CHILDREN'S ASSESSMENT OF WELL-BEING

A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF ORPHANS LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

BY

NANA AMA TAKYIBEA ADU

FINAL THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT
NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)
FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES

JUNE, 2011

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for the references cited and duly acknowledged, this thesis is my own original attempt and that it has not in part or in whole been presented for an award of any kind anywhere.

....

Nana Ama Takyibea Adu

June, 2011, NTNU

Trondheim, Norway

DEDICATION

A Special Dedication To

My Loving Father Mr Yaw Ampeney Adu

I appreciate your encouragement and support throughout these years

And To

My Sweet Mother, Mrs Jane Irina Adu

You have not only been a mother but a friend and sister to all your children. We love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been inspired by a lot of people in accomplishing this task. I must however declare that for any inaccuracies, be it omission or commission, I am solely responsible. Thanks are due the following people for their immense support throughout this work.

Firstly, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Associate Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt for her time and guidance. Despite of her busy schedules, she always made time to provide me with valuable comments which has contributed greatly to the success of this work. I sincerely appreciate your patience and diligence.

I also want to appreciate Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen for her immeasurable suggestions during the Masters' thesis seminars. They were so helpful and I deeply appreciate it.

My appreciation goes to the lecturers and staff of the Norwegian Center for Child Research (NOSEB) for their kindness and warmth throughout the duration of my studies.

I cannot fail to mention the Government of Norway who awarded me a scholarship through the quota programme and offered me the opportunity to study in Norway. And to the staff of the International office, especially the Quota Programme Cordinator, Anette Moen; I say a big thank you.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my family for their consistent support and encouragements during the period of my studies. A special thank you to my uncle and his wife, Mr and Mrs Osafo Adu, God bless you richly. Not forgetting to say thank you to my friends here in Norway and in Ghana, you have been wonderful friends. I am grateful to you, Mr and Mrs Ganaah, Jerry, Eddy and especially to you Alex. You have all been such great friends to me. Thank you for the assistance and love in various ways that has contributed to the success of this work. I appreciate you so much and may God richly bless you.

I must also express how grateful I am to the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana who gave me access to my informants. Also to the Director of the institution, and the children who provided me with the necessary information, I say a big thank you.

My greatest appreciation goes to God Almighty. Thank you for strength, grace, life and for successful studies in Norway. Whatever I am now, I owe it all to you.

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the experiences of orphans living in institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It attempts to understand how they assess their sense of well-being subjectively. The study goes further to gain knowledge on the interpretations children give to a good and bad childhood and to explore the kind of coping strategies that children employ in the institution.

The theories that guided this study were the Social Studies of Childhood and Children's Rights. Social Studies of Childhood acknowledges children as competent social actors who are active in their societies and therefore advocates that children be given the opportunity to talk about issues that concerns them. Children's rights also state that children have the right to impart information and thus, acknowledging them as competent. It further discusses 'the best interest of the child' as the fundamental principle to consider when deciding for a child. Aside these two main theories, theories on play were also discussed emphasising the effect play has on children. Theories that concern the care for orphans were briefly discussed exploring the capacities of the extended family system to be able to absorb the increasing number of orphans in our societies. Some concepts that have been used in the study are orphans, subjective well-being, residential care or institutions, resilience and coping strategies. All these concepts have been explained briefly in line with how it has been used in the study, considering the fact that these concepts do not have one specific meaning.

The study is a qualitative one and several methods were used in the collection of data to check for consistency in responses given by children. The major informants for this study are children although few adults were interviewed.

In the study, the findings revealed that initially the children were apathetic about coming to the institution. However, after staying in the institution for a while and considering the prospects they had, most of them were willing to stay until they were done with their education. Majority of the children considered a good childhood to mean one that has all needs provided. Some of the children formed bonds with either their sponsors or other children and this served as a form of a coping strategy for them. It is worth noting that names of individuals and the institution used are not the original names because of ethical reasons.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC................African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

AIDS..................Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CRC......................Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRI.....................Care Reform Initiative

DSW.....................Department of Social Welfare

GDP......................Gross Domestic Product

MDG...................Millennium Development Goal

MOH................... Ministry of Health

MOWAC...............Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs

NACP....................National Aids Control Program

NHIS.....................National Health Insurance Scheme

OA..................... OrphanAid Africa

OVC.....................Orphans and Vulnerable Children

UNCRC...............United Nations Convention

UNICEF.............United Nations Children's Fund

USAID...............United States Agency for International Development

LIST OF TABLES

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1.1 Background of the Study

There is a common saying that 'children are the future of a nation.' Consequently, the level of care and attention children receive is very relevant. In fact, most authors have written that if children are well-cared for, they will grow to become useful citizens. It is therefore important for parents or guardians to provide the necessary love and attention children will need to grow up well physically, psychologically, health wise and many more. In other words, children should be made to enjoy their childhood without any stress. Evidence has actually proven that children who are exposed to several stressful events are at a higher risk of becoming overwhelmed emotionally and psychologically (Boyden and Mann, 2005, p.18). Again, if children are well cared and provided for, the likelihood that they will end up on the street as a result of poverty will decrease since poverty has been identified as a major cause for children to come out on the streets (Veale, 1993, cited in: Abebe, 2008 90(3). Currently, concern for children and their well-being has increased even the more globally. A group of children who are however receiving special attention are Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). These groups of children have received special attention because they are considered to be disadvantaged. A lot of efforts are being made by international organizations to support these groups of children. These efforts intend to make children in this group enjoy basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education as well as meet their emotional needs.

According to a report by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), fourteen million children have lost one or both parents worldwide. Out of this number, 90% reside in sub-Saharan Africa. The HIV epidemic has spread rapidly and has affected sub-Saharan Africa most. The number of children stated above by UNICEF (2006) lost either one or both parents as a result of AIDS. Thus the increasing number of orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS has become alarming. A report by USAID/UNICEF/UNAIDS (2002) stated that by 2001, in ten African countries, more than 15% of children were orphans and out of this, three-quarters of it was due to AIDS (Ansell, 2005 p.211). United States Agency for International Development (UNAIDS, 2004) also estimates that out of the children orphaned in 2010, across sub-Saharan Africa, 36.8 percent are likely to be orphaned by AIDS.

In 2002, UNAIDS defined an orphan 'as a child of less than fifteen (15) years of age who has lost his or her mother.' Recently, the definition has been changed to cover both mother and father (UNAIDS, 2004). Thus, not only is a child an orphan when he or she loses his or her mother. A child can also be said to be an orphan when he or she loses his or her father. For some authors, orphan hood is not a single event but a gradual process. Especially for children who become orphans as a result of AIDS, the state of orphan hood starts long before the parents actually die. Children whose parents suffer from HIV/AIDS become disadvantaged and do not receive the proper care they need. Though these children may have parents who are alive, they can be considered orphans since they do not receive the love and care they need. Thus various authors have said that some children become orphans even though their parents are still alive because their sick parents are unable to provide for them or meet their needs leaving most of the children in vulnerable situations. It is worth noting that several factors may cause children to become orphans; however HIV/AIDS has been identified as a major cause.

Ghana, one of the West African countries also faces the problem of increasing numbers in Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Even though it is not as severe as compared to other African countries, the situation has increased as a result of the rural urban migration as well as the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

Increasing number of orphans has attracted attention on how to care for them. Caring for children in other settings such as orphanage homes or children's homes has become pressing due to the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children. Thus, due to economic reasons coupled with other factors, it has become difficult for this large number of children to be cared for or raised by only the extended families system. 'Specialized state-run institutions of childhood-child care and leisure centers, schools and so on complement the traditional roles and functions of the family' (Boyden and Mann, 2005). During difficult situations or in the midst of crisis, institutions or orphanages may replace families in the role of caring for children. It must be noted that in this study, orphanages, children's home, residential care or institution will be used interchangeably to mean the same thing.

A report from the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and Ministry of Health (MOH) states that the number of orphans in Ghana is likely to increase to more than 603, 000 in 2014 (MOWAC and UNICEF, 1997-2005). One of the interventions by the Ghanaian community to this increasing numbers in orphan hood is the establishment of institutions. Consequently, there have been a lot of institutions established to help with the caring of such children. In other words, increasing number of orphans has led to growing number of orphanage homes in Ghana. Some few studies conducted have showed that the number of orphanages Ghana had as at 1996 were ten. A report from OrphanAid Africa (OA) states that currently there are 148 children's homes in Ghana. The breakdown of the number of children who live in each of these homes will be presented later after a study has been conducted on that. (http://www.ovcghana.org/why-not-orphanages.html). This depicts the drastic increase in the number of such institutions caring for children (orphans) in Ghana.

Orphanages in Ghana were introduced by European missionaries who took up the responsibility of caring for orphans who for certain reasons were seen as undesirable to be absorbed in families (Deters, 2008). Later, the number of these orphanages increased as a result of the increasing numbers of orphans. Therefore, as orphans and needy children increased in communities, it became burdensome for the few orphanages to care for them. Meanwhile, extended families could not also absorb all these orphans partly because of socioeconomic factors. It therefore became necessary for other institutions to be established and assist in taking care of these orphans. Most of these homes are being run by individuals, non-governmental agencies and private institutions who receive aid from external donors.

It has however been found that institutional care for orphans and vulnerable children is not generally successful. Several factors have been identified as to reasons why institutional care has been said not to be successful generally. One of the factors is the poor condition in which children find themselves in some of the orphanage homes. Children who must necessarily live out-of-home normally find themselves in very distressed conditions in some of these Children's Homes. The vulnerability of these children stems from the fact that they need additional support and care following the trauma of separation from their parents or relatives. Failure to support them may expose them to various forms of abuses, or human rights violations, which could adversely affect them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, most of the children's homes which are suppose to serve as a safe haven for children rather

exposes children to danger such as poor sanitation, inadequate bedding and space, food and other things that may be essential for children.

Another reason why institutional care has been considered to be unsuccessful is the poor management of the institutions. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in Ghana has declared that results from a data collected from institutions in Ghana indicated that most of orphanage homes in Ghana operate without budgets. Thus, most of them do not plan financially which results in their inability to provide for the children in their custody and therefore adversely affects the children.

The poor ratio of care-givers to children has also contributed to reasons why institutional care has been said to be unsuccessful. Research conducted in some of the institutions in Ghana revealed that most of these children's homes do not have enough care-givers as compared to the number of children living in the institutions. This denies children the necessary attention they require. Aside the fact that care-givers were not enough, most of the institutions employed the services of personnel who had no expertise in child care. Aside all these factors, children who live in residential care setting (orphanage homes) are often stigmatized by the larger society and also do not grow well emotionally. Again, it was stated that most of these children living in the orphanages do not have contacts with their family members and the society at large.

 Thus, the unfavourable conditions coupled with the emotional needs of children which are not often met makes the raising of children in institutions not advisable. Extensive international research on the consequences of residential care for children, (notably undertaken by UNICEF, International Social Services, and Save the Children) has that institutions should be used only as a last resort. Children need families to successfully integrate and thrive in the society, as the family is the best context for a child to successfully develop. Again, the institutions are not financially stable since they depend on donors to care for these children. (http://www.ovcghana.org/why-not-orphanages.html).

As a way of providing better care for the rising number of orphans in Ghana, attempts have been made by the government to shift from institutionalization of children towards a community-based approach of caring. Thus efforts are being made to relocate children into

families and for that matter the communities instead of institutions. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) has therefore introduced a program called the Care Reform Initiative (CRI). The aim of this initiative is to care for children in the communities instead of children homes or institutions.

A report by UNICEF in 2006 state that 'to provide the best possible care for orphans and vulnerable children, much greater efforts by governments are needed to establish and promote community-based care options'. Thus the report suggests that residential care facilities as a primary response for orphans and vulnerable children is not appropriate. Reasons such as high child-to-staff ratios that exacerbate the care deficit, difficulties in reintegration during early adulthood, due in part to community stigma, frequent failure to respond adequately to the psychological needs of children among others have been highlighted to attest to the fact that residential care or institutions are not appropriate for orphans. (http://www.ovcghana.org/why-not-orphanages.html).

1.2 Statement of Problem

In the third world countries, many children are considered to be living in circumstances that are considered to be difficult in the perspective of the Western world (Ansell, 2005). However, a minority of children experience situations that are said to be more difficult and extreme. Groups of children who are considered to be living in situations that are extreme are;

- Children in armed conflict
- Children who are being exploited sexually
- Children with disabilities
- Street children
- Children affected by AIDS
- Children in institutions.

In a bid to provide for these children, enormous attempts have been made to identify their specific needs and to meet them. A report by UNICEF (1996) stated that in the 1980s, UNICEF began to focus on the needs of children who find themselves in some of the difficult circumstances. The aim of this was to give these children assistance that is appropriate to

their situations. Subsequently, more research has been conducted on these groups of children by UNICEF and children living in institutions are no exception. More of the researches conducted have proven that orphans or children living in institutions or orphanage homes do not develop successfully. This is because their privacy is often being invaded, they are unable to form social networks and many more which have been discussed above. In as much as problems associated with children living in institutions cannot be denied, it is essential to know children's views about their own circumstances before any intervention programs are made. As stated by Ansell (2005), 'it is important that such children's lives are understood and they are not merely on the receiving end of emotional but uninformed responses.' How will these children's lives be understood, how can their experiences be appreciated? One good way of doing that is to talk to children themselves about their situations. As declared by Qvortrup (cited in Mouritsen & Qvortrup, 2002), children must be studied in their 'own rights.' By this, he implied that in studying or describing children and their life's conditions, 'the demand is to use children as the unit of observation and as mediators of information.' Children should be the ones to inform adults about their situations and how they feel about it.

Unfortunately, not much work has been done to get children's views on particular issues concerning them. For instance, much studies carried out on street children have often portrayed them as vulnerable and victims of their circumstances without considering the child's agency. Similarly, several difficulties have been associated with children living in institutions. However, not much study has been conducted with these children to seek their views about their stay in the institution.

This study will therefore explore the physical and emotional well-being of children from their own perspective. The study also attempts to know if children living in institutions regard themselves as vulnerable as the society perceives them. Children's views would be sought about their experiences in the institution and how they assess their own sense of well-being. Also their understanding of a vulnerable child as well as good childhood will be investigated. And finally to find out how they cope in the institutions and what can be done to improve their situations.

1.3 Relevance of Study

Children who have lost either of their parents are often considered to be among society's most vulnerable groups and are therefore dependent on the wider society for support.(Ennew, 2005.p128. cited in: Qvortrup, 2005). The inclusion of orphans in society's vulnerable groups has called for several intervention programs.

In Ghana, institutional care can be said to be one of the interventions for orphans whose surviving parent or extended family cannot take care of. However, the increasing number of institutions in Ghana has become a bit of a bother to the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in Ghana because their report states that many of the institutions do not meet the criterion for establishing an institution. Again, some of the institutions which are not monitored have veered from charity to commercial where founders solicit for support and channel it to other things instead of the main purpose; assisting the children. Aside the fact that some of these institutions are gradually losing focus, a lot of problems have been associated with children living in institutions which have already been discussed above. By implication, it can be said that much studies conducted on children living in institutions have focused on the problems or challenges children face in the institution. However, not much has been done in investigating these children's experiences. Thus, there is not enough information on the kind of childhood that children have in the institutions from their own opinions. If studies done with children allow them to reveal their experiences or their feelings about a particular situation, their response can then influence the kind of intervention that will work best for them. In this study, attempt is made to explore children's experiences in the institution.

One important rationale for this study therefore is to gain insight on the kind of intervention programs that are likely to be in the interest of children living in institutions or an intervention that works well for them depending on their peculiar situation. It is important to understand children and their experiences from their own perspectives before suggesting an intervention program. Children are social actors who have the ability to inform research and intervention. Thus this study attempts to know if children living in institutions are as vulnerable as the society perceives them to be. This might be of assistance to policy-makers when designing an intervention program.

Another relevance of this study is to add to the few existing literature that studies children from their own point of view. A lot of work has been done in studying and understanding children. However, there are just few studies that attempt to understand children from their own point of view. Even though much work has been done on children from various disciplines, just a few study them from their perspective. Sociology of Childhood is a discipline that studies children from their perspective and one of their theoretical features is to give children voices in research. In other words, when studying children, it is important to use them as informants. This work will therefore add to such existing literature.

