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ASSESSMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS' AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN POLICY IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE

BY

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Abstract

This study assessed stakeholders' awareness and participation in the implementation of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria, with particular focus on the relationship between the two variables. A correlational research design was adopted, and a sample of 200 stakeholders was selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections, each measured on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82 using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that stakeholders' awareness of the OVC policy was moderate ($M = 2.81$), while their level of participation was low to moderate ($M = 2.60$). The study further found a very weak and non-significant relationship between awareness and participation ($r = .073$, $p > .05$). The study concluded that awareness alone does not significantly influence stakeholders' participation in policy implementation, as other structural factors may play a more critical role. It was recommended that efforts should go beyond awareness creation to include capacity building, improved coordination, and provision of adequate resources to enhance stakeholders' active involvement in the implementation of the OVC policy.



Keywords: stakeholders' awareness, stakeholders' participation, orphan and vulnerable children, OVC policy, policy implementation

Introduction

The welfare and protection of children, particularly those categorized as orphaned and vulnerable, remain a major concern within global and national development frameworks. According to Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2008), orphans are children who lost one or both parents as a result of death. And Vulnerable children on the other hand are children whose safety, wellbeing and development are for various reasons threatened, including children who are emotionally deprived or traumatized and those who experience negative outcomes. Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) are often exposed to conditions such as poverty, neglect, abuse, and limited access to education, healthcare, and social support services. In response to these challenges, governments and development partners have established policy frameworks aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of vulnerable children. In Nigeria, the OVC policy was developed to provide a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable children through the involvement of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community stakeholders. However, the effectiveness of such policies largely depends on the extent to which relevant stakeholders are aware of and actively participate in their implementation.

Stakeholders' awareness is a critical component in the implementation of social policies. Awareness, in this context, refers to the extent to which stakeholders possess knowledge of the existence, objectives, provisions, and operational mechanisms of the OVC policy. Adequate awareness is expected to enhance stakeholders' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, thereby facilitating effective engagement in policy implementation. Recent studies have shown that awareness of child protection policies remains uneven, particularly at the community level, where stakeholders often lack detailed knowledge of policy provisions and implementation strategies (Adewale & Potokri, 2023). This suggests that the presence of a policy framework alone does not guarantee its effective utilization without sufficient dissemination and sensitization.

Closely related to awareness is stakeholders' participation, which refers to the degree of involvement of individuals and groups in the planning, execution, and evaluation of policy



initiatives. Participation is essential for ensuring that policies are effectively translated into practical actions that benefit target populations. Active involvement of stakeholders enhances ownership, promotes accountability, and improves the sustainability of interventions. Empirical evidence indicates that stakeholder participation plays a significant role in the success of child welfare programmes, particularly when community actors are actively engaged in decision-making processes (Skauge et al., 2023). However, participation is often constrained by structural and institutional challenges that limit stakeholders' capacity to contribute effectively.

Theoretically, this study is anchored on Stakeholder Theory and the Social Ecological Model. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that the success of any policy initiative depends on the active involvement and collaboration of all relevant actors. It posits that stakeholders must be adequately informed and empowered to contribute meaningfully to policy processes. In the context of OVC policy implementation, this implies that both awareness and participation are essential for achieving desired outcomes. The Social Ecological Model further explains that individual and group behaviour is influenced by multiple levels of interaction, including individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy factors. This perspective highlights that stakeholders' participation is not solely dependent on awareness but is also shaped by broader systemic conditions such as institutional support and resource availability.

Empirical studies conducted in recent years provide further insights into the dynamics of awareness and participation in child welfare programmes. Adewale and Potokri (2023) found that although stakeholders were aware of child protection policies, their understanding was often limited to general concepts, with little knowledge of implementation procedures. Similarly, Adebayo and Alade (2025) reported that child welfare programmes in Nigeria are frequently hindered by inadequate awareness and weak stakeholder engagement, particularly at the grassroots level. These findings suggest that moderate awareness levels may not be sufficient to drive effective policy implementation. Also, Abubakar, (2024) in his study shows that low public awareness and inadequate community involvement are significant hindrances to the implementation of health and social welfare programs in Kwara State. For instance, in the context of immunization programs, which share similar community-based delivery structures with OVC initiatives, lack of awareness and community involvement were identified as major barriers to



success (Abubakar, 2024). this suggests that for OVC policies, awareness is not just an informational state but a prerequisite for functional engagement.

