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Exploring experiences of rural female orphan learners from child-headed families in Zimbabwe funding their own education

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Abstract
This qualitative paper explored the experiences of female orphan learners from child-headed families in Zimbabwe rural primary schools who are working minimal jobs to pay for their academic fees. In Zimbabwe the experiences encountered by female orphan learners from child-headed families working minimal jobs in their quest to further their education have remained understudied and under theorized. I used resilience as theoretical framework and case study in this article. Twenty participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique and two focus groups discussions were used to collect data. The study found that most rural female orphan learners from rural child-headed families are financing their primary schools from the money they are getting from doing minimal jobs. This article recommended that rural community members should be empathetic towards vulnerable female learners from child-headed families through paying of their academic fees.

Keywords: orphans, female, child-headed families, Zimbabwe, minimal jobs, rural areas, fees

Introduction
This qualitative paper explored the experiences of rural female orphan learners from child-headed families who are paying their primary school education in Zimbabwe through working minimal jobs. It is important that from the onset, that l should give a clear picture of the main characteristics of the majority of Zimbabwe rural areas and subsequently give educational implications: Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa, it is surrounded by Zambia on the north, Mozambique on the east, Botswana on the southwest, and South Africa on the south and Zimbabwe is approximately 390,000 square kilometers (UNICEF, 2019). Zimbabwe is predominantly divided into two main geo-political areas namely: urban and rural areas, however rural areas can be further be divided into resettlements, villages among others (Scooners & Murambimba, 2020). Zimbabwe rural population has been steadily increasing since 2000 where it increased economic decline after chaotic land reform on Zimbabwe. Macrotrend (2020) confirmed that rural-urban migration increase by around 4% since 2015. There has been a steady increase of people in Zimbabwe migrating from towns to permanently stay in rural areas due to high cost of living such as school fees, house rentals, food costs in urban areas, high unemployment due to closure of companies and businesses due to poor economic performances (Potts, 2013) [34].
I conducted this study in two rural areas which are 40 kilometers outside Masvingo town in Masvingo Province which is located at the central part of Zimbabwe. These two rural areas in this province experience hot weather, poor annual rainfall, there are no big industries except grocery shops, beer halls, clinics and few primary and primary schools and there are no tertiary institutions. Electricity and taped water are only found at clinics and Government buildings such as Education offices. The majority of rural people use open wells, rivers and few boreholes as source of water (TellZim, 2020). There are no tarred roads but there are bad gravel roads and there is shortage of transport. Most people in these areas survived on agriculture although it is affected by poor rains but the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and Government donate food to assist them.

On the educational front, there is an increase of primary and primary school learners in rural areas because their parents cannot afford high cost of education in urban areas. This is contrary, to American rural schools where there are few learners in rural schools (Ayalon, 2004; Mitchel et al, 2006; Rude & Miller, 2005).

In Zimbabwe rural areas, there are very few class buildings, most of the learners learn under trees, have few chairs and desks and learn in unfinished class buildings (Hodge &Krum, 2009). In addition, there are very few qualified mathematics, science and other subjects, teachers and lack of educational resources such as computers (Colson, Xiang & Smother, 2021). There are many orphans from child headed families due to HIV/AIDS, COVID-19 and other causes of deaths (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). In the past, the majority of the relatives and community members of the deceased used to take care of their children under the African traditional concept *'a child belongs to the community'* , however, this have charged due hard economic situation in Zimbabwe were current different inflation figures are given as between 188%-800% (Newsday, 2021).

Resultantly, there is an increase of orphans from child headed families who are engaging in minimal work to get money to buy food, clothes, pay fees among other issues. Some female orphan learners end up engaging in prostitution, early marriage others drop out of school. According to Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs Report (2020) around 2000 female learners in Zimbabwe became pregnant, some went into early marriages and others dropped out of school between January and March 2020. However, in Zimbabwe the experiences encountered by female orphan learners from child-headed families working minimal jobs in their quest to further their education have remained understudied and under theorized. Hence, there is need for this study.