1.4 Research Questions

The major aim of this research is to investigate how orphans living in institutions assess their own sense of well-being. Also the study aims at knowing the daily lives and experiences of such children. Since the concept of well-being is broad, the study will concentrate on their emotional as well as their physical well-being. In light of this, the research or the study will seek to answer the questions below;

- What is a good childhood for children in their own perspective?
- In what situations do adults think children are vulnerable?
- What meanings do children give to bad childhood?
- What are the reasons why children go to the institution?
- What are children's experiences in the institution?

1.5 Aim of Study

The general aim of this study is to explore the experiences of orphans living in institution in Ghana, to gain knowledge on their well-being as well as the coping strategies they employ in their peculiar situations.

The specific aims are:

- To explore how children living in institutions assess their own sense of well-being.
- To gain knowledge on children's experiences in the institution

- To study the different coping strategies children living in the institutions employ.
- To find out if children living in the institution consider themselves as vulnerable the society perceives them.

1.6 Limitation of Study

A major limitation in the study had to do with the duration of the data collection. One of the aims of the study is to know the children's daily lives and experiences in the institution through the use of qualitative methods. This implies that much time should have been spent in the institution in order to get the accurate picture of what actually goes on there. Unfortunately, I spent only two months on the field trying to know all about the children's life. This limited the study in a way.

Another limitation of this study had to do with the unavailability of literature to support the study. In other words, access to secondary data was difficult not because there was not enough research on the study area. In fact, where I conducted the research is an area a lot of people have researched on. However, getting data that explored the views of the children on their subjective well-being became a bit more challenging because not much has been done on it and this served as a limitation.

All these limitations notwithstanding, much effort was made to get good data on the field and consequently, results can be said to be reliable.

1.7 Structure of Thesis

The thesis has been structured in six chapters. The first chapter which is the introductory chapter gives an overview of the thesis. It gives a brief background of the study and also discusses the rationale behind it and why it is relevant. As part of the introductory chapter is the research questions the thesis attempts to answer. And finally, it highlights the limitations of the study.

Chapter two gives a brief description of the study area. Thus this chapter will describe where Ghana is located in Africa. It will also discuss the political, social as well as its economic situation and how relevant it is to this study.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical perspectives. It also includes some related studies as well as attempting to explain some concepts that have been used in this work.

Chapter four highlights the various methods used in the gathering of data. Thus this chapter attempts to describe the methods that have been used and why those methods were chosen. It also discusses the challenges faced on the field as well as some ethical issues in the study and the analysis. In this chapter too, I write briefly on field notes and the validity and reliability of the study.

Chapter five talks about the analysis and the discussions of the data. It also highlights how the data collected, answers the research questions. It highlights certain important themes in the study in trying to know about children's lives and experiences.

Chapter six finally gives the concluding remarks discussing the outcome of the research in relation to the research questions. It suggests recommendations and what could be done in relation to the topic in future research.

CHAPTER TWO

PROFILE OF COUNTRY -GHANA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will throw light on some of the characteristics of the country in which the research was conducted and also the specific area of study which is the Greater Accra region (capital of Ghana). In addition, some policy interventions that the government has made for children will briefly be discussed.

2.2 Geography and Demography

Ghana is located in West Africa, covering a land area of 239,000 square kilometers. The Country lies on the Gulf of Guinea and is bordered by Togo in the east, Burkina Faso in the north, and Cote d'Ivoire in the west. The population census of 2010 undertaken by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) put the country's population at 24.5 million people drawn from more than one hundred ethnic groups - each with its own unique language and culture. English, however, is the official language, a legacy of British colonial rule (http://www.gipc.org.gh/pages.aspx?id=44).
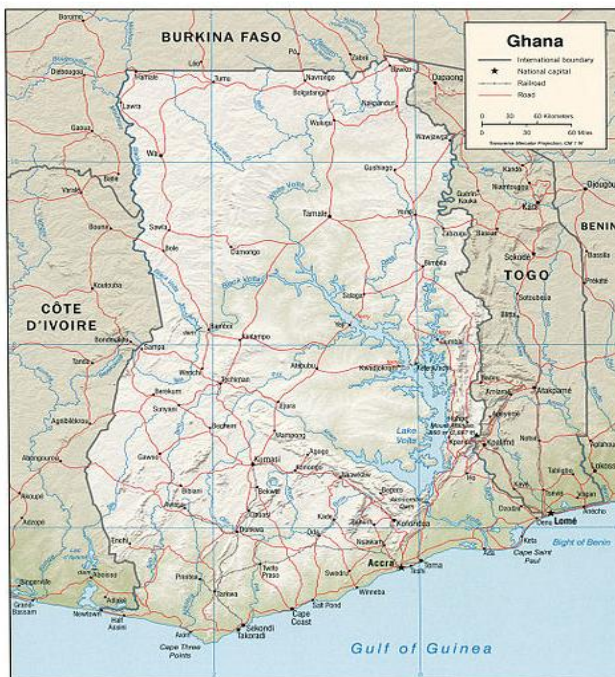
Generally, Ghanaians emphasize communal values such as family, respect for the elderly, honoring traditional rulers, and the importance of dignity and proper social conduct. Individual conduct is seen as having impact on an entire family, social group and community; therefore, everyone is expected to be respectful, dignified and observant in public settings and in every aspect of life. Naming ceremonies, puberty initiations, marriage and death are all marked by family ceremonies, and while Ghana has the highest percentage of Christians in West Africa, belief in traditional animist religions is still common. Seasonal festivals serve to bring a whole tribe or clan together in spectacular fashion. Different ethnic groups have their different festival which reflects ethnic differences and diversities.

Customs are often passed on through the extended family while the customary leaders or chiefs, are given historical authority over social, family, and land-related matters. Relationships within traditional society are based on family membership, inherited status, and ancestral beliefs. In modern society, relationships are determined by achieved status, formalized education, membership in professional associations, and ethnic affiliation. The result is that, even those who live primarily in the modern urban setting remain bound to traditional society through the kinship system and are held to the responsibilities that such associations entail Thus, customs are still kept by even   people in the rural areas (http://www.gipc.org.gh/home.aspx).

2.4 Political Landscape

Ghana is one of the most thriving democracies on the African continent. It has often been referred to as an "island of peace" in one of the most chaotic regions on earth. It enjoys a democratic government after a political history that had been turbulent, with ten civilian and military governments since it gained independence in March 1957. In 1992, with a new Constitution in place, the country returned to a democratic dispensation which is working well. The country has held five successful parliamentary and presidential elections in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008. Since returning to a democratic regime, the country has not only been tagged as the most peaceful in the West African sub-region, but has also achieved great success in stabilizing its macro-economy, and its government is seen as business-friendly and keen to promote private investment.   The peace and stability has also brought in its wake a great demand for schools and colleges (http://www.gipc.org.gh/home.aspx).

2.5 Economic Structure

Ghana's economy is dominated by agriculture, which employs about 40 percent of the working population. The country is one of the leading exporters of cocoa in the world. It is also a significant exporter of commodities such as timber, gold, diamond, bauxite, manganese and other precious minerals. An oilfield which is reported to contain up to 3 billion barrels (480,000,000 m^3) of light oil was discovered in 2007. Oil exploration and production in commercial quantities which commenced in the first quarter of 2011 is expected to be a tremendous inflow of capital into the Ghanaian economy.

The performance of the Ghanaian economy over the past few years has made it an attractive destination for investment within sub-Saharan Africa. As may be seen from the chart below, the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has been relatively stable compared to other economies within the region and the global economy as well.

Table 1: GDP Growth in Ghana

ECONOMIC INDICATORS	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Overall GDP Growth Rate(%)	4.5	5.2	5.8	5.8	6.2	5.7	7.3	4.7
Agriculture	4.4	6.1	7	4.1	4.5	3.1	4.9	6.2
Industry	4.7	5.1	4.8	7.7	9.5	6.6	8.3	3.8
Service	4.7	4.7	4.9	6.9	6.7	10	6.9	4.6
Nominal GDP (GHS'million)	**4,886.00**	**6,616.00**	**7,980.00**	**9,702.00**	**11,490.00**	**14,046.00**	**17,618.00**	**21,690.00**

Source: Ghana Statistical Services

The performance of the Ghanaian economy is further rated by the World Bank in its Country Assessment Report (March 2009). The report indicates the strength of the economy making it an attractive and suitable location for doing business as follows:

▪ Ghana was ranked among the strong performers in Sub-Saharan Africa, along with Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius and South Africa. This is based on a rating of 3.9 in the provisional Country Policy and Institutional Assessment Index for 2008.

- Ghana has one of the best trade policies in the sub-region with a relatively simple tariff structure. This is recorded in the time required to register new businesses, register property, as well as ease of trading across borders. The report further indicates that access to credit by the private sector has been made easier, as seen in doing business and increase in the private sector's share in total domestic credit. It also suggests that the cost of starting a new business has declined, while commercial courts dealing with bankruptcy and debt recovery cases have raised the probability of business survival.

- With respect to macroeconomic indicators, fiscal policy has continued to have a pro-growth and pro-poor orientation, with domestically-financed public investments at 10.4% of GDP by end-2008 ((http://www.gipc.org.gh/home.aspx).

2.6 Educational System

Ghana has a 6-year primary education system beginning at age six, and, under the educational reforms implemented in 1987 and reformed in 2007, they pass on to a 3-year junior high school system. At the end of the 3rd year of junior high, there is a mandatory Basic Education Certificate Examination. Those continuing must complete the 3-year senior high school program and take an admission exam to enter any university or tertiary programme.

Presently, Ghana has 21,530 primary schools, 8,850 junior secondary schools, 900 senior secondary schools, 52 public training colleges, 5 private training colleges, 5 polytechnics, 4 non-university public tertiary institutions, 8 public universities and over 45 private tertiary institutions. Most Ghanaians have relatively easy access to primary and secondary education.

The courses taught at the primary or basic school level include English, Ghanaian language and culture, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Social Studies and French as a third language are added, integrated or General Science, Pre-Vocational Skills and Pre-Technical Skills, religious and moral education, and physical activities such as Music, Dance and Physical Education.

With 83% of its children in school, Ghana currently has one of the highest school enrollment rates in West Africa. The ratio of girls to boys in the total education system is 1:0.96, which for a West African country is a considerable achievement. With that said, some 500,000 children still remain out of school because of resource constraints in building schools, providing adequate textbooks and training new teachers. (http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/education/).

2.7 The Study Area: Accra – The Capital City

Accra is the capital and largest city in Ghana with an estimated population of about 4 million people (2011 estimates). As a primate city, Accra is the administrative, communications, and economic centre of the country. Originally built around a port, Accra stretches along the Atlantic Coast and north into the interior. Its architecture ranges from large and elegant nineteenth century colonial buildings to skyscrapers and apartment blocks made of concrete, glass and steel in the 1970s, reflecting its transition from a 19th century suburb of Victoriaborg to the modern metropolis it is today.

Today, Accra has several tourists' attractions such as the National Museum of Ghana, the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Archives of Ghana, and Ghana's central library, the National Theatre, Accra Centre for National Culture, a lighthouse, the National Sports Stadium among others (http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3)

2.7.1 Geography and Climate

The city of Accra has a total area of 200km^2 and it lies in the Savannah zone and features a tropical savanna climate. There are two rainy seasons. The average annual rainfall is about 730mm, which falls primarily during the two rainy seasons. The first begins in May and ends in mid-July. The second season begins in mid-August and ends in October. Rain usually falls in intensive short storms and gives rise to local flooding where drainage channels are obstructed.

There is very little variation in temperature throughout the year. The mean monthly temperature ranges from 24.7 °C (76.5 °F) in August (the coolest) to 28 °C (82.4 °F) in March (the hottest) with annual average of 26.8 °C (80.2 °F). As the area is close to the equator, the daylight hours are practically uniform during the year. Relative humidity is generally high varying from 65% in the mid-afternoon to 95% at night (http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3)

2.7.2 Demographics

With a population of nearly four (4) million people (2010 National Population Census), Accra is today one of the most populated and fast growing Metropolis of Africa with an annual growth rate of 3.36%. The period between 1960 and 1970 saw some of the rapid industrialisation and expansion in the manufacturing and commercial sectors in some major areas within the metropolis. This factor contributed to high immigration to Accra, and the resultant high population growth rate between 1960-1970 intercensal years. Greater Accra region is thus more populated (http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3).

2.7.3 Population Distribution by Age and Gender

Accra's population like that of other urban centres is a very youthful one with 56% of the population under the age of 24years. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the population are females and the remaining 49% males. This gives a sex ratio of 1:1.04 males to females. The dominance of females over males is a reflection of the nationwide trend where the estimated ratio is 1:1.03. The need to target women in any development programme in the metropolis can therefore not be   overemphasized (http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3).

2.7.4 Housing Conditions

Housing conditions in low-income areas are generally depressed with poor supporting social and engineering infrastructure. The housing environment is characterized by haphazard development, inadequate housing infrastructure, poor drainage, erosion and high population concentrations.

The middle-income areas are predominantly business, administrative and professional income families. Much of the housing has been provided by state, parastatal and private sector organisations and individuals. Usually, these areas, unlike the low income areas, are planned but are in need of infrastructure services. Building materials and general housing conditions are of better quality.

The high-income areas are all planned and have well developed infrastructure with spacious and landscaped ground in sharp contrast with, particularly, the low income areas, Buildings are usually built with sandcrete blocks, they have walls and roofed with quality roofing sheets.

Although in some instances, low income areas have exhibited poor housing conditions, the general conditions of houses in Accra are good compared with the general housing condition in the country and that of other urban areas. Efforts are being made to provide the newly developing suburban areas with better services and infrastructure (http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3).

2.7.5 Economic Activities in Accra

Economic activities in Accra are financial, agriculture, fishing, and manufacturing processed food, lumber and plywood, textiles, clothing and chemicals. The economically active population of Accra is estimated to be 823,327. However, the daily influx of people from dormitory towns makes the figure higher than estimated. It is worthwhile to state that the estimated figure of all the economically active population who dwell within the Metropolis excludes the workers of both formal and informal sectors who commute daily to engage in various economic activities (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 200).

2.8 Children in Ghana

The Children's Act (1998) Act 560 of the Republic of Ghana defines a child as "a person below the age of eighteen years." It is estimated that 54% of Ghana's population are less than

18 years of age and are therefore recognized as 'children'. The challenges these children face are several, ranging from malnutrition to human trafficking.

2.8.1 Challenges Faced by Children in Ghana

Poverty, streetism, child labor, child trafficking, domestic violence, gender discrimination, early marriages, among other issues have been identified as factors that contribute to the vulnerability of children in Ghana. Even though poverty rate in Ghana was almost halved in a decade and a half, from 52% in 1991/92 to 28.5% in 2005/06, one-quarter of the population still live below the poverty line, with inadequate resources even to meet their basic family subsistence needs (Nakanyani and Tsoaedi, 2000).

The under-five mortality rate declined marginally during the 1990s, although there has been faster improvement more recently: a decline from 111 per thousand live births in 2000-2003 to 80 in 2004-2008. Among the underlying causes of high mortality, malnutrition is a key problem, with 28% of children under-five years old stunted in 2008, including 9.8% severely stunted, and particularly high levels in the food-insecure regions in the north of the country. Malnutrition is much higher in rural areas and in the lowest wealth quintiles. Children are also vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. This is associated with a mix of economic, social and cultural risk factors.

Another challenge is that many children are receiving inadequate nurture and care within the home. Only 59.8% of children live with both their parents and 14.3% of children live with neither of their parents, owing either to the death of parents or migration, associated with various forms of fostering, or, in the worst cases, to trafficking. In the case of girls, vulnerabilities are often exacerbated by culturally rooted gender inequalities (Sudharshan and Harold, 1998).

In 2001, the Ghana Statistical Service estimated that approximately 27.2 percent of children aged between 4 and 15 were engaged in different kinds of labour in Ghana. Another 48.5 percent of children aged between 14 to 18 years were also found working (Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labour Survey*, March, 2003). The children's involvement in work is

largely attributed to poverty, which affects 47.9% of children in the lowest quintile, according to the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).The majority of working children are unpaid workers on family farms or family enterprises. In rural areas, children can be found working in picking, fishing, herding and as contract farm labourers. Children also work as domestics, porters, hawkers, miners and quarry workers, and fare-collectors. In urban centers, street children work mainly as truck pushers, porters, and sales workers.

Various positive interventions are being implemented by communities, government agencies, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations and donor agencies to curb the plight of children who are economically and socially disadvantaged.