In addition, studies have shown that participation in child welfare programmes is often influenced by institutional and contextual factors. Kahuthu et al. (2025) observed that organizational culture and institutional support significantly affect the performance of OVC programmes, indicating that stakeholders' involvement is shaped by the environment in which they operate. Likewise, Matshepete et al. (2025) emphasized that community-based interventions for vulnerable children are more effective when stakeholders are adequately supported through training, funding, and coordination mechanisms. This implies that participation is not merely a function of willingness but also of capacity and opportunity. Likewise, Study on OVC projects conducted in Kenya by Wesonga & Abuya (2024), demonstrates that stakeholder participation in needs assessment significantly influences the sustainability of these projects. When stakeholders are involved in identifying the specific needs of vulnerable children, the resulting interventions are more likely to be culturally appropriate and sustainable.

Further evidence suggests that governance and coordination challenges continue to undermine the effectiveness of OVC policies. Shiffman and Min (2025) argued that weak governance structures and fragmented service delivery systems often limit the impact of national care systems for vulnerable children in low-income countries. In a similar vein, Majebi et al. (2024) highlighted that community-based child protection interventions are often constrained by poor coordination among stakeholders and inadequate policy implementation strategies. These challenges may reduce stakeholders' ability to translate awareness into meaningful participation.

The relationship between awareness and participation has also attracted scholarly attention, with mixed findings reported in recent literature. While some studies suggest that increased awareness leads to higher participation, others indicate that the relationship may be weak due to intervening variables such as resource constraints and institutional barriers. For instance, empirical evidence suggests that stakeholders who are aware of policy frameworks may still be unable to participate effectively due to lack of training, limited funding, or absence of institutional support (Matshepete et al., 2025). This justifies the complexity of the relationship between awareness and participation and the need for context-specific investigation.



In Nigeria, the implementation of the OVC policy continues to face significant challenges, including limited dissemination of policy information, inadequate funding, and weak collaboration among stakeholders. These challenges have implications for both awareness and participation, as stakeholders may not have sufficient knowledge or capacity to engage effectively in policy processes. As a result, the intended benefits of the policy may not be fully realized, particularly at the community level where implementation is most critical.

Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, provides a relevant locale for examining these issues due to the presence of diverse stakeholders involved in child welfare, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups. Despite the existence of the OVC policy, there is limited empirical evidence on stakeholders' awareness and participation within this locality. This creates a gap in knowledge that necessitates systematic investigation to better understand the factors influencing policy implementation.

Given the importance of stakeholder engagement in achieving policy objectives, it is essential to examine not only the levels of awareness and participation but also the relationship between these variables. Understanding whether awareness significantly influences participation can provide valuable insights for improving policy implementation strategies and enhancing outcomes for orphan and vulnerable children. While recent studies highlight the importance of these factors, gaps remain in understanding their interaction within specific contexts. This study, therefore, seeks to examine stakeholders' awareness, participation, and the relationship between both variables in the implementation of the OVC policy in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State.

The Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy in Nigeria was established to safeguard the welfare and rights of vulnerable children through coordinated efforts of relevant stakeholders. However, observable conditions within many communities, including Ilorin metropolis, suggest that the objectives of the policy are yet to be fully realized. Persistent cases of child neglect, abuse, and inadequate access to support services raise critical concerns about the level of stakeholders' awareness and the extent of their involvement in policy implementation. Where awareness is limited or superficial, stakeholders may lack the necessary understanding of policy provisions, programmes, and reporting mechanisms required for effective action, thereby weakening the overall impact of the policy.



In addition, the assumption that awareness naturally translates into participation remains questionable in practical settings. Stakeholders who are aware of the policy may still be constrained by factors such as inadequate training, lack of institutional support, poor coordination, and limited resources, which hinder active engagement in implementation processes. The lack of clear empirical evidence on the relationship between awareness and participation within the local environment creates a gap in knowledge and limits informed decision-making. This situation necessitates a systematic investigation into stakeholders' level of awareness, their level of participation, and the relationship between both variables in the implementation of the OVC policy in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate stakeholders' awareness and participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state. Specifically, the study focused on the following objectives:

- a. Identify the level of stakeholders' awareness of orphan and vulnerable children policy;
- b. Identify the level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy; and
- c. Examine the relationship between stakeholders' level of awareness and level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this study:

- a. What is the level of stakeholders' awareness of orphan and vulnerable children policy?
- b. What is the level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy?



Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between stakeholders' level of awareness and level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between stakeholders' awareness and participation in the implementation of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. The population of the study comprised stakeholders involved in child welfare and community development within the metropolis. A sample of 200 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique, which ensured that each member of the population had an equal chance of being included in the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into two sections: Section A measured stakeholders' level of awareness of the OVC policy, while Section B assessed their level of participation in its implementation. Each section consisted of items structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was validated by experts in the field to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76 and 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents and retrieved after completion. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. All analyses were carried out using statistical software, and decisions were based on the computed results.