Theoretical Framing: Resilience
This paper is anchored on the resilience theoretical framework developed by the following scholars: Norman Gazmezy, Lois Murphy, and Micheal Rutter (Mastern, 2013; Zimmerma, 2013). Bonanno, Mastern, Panter-Brick and Yehuda (2014) define resilience theory as a dynamic process that enables human beings to successfully deal with life-threatening situations. In addition, Masten and Obradovic (2006) explained that resilience theory helps in understanding why some people can survive life painful situations and make it in life. I argue that the resilience theoretical framework has gained traction as a significant theory in educational psychology and other academic fields.

I concur with van Brenda (2018) who argued that resilience theory is used among adolescent and young child-headed households, as in this article, rural female orphans have shown resilience as they face many psychological, physical, financial, loneness and other problems relating to working and furthering their studies through working tough minimal jobs such as working in farms. The current paper, used resilience theory to unpack the experiences of rural orphan female primary school learners' ability to succeed or fail in face of challenges and diversities in pursuit of the academic purposes. In this article, l agree with Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, (2000), that resilience theory is a significant and powerful tool for making orphan adolescent learners survive in adversity circumstances. There is a vast literature that proved the essence of resilience theory in helping people to positively develop despite the presence of

threats to their well-being (Cicchetti, 2010; Goldstein & Brooks, 2013; Luthar, 2006; Mastein, 2013).

Literature review
Gwebwe, Gubwe and Mago (2017) found that most primary school learners from child-headed families in the urban set-up are facing educational problems such as poor academic performance. On challenges faced by child-headed learners Newlin, Reynold, and Nombuto (2017) found that most learners have been affected academically because of HIV/AIDS and some problems that emanate from home and at school. Mturi (2012) argued that in many African countries in the past orphans were taken care of by their relatives after the death of their parents, however, due to economic problems extended family members are failing to support them. I concur with Gomba (2017) who argued that many orphans have been left alone to struggle to get food, clothes, shelter, and fees among other necessities. In South Africa, child-headed orphans are regarded as vulnerable consequently; the Government has created programs to support them financially, morally, spiritually, and physically (Mturi, 2012). Contrary, in Zimbabwe l have observed that there is limited support the Government is giving towards female learners from child-headed families in helping them funding their primary education.

In Tanzania, Mukoyogo and Williams (1991) believe that there is a need for greater involvement of different community members in solving the negative effects of child-headed orphans. On the other hand, Chinyoka and Naidu (2014)'s comparative study noted that, due to economic instabilities in Zimbabwe and South Africa some relatives are struggling to take of their orphan child relatives. Sloth-Nelsein (2004) noted that the rights of orphans such as provision of free quality education should be adhered to, advocated for, and supported by all Governments and stakeholders. The above notion of rights of orphan learners from child-headed families was also supported by World Health Organization (WHO) (2015). However, the reality on the ground is that most countries in the Sub-Sahara are failing to provide free education to disadvantage orphan learners (Gwebwe et al, 2017). The literature also show that there is demand an urgent interventions from both the Government and other interested stakeholders such as researchers, Non-Governmental organizations to help orphans from child-headed families (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). Contrary, Ritcher and Desmond, (2008) argued that the problem of child-headed families is not as big as it is claimed in South Africa. However, Heuveline (2004) noted that in many countries there is a drastic increase of child-headed orphan families and Zimbabwe is not any exception. The orphans from child-headed families in many developing countries have been exposed to many vulnerabilities such as child labor, street kids, early childhood, prostitution, and human trafficking (Gomba, 2018; WHO, 2015). On education, Aiwood (2004) posited that learners including orphans from child-headed families learn through play as it (play) help them to learn through socialization. In Namibia, Ruiz-Casares (2009) observed that the age of learners from child-headed contributes to the severity of challenges they encounter in their lives. The younger the child, the most vulnerable the multiple challenges he or she is exposed to.

Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) explained that some orphan learners from child-headed learners in suffer from psychological disorders caused by poverty. On the other

hand, urban areas, Kurebwa and Kurebwa (2014) argued that orphans from child-headed families in urban completed their education due to coping strategies they have to mitigate the impact of being orphans. On the impact of gender on child-headed orphan learners' challenges, Francis-Chizororo (2010) commented that girls are mostly affected by challenges caused by being orphans from child-headed families as they fail to progress with their education due to sexual abuse. From the vast literature in Zimbabwe and beyond included the ones cited above in this paper, l have observed that there is a dearth of literature that focuses on the experiences of rural female orphans from child-headed families who are financing their studies in rural primary schools. Hence, there is a need to engage in this paper, as a way to contribute to the body of knowledge and bring awareness to the solutions of challenges facing the rural female orphans from child-headed families including their failure to paying their fees and negative impacts of working minimal jobs.