2.8.2 Children's Rights Protection in Ghana

As in all parts of the globe, children in Ghana are recognized as the nation's future leaders and workforce and therefore require serious commitment from the government and all stakeholders to ensure their proper growth and development into adulthood. Thus adequate provision is made in the national Constitution and other Parliamentary Acts and Legislative Instruments to protect and promote their welfare.

In 1998, the Government of Ghana enacted the Children's Act, 1998 to provide for the rights of children and regulation of matters concerning children generally and to provide for related matters. The Act deems paramount the welfare of children and therefore obliges any court, person, institution or other body to make the best interest of children a primary consideration in a matter concerned with children. The Act also disapproves of any act of discrimination against children on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, disability, health status, custom, ethnic origin, rural or urban background, birth or other status, socio–economic status or because the child is a refugee. Additionally, the Children's Act protects children against exploitative labour and deprivation of health, education and development (Country reports on human rights practices).

Ghana is also obliged to meet the tenets of international Conventions and Treaties it has ratified. These include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 182, Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, among others.

Even though these legal provisions have been made to protect children's interest in Ghana, they are not effectively enforced. Labor authorities carry out routine annual inspections of every workplace in the formal sector, but rarely monitor the informal sector where working children can be found. Other law enforcement authorities, including the judiciary and police, lack adequate resources to ensure compliance with child protection laws (Country reports on human rights practices-2003, Ghana).

2.8.3 Policy Initiatives and Interventions

The Government of Ghana has initiated a number of policies and programmes that directly or indirectly impact on the issue of children's welfare. These include the promotion and extension of pre-school education, policy and strategies for improving the health of children under 5 years, street children policy, child protection and promotion policy, school feeding programme, and other initiatives aimed at improving the livelihood of children in Ghana.

Under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) project, the percentage of children of official school age (net enrolment) who are enrolled in primary schools rose from 81% in 2006/07 to 89% in 2008/09. The total number of children enrolled at the primary level irrespective of age (gross enrolment) increased from 91% in 2006/07 to 95% in 2008/09.

Also, there has been significant progress on cutting down the number of children who die before their fifth birthday, although for every 13 children in Ghana, one child still dies before his/her fifth birthday. Previously 1 in 10 children died before his/her fifth birthday.

In the past few years much attention has been given to developing a broader social protection system that would address the vulnerabilities and risks facing the mass of the population. Several major programmes have been launched, some with a strong focus on children (Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare).

- A *National Health Insurance Scheme* (NHIS) was established in 2003 to provide equitable health insurance for all.

- An *Education Capitation Grant* was introduced in 2005 and expanded nationwide to all schools in 2006, in order to improve enrolment and retention by providing schools with grants to cover tuition and other levies that were previously paid by households.

- A *School Feeding Programme* was introduced in 2004, with the aim of increasing school enrolment and retention by providing children with a daily meal at school.

- *Public Works Programmes* provide jobs for unemployed and underemployed youth, including through the National Youth Employment Programme.

- *Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty* (LEAP) programme was initiated in March 2008 to provide cash transfers to extremely vulnerable households, including those with orphans and vulnerable children

The multidimensional nature of the vulnerability and risks affecting children implies the need for different types of social protection programmes, including preventative and responsive social welfare services, as well as a strong legal and regulatory framework. Ghana has made substantial progress in developing a policy commitment to social protection, and designing and implementing a number of programmes with a strong child focus. However, there is still much to be done to reach the poorest and most vulnerable, especially in terms of effectively implementing key policies and programmes (World Bank, Millenium report).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the concepts and theories on which the study is built. Theories are important in research. The use of theories in analysing data is unavoidable in carrying out research. Theories help us clarify and focus on the topic we are studying. Theories also help us position our study in the field of research. Connolly and Ennew (1996) have stated that in conducting a social research, one must take into consideration established theories about human social behaviour. In using theories to analyse an empirical data, there are likely to be two outcomes; either the knowledge emerging from the data is in line with the existing theories or it challenges it. Thus, though theories are important in making us focused in the research process and guiding us, they can also be challenged by new knowledge that is emerging. Considering the complexity of this study, a single theory will not be enough to capture the reality. Therefore different theories will be used in the analysis of this study.

I first present the theories that have influenced the study. The theories used are social studies of childhood and children's rights. Aside the theories, I have highlighted the concepts used and attempt to explain it as it has been used in this study. Some of the concepts that will be clarified are childhood, orphan, vulnerability, subjective well-being, resilience and coping strategies.

3.2 Theories

As stated above, the theories that are used in this study are social studies of childhood and children's rights. The specific theoretical feature used in this study from social studies of childhood is the child as a competent social actor. The few lines below will discuss briefly the theoretical perspectives of social studies of childhood.

3.2.1 Social Studies of Childhood

This work has been influenced mainly by the perspectives of the new sociology of childhood. One of the features in this field is the fact that childhood is socially constructed, and that there is no specific childhood all over the world. This is as a result of the fact that the kind of childhood one can describe is dependent on space and time.

Another theoretical feature of the sociology of childhood is that children should be studied in their own rights. Thus, what children do must not be considered inferior to adults. Rather, they must be understood in their own 'culture'. The fact that children's 'culture' may be different to that of adults does not mean theirs is bad. It only depicts variations in the two. Children's way of life and perspectives should therefore be appreciated.

The notion that children's voices should be heard in research is one of the theoretical features. The paradigm claims that the voices of children are lacked in research that have been conducted over the years. Thus, it seeks to correct this by giving children a voice in research. Children must be seen as 'human beings' and not 'human becomings'. If one is guided by this in a research, it will help place value on what children say.

If any group of people must be studied, for example the disabled, they are the best people to share their experiences. Likewise children, if they must be well understood, then their experiences and what they say matter a lot in research. Adults' views must therefore not be the only source of information when it comes to the studying of children. Speir (1976) refers to this as 'adult ideological viewpoint.'

The emphasis on children being seen as active agents is one of the theoretical features of this paradigm. This feature can be linked to the previous point. Children must not be seen as passive agents in society but active ones with agency. They must therefore be studied from their own perspective since they know themselves best. Children must be part of the constructions about their everyday life.

Researching children from an actor-oriented point of view is to consider children as 'complete' human beings who are whole and capable.

3.2.1.1 The Child as a Competent Social Actor

One of the theoretical features of social studies of childhood that will influence this study greatly is the competence of the child. Most research concerning children in the fields of the developmental and socialization theories have portrayed them as dependent, incompetent and 'human becoming'. James and Prout, (1997) have referred to these theories that have been used to study children over the years as the 'dominant framework.' The dominant framework sees children's lives 'as a journey toward being fully human.' Socialisation as defined by Parson, is the internalization of the culture of a society in which a child is born. Thus a child born into a particular society is taught the cultures of that particular society so that he or she can grow to fit well into it and behave in a manner acceptable. Piaget's theory of cognitive development also states that, children develop cognitively depending on their ages. He outlines four stages that each child goes through in growing cognitively. Thus, in these theories, childhood is seen merely as a stage of learning in order to achieve adulthood.

The new social studies of childhood however, criticize the dominant framework for the way it presents children as passive subjects and human becomings (James and Prout, 1997 cited in: Lee, 2001). Thus past researches on children often had the propensity to focus on structures in society and how it affects the lives of children. Structures in society were therefore considered to be active forces whiles children on the other hand were presented as passive and not competent enough. Research on human competence was therefore considered as being dependent on age. They assert that human beings develop competence through the process of change from 'an immature child to mature adult, simple to complex, irrational to rational behaviors and dependent childhood to autonomous adulthood' (Boyden et al, 2000). Children were viewed as incompetent and not fully human. The child being presented as 'human becoming' means that the child is on the way to becoming an adult and by implication, competent.

The new paradigm, social studies of childhood presents children in a different light. The paradigm claims that children should be seen as human beings who are competent. This idea about children will inform how they are seen and treated in society. Children must be considered as competent social actors who influence and contribute to their own lives (James et al, 1998). James and Prout (1997) are of the view that children must not be considered as small adults. Researchers must therefore recognize that children are competent social actors

who have their own opinions and thoughts. 'Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes' (James et al, 1997). Boyden et al (2000) further asserts that 'even in adversity children are not passive recipients, but active survivors of experience'. Thus, even in the face of difficult moments or change, children do not remain passive to such circumstances.

In as much as children are being viewed as competent social actors in the new paradigm, scholars in this field do not reject out rightly the role that structures play in the lives of children. Recognizing children as social actors, they mean their views and competencies should be respected. Holloway et al (2000) assert that recognizing the agency of the child is not the same as necessarily rejecting the fact that structures beyond their control influence the lives of children. They declare that there are variations in the extent to which each child can be said to be a competent social actor. Thus, children with their individual differences, react to situation differently. A number of factors may affect a child's ability to be able to cope with structures and conditions influencing their living conditions. Some of the factors affecting children's coping abilities are the child's disposition, their past experiences, and their relationships among other factors (Boyden & Mann, 2005 cited in: Ungar 2005). Owing to the fact that children have their individual differences, it is salient to involve them in a research to get their different opinions and experiences about their situations.

3.2.2 Children's Rights

'Rights are important because possession of them is part of what is necessary to constitute personality' (Freeman, 1992). The question as to whether children should have rights just like adults does have raised a lot of arguments and different people have different opinions about this. Some believe there should not be unique rights for children because they are covered by the 1948 UN Declaration. They assert that the 1948 declaration is for all human beings for which children are also inclusive. Some also think that children will not understand the rights since they are immature and therefore giving them rights will be irrelevant. 'It is also said that rights go with obligations and responsibilities, and that children are irresponsible.' (Alderson, 2000). Since they are irresponsible, they cannot have rights.

The issue to ponder on when dealing with a dilemma as to whether children should have rights or not is; are they human beings? If yes, then they deserve to have rights as adults do. There are some who also believe children have unique needs that are not equal or may not be equal to adults' needs. For this reason, these needs must be protected and they can only be protected when they are given rights.

'In the US in the 1970s there emerged a coherent and robust movement for the empowerment of children in political, civil and social context. This hinged on a move away from the welfare-oriented paternalism of earlier campaigns towards a radical liberation-oriented approach, the cornerstone of which was recognition of the child's autonomy.'(Burr and Montgomery, 2003).In a bid to answer whether children should have rights just like adults do, there have been two opposing viewpoints; the Liberationist thesis versus the Care takers thesis.

The Liberationist thesis talks of how children have been oppressed in the society. That is children have been part of the groups of people looked down upon by society like women and the disabled. These groups for so long have not had the freedom to express themselves and for their views to be heard in society. And even if given a chance to express their opinions, they are not taken seriously. This thesis seeks to liberate children from that oppression and asserts that children should be free. Over the years, children have been seen as small and so incompetent and unable to make good or rational decisions. Thus, they are considered not to be matured enough to make wise judgments. Age is then a matter for discussion here. Is age equal to competence? Farson and Holt are advocates for the Liberationist thesis. Some of their argument is that it will not to be fair to think or suppose that age is always linked or associated with competence. In their argument, they claim children should be given all the rights adults have and should even have the right to vote because they as children will also be affected by the decisions made by any government in power irrespective of their age. 'Farson, for instance, declares that children should have the vote not because they are as able as adults to make an intelligent informed electoral decision, but simply because they are members of society and affected by the decisions of its elected government' (Burr and Montgomery, 2003).

They also argue that some adults may not make any intelligent decision but will be allowed to vote anyway. Children should hence be allowed also. They suppose that children will do well if allowed to speak their opinions. 'Holt and Farson seem to claim that "childishness,' connoting vulnerability, frailty and helplessness, is not a natural quality of children but rather an ideological construct which helps to support the denial of their proper rights.'

Hence, it is adults who construct children or childhood as a state of helplessness and this is because they want to exercise control over children. That is why they portray them as dependent people who must depend on adults to survive; it is not a biological disposition.

The thesis further argues that every child, right from birth should be entitled to rights. Farson (1974) claims that "achievement of children's rights must apply to children of all ages, from birth to adulthood." They argue for child autonomy.

'The main thrust of the child liberationist movement is that, even if a certain competence rightly remains the crucial criterion for the possession of adult rights, it is a mistake to judge children incompetent.' Thus, children of all ages should be in the position to enjoy all the rights. (Burr and Montgomery, 2003).

The second view point is the care takers thesis. The liberationist thesis argues that children should be able to make decisions by themselves without being manipulated by adults. The care takers thesis on the hand claims that children should not be left alone to make decisions. They should be guided or directed by an adult, probably their parents. They further declare that the child may not know exactly what is good for him or her and therefore may be in the child's interest if a significant adult decides for him or her. The thesis does not only argue for parents to decide or choose for their children but also present to them how this decision should be taken. Decisions made on behalf of the child should be in the child's best interest. The adult should be conscious of the fact that every decision taken on the child's behalf will affect the child's future and also the people around them. As a result, the care taker must be able to choose what probably the child would have chosen if matured enough to make choices. Consequently, 'the adult caretaker might be described as the trustee of the child's interests who acts to promote them until such time as the child is able to do so for itself.' (Burr and Montgomery, 2003).

In spite of these two opposing viewpoints, it still stands that children should have rights. 'Rights are important because possession of them is part of what is necessary to constitute personality.' Dignity and respect are due us if we have rights and this applies to children equally. (Freeman,1992).Seeing that children are also entitled to rights, the United Nations in 1989 designed the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is worth noting that the idea of the child needing protection came up in 1924 in the 'Declaration of the Rights of the Child'. This declaration was modified in 1959. The 1989 declaration can be seen as an improvement on the 1924 declaration.

The 1989 'Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)' stated that just like adults, all children also had rights. The Convention also contained rights that paid attention to children's vulnerability. The aim of these rights therefore is to protect the child from any form of abuse.

The UNCRC seeks to provide rights for all children and these rights can be placed under three (3) headings namely the Protection Rights, Provision Rights and Participation Rights. The Protection rights seek to protect children so that their rights are not interfered with. It also lays down structures to avoid exploitation and abuse of children. They ensure that the child's rights are not trampled upon or taken for granted. That is, children have the right to be protected from anything that will cause harm to them.

The rights to provision allow children to grow and develop to the highest level they can possibly get to. The child then must have access to food, shelter, education and anything that will help him or her grow well. Every need of the child must be provided for by parents or guardians. Denial of these needs or failing to provide the child with anything that will be significant to his growth will mean denying the child of his or her right.

Unlike the protection and provision rights, the participation rights raise a lot of controversies. Everyone agrees children need protection and that their needs should be provided for but when it comes to the participatory right, it is a bit challenging. The participatory rights make room for children to express their views freely and to be involved in decisions made, especially ones that are made on behalf of the child. Further discussions in this essay will highlight some of the controversies surrounding the participation rights.

Article 3, which happens to be another principle talks about the 'best interest of the child'. This article asserts that in every decision that has to do with the child, 'the best interest of the child' should be considered. As a result, the underlying motive for every decision taken on behalf of the child should be in the child's best interest. 'Whether undertaken by public or private', the child's best interest should be paramount.

3.3 Explanation of Concepts

Concepts used in this study do not really have specific definitions. Different people perceive or interpret them differently. It is therefore of great importance to explain or clarify how it has been used in this study.

3.3.1 Concept of Child and Childhood

The new sociology of childhood propounds that the concepts of child and childhood vary between cultures because the terms are culturally or socially constructed (Ansell, 2005; James and Prout, 1997). The paradigm also asserts that 'childhood is not a natural phenomenon and therefore cannot properly be understood as such.' Thus, understanding childhood varies among different cultures. The oxford dictionary has also defined childhood as a state of being a child.

The United Nation on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has defined a child as anyone below the age of eighteen years; 'a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This definition of a child has become the standard globally when dealing with children especially on the issues of rights. Ghana was the first country to ratify the convention in 1990 and in response to the ratification, the Children's Act was designed by the Government of Ghana in 1998 which spelled out the rights of the Ghanaian child. With the aim of giving special attention to the marginalized groups in the society of which children are inclusive, a separate ministry was established (Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs; MOWAC) in 2001 by the Government of Ghana to solely see to the affairs of women and children in the country.

Article two of the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child also defines a child as a human being below the age of eighteen years.

A child has been defined by the Children's Act as a human being below the age of eighteen (18) years in accordance to the UNCRC. A child in this study therefore has been defined in agreement to the UNCRC and The Children's Act.