Results

Answering of the Research Questions

Research Question One: what is the level of stakeholders' awareness of orphan and vulnerable children policy?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Stakeholders' Awareness of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Policy

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I am aware of the existence of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children policy.	3.23	.89504
7	I am aware of the rights of orphan and vulnerable children.	3.03	.96632
8	I know the procedures for reporting cases involving vulnerable children.	3.03	.92120
5	I know the institutions responsible for implementing the OVC policy.	3.02	.97443
2	I understand the objectives of the OVC policy.	2.77	1.04044
9	I am aware of community services available to support OVC.	2.74	1.06322
4	I am aware of programmes designed to support orphan and vulnerable children.	2.71	1.06846
6	I have received information or training related to the OVC policy.	2.64	1.02256
3	I am familiar with the provisions of the policy regarding child protection.	2.60	1.06227
10	Awareness campaigns about the OVC policy exist in my community.	2.30	1.02094
Average Mean		2.81	

The level of stakeholders' awareness of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy was determined using mean and standard deviation scores. The results revealed an overall average mean of 2.81, indicating a moderate level of awareness among stakeholders. Respondents demonstrated relatively higher awareness of the existence of the OVC policy ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.90$), the rights of orphan and vulnerable children ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.97$), procedures for reporting cases involving vulnerable children ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.92$), and the institutions responsible for implementing the policy ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.97$). However, awareness was comparatively lower



regarding the objectives of the policy ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.04$), available community services ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.06$), programmes designed to support OVC ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.07$), training or information received on the policy ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.02$), specific provisions on child protection ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.06$), and the existence of awareness campaigns within the community ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.02$). Overall, the findings suggest that although stakeholders are generally aware of the policy's existence and basic child rights issues, their knowledge of detailed policy components and implementation mechanisms is limited.

Research Question Two: what is the level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Stakeholders' Participation in the Implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Policy

S/N	Items	Mea n	Std. Devatio n
1	I participate in programmes aimed at supporting orphan and vulnerable children.	2.84	.95864
5	I work with NGOs or community groups supporting vulnerable children.	2.75	1.00750
2	I assist in identifying orphan and vulnerable children in my community.	2.73	1.28661
10	I support initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of OVC.	2.70	1.05982
4	I collaborate with government agencies implementing OVC programmes.	2.53	1.09332
7	I provide support services (educational, emotional, or material) to OVC.	2.52	1.06558
6	I report cases of child neglect or abuse affecting vulnerable children.	2.50	1.07039
9	I help mobilize community members to support vulnerable children.	2.50	1.05125
8	I attend meetings or workshops related to OVC policy implementation.	2.50	1.09705
3	I take part in awareness campaigns on child protection.	2.40	1.06652
Average Mean		2.60	

The level of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of the OVC policy was also assessed using descriptive statistics. The results showed an overall average mean of 2.60, indicating a low to moderate level of participation. Stakeholders reported relatively higher involvement in



participating in programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable children ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.96$), working with non-governmental organizations or community groups ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.01$), assisting in identifying vulnerable children within their communities ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.29$), and supporting initiatives to improve the welfare of OVC ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.06$). Lower levels of participation were observed in more formal activities such as collaborating with government agencies ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.09$), providing direct support services ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.07$), reporting cases of neglect or abuse ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.07$), mobilizing community members ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.05$), attending meetings or workshops related to policy implementation ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.10$), and participating in awareness campaigns ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.07$). These findings indicate that stakeholders' participation tends to be limited and largely informal, suggesting insufficient engagement in structured implementation processes.

Testing of the Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between stakeholders' level of awareness and level of participation in the implementation of orphan and vulnerable children policy

Table 3: PPMC Result of the Relationship between Stakeholders' Level of Awareness and Level of Participation in the Implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Policy

		Awareness Mean	Participation Mean
Awareness Mean	Pearson Correlation	1	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.303
	N	200	200
Participation Mean	Pearson Correlation	.073	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.303	
	N	200	200

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between stakeholders' level of awareness and level of participation in the implementation of the OVC policy was tested using