Research methodology

This is qualitative research which permits the use of multiple perspectives on the phenomena (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). A case study research design was utilized in this paper. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) opined that case study allows the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the case(s). The current study involving two primary schools located in a rural area in Zimbabwe was utilized in this article. From the population of 2 423, the following twenty knowledge-rich participants were purposively selected from two rural primary schools among two rural communities: ten learners (five males and five females), one female religious leader, one male Member of Parliament, 2 teachers (male and female), one female social worker, one male councilor, one male village headman, one female police office working with Victim Friendly Unit, female nurse, one male Non-Governmental Organization leader and one female School Development member. The participants were selected based on their geographical location (rural areas), family status (child-headed families in case of orphans), profession (teachers, local leaders), political influence (Member of Parliament), expertise such as counseling orphan learners (social workers) and gender (equal number of male and female participants)

I used two focus group discussions as instruments to generate data from the participants (Cresweell& Poth, 2018). The participants were divided into two groups: learners in their own group and adults in their own group. This was done to allow learners to free express themselves without fearing adults as recommended by Dube (2016). The data from two focus groups were consolidated. The participants responded to two critical research questions on the interview guide:"*What are the challenges that cause rural female orphan learners from child-headed families to do minimal work and what kind of assistance do rural female orphan learners from child-headed families need"*. To successfully conduct the study, ground rules were agreed upon between participants and the researcher, such as freedom of expression. Group discussions were held for two days (2 Saturdays) and 2 hours each session (total of four hours). The participants' views were recorded as verbatim by two professional research secretaries and data generated from participants were categorized into themes. Trustworthiness of data was enhanced by a pilot study, which eliminated

ambiguities in the data generation instrument (interview guide). Additionally, the researcher used member checking of the data from the participants on the focus group during discussions as a way to strengthen the trustworthiness of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:10) "theme captures something important about data concerning the research question, and presents some level of patterned response or meaning with the data set." The two themes of data were "*Challenges that cause rural female orphan learners from child-headed families to do minimal and Assistance that rural female orphan learners from child-headed families need to pursue their studies"*. Furthermore, data were analyzed through Thematic Content Analysis as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018).To have access to the participants, l obtained the relevant clearance as part of the advance protocol to conduct this study in the selected primary schools from the Ministry of Primary and Primary Education. Before the commence of the study, l explained to the participants that this study is purely academic, they are allowed to stop participating at any moment, pseudo names will be used to protect their identities and the participation is voluntary (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2020). The participants signed informed consent form and assent forms to authenticate they are voluntary participating in the study

Discussion and Findings

This section dealt with two themes that were derived from the data generated from the participants in this article. Theme 1: challenges that cause black female learners from child-headed families to do minimal work to support their education and Theme 2: Solutions that mitigate female learners from child-headed families to do minimal work to support their education. In this article, l did not only highlight the problems that push orphan learners to engage in minimal jobs, but l also offered the solutions: Theme1: Challenges faced by female orphan learners from child-headed families

Firstly, challenge of fees

Emma commented that, *"My parents died in a car accident in 2018 when l was doing grade 7. My mother's sister started to stay with me in her house taking care of me in Harare town, Zimbabwe. However, she started to make me her house maid, working up in early in the morning cleaning and washing her clothes, kitchen utensils, among other house chores but she could not send me to school. I finally ran away from her and went back to rural areas (my parents' home).* (PT2, female learner)

In addition, Ms Mago said, *"My neighbor is a girl aged 16 a learner at our nearby primary school. She started to stay the extended members who were staying with her moved to South Africa to look for employment. Unfortunately, they have neglected the child and she is now surviving on money she gets from washing clothes for her neighbors".* (PT1, a female community leader)

Further, Gombiro, *"Some teachers are making learners to pay extra money for extra lessons they are conducting during the weekends and holidays. Orphan learners have to work to pay to get money to pay for their fees". (*PT13, male politician, Member of Parliament)