3.3.2 Orphan

The term 'orphan' varies in different respects. Not only does it vary from a legal point of view but also the use of it varies among different societies and cultures. It is therefore of great relevance to policy makers and researchers to state clearly the meanings they ascribe to the term and how they use it. In an orphan project, Michaels and Levine (2002) used the word 'orphan' to mean a child who had lost one or both parents. They claim that most of the women with AIDS were single mothers indicating that children of such mothers will soon lose their parents and so consider such children as orphans. This understanding may not be applicable in every context. The Webster's dictionary defines the term as a child who has been deprived of one or usually both parents. The term has also been defined by the same dictionary mentioned above as one who has been deprived of some protection or advantage. This definition implies that though children may have parents alive, if they lack certain basic needs which is important for survival, such children could be considered as orphans. For instance, children who have been abandoned, neglected or ignored can be regarded as such.

Also, the age up to which children can be considered as orphans varies. For some cultures, a child who loses his or her parent before fifteen years is an orphan and for some, it is children below eighteen. Simply, no specific age runs across every society in regards to who an orphan is. Apart from the variations in age, the pattern of death for which a child can be considered as an orphan varies. In some cultures, the death of a mother renders the child an orphan and for some the death of the father or both. From the above discussion, it is evident that there is no single definition of who an orphan is. That is why it is important for researchers to state their definition when conducting a study on orphans to bring clarity to their readers since the term may be used differently.

(http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/Gallery/Ruiz/monica5.htm). It must be noted that the different ways of defining an orphan has implications on policies and programs.

'Wo maame wu a, na webusua asa.' This is a common proverb among the Akans in Ghana and it means that 'when your mother dies, you have no family.' This proverb suggests that among this ethnic group, the death of one's mother leaves the person with no family even though he or she may have a father meaning that child becomes an orphan. This is not the same in all the ethnic groups in Ghana. Thus, in Ghana too, there is no single definition for who an orphan is generally. The common use of the word in Ghana is one who does not have any surviving parent to take care of him or her. However, in dealing with issues that concerns the rights of a child, policy makers use the term as it has been defined by UNICEF and that is the definition used in this study; a child below the age of eighteen who has lost one or both parents. The large numbers of orphans especially in the sub-Saharan Africa has raised attention on how they can be cared for.

3.3.2.1 Care for Orphans

Care for orphans has become an important area when dealing with Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Two competing theories have been used in studying care for orphans and they are; the social rupture thesis and the social resilience theory.

The social rupture thesis argues that the traditional system of care has exceeded its limit and that its breakdown is forthcoming. Some writers have it that as a result of the AIDS epidemic, the numbers of orphaned children have increased drastically. It has therefore become almost impossible for these children to be cared for only by their extended family.

A number of studies seem to be pessimistic that the traditional family system is no longer able to cope with the burden of caring for orphans. Thus, according to this school of thought, the traditional way of caring for orphans is broken down. It therefore sees promoting external interventions of care in foster homes and orphanages as a solution.

The theory of social resilience on the other hand argues that the capacity and strength of the traditional child-care system can still support the increasing number of orphans in spite of

how large the numbers are. This school of thought is of the view that orphaned children are well cared for by their families. It will therefore be wise to keep them in their families than to send them to institutions to be cared for.

The perspective of social resilience provides an account of the ways in which the extended families are able to pull resources together to ensure the well-being of orphans. This school of thought believes that families should be given the necessary help to be able to take care of orphans. It will be essential for families to be empowered to be able to take care of orphaned children since they are capable of doing so instead of keeping them in orphanages to be cared for.

3.3.3 Residential Care

Residential care, orphanage or institution shall be used interchangeably in this study to mean the same thing. Institutions in this context can be regarded as a place where children who have lost their parents or have no guardians are often sent to be taken care of by other adults who 'act' like mothers to them. The adults who take care of these children do not necessarily adopt them. They take care of them and are paid for the work they do. Residential care has come to be one of the solutions for the growing number of orphans in Africa as a result of AIDS among other factors. Some scholars have argued with the view that the extended family system has been overwhelmed with the large numbers of orphans and therefore, are unable to cope with those huge numbers. Institutions have then become like one of the coping strategies that families employ to curb this problem.

A report by Save the Children in 2003 shows that, an estimated number of eight million children globally, lived in institutions (International Save the Children, 2003). Institutions often thrive on the assistance of the government in a country, donors, churches, individuals and many more. Tolfree (2005) claims that residential care can have preference, by professionals in social services since they are convenient in terms of organization. However, in recent times, there is a campaign to shift from institutionalization towards a community-based approach of caring for orphans because residential care has been identified with a number of problems which has been discussed already in chapter one.

3.3.4 Subjective Well-Being

Well-being is a notion that people and policy makers generally desire to improve. However, it lacks a universally accepted definition and most of the time faced with competing interpretations because of its ambiguity. McGillivray and Clarke (2006) argues that concepts like 'quality of life, welfare, well-living, living standards, utility, life satisfaction, prosperity, needs, fulfillment, development, empowerment, capability expansion, human development, poverty, human poverty, and more recently, happiness are often used interchangeably with well-being without explicit discussion as to their distinctiveness. The concept of well-being is multi-faceted and entails different aspects of one's life. An online dictionary has defined the concept as 'a good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness and prosperity.' Well-being has also been described as a state that describes one's happiness, confidence, and a good way of thinking. It is a nice state where one is satisfied and pleasured (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/well-being). In discussing the concept of well-being, one could talk about the different aspects like social, psychological, emotional, subjective well-being and many others. This study however focuses on the subjective well-being of children.

In an attempt to define the term subjective well-being, McGillivray and Clarke (2006) have stated that 'subjective well-being involves a multidimensional evaluation of life, including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods.' Subjective well-being has also been defined as an individual's current evaluation of her happiness. The term is concerned with how people evaluate themselves or how they perceive their own lives. Such evaluations are often expressed in affective terms. Affective experiences are often related to feelings; being happy or anxious. The traditional models of health focus on the absence of sickness or negative experiences but subjective well-being focuses on both the positive and negative experiences of people. It has been pointed out by Diener (2003) that certain factors have an effect on subjective well-being and these factors are culture and personality. Thus, the personality of an individual is likely to influence the way he or she perceives things and their reactions to different situations. Equally, the culture in a particular society has the ability to influence people's perception and for that matter, their subjective well-being.

3.3.5 Resilience, Vulnerability and Coping Strategies

The rights that children have can be grouped under three headings; protection, provision and participation. The need for children to be protected have deepened internationally due to certain negative circumstances that some of them face like poverty, exploitation, child prostitution and many more. Modern policies have adopted the notion of providing special care and protection to children who are faced with difficult circumstances. Most scholars worldwide are doing their best to identify the effects of adverse circumstances on the physical and emotional well-being of children and to find a solution to it. Finding solutions to children's unpleasant situations also demands that children's understanding of their experience is explored. In difficult situations globally, the CRC has declared that the best interest of the child should remain paramount in decisions made on behalf of the child.

Though some scholars have attempted to identify the effects of negative situations on children, it is also important to admit that not all children who are exposed to harsh situations or difficulties develop problems in their later life. Such children are considered 'resilient.' Schaffer (1996) cited in Boyden and Mann, (2005) stated that 'whatever stresses an individual may have encountered in early years, he or she need not forever more be at the mercy of the past….children's resilience must be acknowledged every bit as much as their vulnerability.'

Resilience has been comprehended to mean 'an individual's capacity to recover from, adapt, and remain strong in the face of adversity. Thus, resilience has been ascribed to three kinds of phenomena: good outcome despite high-risk status, sustained competence under threat and recovery from trauma (Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990 cited in: Boyden and Mann, 2005). One's ability to be resilient depends on the individual and certain elements in the environment in which the person finds himself. For instance, research has identified that children who are strong and healthy are likely to be more resilient than those who are weak and sick. Also gender has been found to be one of the factors that influence children's response to adversity (Werner and Smith, 1998 cited in: Boyden and Mann 2005).

Other attributes in children that affects their resilience are competencies, spirituality, belief in a good or bright future, age, temperament amongst others (Garbarino, 1999 cited in: Boyden

and Mann 2005). Children who are positive about life are more likely to be resilient than those who are not. Thus, generally for children who remain hopeful and actively assume control over their own lives are less likely to be vulnerable than children who remain passive to accept any bad situation they find themselves in. Again, children who have experienced humiliation or failure are less likely to be resilient than their counterparts who have received approvals and praises or acceptance. Aside children's own dispositions, their relationships with others also play a role in their being resilient. The presence of adults, at least one supportive adult can influence a child's resilience (Werner and Smith, 1992 cited in Boyden and Mann, 2005). Significant others in the lives of children help a child to be able to overcome difficult situations when faced with one. Adults can provide motivation or serve as mentors to children. The relevance of adults in children's lives cannot be disputed as children are likely to look up to adults for emotional support. However, the support of peer relationships cannot be underestimated in children's ability to be resilient. There is evidence that children's resilience can be greatly improved by the social support from peers. Peer relationships that are positive provide children with an environment where they develop attitudes or skills outside their families. Just like adults, friendships provide children with an atmosphere that makes them to be 'themselves.'

Though it is not good for children to be exposed to adverse situations, 'many children are highly adaptable and able to adjust. Some show greater personal resilience even than adults' (Palmer, 1983 cited in Boyden and Mann, 2005). Some few writers have even argued that some children benefit emotionally or socially from being exposed to unpleasant situations. Thus, for some children, whiles faced with difficult situations, they are able to develop certain attitudes like being responsible among others. Labeling children as 'victims' portrays them as being defenseless in times of adversities and having no strength to cope on their own. Gaining knowledge on children's own views and understandings to adversity and how they employ strategies to protect themselves are important to resilience and coping. As said earlier, children respond to misfortunes differently just like adults do.

'Adversity comes in many forms, as a result of social or political strife, individual acts of omission or commission, environmental calamities and many other causes. Due to their youthfulness, and specifically, their lack of social power, children and adolescents are often among the most severely affected by these adverse circumstances' (Boyden and Gillan 2005)

Thus, when bad situations occur, it is children who are often rendered vulnerable. The terms 'vulnerable' or 'vulnerability' are common terms that have been used across various disciplines. Vulnerable or vulnerability has come to serve as convenient substitutes for 'poor' and 'poverty.' Vulnerability, though has been used interchangeably with the word poverty, is not the same as poverty. It does not also mean 'lack' or 'want.' Rather, it means defenselessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress.

Vulnerability here refers to exposure to contingencies and stress and difficulty in coping with them. Vulnerability has two sides, an external side which involves shocks, stress and risk an individual or environment is subject to, as well as internal side which is defenselessness. Defenselessness here as used in the study means inability or difficulty to cope in order to prevent damage.

In view of the above discussions, it is apparent that in providing support for children living in difficult circumstances, we gain valid understanding into their well-being. Approaching issues in this manner will not portray children as simply beneficiaries of the interventions of adults but as social actors who are competent enough. 'For adults to better understand children's perspectives, we must temper adult's perspectives with some humility and allow children to explain and interpret their childhoods' (Boyden and Mann, 2005). Thus in making of policies that protects children, they should be allowed to participate more than they are now which they have a right to. There is the need to therefore 'work alongside and "with" children rather than "for" children (Boyden and Mann, 2005).

As stated above, certain factors help children who find themselves in vulnerable situations to be able to cope and play can be said to be one of those factors as propounded by some scholars. Some school of thought asserts that as children play, they tend to hide or expose their emotions.

3.3.5.1 Childhood and Play

Childhood is a period where children develop the skills and competencies they need. Childhood can also be said to be a time of play. Barnes and Kehily (2003) from a cultural studies perspectives assert that 'play is often regarded as one of the most distinctive features

of childhood-something that all children have in common, and which makes their world strikingly different from an adult. Indeed, for many people it is children's capacity for play, their enthusiasm for play and the importance attached to being allowed to play that defines what childhood is about. Children differ in the games they play of course, not least according to their age and gender, but all children play' (Cited in Montgomery 2008).

Even though a large number of activities like have been used to refer to play, its importance to children became of interest to anthropologists in the last thirty years. It is during these years that anthropologists have placed emphasis on children's play and to focus on it 'in its own rights' (Smith, 1997 cited in: Montgomery, 2008). Thus play became one of the children's cultures to be studied by anthropologists. They identified in their study that though children play in every society, there are variations in how they play and who they play with. Lancy (2007) argues that 'play is a cultural universal'. Studies revealed by anthropologist show how children in every society play. However, it is not very common to see adults playing with children (cited in Montgomery, 2008). Mothers in some societies do not play with their children except in certain circumstances which are in contrast to Western psychology that sees the interaction between mother and child as important for the child.

Scholars who have studied on play have again propounded that play could be used as an avenue either to hide or to expose emotions that are powerful as well as social tensions. Jean Briggs (1991) for instance discusses that in societies where people shy away from strong emotions or confrontations, play could be used as a medium to air such emotions and tensions. Thus in trying to keep emotional or social problems on a level of play and denying its seriousness, children and adults learn the right responses to different situations as well manage their feelings. Also, Briggs (1991) describes a situation where;

'only in play is it permitted to express feelings with an appearance of intensity – and it is permitted only if the feelings are not really intense. Thus play both breaks and keeps the rule that prohibits the expression of intense emotion.'(cited in Montgomery, 2008).

A 'real' situation that goes on in the life of a child could manifest in their play. Donna Lanclos (2003) did a work on children's play in Belfast and in the work she discovered that children were not virtually concerned about religious divisions when playing. Rather what the

children she studied concerned themselves with were the gender and age variations. In her studies, she also identified that children's play was a reflection of wider social realities of their lives but in a way were transforming and transcending those realities so that the social problems could be aired through play.

Some scholars also argue that children's play was important because play has an educational value. They assert that certain skills in life could be seen in children's play. For instance, a child who plays with a doll is seen as doing that as a form of learning to take care of younger siblings (Rossie, 2005). It is further argued that children's play should not only be seen as an imitation of what adults do. Children's creativity should also be acknowledged as they play.

3.4 Related Studies

Some studies have worked into researching orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and getting their views about how they feel about their situation. This section will highlight on some studies relevant to this study. Two of such studies will be used. The first does not necessarily talk about orphans living in institutions but street children who beg on the streets for a living. I included this study because street children are also part of the vulnerable group. The first study conducted with street children tries to seek their opinion about the work they do as street beggars, thus trying to understand how they feel about their situation. And the second study talks about children living in institutions.

The first study concerning street children is an article, written by Tatek (2008) titled 'Earning a living on the margins: Begging, Street work and the socio-spatial experiences of children in Addis Ababa'. The article discusses the experiences of street children. It also highlights some important issues that are worth noting. One of such issues raised is, understanding children from their own point of view. The author seems to agree with childhood studies that in order to know and understand children well, they should be involved in any research that concerns them. The use of children as informants in this study agrees with the above mentioned point. Thus in understanding children's experiences, we do not need to take into consideration adult's perspective alone. Children, who are key people, should also be involved in any research that concerns them. Again, by involving children in research that concerns them, we learn about their experiences from their own point of view. The 1989 'Convention on the

Rights of the Child' states that just like adults, all children also have rights. The Convention also contains rights that pay attention to children's vulnerability. The aim of these rights therefore is to protect the child from any form of abuse.

Generally, when street children or child beggars are mentioned, the picture of pity, vulnerability, abuse, neglect, and the like comes to mind. One may be tempted to think that child beggars have bad experiences and probably, are unhappy children. This is the more reason why children's experiences must be studied from their own perspective.

Interviews with some of the children, according to the study revealed that even though most of them lived in abject poverty, they did consider themselves to be abandoned or neglected by their parents. Rather they felt they had a responsibility to contribute to their families economically. Some of the children attest to the fact that using the money they gained from their begging 'business to support the home made them feel important and valuable.

In the study, it was found that the perception of the public towards children's involvement in begging and the children's own perceptions and reactions to it differ (Abebe, 2008, p. 271).

Through interviews and observations, it was clear that these children did not consider their own lives as negative as others perceived despite their deprivations. Therefore, as stated earlier, when interventions are being suggested for these children beggars or street children, their own experiences of the situation should be considered. Thus, an important concept to consider in this article is to study children's experiences from their own point of view. "Children are seen not as passive objects in the research process or in society in general but as social actors". The emphasis is on exploring children's 'lives, their interests, priorities and concerns' from their own perspective (Clark, 2005, p.30).