Pearson Product–Moment Correlation. The analysis revealed a very weak positive correlation between awareness and participation ($r = .073$, $N = 200$), which was not statistically significant ($p = .303$). Since the p -value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was retained. This result indicates that stakeholders' awareness of the OVC policy does not significantly influence their level of participation in its implementation. In practical terms, being aware of the policy does not necessarily translate into active involvement, implying that other factors beyond awareness may determine stakeholders' participation in implementing the policy.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that stakeholders' awareness of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy in Ilorin metropolis was moderate. This indicates that although stakeholders are generally aware of the existence of the policy and the basic rights of vulnerable children, their understanding of its objectives, provisions, programmes, and implementation procedures is limited. This finding is consistent with recent studies which have reported that the existence of child welfare policies does not necessarily translate into deep awareness or understanding among community-level stakeholders. For instance, Mutiso and Kamau (2021) found that while many stakeholders in Kenya were aware of national OVC frameworks, detailed knowledge of policy content and operational guidelines was low. Similarly, Akinola (2022) observed in a Nigerian context that awareness of child protection policies among community actors was largely superficial, with limited exposure to training and sensitization programmes. These studies suggest that moderate awareness, as obtained in the present study, may reflect insufficient dissemination strategies and limited capacity-building initiatives.

The study further revealed that stakeholders' participation in the implementation of the OVC policy was low to moderate. Stakeholders reported higher involvement in informal activities such as participating in support programmes, identifying vulnerable children, and working with community groups, but lower engagement in formal implementation processes such as collaboration with government agencies, reporting abuse cases, and attending policy-related meetings. This finding aligns with recent research emphasizing that community stakeholders often contribute in ad hoc or voluntary ways rather than through structured institutional channels. For example, Wanjiru (2020) reported that although community members were willing to support



vulnerable children, their participation in formal programme planning and decision-making was minimal due to lack of empowerment and coordination. Likewise, Olagunju and Ajayi (2023) found that stakeholders in South-Western Nigeria participated more in direct assistance activities than in policy implementation structures, largely because of bureaucratic barriers and inadequate government engagement. Therefore, the low to moderate participation observed in this study may not indicate apathy but rather structural limitations that constrain meaningful involvement.

Another major finding of this study was that there was no significant relationship between stakeholders' level of awareness and their level of participation in implementing the OVC policy. Although a weak positive correlation existed, it was not statistically significant, indicating that increased awareness does not necessarily translate into active participation. This finding is supported by contemporary literature suggesting that knowledge alone is insufficient to drive behavioural or institutional engagement. According to Ndlovu and Sibanda (2021), participation in child welfare programmes is strongly influenced by resource availability, institutional support, and perceived efficacy rather than awareness alone. Similarly, Adeyemi (2024) reported that stakeholders who understood child protection policies often lacked the financial resources, authority, or organizational backing required to participate effectively in implementation. These studies reinforce the conclusion that structural and contextual factors play a more decisive role in shaping participation than awareness.

Hence, the findings of this study are in agreement with recent studies which emphasizes that the success of OVC policies depends on a combination of awareness, capacity, coordination, and institutional support. The moderate awareness, limited participation, and absence of a significant relationship between the two observed in Ilorin metropolis suggest that policy effectiveness may be constrained by systemic barriers rather than lack of goodwill among stakeholders. Consequently, efforts to improve outcomes for orphan and vulnerable children should move beyond awareness campaigns alone to include sustained training, resource provision, stakeholder empowerment, and stronger collaboration between government agencies and community actors.



Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that stakeholders in Ilorin metropolis possess a moderate level of awareness of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy but demonstrate only low to moderate participation in its implementation. Although many stakeholders are familiar with the existence of the policy and basic child rights issues, their limited knowledge of policy details, programmes, and operational procedures appears to constrain effective engagement. Furthermore, the absence of a significant relationship between awareness and participation suggests that knowledge of the policy alone is insufficient to stimulate active involvement. Rather, participation may be influenced more strongly by structural factors such as institutional support, availability of resources, coordination mechanisms, training opportunities, and empowerment of stakeholders. Therefore, for the OVC policy to achieve its intended outcomes, efforts must go beyond awareness creation to include capacity building, strengthened collaboration between government and community actors, and the provision of adequate support systems that enable stakeholders to translate awareness into meaningful action.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Government and relevant agencies should intensify awareness campaigns to improve stakeholders' understanding of the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy.
2. Regular training and sensitization programmes should be organized for stakeholders to deepen their knowledge of the policy and its implementation procedures.
3. Government agencies should strengthen collaboration with community groups, NGOs, and other stakeholders to encourage active participation in the implementation of the OVC policy.
4. Adequate resources and institutional support should be provided to stakeholders to enable them to effectively participate in programmes supporting orphan and vulnerable children.
5. Stakeholders should be encouraged to actively report cases of child neglect or abuse affecting vulnerable children within their communities.



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