From the above submissions by the participants, it is clear that female orphans from child-headed families end up engaging in minimal jobs fight poverty through getting quality education and empowering themselves for a better

future (Mastein, 2013; Newlin, Reynold & Nombutho, 2017). Some of the female orphan learners end up working because their relatives mistreated them (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). If they do not work they will struggle to get money to pay fees. In addition, some orphans engaged in minimal jobs because the relatives who were taking care of them migrated to the diaspora and forgot about them (Ganga & Chinyoka, 2010). The struggles encountered by female orphan learners in paying their fees are due to resilience that helps them to fought challenges by working hard to support their education (van Brenda, 2018).

Second challenge is lack of food

Mr Takudzwa argued that, *"Most of orphans from child-headed family do not have other sources of income to buy food. As a result, they end up doing odd jobs such as pasturing cattle".* (PT 11, a male, primary school teacher) Furthermore, Maidei noted that, *"My mathematics teacher is paying my school fees. However, she cannot afford to give me monthly groceries because of her little salary. I have to work to get money to buy food".* (PT4, a female learner)

A critical analysis of the above perspectives of the participants, some female orphan learners struggle to get food and the few handouts they get from their neighbors and other well-wishers are not enough (Gomba, 2018). Literature shows that lack of food makes learners lose concentration at school, makes them sick, and fail in the academic endeavors (Mwamwenda, 2014). Needy to eat healthy food forces orphan girl learners to work hard in farms by exposing themselves to dangerous animals and reptiles such as snakes (Gabwe, Gabwe & Mago, 2017). Their resilience in the face of tiredness after school and risk of being attacked by snakes force them to work to put food on their tables (Zimmerma, 2013).

Third challenge of school uniforms, personal clothes, and stationery

Mercy submitted that, *"One NGO is paying my school fees under its community based program of taking care of orphans from child-headed families. But, they scholarship does not provide school uniforms. I have to work in people's fields to get money to buy them."*(PT6, a female learner)

More so, Mrs Madembo, was of the view that, *"One orphan learner told me that, she works in people's house during weekends as a way to raise money to buy personnel clothes such as dresses. (*PT20, a female social worker)

The above narrations by the participants in this article show, that female orphan learners in rural need school uniforms which are essential as they give learners a sense of identity and belonging as noted in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Gomba, 2018). Wearing torn uniforms or not wearing them makes orphan female learners have poor self-esteem (Chingombe, 2019). In order, to develop their self–esteem, to feel part of the school and a sense of belonging among peers, orphan female learners end up looking for jobs to get money to buy school uniforms, stationery, and personal clothes. The inward and outside resilience by orphan learners pushes them to forgo the pain, stress, and suffering and work to raise

money to buy clothes and stationery (Sonthwick, et al, 2014).

Fourth the challenges of lack of sanitary wear

Vimbai held that, *"I was using old towels as my pads because l had no money to buy sanitary pads for me. I end up developing some wounds around my private parts. I had to start working small jobs in order to get money to buy pads."* (PT9, female learner)

In support of working minimal jobs for sanitary pads, Mr Dahwa, commented that, *"One local orphan female learner requested my wife to give her a small job that she can get money to buy her pads. However, my wife decided to buy her pads without making her work".* (PT3, male ward councilor)

The participants argued that menstruation is one of the challenges that push orphan learners in rural areas to work to buy their sanitary wear. Sanitary wear is very important among females and lack of sanitary wear makes a girl child miss classes, it is estimated that some rural female learners fail to go to school 60 days per year during their monthly periods (Herald, 2020). The participants' desire not to miss school forces them to do minimal jobs for them to buy sanitary wear. This shows great resilience among rural female learners who want to work to further their education (Fraser et al, 1999).

Fifty challenge of transport money

Rudo argued that, *"I stay very far away from school. Therefore l need transport money. I wake up at 3 am cleaning the house, cooking food and bath my sister. Sometimes l arrive late at school tired. I miss morning work, this affects my academic performance."* (PT7, a female learner)

More so, Mr Damba informed us that, *"We have one primary school in this area, some learners travel 16 kilometers to and fro school. Some of our girl learners are raped and sexually abused when they use short roads through the bush to and fro school. Surely they need transport money."* PT 18, male headman).