Similarly, a study conducted by Kristiansen (2009) revealed how the institutions served as structures that enabled and restricted children to act as competent social actors. The title of this study is 'the quality of life of children living in residential child care facilities: a comparative study of 3 children's homes in Accra and Cape Coast, Ghana. The study aimed at exploring how the structures (materially and socially) and supplies of the institutions contributed to differences and similarities in different aspects of the quality of life of the

children. It was a comparative study of three institutions in Ghana. The study concluded that the supplies available in each of the institutions or the orphanages had strong bearings on the quality of life of the children. It further discussed that though structures both materially and socially had the ability to determine much of children's lives, the children still had some degree of freedom to act within the structures and to influence their own lives.

The relevance of this study in relation to mine is the emphasis on children as competent social actors. Though children may have some structures that affect their lives, they do not only remain passive but active. Again, the use of children as main informants in the study makes it a relevant one related to mine. The emphasis on the importance of listening to children especially when it concerns them remains crucial in this study just like the first one on street children. Thus, in appreciating children and their experiences, their views do matter. Again, in trying to propose intervention programs for children who are considered to be in vulnerable situations, efforts must be made to understand how they perceive their own condition since they are competent enough. As stated earlier, children living in institutions are part of the groups of children considered to be living in difficult circumstance. However, it is important to note that irrespective of the circumstances children find themselves in, they do not only remain passive and victims of the circumstance.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research has been defined as a diligent and systematic enquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications, etc. Redmore and Mory have also defined research as a 'systemized effort to gain new knowledge.' The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English also defines research as 'a careful investigation or inquiry specially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. Thus from all the definitions given, it can be said that research helps us to discover or to have new knowledge about a phenomenon (Kothari, 2004)

In an attempt to gain knowledge about a phenomenon, the kind of methods used in a research is salient. Before I proceed to discuss the methods used in this study, it will be important to differentiate between research methods and research methodology. Research methods can be understood as all those methods or techniques that are used for the conduction of research. Methodology, on the other hand can be defined as the system of methods followed by a particular discipline. Therefore, research methodology can be defined as the 'way how' to conduct research. (Kothari, 2004.p.8). The study employed qualitative approach of doing research.

'Qualitative research, broadly defined, is "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Carbin, 1990, p. 17 cited in; Golafshani, 2003). Thus, qualitative research uses an approach that is natural to gain understanding about a phenomena in a particular context like 'real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest; the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally' (Patton, 2001). A subjective understanding of knowledge is crucial in doing qualitative research and this involves the discovering of the thoughts, emotions, perceptions and feelings of people. Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon whiles quantitative research seeks to identify the cause of a phenomenon. Thus, the aim of qualitative research is to gain detailed

understanding of a particular area of study. Due to the nature of this study which aims at gaining understanding of children's experiences, qualitative approach of researching was used as qualitative methods are considered to be suitable in doing research with children (Greig et al, 2007) and also 'more effective in enabling children to communicate in their own terms' (Barker, 2003). Thus this chapter discusses how the research was conducted, highlighting the instruments used in the collection of data, the methods used, ethical consideration, limitation of study and many more.

4.2 Doing Research with Children

'Listening to what children say about their everyday lives and experiences can allow us to both theorize and act on their understandings in relation to larger issues of social and political change' (James, 2007). The understanding in the above statement is that if anything can be done for children socially or politically, then children must be understood. However, children can only be understood if they are given the chance to express their views on issues relating to them. Article 13 of the UNCRC states that children 'shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media.' This article has brought to light the notion that children are active social agents who are capable of imparting information especially when it concerns them. For this reason, my study sought to research with children by seeking their perspectives and so making children my major informants.

Research conducted in Social Science; Psychology or Sociology often focused on adult population. Thus, studies or research were done about children and the tendency was to ask either parents or teachers about the children, leaving children out. The new social studies of childhood therefore advocates that children should be part of research that concerns them and involving children in research means that researchers must be able to find ways that the perceptions and ideas of children can be expressed in their own words or terms (Ennew and Boyden, 1997). The implication of the above study on my study was that I had to be careful in the kind of methods I was going to use in the collection of data. I had to use methods that could get the children to be involved in the research and this I managed to do.

4.3 Research Design

The institution that was selected for the study; known as 'the Children's home', was a government institution for orphans and abandoned children, located in the capital of Ghana. The initial plan for this research was to conduct a comparative study that will investigate the experiences of orphans living in the institutions and that of those in their extended families. The aim was to assess the children's sense of well-being from their own perspectives. Interesting as it seemed to be, the reality of time constraint showed up when I got to the field. I had two months to collect data for the study which was very short. By the time I gained permission to start with the data collection, much of the time had already been spent, meaning I had less than two months to collect the data. Consequently, I was unable to achieve my initial plan. I resorted to conduct the study only with children in the institutions and exempted those with their extended families. Studying children in the institutions alone was to help me have time for them in order to gain much knowledge about their experiences.

The study was a qualitative one, thus, the collection of data consisted of observations, interviews and focus group discussions. It was essential to use more than one method in the study so as to get a better understanding of the subject being researched. As Ennew and Boyden (1997) states that more than one method is required in a good social research. This is because different methods give light to different areas of the same reality, hence, giving a better understanding. Thus, if more than one method is used, a researcher is likely to get additional information that may not be obtained using another method.

The research commenced with the aid of three significant contacts. These were; the Director of Social Welfare, the Director of the institution and one of the children in the home. These were the three people who provided me with access to the informants and assisted me throughout the research**. Whiles administering the questionnaire, I tried to be flexible enough to change the questions in the interview guide when necessary for clarity.

4.4 Methods Used In the Collection of Data

On the field, I used different methods in collecting data for this study. Taking into consideration the nature of my informants, it was salient for me to choose the right methods that will not expose the children to any danger as Desai and Potter (2006) writes that the

choice of methods used in a research is dependent on the nature of the informants and the questions to be answered in the research. Thus, reflections on the nature of my informants coupled with the questions that the research sought to answer, the methods that were used in this research were considered appropriate.

The study was a qualitative one. The methods used in the collection of data consisted of observations, interviews and focus group discussions. It was essential to use more than one method in the study so as to get a better understanding of the subject being researched as Ennew and Boyden (1997) states that more than one method is required in a good social research. This is because different methods give light to different areas of the same reality, hence, giving a better understanding.

4.4.1 Participant Observation

The fieldwork started with some observations of the children and how they went about their daily activities in the institution. In dealing with children, observation can be useful because it is likely to reveal a behavior of children that they may not be able to explain well or are unaware of. What people and for that matter children do and what they claim they do may sometimes differ (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). As a result, it is important for children to be observed after they have given their opinions on issues. Efforts were made to observe the children and what they did before and after school. However, efforts to observe the children before going to school were not completely successful because by the time I got to the orphanage, most of the children had left for school. The only time I was able to observe the children in the mornings were during the weekends where they were all at home. In order for me to have the attention of the children and for them to cooperate, I tried to form friendship with them. I was able to get the attention of some of them especially the boys. As I spent time familiarizing with the children, I also tried to identify those I could use as my respondents. Whiles observing them, I had an informal dialogue with some of them and explained what my research was all about. Some of them seemed more convinced and satisfied about my task in the institution and out of that I got to know those who were willing to participate and those who were not.

Before going to the field, I thought I could organize an interesting event that could let the children open up whiles I observed but upon getting to the field, I realized that it was not possible. This was because the children were almost always busy. After school, most of them had to do some household chores. Some also had to do their assignment that was given to them in school. Another reason that accounts for why I could not engage them in any extra activities was that, almost every day they had visitors coming to them either to donate or just to visit them. Anytime there was an occasion like that, they all had to be there and this was happening almost all the time. Consequently, it was not feasible to engage them in any other activity. Nevertheless attempt was made to get the children to be comfortable around me so that my presence does not influence their behavior. Observation proved to be a useful tool in this study at the initial stages where children were finding it difficult to open up. Instead of just being around waiting for them to feel comfortable with me and to open up, I used those time to do a lot of my observations.

I started my observation from the way things were done in the institution then I moved to observing children later. Around their administrative block, I observed how different people came in almost all the time to donate; individuals (local and foreign), churches or clubs. I also observed how people came in as volunteers willing to work with them and these were mostly Westerners. From the administrative block, I moved to where the children slept. I observed that boys had their separate area and the girls also had their separate block. I met quite a number of people working in the institution as volunteers. Some of these volunteers helped the mothers take care of the children. Most of these observations were done in the mornings when the children were in school. However, when it came to observing the children, I did that in the afternoons when they had returned from school. I observed their relationships with the people around them; their care-givers, the volunteers and the other children. Again, I paid attention to how older children assisted the younger ones like helping to undress them when they returned from school. This gave me an idea about how the children related to themselves. Apart from the play ground where both boys and girls played together, I observed girls and boys separately since they had separate dormitories. There were no challenges for me when I was observing the girls probably because we were of the same sex. However, observing the boys posed a bit of a challenge because I was of a different sex. Considering the fact that they were all boys apart from the few mothers who took care of them, it was quite alarming for some of them to see a strange lady over and over again even

though they knew what I was doing there. I could see that my presence there in a way influenced their behavior. On one occasion where two of the boys had a slight misunderstanding, just when the argument was becoming serious, one of the boys looked at me from where I was sitting and walked away and the argument ended.

In my observations, I realized that there were no rules that prevented boys from moving to the girls' dormitories and vice versa. Thus they allowed the children to live like 'brothers and sisters.' It was later during the interview sessions that one of the boys told me they were not allowed to move to the girls' block after a certain time in the evening and equally, the girls were not allowed to go to them at a certain time in the evenings. When I heard this, I appreciated the importance of using more than one method in the collection of my data. I would have concluded that the children were allowed to go the dormitories of the opposite sex as and when they wanted but in the interviews, I realized it was not so. Thus, though they were free to do so, they had a limit depending on the time.

Observation as a method of collecting data comes with its own advantages. The fact that children were being observed in their familiar and natural setting can be one of the advantages. In other words, children were likely to be themselves and behave in their normal way because they were in their own environment. This is because, children's attitude are not likely to be the same if they find themselves in a new and unfamiliar environment. Thus, the advantage of this method in this study was the fact that these children had been living in the institution for long and for that reason were used to the environment. As I observed the children, I took note of how they went about their activities and how they were able to manage little challenges and conflicts they faced such as finding their own ways to resolve petty misunderstandings between themselves. Though observation can be said to be a good method, it may also have its disadvantages. The presence of a strange person around could influence the behavior of the children. Therefore I tried as much as possible not to exhibit any strange behavior that would alarm the children. And talking about strange behavior, I mean I tried not to behave in a way that will make me look like a 'spy.' So though I was taking field notes alongside the observations, if I realized some of the children were getting distracted, I stopped. I did this to create an atmosphere where children could be at ease and 'be themselves.'

4.4.2 Interviews

Our quest for knowledge on a particular subject or about a group of people may be best answered if we could engage them in a conversation. Communication is a basic way of interacting with human beings. By engaging people in a conversation, we learn to understand their world, their experiences and why they do what they do. Conversations about daily life are the basis for a research interview. It must be stated that the kind of conversation that goes on in an interview is a professional type. In an interview research, the researcher, in an attempt to understand the lives of people, poses questions and hear respondents tell him or her about their experiences. In social research, interviews are popular methods of collecting data. Qualitative research interview, thus, tries to understand participants in research from their own point of view (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Feminist scholars have asserted that since interviews allow people to narrate their experiences and stories in their own words, it is a good method that can be used in studying the marginalized group like women and children (De Vault, 1999 and Reinharz, 1992 cited in; Esterberg, 2002).

Aside the participant observation, I conducted some interviews which allow the children to express themselves and to elaborate more on minor issues they had raised during previous conversations. I started the interviews by allowing the children to tell me about themselves and to let them describe how a day was like in the institution. Based on what they said, I deduced questions from it for them to answer or to elaborate on. After this I asked them the questions I had in my interview guide. Most of the questions were asked several times in different ways to make sure the children understood what I meant.

In the interview, I tried to ask questions that covered different aspects of their lives; their family relations, education, social life, health, work and their thoughts about being in the institution. In response to their answers, some general questions were asked to enable them elaborate more on their answers. The interview guide was an open-ended one so children had the chance to bring in other issues that they thought were relevant to them.

One of the advantages of using interviews is that it allows informants to be able to raise certain issues that the researcher may not even have thought about (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). It also allows participants in research to be able to explain their conditions and experiences in their own words. Though interviews have its advantages, it comes with its own

disadvantages especially when it is not a structured one. In using semi-structured or non-structured interviews, informants are allowed the chance to talk about issues that are of importance to them and if care is not taken, they can shift the focus of the research. Researchers must therefore pay close attention when informants are talking during an interview so that they can find a way or ask a question that brings them back to answer the research question in case they deviate. Again, in interviews, the researcher must not only pay attention to what participants are saying but must also pay attention to how things are being said and this makes the process quite tedious. If informants in an interview are not too comfortable with the researcher or have not built a relationship of trust, the researcher is likely to be misinformed since informants may just say anything which may not be the truth. Again, power relations may affect an interview. When informants are children, they are likely to say things that they think an adult may want to hear just to please them and this does not reveal the 'truth' in an interview.

After interviewing about three of the children, I realized I had to take certain factors into consideration like the children's level of maturity and their personality. Some of the children were confident to express themselves very well and others, though they would talk, were not really straight forward. I had to give such children a bit of time to answer one question and also to ask the question in different ways. Depending on the maturity of the children too, I had to re-frame the questions for better understanding. I used an interview guide that was semi-structured and this gave me an advantage of being flexible. Also, some scholars have argued that the use of semi-structured interviews have the ability to depict an informant and a researcher as co-producers of knowledge (Kvale, 1996).I discussed issues relevant to my study as and when they came up in the responses of the children aside the interview guide.

Before going to the research site, an interview guide was prepared that covered the various themes I wanted to gain knowledge on during the interviews. The themes that were highlighted in the interview guide were in relation to health, education, emotions, work, social networks, their personal information and some general questions as they brought them up. All these themes were aimed at gaining knowledge on how the children assessed themselves in their well being and to know if they considered themselves vulnerable as being perceived by the public. The guide also aimed at exploring the lived experiences of the children before coming to the institution since that had an effect on how they would assess

their situation in the institution. Though the study also aimed at gaining knowledge on the kind of coping strategies the children used I the institution, specific questions were not asked to that effect because I thought they may not actually understand what I meant by that. However, in the course of the interviews, almost all the children said something directly or indirectly to indicate the kind of coping strategies they employed that made their life comfortable in the institution.

Interviews were conducted one on one and at a place where the other children could not hear what we were talking about. To some degree, it helped the children who were being interviewed as they felt at ease to express themselves knowing that no one was hearing them. Although some of the children tried to peep in sometimes to listen to what we were saying, efforts were made to manage that. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes. Children who were willing to participate in the interview waited at a place that was not too far from where I was so that locating them would be easy. Throughout my stay on the field, none of the children who decided to be part of the research withdrew from it. From the responses I received and the way children expressed themselves, it was easy for me to deduce that some of the children enjoyed the interview because they were given an opportunity to express their views.

During the interviews, I tried to use simple language that the children could understand better. Older children were good at expressing themselves than the younger ones. Some of the children were also articulate than others and this influenced their responses during the interviews. Children who had stayed in the institution for a longer period of time seemed to be so sure of what they were saying and I was able to get a lot of data from such children. The interviews were conducted like normal conversations to prevent children from being under pressure. I also made it clear to them that they were not going to be assessed on whatever they said and this assurance made them relaxed.

Furthermore, one factor I considered as an advantage for this study was the fact that I did not use an interpreter. Using an interpreter could be useful when the researcher is not familiar with the context where the study is taking place and for that matter has a problem with the language. Thus, there will be a communication barrier when a researcher does not understand the language of his or her participants. In such a situation, an interpreter could be useful.

Fortunately for me, the research took place in my own country and at a place where I was familiar with the language so communication was not going to be a problem. However, almost all the interviews were conducted in English. It must be stated that the decision to have the interviews conducted in English was decided by the children for reasons I cannot be certain of. However, I can assume that most of these children have been part of researches conducted by Westerners and therefore using the English language as a means of communicating in research was quite common to them. Though most of them spoke in English, when it got to issues where they could not really express themselves in the English language, they spoke the local language.