The participants in this discursive paper noted that orphan learners in Zimbabwean rural schools experience transport problems as they travel to school in order to arrive early and safe. Due to lack of money some orphan learners wake up in the morning around 3am to prepare and go to school. Literature shows that lack of sleep among learners and tiredness from walking long distances to school negatively affect learners' concentration and academic performance (Ganga & Chinyoka, 2010; Mwamwenda, 2014). Walking long distances to and fro schools has contributed to the high number of learners who are being raped among other ills in Zimbabwe rural areas (TellZim, 2021). In addition, there are few available vehicles in Zimbabwe rural areas due to bad roads therefore transport costs are very expensive, as a result, most orphan learners in rural areas cannot afford them (Mudavanhu, 2018). To mitigate these transport high costs and walking long distances they have to work to get money to pay for transport. The ability to work for transport money or walk for long distances to school show their resilience and high desire to be educated as a way to transform their lives from poverty to prosperity (Tupett, et al, 2014).

The sixth challenge of having no income-generating projects

Mrs Moyo stated that, *"Some of the weapons used by perpetrators of sexual abuse include giving money, phones, clothes and other nice things to needy learners such as orphans from child-headed families. Abusers take advantage that orphans need money".* PT10, female police officer)

On the other hand, Dorren, postulated that, *"I want to move out of poverty through education and doing my business. I have a desire to start my own viable business but l do not have money to start my business".* (PT11, a female learner)

The shortages of income generation projects have been raised by participants as one of the reasons why orphan learners end up engaging in minimal jobs. Income generation programs help orphan learners to have stable income and empathetic adults within the rural community help to run / do projects on behalf of the learners (Nyokanhete, 2021). Lack of income generating projects dis-empowers the rural orphan learners as a result they end up engaging in prostitution, working in farms and other dangerous jobs in order to get money. I argue that, some orphan learners do minimal jobs as a way to survive in the Zimbabwe harsh economic environment, is a testimony of orphan learners' resilience to fight for a better life (Masten, 2001).

Seventh challenge of lack of money to buy medication

Martha said, *"I have terminal illness, some of the medicine l get it from the local clinic for free but other medication l should buy it. Therefore, l have to work to get money to buy medication".* (PT5, female learner)

In addition, Ms Chuma, said, *"Our local clinic does not have enough medication, we frequently run short of drugs. Surely, there is need for money to purchase drugs at private pharmacies."*(PT8, local nurse).

Participants noted that, the desire to have healthy bodies have contributed to the early employment of the orphan learners in Zimbabwe as they look for money to get medication. Healthy learners have the ability to listen when teachers are teaching them, they engage in play and socialize with others and have peace of mind (Mwamwenda, 2014; Snowman et al, 2009). They are forced to work because they do not anyone to pay for their medical bills. Sick learners who are working show sign of resilience towards having good health (Mturi, 2012).

Lastly, challenge to buy data and education gadgets to access online learning

Lovejoy shared her views, *"We are learning online during COVID-19 period using electronic gadgets and they need data to connect to work. We have to work to get money to buy data, smart phones and computers to use in learning."* (PT16, female learner)

Mrs Nguwo said, *"Surely learners do not have e-learning gadgets such as laptops. Therefore, they end up engaging minimal work to raise money to buy these learning gadgets.* (PT15, leader of NGO)

The participants observed that the advent of online teaching and learning in due to COVID-19 in Zimbabwean rural and urban schools have been instrumental in forcing learners to work to get data and computers (WHO, 2020; MoPSE, 2020). Most female orphans in rural areas have no one to buy expensive computers and data therefore they are motivated through resilience to work very hard to raise money to buy these important educational tools to further their studies (Dube, 2020).

The next section dealt with theme 2: The help needed by female orphan learners from child-headed families need to pursue their studies. In this paper, the community members provided ways in which individual and community members should collective implement to help marginalized female orphan learners to pursue their studies without working minimal jobs.