One instrument that helped me most during the interview session was the recorder. All the responses were recorded so I did not have to write all they said. This saved me much time. The only challenge I faced with using the recorder was that after the interviews, I had a large data all mixed up. I had to later take time to structure all they said under various sub-topics during transcription. After each interview with the respondents, I played the whole recording back to them so they could hear themselves. Most of them were fascinated about the fact that they could hear themselves especially the younger ones. Other children who were initially not interested to be part of the study later decided to be involved simply because they wanted to hear themselves on the recorder.In addition to the children who were interviewed, about four adults were also interviewed on the kind of meanings they gave to 'good' and 'bad' childhood. This was to gain on whether adults shared similar or diverse views with children on that theme.

4.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Another method I used on the field was focus group discussion. Each method used in this study allowed children to freely open up and this method was no exception. For children who still found it difficult to open up even though I had tried hard to make them feel comfortable, this method made them participate freely because their colleagues were also around. It became easy for them to participate in the discussion at the group level. Most of the children were able to express themselves in the group. During the interviews, some of the children

said they had no challenge living in the institution but on the group level, they did not find it difficult discussing their challenges in the institution. Whiles discussing in the group, some of the children who were not so certain about certain things in the institution were informed. These discussions were therefore fruitful both to the researcher and the participants because as they discussed different subjects which helped this study, they also gained information. For instance one of the girls during the discussions said they could stay in the institution as long as they wanted until they decided to leave but just then, some of the children corrected her by saying they could stay there till they were eighteen where they had to leave.

There were two groups who participated in the study; one group for boys and the other for girls. I separated the boys from the girls because I wanted each of the groups to feel comfortable and relaxed in discussing the challenges they faced. Again, I wanted to avoid a situation where the males would dominate in the discussions. Each group consisted of seven participants. The principal aim of this method was to be able to have the children discuss their problems on a common platform. Initially, I wanted any of the children who was willing to be part of the discussion to be involved because I realized that even children I had not interviewed wanted to be part of it. Later, I decide to involve only the children I had interviewed. I took this decision because I wanted to check for consistency as some of the questions that came up during the interviews were also discussed during the focus group discussions. In each of the groups, the oldest child in the group and I acted as moderators. Whiles the discussions took place, I recorded whatever that was being said by the children alongside taking some notes. In this environment, the children were not apprehensive about the notes I was taking like when I was observing.

4.5 Key Informant

The research was conducted with the aim of gaining knowledge on how children living in institutions assess their own sense of well-being as well as to know if they regarded themselves vulnerable as society may consider them. Some of the questions it sought to answer were:

- What is a good childhood according to children's perspectives?
- What are children's experiences of their everyday life in the institution?

Because the research aimed at getting children's perspectives, my informants for the study were mainly children and more precisely those living in institution. There were some few adults who were also interviewed. I interviewed the 'mothers' who took care of the children.

Key informants can refer to those who may act as a 'gateway' to informants. Mikkens (2005) has defined key informants as people who have insight or close knowledge into the area of study. The oldest child who had stayed in the institution all his life was the one who served as my key informant. He happened to be the first person I interviewed. When I first entered the institution and saw him, I did have it in mind to interview him because he was not within the age range of children I wanted to interview, he was older. He had completed his senior high school and was waiting for his results so he was always at home. However, on most of my visits, he was the one I met and we often had a chat on general issues. In one of our conversations, he made me aware that he was the oldest child in the home and also the one who had stayed in the institution the greatest number of years. I confirmed this with some of the care-givers. On having this knowledge, I decided to interview him.

Interviewing the boy was very useful to me as it gave me a lot of information on how things are done and what often happens in the institution. His experiences were very relevant and useful to me as it gave me a clear picture of the home and made it easy for me to understand why certain things were done the way it was being done. It gave me a picture of the everyday life of the children, their challenges and some of the good things they enjoy. One significant difference I observed from this boy's interview was the confidence with which he was able to tell me the challenges they faced in the institution. Other children also told me about challenges but it was clear to see that they were being careful. This boy however was bold to talk probably because he was old in the institution and had become like one of the 'care-givers.' From his interview, one could see that he did not consider himself as a child who was being cared for but an adult caring for other children. The boy did not only serve as a key informant but also played the role of a sponsor in this study. A sponsor in this sense is one who really gets helps you to get the informants to open up. Even though I had gained permission to work with the children and had been introduced to them, the children still found it difficult to open up. It was this boy who talked to them and later I observed that they were more willing.

Considering the fact that a single person's views may not be able to represent fully the views of the subject being studied, there is a risk in the use of a key informant as it may cause one to be biased. However, this can be minimized by interviewing others who equally have good knowledge in what is being studying. In trying t minimize this risk; I interviewed another girl who had also stayed there for seventeen years. Apart from the boy who had been I the institution for nineteen years, the girl was the next who had stayed there for that long. Apart from these two, some of the care-givers who had worked in the institution for long were also interviewed.

4.6 Data Collection

Fifteen on-site interviews were conducted. These interviews were in a semi-structured form. The interviews were conducted one on one with the children on how they assessed their emotional and social well-being. The interviews with the children were followed up by observation. I observed a lot to know if the picture I was getting was in agreement to what the children were telling me.

Focus group discussion was also conducted in two groups according to gender; boys only and girls only. It was opened to all who wanted to be part of the discussion. The discussion focused on what was a good childhood for children. With the use of this method, children who could not open up during the one on one interview did probably because other friends were around. This made them comfortable to express their views. All the interviews and discussions were done in English.

4.6.1 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised of children living in institutions in the Greater Accra region, the capital of Ghana, between the ages of six and fifteen years. The specific institutions chosen for the study were the Children's home, a government institution in Accra. This home was chosen because I wanted the children's home that provided at least the average life for the Ghanaian child. Another reason why this home was chosen was because

of proximity. Because of the limited time I had to conduct the study, I had to choose the closer to me so I could work more effectively.

4.6.2 Gate Keepers

The homes that were selected for the study are both under the supervision of the Department of Social Welfare. Thus, before getting access to the respondents, permission was sought from the Director of the social welfare department. I gained his consent by introducing myself and what I wanted to do in the homes. The Director on the other hand gave me a letter to be added to the letter given by the school and these letters were given to the Directors of the homes. After introducing myself to the Directors of the homes, they on the other hand introduced me to the mothers taking care of the children so that it would not be strange when they saw me around the children.

The mothers explained to the children what my mission was in the home so they could open up and talk to me. So the first few days, I started by observing the children and how they went about their day after school. During those days too, I tried establishing some rapport with the children in order to make them feel comfortable around me. I observed that though i tried hard building trust and confidence in the children, they were still finding it difficult to open up, making the work more difficult.

On one of my usual visits, one of the boys (Boateng) who had stayed there for so long and had become like a big brother to all the children approached me and asked he could be of help, seeing that the children were still not opening up to talk to me. I explained everything to him and he spoke to the rest of the children. The next day when I visited, there was such great improvement. At least, most of them were willing to talk to me. That was how I finally gained access to my informants.

4.6.3 Instruments Used In Data Collection

The instruments used for the collection of data are listed below:
- A tape recorder: which I used to record the response of my participants in the interview.

- An interview guide: The interview guide assisted me to ask all the children almost the same questions.

4.6.4 Pre-Test of Interview Guide

It is important that an interview guide is able to measure what it intends to and that is the validity of a research. Validity in an interview means whether an interview study investigates what is intended to be investigated. It must be emphasised that the interview guide for this research was not pre-tested. However, the first respondent who answered the interview guide helped me to re-frame the questions in order for the children to understand well.

As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005), it is important to have an iterative design where the researcher keeps adapting to new circumstances on the field by changing subjects and questions where necessary (Kvale and Brinkmann,2009). Thus, when I got to the field, I changed some of the questions considering the fact that it was not too clear. And I got to know after the first respondent answered the questions in the interview. Some of the questions were also modified for better clarification**.**

4.6.5 My Role as a Researcher

In my endeavour to make the children gain trust and freely express themselves during the data collection period, I assumed different roles as a researcher. I started by trying to make them my friends by being part of whatever they did but this was not successful because in our culture, it is not common to see children who have adults as friends. They saw it to be strange as i tried to make them my friends.

The next strategy I devised was to help them do their assignments given to them in school. There were two ladies who had volunteered to visit them every day and assist them with their home work. I spoke to them and they agreed I could join their discussions while they taught the children. So anytime they gathered to teach the children, I was also there to assist and because it was normal to them that an adult could be a teacher, they were comfortable with that. Though they felt comfortable, I did not want them to see me as a teacher in that strict

sense because that was going to limit them. Whiles assisting them in their work, I tried to engage them in casual conversations. By the time i was through with all these, i was seen as a big sister. This role was comfortable for me because now the children could open up freely and some of them were able to confide in me about their personal issues.

4.6.6 Field Notes

Before going to the field of study, I made the necessary preparation like getting my recorder and the interview guide. As part of my preparations, I got a note book and pen and the purpose of this book was to write some notes on the field. Thus, as I made my observations on the field, I wrote them down. In writing the field notes, I was cautious because initially, some of the staff working there were not comfortable as to why I wanted to interview the children and not the adults. Again some of the adults were wondering why I was recording what the children were saying. Due to these factors, I did not write a lot on the field. What I did was to write some few lines that would remind me of what I had in mind. Most of the notes were written when I had returned from the field. As much as possible, I did my best not to get the children I was observing distracted. Events that caught my emotions were also written down and this was aimed at reflecting on how those events had influenced my perceptions. In my observations, I tried not to be affected by my emotions or preconceptions. I decided to write down most of the things I saw on the field. For some of the things I wrote, I was not too sure how important it was going to be for the study but its relevance was known later. I took notes as I observed and also took some notes in the course of some of the interviews. When a participant made a point that I thought was significant for the study, I wrote the person's name down together with that specific comment.

4.6.7 Data Analysis

'The quality of research depends on how well methods are used and analyzed, rather than whether numbers or descriptions are used' (Ennew et al, 2009). Thus, a research can be said to be a good one depending on the methods used in the research and how well the data collected is analyzed. In an attempt to be able to do a good analysis of the data collected, all interviews and the focused group discussions were recorded. Later, these recordings were transcribed just as the participants had said. Even though this task seemed to be time consuming considering the amount of data I had to transcribe, the advantage I had was that

all the interviews were conducted in English so I did not have to translate what the informants had said into English before transcribing. Later, the transcriptions were divided into responses from children and that of adults. Thus the data was organized into interviews from children and adults. This was aimed at identifying the differences and similarities between what children describe as good or bad childhood and adults' views on that too. Responses from children were further structured into various topics like health, education, social networks and many more.

4.7 Reliability and Validity

Patton (2001) asserts 'that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing the study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study'. The term 'dependability' has been used in qualitative research which corresponds with the idea of 'reliability' in quantitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Hay (2000) defines reliability as 'the extent to which a method of data collection yields consistent and reproducible results when used in similar circumstances by different researchers or at different times'. It is important to note that certain factors can influence the reliability of a study and Kumar (1999) asserts that the factors that influence reliability cannot be controlled in qualitative research. Some of the factors that could influence the reliability of a study could be the way questions are asked (the skill of the researcher), the respondents' environment, the mood of both the informant and researcher and the level of trust between informant and researcher. If an informant is in a bad mood there is the likelihood that the findings of the research will be different from another result by another researcher. It is therefore essential that informants are in a very relaxed mood before research is conducted. The researcher may not always be successful in ensuring that the informant is in a good mood, however the researcher must do his/her best to ensure that informants are in a good mood. On the other hand, if the researcher is also in a bad mood it may influence the way the questions are asked which will indirectly produce another results if another researcher conducts a similar research in the same setting and environment. I managed this by keeping a relaxed atmosphere both on the part of the respondent and myself. I achieved this by starting each interview session with general conversations that was not related to the study but to make them comfortable.

Also, the setting in which the interview takes place play a role in the reliability of a study. If interviews are conducted in settings where children feel distracted or an unfavourable environment the findings are likely to be altered. In view of this, the interview was conducted one-on-one to avoid distraction from other children. This was however not completely successful as other children kept peeping in at one time or the other. Anytime I observe other children trying to get involved, I changed the interview to a much more general conversation.

The skill of the researcher in conducting a research equally influences the reliability of a study. If a researcher asks leading questions it helps to produce concrete responses from informants. To add to that, if the questions asked by the researcher are unclear, it adversely affects the responses of the participants. In an attempt to minimize this problem, same questions were asked in different ways to ensure that children understood clearly the questions that were asked.

Validity has to do with the truthfulness of a research. Validity has been defined by Katchin and Tate (2003) as the 'soundness, legitimacy and relevance of a research theory and its investigation or practice.' In other words, validity has to do with the relevance of a data in relation to research questions. Some scholars have argued that validity as a term is not applicable in qualitative research. However, they still recognize the need to have a way of 'measure for their research.' Creswell and Miller (2000) assert that a researcher's opinion of validity in a study affects validity. Consequently, most researchers develop their own concept of validity and tend to generate their own term which they deem appropriate like 'quality, rigor and trustworthiness' (Davies and Dodd, 2002). It has been argued by some scholars that if concerns about the reliability of a study, its validity and how trustworthy it is, its quality are all meant to differentiate '"good" from "bad" research then testing and increasing the reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality and rigor will be important to the research in any paradigm', whether qualitative or quantitative (Golafshani, 2003).

In maximizing or increasing validity and for that matter reliability, Patton (2002) has advocated for the use of 'triangulation by saying that 'triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods.' Thus, in attempt to ensure the validity of a study, different methods could be used. Even though the use of different methods has been challenged by some

scholars like Barbour (1998), some scholars still hold that in maximizing validity, several methods should be used.

In view of this, I employed different methods in the gathering of my data like participant observation, interviews and focused group discussions. Also follow-up questions were asked with regards to the answers children gave. Different methods may shed light on different areas of the same phenomenon hence, maximizing the validity of a study. Ennew and Boyden (1997) state that more than one method is required in a good social research. This is because different methods give light to different areas of the same reality, hence, giving a better understanding.

4.8 Ethical Issues

It is always significant to consider ethical issues during, before and after a research. Ethics can be said to be moral codes that must be observed by researchers while carrying out research. Researchers ought to adhere to these codes irrespective of a situation they may find themselves in. According to Fraser et al (2004), ethical considerations in research are of importance in two ways; it guides the researcher against any form of abuse of rights of the participants and it also protects informants. In this research, the following ethical issues were considered; informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

In research that involves children, informed consent is very important. This is because according to Ennew and Boyden (1997), children are less able than adults to exercise or recognize their right to refuse to participate. In view of this, I made sure I had the consent of all the people who matter especially the children. I first gained the consent of the social welfare department and this was achieved by giving them a letter from my university that introduced me as a student and what I wanted to do. When they were satisfied with what my assignment was in the institution, they agreed that I could undertake the study and also gave me a letter to that effect. The next person I had to seek permission from was the director of the institution. On showing the letter from the university and the social welfare, she then gave me access to the place and spoke to the 'mothers' about my intention. All these consents were not complete without the children's. Therefore, I preceded each interview by an introduction. I introduced myself again to the children though I had been introduced to all of them. I told them what I wanted from them and also told them they had the right to withdraw from the

research if they wanted to. I also informed them on what the whole study was about as Ennew and Boyden (1997) stated that for children to 'participate meaningfully, children need information about the reasons and the consequences of what they are doing' Thus, in this study, children participated in consenting to be part of the research or not to be. None of the children were chosen by any adult. Children decided by themselves to be part of it.

They were also assured of confidentiality. Children living in institutions are part of the groups of children who are considered to be vulnerable and therefore, it was important that they were protected from anything that would harm them any further. Confidentiality was then very important in this study to avoid any complications that could arise when I had left the field. I assured them that whatever they would say was going to remain confidential. Confidentiality was one of the ethical issues that were so crucial in this research because my respondents were children who are not living with their biological parents. Thus, if they are able to trust me and open up to, it was required of me to keep whatever they said in order save them any trouble they may encounter with their care-givers for saying things they were not supposed to say.

In addition to these, I ensured not to discuss into details topics that raised the emotions of the children. This was aimed at protecting the children from any harm emotionally. In the course of the interviews, I paid attention to the body language of the children as well and also to questions they were hesitant in answering. Anytime I observed some of the children had difficulties in answering a particular question or were unwilling to, I left it and moved to another one. Davies (1998) says that during the process of a research, the researcher has the 'ethical responsibility to deal with the emotions of children' and that was what I sought to do.