Firstly, assistance of fees payment assistance

Emma suggest that, *"I appeal to the Government of Zimbabwe to increase Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) funds that are designed to assist orphans and other disadvantaged learners".* (PT 2, female learner)

In addition, Ms Mago proposed that, *"Faith based organizations and NGOs should be empathetic to less privileged orphan learners from child-headed families by paying their educational fees and examination. The church has a moral and spiritual responsibility to support the well-being of orphan learners"* (PT1, female church leader)

To effectively support female orphans from child headed families to pursue their studies without hindrances of going to work. The participants suggested that, the Government of Zimbabwe should allocate lot of money to BEAM program to cater for the underprivileged orphan learners in rural areas. BEAM has been created by the Government as a program to pay fees for the disadvantaged learners in both primary and primary school, however, it has been noted that it is not enough (Herald, 2020; Ministry of Education and Primary, 2020). More so, the Faith based organizations and NGOs should assist the orphan learners in rural constituencies to pay their fees (Ganga & Chinyoka, 2010; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). I noted that the resilience in orphan learners to further their studies through working to raise fees have also contributed to the community members' empathy to support them (Gomba, 2018).

Secondly, food assistance

Rudo commented that, *"We thank NGOs that are giving us food monthly that consists of beans, cooking oil, mealie-meal, salt and sugar. However, not all orphans are receiving these monthly groceries".* (PT7, female learner)

More so, Mr Damba explained that, *"As community members we have to have Ubuntu / unhu (an African concept that calls for collectiveness in assisting and caring for each other. We have to support our children, remember a child belongs to community at large. We have to contribute maize, wood, money and vegetables that we will give to all orphans in this rural area."* (PT18, male headman)

The participants in article acknowledged that food is essential to the well being of the orphan learners and suggested that, Faith Organizations and NGOs are already assisting orphans with monthly food hampers, unfortunately these food hampers are not adequate to feed all orphans in the rural areas. Therefore there is need for individuals, community

members and Government to argument the food given to orphans (Gubwe et al, 2017; Ritcher & Desmond, 2008). In addition, the participants were encourage to take proactive role of supporting their orphans, as children in Zimbabwean community are regarded as belonging to community under Ubuntu / unhu concept (Chidarikire, 2021). In African concept of Ubuntu / unhu are child belongs to the community and as it is regarded as the responsibility of the community to raise that child.

Thirdly, assistance with school uniforms, personal clothes and stationary
Mr Gombiro said: *"I have avail money to buy uniforms, personal clothes and stationary for 50 orphan learners in this constituency."*(PT13, male Member of Parliament)
Furthermore, Mr Dahwa said, *"I will buy sports shoes and t-shirts for 60 orphan learners. Our learners deserve to participate in sports and this helps them to socialize."*(PT3, male ward councilor)

Mrs Nguwo contributed to the discussion,
"As an Organization that works with the aim of empowering girl child in rural areas, we are going to buy school uniforms and stationary for 100 more orphan female learners."(PT15, NGO female leader)

From the above discussion it is encouraging to note that, participants acknowledge the importance of uniforms, personal clothes and stationary to the orphan female learners and they motivate them to learn. This is support by scholars, who argue that, learners who have adequate resources such as uniforms, clothes and stationary perform better at schools (Chidarikire, Hlalele & Tarisayi, 2021; Mwamwenda, 2014). It is my view that, collectively rural community members have the capacity to improve the lives of the orphans within their communities through giving uniforms, clothes and stationary to learners.

Fourthly, assistance with sanitary wear
Mrs Madembo opinioned that, *"We need to make washable and reusable sanitary pads. These washable and reusable sanitary pads may go a long way in helping our girl children."*(PT20, female social worker)
More so, Ms Chuma, *"There is one NGO that is coming next week to give female learners sanitary pads. We have made a special request for the orphans to receive pads monthly for the next 2 years"*(PT8, a female nurse)

Participants noted that, there is need to provide pads to orphan learners for them to go to school regularly. It has been found by different scholars that, most female learners do not go to school during 60 days per year, during their monthly menstruation periods because they do not have pads (Onward, 2020; Women Coalition in Zimbabwe, 2018). Therefore, to mitigate the failure of female learners to go school due to lack of pads to use during menstruation periods, the participants recommend the use of reusable sanitary pads and for NGO and Government to provide free and high quality sanitary pads to rural female learners.