Finally, I promised them that they were all going to remain anonymous because anonymity is very important especially when conducting research with vulnerable groups in society like children (Ennew et al, 2009). I made them understand that under no circumstance were their names going to be mentioned. Again I made it clear to them that even if a name must be mentioned in the research; it was not going to be their correct names. I saw the relief on most of the faces of the children when I again told them that I was not going to mention the particular institution where the research took place. After telling them all these, they were willing to participate in the research.

4.9 Challenges Faced on the Field

This research study, just as with all others, had its own challenges. One major challenge I faced was getting access to the children. It took me a relatively long time to be able to get access to the children. Gate keepers were not sure whether I was appointed to do the study for a political reason or I was really a student as claimed. This delay affected the time I had for the study, leaving me with a limited time.

Another challenge I faced had to do with power relations. In a cultural setting like Ghana where respecting adults means a lot, the children from the unset could not feel comfortable around me no matter how hard I tried. As time elapsed, some of the children were able to break such barriers of shyness but even that, with caution. This was a bit challenging because already I was working within a limited time and because building trust in the children also took some time, there was not much time left to do the study.

Still with power relations, children were likely to provide answers that will please the adult (researcher). I tried to manage this by making them know I was a complete stranger in their world and that they were more knowledgeable than I was when it came to their world and experiences. This inspired confidence in some of the children but was not completely successful since some of them still remained adamant.

Moreover, the fact that the children had been warned on what to tell strangers served as a limitation. These children had been researched over and over again by different people from different countries either for political or academic reasons. From their responses, I could see they were being cautious on what to say. This was manifested in their attitudes during the interviews. During the interview sessions, children did not feel comfortable to talk when they saw a friend around and so we had to change the topic anytime we observed some of the children were around. It seemed they had been warned by their care-givers on the kind of information to give to strangers. In my case, though I had been introduced to them as a student, they were still very careful the kind of information to give me. This served as a limitation since some of the children could not really open up to tell me the actual thing going on.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the data collected on the field as well as discussing some important themes in the data in relation to the research objectives and the theories used in this study. The chapter starts by describing the characteristics of my respondents and how that feature could possibly affect their responses. Also, this chapter will further discuss children's views of their well-being and the meaning they give to a good and bad childhood. Adults' views and meaning of good and bad childhood shall also be analyzed. Discussions on the data will be made alongside analyzing the data. Data used in this chapter shall be from interviews, focus group discussions and observations on the field.

5.2 Characteristics of the Orphans.

The total number of children who participated in the study was seventeen (17). Ten of which were boys and the other seven were girls. It must be stated that there is no precise reason why the boys were more than the girls. The initial plan was to actually get ten boys and ten girls to participate in the study. However, on getting to the field, I observed that the boys were more willing to participate in the study than the girls for reasons I may not be able to explain. And that accounts for the reason why the boys were more than the girls. The analysis of the data will be preceded by highlighting some characteristics of the children (orphans) like their parents' background, their reasons for coming to the institution, their duration of stay in the institution and to know if they had contact with any family member.

5.2.1 Background of Surviving Parents

In a study of seventeen participants, three of them had lost both parents, three had lost their biological mothers and four had lost their biological fathers. Three of them did not know the where about of their biological parents. Thus they had no information about their parents. They had come to the institution when they were babies. The last group of children who were four in number had both parents alive but were living in the institution. About half of the

people were between the ages of eight and twelve and the other eight were from the ages of thirteen to fifteen. From the stories the children were saying, one could deduce that the children who had both parents but yet lived in the institution were living in poverty and that was what brought them to the institution. Out of the seventeen children, fourteen of them were able to give me information about their parents. The other three could not give any information about their parents because they did not know them at all. Most of the children who were able to give me information about their parents said that as much as they could remember their parents were not literates when I asked them of the educational level of their surviving parents. Some of the children were not too sure if their parents were literates or not as one of the boys, Daniel said. When asked if his mother who was his surviving parent had been to school, he said;

'I don't really know if my mother is educated or not because I left her when I was a bit younger but I remember she use to speak English with us sometimes.'

Another girl who was not sure of her mother's educational level said;

'I remember my mother could speak English but when we were coming here, she told us that she couldn't go to school but wanted us to go to school so that we could become great people in future so I don't know if she went to school or not'.

Thus, most of the children who knew their parents said their parents were not able to go far in their education. Apart from the educational level, I sought to gain knowledge on the occupation of their parents. The responses to this question indicated that most of the children had come from the rural areas in Ghana. It is essential to mention that most of the rural areas in Ghana are characterized by abject poverty. Majority of the children who had lived with their parents before going to the institution said their parents were farmers in their village whiles others said their parents were petty traders. Those who were into farming were not doing that on a large scale as revealed by some of the children. An informant, responding to the kind of work his father did, said;

'My father had no work but we had a farm that he grows tomatoes and other things on so that we could get food to eat. He was the only one working on the farm because my mother is dead and when I was there, I was too small and my sister too was small so we couldn't help'.

The responses received from children who said their parents were into farming indicated that their parents were involved in subsistence farming which was meant to cater for the family and if there was any surplus, it was sold. Some other children also said their parents were into petty trading which did not fetch them much and for that matter was not enough to cater for the family. Two of the children declared that their mothers were house wives as one of them, Nunya (12 year old girl) said,

'My mother does not work. It was my father who was working when he was alive but my mother was not so when my father died, my mother was suffering because she was not getting money to take care of us and that is why she brought us here.'

Following the responses of the children, it can be deduced that majority of the informants' parents had no regular source of income which resulted in poverty. Almost all of them, apart from those who did not know anything about their parents stated that they could not get the basic needs in life like clothes, shelter, food and education. Despite their acknowledgement of the lack they were facing, an interesting thing most of them said was that they would have preferred to be with their parents though they lacked certain things in life.

5.2.2 Reasons for Coming into the Institution

Having talked to some of the care-givers in the institution on the backgrounds of the children, I realized that not all of them were orphans as one may assume. The local people call the institution 'orphanage home' suggesting that probably all the children there were orphans but a good knowledge about the institution revealed that orphan hood was not the only reason why children were institutionalized. Several reasons accounted for why children found themselves in the institution as disclosed by the interviews. All other reasons notwithstanding, most of the children had come to the institution as a result of the death of one or both parents. Three of the children who were interviewed had lost both parents, three had lost their mothers and four had lost their fathers. Thus, according to the definition of who

an orphan is, out of the seventeen participants, ten of them were orphans. However, taking into consideration other definitions of orphan which encompasses rejection, abandonment and inability to provide for a child, then all the seventeen children can be regarded as orphans.

Maternal orphans were considered to be more vulnerable than the paternal orphans according to local opinions. The reason being that men who had lost their wives were likely to marry again which could lead to maltreatment from the new woman in that she will favor her own children, neglecting the children from the deceased wife. Again, according to some adult participants, it was difficult for fathers (widowers) to single-handedly take care of their children especially when they are young which may deny the children of the necessary attention needed. They explained that it may not be difficult economically but in the area of providing care, cooking for the children, bathing and dressing them up for school amongst others, fathers may not find it easy. Those who were of such opinion argued that mothers were better in terms of support for the orphans because they were believed to be more concerned with their children than the fathers .They believe that after a man re-marries, he is not likely to give his children the kind of attention that will ensure optimal protection of his children.

On the other hand, some of the adults who were interviewed stated that in their own opinions, paternal orphans were more vulnerable than maternal orphans because mostly after the death a father, it becomes difficult for mothers (widows) to provide all the needs of the child. Despite these two different opinions, one cannot state emphatically which of the parents will have difficulty in catering for their children after the death of a spouse. A lone parent is vulnerable, men as well as women (Abrams, 1998, p10). Thus, any of the spouses, male or female could face some difficulties caring for their children in the absence of a spouse depending on the situation. Another group of children considered to be more vulnerable were younger ones. Literature has it that younger persons are more vulnerable to the blight of poverty (UNICEF, 2000). In the same light, younger children who were orphaned were more vulnerable.

Another reason why children found themselves in the institution was as a result of poverty. Spouses who had lost a partner and were finding it difficult to meet the needs of their

children brought them to the institution. Children who had lost both parents and were living with other family members were sent there because either their uncles or aunties could not take care of them anymore as a result of unemployment which led to poverty. Sophia, one of the girls narrated her story of how she found herself in the institution;

'When my parents died, I was sent to my aunty who was taking care of me. After some time, she wasn't going to work anymore, maybe she lost her job so later a friend told her she could bring me here and I was brought here some months after she lost her job.'

Four out of the seventeen children had both parents alive yet were living in the institution. They also accounted that the reason for their being there was as a result of the fact that their parents could not take care of them since they had no regular income. The responses from the participants indicated that the major problem that sent the children to the institution was poverty. Parents or other relatives of the children sent them to the institution because they could not cater for them. Thus, it can be said that sending children to the orphanage was used as a strategy by families of these orphans to cope with the poverty and to support their low income.

In addition to the above cases of children who had come to the institution as a result of orphan hood and poverty, some had come when they were babies either because they were abandoned by their mothers or their mothers died in the course of giving birth and the babies were abandoned by other relatives The inability of the hospital authorities or the social welfare to trace any family relation of such mothers resulted in caring for such abandoned children in the orphanage. These children had lived all their lives in the institution without knowing any relative. Asking one of the care-givers about the history of the children, she said;

'Not all the children here are orphans though most of them are. This home takes care of the abandoned and needy children as well. There are some of the children who came here when they were babies and since then we have never known any of their family members. Some children also come here temporarily probably because they got lost and the police were trying to locate their parents or are faced with abuse at home and the issue was being settled the DSW. Such children stay for a short while and soon return to their families'.

Three of the children I interviewed had such experiences of being abandoned when they were babies. They had got to know because they had been told when they grew up. Furthermore, some of the children had come to the institution on a temporal basis. Either such children got lost and were located by the police and so were sent there whiles waiting for their parents to come for them. Some of the children who were also staying there on a temporal basis were children who were facing abuse at home. They had come there whiles the issue was being dealt with. Such children either stayed for longer or shorter period in the institution depending on the outcome of the investigation of the abuse case.

Generally, different categories of children from different backgrounds found themselves in the institution. Most of them had come from the rural areas. Those who were living in the urban areas but yet found themselves there often were children who were living in the institution on a temporal condition.

5.2.3 Coming to the Institution (Who Decided)

'State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age, and the maturity of the child' (article 12, UNCRC).

This article has stated that in making decisions that concerns the child, his or her opinion must be sought. In regards to that, I tried to find out from the children if they were informed about their coming to the institution. I wanted to establish if children had decided themselves to come to the institution. Responses to this question revealed that some of them were not informed by their surviving parent that they would be sent to the institution (children's home). In one of the responses, when I asked the question, '*How did you get here"*? One of the participants, a thirteen year old boy said;

 'I was forced here'.

Elaborating on the answer he gave, he said he was not informed and that it was an uncle who came to take him from home one day when he was eight years. I went further to ask,

'*So where was your mother*?' and he replied,

'*She was in her room, I guess they had arranged already*'. Another child, answering the same question as to whether she was informed about her coming said;

'*One day my mother's church member came to her and said she could send us to a place where they will take care of us because my mother was suffering to care for us. When she left, my mother called us and said she will take us to a place where they will send us to school. She saw from my face that I was not willing to come and she told us again that one day a 'white man' will come and take us to Europe*'.

These examples coupled with other ones shows that most of the children who were brought to the children's home were not informed by their surviving parent or guardian. It can also be deduced from their responses that some of them were 'cajoled'. The question such responses raise has to do with the participatory rights of children. Parents or guardians who brought their children to the institution probably thought about them and how they may lack certain basic needs in life if they stayed with them and this might have informed their decision to bring their children to the institution. In other words, we can say that guardians who brought children to the institution had the best interest of the child in mind as declared in article 3 of the UNCRC. However, taking the best interest of the child into consideration meant denying them their participatory rights which allows them to express their opinion on whether to come to the institution or not. Thus, for most of the children, it was adults; parents and guardians who decided their coming into the institution. Again, with the aim of providing the best for their children, parents denied their children the right to live with them as declared in article 9 of the UNCRC. However, one could argue that these parents took such decisions in the best interest of the child taking into consideration that they could provide for them. Thus these children enjoyed some rights at the expense of the other. They had access to their needs at the expense of living with their family.

5.2.4 Duration of Stay in the Institution.

Out of the seventeen participants, majority of them had stayed in the institution for about four years and above. Most of them said they came to the home when they were quite young. Some of them said they cannot even recognize their mothers should they meet them. This implies that for most of the children, the institution had been their home. It was only one child, upon asking her how long she had been in the institution said:

'*I came here just two years ago. My mother didn't have money to take care of me so my aunty told her she could bring me here'.*

Considering the fact that almost all my informants had been in the institution for quite a long time, their experiences can be of great relevance to this study.

5.2.5 Knowledge about any Other Family Member

In order to be able to appreciate the experiences of the informants, the study also sought to find out if these children living in the institution were in touch with any other family member. The aim of trying to know if children had contact with any other family member apart from their parents was to see if there would be any difference in their experiences between children who had contacts with family members and those who had no contacts with other family members. Unfortunately, almost all of the informants had no contacts with any family member like an aunt or uncle. Out of the seventeen participants, two said they had been visited once by their surviving parent and another one also commented;

'*One woman came here and said she was my aunty. After that visit, I have never seen her again'.*

Another boy also said he had visited his uncle before but did not like the place because the place was boring as he said;

'*One day I was called to the office and I was told that my uncle wanted to see me. I went there and he decided to take me to his house for the holidays even though I didn't know him. But I didn't enjoy the place when I went because it was boring. I don't think I want to go there again'.*

Generally, majority of the children who participated in this study had no links with their family members.

5.3 Life in the Institution

Children living in different institutions may experience life differently. In few pages below I describe the institution in terms of structure, organization and how a day was like for the children. I further talk about how they receive sponsorship and highlight some differences and similarities of the institution to a normal home.

5.3.1 Structure and Organization of the Orphanage Home

As stated earlier, data for this study was collected from an orphanage home in the Greater Accra region. This institution is a government institution. The structure of the institution is such that they had separated where the boys slept from where the girls did. The setting of the institution is like that of a boarding school. It had a chapel where the children attended church services on Sundays. They also had a play ground with numerous playing items the children play with. The institution had boys' dormitories and girls' dormitories. In each room were a lot of beds where the children slept. According to the respondents, the number of people sleeping in a room varied depending on the size of the room. The maximum number of people was fifteen in a room. Thus, there were quite a large number of people sleeping together in the same room and they did not seem to have any problem with it at all. In the data, one of the boys, in responding to whether he was fine by the idea that they were a lot in the same room said;

'I like it that way; we talk about a lot of things when we are in the room especially about football. So I am okay with the sleeping arrangement'.

In another interview, one of the boys stated;

'Sometimes, some of the children die and when it happens like that we all get scared when we are going to sleep but because we are plenty in the room, I don't get afraid again. Sometimes

I move from my bed to sleep on my friend's bed when I am afraid so as for me I like the way we are plenty in the room.'

These examples showed that some of the the children were comfortable with their sleeping arrangements for reasons of companionship and security amongst others.

Again, in the institutions, the children had numerous care-givers. The girls had different mothers who took care of them in turns. These mothers do not stay with the children permanently. They have times allocated to them and when their time is up, they leave for the next to come. The care-givers who come and go are called aunties by the children. However, they also have about three of the 'mothers' who sleep there with the children. The boys also have mothers who take care of them in turns and have two mothers and one house father who stay with them.

Though the children are coming from different cities and backgrounds, they all live like brothers and sisters. The younger children are cared for by the older ones, bathing them, dressing them and providing any other assistance within their means. Thus, the relationships that exist among the children are like that of a family. They see themselves as brothers and sisters; they have created 'families' for themselves. During an interview session, one of the girls said;

'I don't have my own brother or sister that I came here with but I have a brother here. He comes to make sure I'm ready and we go to school together. Sometimes, when somebody wants to beat me, I run to him.'

There are some of the children who live in the institution with their biological siblings whiles some are there alone but have formed 'family ties' for themselves. In as much as the children try to live like brothers and sisters, they do not seem to trust each other fully. In my attempt to gain knowledge on their friendships both in the institution and outside, one of the boys said;

'I have friends but don't have best friends both here and in school. Everyone here is my friend but I don't want a best friend because they can betray you'.

This sounded quite interesting and I wanted to understand what he meant by 'they can betray you'. Unfortunately, he was not willing to go much into that so I left it.