Fifthly, assistance with transport money
Mrs Moyo commented that, *"I suggest that, as community and parents of these learners we should start mobilizing money to buy school bus"*

On the other hand, Mr Gombiro said, *"I concur with Mrs Moyo who said, we should buy the bus as a matter of urgency. For the mean time, l will give you my 25 seater bus; you can use it and give me later after we bought the bus"*

To solve transport problem, the participants held that, they should mobilize money to buy a school bus to use to carry to and from school the learners. The Government of Zimbabwe through School Development Committee (SDC) Act 1985, gave powers to parents to contribute to the purchase of goods and services at school. Some rural community members have mobilized money in Zimbabwe and bought buses, lorries and private cars to assist learners and teachers (Mirror, 2017). In addition, rural community leaders and business may donate vehicles to schools. Transport helps learners to arrive and depart from school in time and makes learners to learn without being tired and worried about how they will reach safely home.

Sixth, assistance with income generating projects
Mr Damba held that *"I give you 6 hectares of land not very far away from the dam. You can use that land to cultivate vegetables, maize and other produce and sell them".* (PT18, male headman)
Again, Mrs Nguwo said, *"We are going to give you seeds for all the crops that you need to use in the land the headman has given to you. We are also going to train you on how to do your farming, protective clothes and chemicals to use".* (PT15, a local NGO leader)

The participants were of the view that, income generating projects are important to empower orphan female learners in preparation for post-primary school. Consequently, the headman donated land to support orphan learners using his traditional leaders' power to allocate land to his subordinates. Community members will utilize land to do farming and get produce to sell, get money to support orphans and also food to give them. This is one of the sustainable ways to support female orphan learners. To support rural farming, the NGOs offered farming inputs, drill boreholes and training of community members on farming.

Seventh, assistance with money for medication
Mrs Gundani said, *"As my social responsibility l offer to give free medication to 25 orphan learners, every time they need medication".* (PT12, a pharmacist)
In support of the provision of free medication to orphan learners, Mr Gombiro argued that, *"I am going to engage health minister to prioritize rural clinics in terms of provision of medicines. In addition, l will request the minister to reinforce the policy that young children should get free medication and should not pay consultation fees".* (PT13, Member of Parliament)
Ms Madembo commented that: *"We want to thank the medical NGOs that are giving free medication and free consultations to rural population. This work is high commendable and is making rural communities healthier."* (PT20, female social worker)

The participants noted that, learners in their quest to get medication and to stay healthy they end-up working risky jobs and fail to concentrate at school. Therefore, the business owners and medical NGOs should give orphan learners free

medication as a way for giving back to the community that supports them. In addition, the participants encourage the Government to provide free medication to disadvantaged rural orphans who are marginalized as stipulated in the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013). More so, Government should subsides local rural pharmacies so that they will be able to sell medical drugs at the reduced prices.

Lastly, assistance with data and computer gadgets

Mrs Lavender is of the view that, *"MoPSE should have a deliberate policy to give disadvantaged learners free computers and free data to use. This enhances teaching and learning."* (PT16, female teacher)

Furthermore, Ms Daizy said, *"Our learners may use computer laboratory at education district office as there is free internet".* (PT8, female educational psychologist)

Currently, most schools in Zimbabwe are doing online learning. Therefore, the participants appealed to the Government to give free data and computers to disadvantaged female orphans and other learners to enable them to learn (MoPSE, 2020) . It has been noted in literature that South Africa a neighboring country to Zimbabwe is giving her learners free computers and data and this has promoted online teaching and learning (Dube, 2020; Sowetan, 2020). This article was written during COVID-19 period and schools are encouraging online teaching and learning as way to maintain social distance to stop the spread of COVID-19 virus (WHO, 2020; MoPSE, 2020).

Conclusion

This article explored the experiences of rural female orphans from child-headed in Zimbabwe who are working minimal jobs to pay for their academic fees. The article contributed to the current knowledge of the matter under discussion and trigger future research studies in the same area. It was noted in this paper that, female orphan learners did not voluntarily engage in minimal jobs but there are being forced by many circumstances such as being neglected by their relatives. There is scarcity literature on the challenges forcing adolescent orphan female learners to work and solutions to mitigate these challenges. This qualitative study used resilience as theoretical framework and participants selected through purposive sample techniques argued that, there are female orphans who are working jobs to support their academic life.

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