A normal day in the institution is organized in a way that from 5 to 7am, children prepare for school. Every morning when the children wake up, they take their bath and dress up for school. The older children help with the bathing and dressing of the younger ones and prepare them for school and this is supervised by the mothers on duty. After they are all dressed up, they have their breakfast and go to school. The toddlers attended a kindergarten that was situated on the compound so they were not moving out. The rest of the children attended schools that were outside the compound. After school when they come back, between the hours of 3 and 5pm, they have their lunch after which some of the children sweep the compound whiles others help with the cooking of supper. After their chores, most of them go to do their home assignments that were given to them in school and they were assisted by some volunteers from the local community who had committed themselves in assisting the children to do their assignments given them from school. At this time when some of the children are engaged in some household chores, some also played around. Often times, the boys were found playing football and engaging in other games on their playing ground. Between 5:30 to 6pm, the children take their bath for the evening and just like it is done in the morning, the older ones help the younger ones. It must be stated that bathing twice in a day is a normal habit in Ghana probably because of the nature of the weather. After having their bath, they take their supper, after which they stay around with their friends for a while and then retire to bed.

Apart from the way a normal day is organised in the institution, there were few days in a week that was different from the other days. This is based on the observations made during the period of the field work. Such days were the days the home had visitors to donate to them and this happened most of the time. On these days, after children return from school and have taken their lunch, they dress up and move to the administration block where the donations take place. The children join the staff of the institution and donors for a photograph most of the time. Sometimes after donations are made, one of the children is made to thank donors on behalf of all the children. Generally, that was how a day was structured in the institution.

5.3.2 How Different or Similar is it from a Normal Home

The idea of attempting to gain knowledge on the similarities and differences surfaced when one of the girls gave an answer to the question I asked about what makes them happy on the institution. Observations made, alongside answers children gave to different questions I asked them gave me an idea of the similarities and differences in the institution. I did not directly ask the children if they perceived any difference in a normal home life and life in the institution. However, in the various answers children gave to different questions, it was quite obvious that home life and life in the institution were not the same. The few paragraphs below will attempt to fish out and discuss the differences and similarities between life in the institution and life in a home.

5.3.2.1 Similarities

Interviews with children did not point out any striking similarity between a normal home and life in the institution. However, from observations, I discovered that there are some similarities. What children did almost every morning was similar to what goes on in a normal home. In normal homes, when children wake, they prepare for school and this goes on in the institution as well. Again, the assistance younger children received from older ones in terms of bathing and feeding them are similar to what goes on in a normal home. Children assisting their care-givers in the cooking and other chores points out a similarity. However, assisting adults in household chores like cooking is not done on a daily basis in the institution. They do that in turns. Even though it cannot be said that life in the institution is too different from a normal home, one cannot point out a lot of similarities either.

5.7.2.2 Differences

'Most of the children who live in normal homes do not get what we get here so I will say we are having a good childhood. We do not live with our parents but we are better than most children with their parents so having a good childhood is not necessarily being with your family like my friend said'(Source; fieldwork, 2010).

The quotation above was a response given by one of the children when I asked them about the meaning they gave to 'good childhood.' The point I want to draw out of this is in the first portion of the response with emphasis on **'normal home.'** As this child kept talking, my attention was drawn to the reality that even the children knew that life in the institution was different from life in a normal home. This could be a result of the fact that most of the children I interviewed had stayed with their parents before coming to the institution. The first and obvious difference I could point out from observation was the structure of the children's home. On one big compound, they had an office, a pantry, a chapel, clinic, play ground, a school for the toddlers, and then their rooms where they sleep. The setting alone depicts a clear difference because normal homes in Ghana do not have all of these facilities on a single compound. Even the compound houses (different houses on a big single compound owned by different people) where a lot of people live on the same compound, facilities like offices, clinic, church and the like are not likely to be found there. The setting of the institution and the way things are organized there makes it look more like a boarding school than a home. Responses given by the participants informed me that even with work, children had different times they had to work. One of the girls in expressing her displeasure about being in the institution said;

'Yesterday like this, I wanted to be in the kitchen to help with the cooking but they said I should leave because it wasn't my turn to be in the kitchen. If I was with my mother, I could go to the kitchen to help her every day and anytime I want'.

Working in turns does not often happen in a typical Ghanaian home. Children help in domestic chores almost any time there is something to be done in the home. The exclusion of some children to be involved in work on some specific days is more characteristic of the boarding school system in Ghana where the work is shared among students on different days. Thus, the physical structure coupled with how certain things are done in the institution is enough to suggest a difference.

Another difference is the issue of multiple-givers in the institution. The institution has quite a number of women who play the roles of 'mothers' to the children who live there. Apart from some few 'mothers' who live permanently with the children, the rest of them come and go as and when it is their turn. This is not likely to happen in a normal home in Ghana. In the urban

areas, when both parents are busy, some of the homes are likely to engage the services of one adult who takes care of their children in their absence. Such adults come to the home as nannies. Thus, in a normal home, a lot of women do not play the roles of mothers at the same time. However, in the institution, different women are paid to play the roles of a mother to the children at the same time. Generally in Ghana, the training of a child is seen as a collective responsibility of adults and not necessarily the duty of only the child's parents. A common proverb among the Akans (the largest ethnic group in Ghana) suggests that it is not good for one person to train a child; 'obaakofo ntete akoraa' meaning 'one person does not train a child'. By this, they mean it is not only parents who have the duty of training their children. In spite of this notion, the care and training of children is largely the responsibility of parents. It is the parent of a child, either single or both who care for the child. In some occasions, it is grandparents, aunties or uncles who take on such responsibilities and children tend to form a bond with their guardians. Still in relation to care-givers, women who 'act' like mothers to the children in the institution are paid for the work they do whiles in the normal homes, mothers regard caring for their children as their responsibility and so do not need to be paid for doing so.

In addition to the above mentioned differences, another major difference between life in the institution and life in a normal home is the frequency of visits by 'strangers' to the institution. Due to the fact that children living in the institution survive by donations made by individuals, churches and other organizations apart from the help they receive from the government, they often have a lot of visitors in the institution. Most of these visitors do not come because they know anybody in the institution. They come only to donate to the children and in some cases interact with them. From my observations, this happens a lot of the time where people come to visit the institution and to donate. Normal homes in Ghana do not have strangers visiting almost all the time to donate to them if there are some at all. More other issues bring up differences between the institutional life and life in a normal home. There may be other differences but for the purpose of this study, I will limit myself to these differences.

5.3.3 Sponsors/Funding

In the institution where this study was conducted, funding or sponsorship came mainly from the government. Thus it is the government that supports the children, providing their basic needs. Article 27 of the UNCRC talks of children having the right to a standard of living and paragraph three of this article declares 'State parties in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing' (UNCRC). The ACRWC also states the same thing in article twenty (20). Therefore, in the institution where children are being cared for, it is the duty of the government of Ghana to support this institution to cater for the children.   Apart from the assistance the government provides, the children receive support from individual donors, churches and other sources. Aside the fact that all the children are being cared for, most of the children have been adopted by individuals who give them special attention by providing for their specific needs. The interviews that were conducted revealed that most of these children who had individual sponsors (apart from the fact that all the children were being cared for) were much comfortable as they attended good schools (in their opinions), had mobile phones and received special attention anytime their sponsors came around.

5.3.4 Responsibility

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 which legally became the African Union in 2001 and was entered into force in 1999. Like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the ACRWC is a comprehensive instrument that sets out rights and defines universal principles and norms for the status of children. However, one distinguishing feature of the ACRWC from the CRC is that the child is given responsibilities in addition to his rights which are significant in the African context. The ACRWC originated because the member states of the AU believed that the CRC missed important socio-cultural and economic realities particular to Africa. Therefore, it emphasizes the need to include African cultural values and experiences when dealing with the rights of the child.

This is captured specifically in article 31 of the ACRWC which states "every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community". The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have duty; to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need. Duty has been defined by the Encarta dictionary as something that somebody is obliged to do for moral, legal, or religious reasons (2009). In this study, considering the fact that the children have a 'new family' (the people in the institution), they have the responsibility to work within their ability for the cohesion of this family. Also, in the Ghanaian society, respect for elders is very important so children are obliged to respect their care givers and assist them where necessary. Below is a discussion of some of the responsibilities children have in the institution.

Firstly, children had the responsibility to respect their elders, both care-givers and any other adult they met in the institution. This the children did by calling all their care-givers, aunties. In Ghana, it is common to call older women aunties. I got to know this by asking the children how they called their care-givers. In all the interviews, I asked children how they called their care-givers and one of the boys in response to that said;

'*We call them aunties. That is how we have been trained to call them*'

Almost all the children responded in this direction. This is a sign of respect to the elderly in the Ghanaian culture. Again, as part of the responsibilities of children as stated in the ACRWC, children had to assist adults in case of need. In view of this, children in the institution assisted their care-givers in household chores like cooking, washing and many more. Still in the area of assistance, older children helped younger ones when they were preparing for school. Thus children were being cared for whilst older ones also cared for other younger ones. Children who had their younger siblings there assisted them when they had to bath and dress up. Those who had no siblings were equally cared for by other children. By observation, it can be said that the children had a sense of responsibility. In other words, they loved to be responsible probably for their own gratification or because of the praises they may receive from adults when they act responsibly.

5.3.5 Challenging Moments / Stigmatization

Even though a greater part of the interviews conducted revealed that most of the children were comfortable in the institution, they also have their challenges that make them wish they were with their own parents. From the interviews, one could see that the children do miss the 'normal life' where they can be part of everything that goes on in the home. In one of the conversations, a twelve year old girl expressed how delighted she would have been if she was with her mother because then she could be part of household chores all the time;

'Yesterday like this, I wanted to be in the kitchen to help with the cooking but they said i should leave because it wasn't my turn to be in the kitchen. If I was with my mother, I could go to the kitchen to help her every day and anytime I want.'

According to the children, everyday their house mother appoints different people who will assist in the kitchen meaning they cannot go there to help anytime they want and they see this as one of the challenges they have in the orphanage home because they do not have the chance to be like any other child living outside the institution.

Another challenge the children face according to them was the public's reaction towards them. According to them, their school mates do laugh at them sometimes so though their needs are met in the orphanage home, most of them said they would not recommend other siblings of theirs to be there. One of the respondents when asked why he would not recommend his remaining brothers to come there though they were suffering from poverty said;

'Hmm, you don't understand, I prefer they stay with our mother. Hmm, they laugh at us in school, simply because we stay here, they laugh at us but as for me I don't care.'

Comments like this featured prominently as the children discussed their challenges of staying in the orphanage home. The children were faced with the challenge of stigmatization as revealed by the data. Another boy also made a comment that showed that they were stigmatized in school;

'They give us all we need for school here but sometimes I misplace my eraser or pencil. When I ask my friends, they laugh at me. I don't know why they laugh because when other friends

ask, they don't laugh. Maybe it's because we are living here. Just because we are living here, they laugh at us'.

5.4 Children's Meanings / Interpretations of Good and Bad Childhood.

5.4.1 Introduction

'The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture (La Fontaine, 1979 cited in James and Prout, 1990). These 'facts of culture' may vary and so can be said of childhood as a social institution'. It is in view of this that childhood can be said to be socially constructed (James and Prout, 1990). Thus, childhood is socially constructed based on the culture of a particular society. As stated by Ansell (2005), the concept of childhood varies from society to society because childhood is culturally constructed. By implication, the meaning of childhood may differ from one society to the society. In the same light, what may be understood or perceived as a good childhood may differ. In this study, I explore children's views on how a good childhood should be like or the interpretations they give to good and bad childhood. Good childhood is used to mean an 'ideal childhood' or 'proper childhood'. Various views of the children were aimed at gaining knowledge on what they see as an 'ideal childhood' or 'proper childhood.' In the process of interviewing the children, 'good childhood' was used interchangeably with 'proper childhood' to make the children understand better. Likewise, 'bad childhood' was used interchangeably with 'unhappy childhood'. In finding out about bad childhood, the main intention behind it was to know if they considered themselves as vulnerable because they were living in an institution. Bad or unhappy childhood was used so that the children could get a better understanding of what question they were answering.

5.4.2 Children's Interpretations of Good or Ideal Childhood.

As a prelude to finding out what meaning the children give to good childhood, I first asked them how they considered themselves and interestingly, most of them said they were having a good childhood and did not see themselves as vulnerable. Majority of the children who participated in the research explained that what they were experiencing was what they considered to be a good childhood. Knowing the various problems identified with children living in institutions, it was quite interesting to hear such responses from children. In view of that, I sought to understand why they regarded themselves as having a good childhood.

Different children gave different reasons why they considered themselves as having a good childhood. Some of the children interpreted good childhood to mean children who have all their needs met. Some of the children also said a good childhood is one characterized by play. Thus children who have the chance to play and items to play with can be considered to be having a good childhood. The table below presents the various interpretations the children gave to good childhood.

Table 2: Children's Interpretation of Good Childhood

Interpretation	Frequency
Children who have access to food, education, clothing and shelter.	7
Children who have access to playing items and are allowed to play.	4
Children who have their siblings around them.	3
Children who laugh and are happy all the time	1
Not too sure what good childhood is	2
Total	**17**

The table above discloses that out of the seventeen (17) informants, majority of them perceived good childhood as having access to basic necessities in life. The children explained that in their view, if only a child could be given all what he or she wanted in life, then such a child cannot be said to be vulnerable but rather having a good childhood. One of the children went on to further state that irrespective of where children find themselves, so far as they have their needs provided, then they are experiencing a good childhood. So in his own opinion he thinks that children in the institution including him are experiencing a good childhood as he stated;

'I think I am an example of a good childhood because I get everything that I want. Maybe all the children here are happy children because we get almost all that we want. Most of us have

sponsors who help us apart from what the home provides so even though we don't have our parents here, we are happy. What I am trying to say is that every child who can get what he or she asks for is enjoying his childhood so I think that is good childhood.'

In the focus group discussions (FGDs), similar views were expressed as a thirteen year old reported;

'Most of the children who live in normal homes do not get what we get here so I will say we are having a good childhood. We do not live with our parents but we are better than most children with their parents so having a good childhood is not necessarily being with your family like my friend said.'

This statement was in response to one of the comments one of the girls made by saying that she thinks children will have a good childhood when they are with their siblings and parents. It is interesting to note that being with family or not as a yardstick for good childhood raised a debate during the discussions. One of the girls in the course of the argument said that for those who did not know their parents, it was fine for them to think that with or without family, one could still have a good childhood but for those who knew their parents, it was difficult for them to say they were having a happy childhood without their parents though they had all what they needed. Few of the children also related good childhood to one that is characterized by play and elaborated further to say that if children are given the chance to play with their friends and also have items they can play with, it offers them the opportunity to experience a good childhood. One of the boys during the interview sessions said;

'We have a play ground here. After school when we have finished whatever work we have to do, we are allowed to play and such moments always makes me happy. For we the boys, sometimes we plan a football competition and it is always nice. Anytime we finish playing, you can see that everyone is happy that is why I am saying that children who play experience good childhood'.

One person out of the participants said that good childhood is one that children are always happy and laugh a lot whereas about two of the informants said they were not too sure what good or ideal childhood should be like.

The various interpretations or meanings the children gave to a good or ideal childhood indicates that one cannot state emphatically what is suppose to be an ideal childhood. Considering the fact that all the children are in the same environment with the same culture, one could attribute the differences in their opinions to their different personalities and histories because different personalities will see things differently.

An interesting point that some of the children used to characterize a good childhood was the concept of play which none of the few adults who were interviewed mentioned. Such differences in opinions probably accounts for the reason why social studies of childhood (a theoretical perspective for this study) admonishes that children should be studied and understood from their own point of view.

5.4.3 Children's Interpretations of Bad Childhood

Just like I did in finding out children's opinions about good childhood, I sought to gain knowledge on the meanings the children give to bad childhood and I started this by asking the children if they regarded themselves as experiencing a bad childhood and almost all of them said no. In finding out about bad childhood, the main intention was to find out if the children regarded themselves as vulnerable to an extent where they think they may need any help or intervention. Most of the children living in the institution did not see themselves as vulnerable. However they regarded some of the children living in the institution with them as being vulnerable or experiencing bad childhood. Children's meanings to bad childhood did not come up during the focus group discussions. I asked children about it during the one on one interviews but amazingly most of them pointed to a category of children as experiencing a bad childhood as a nine year old girl reported;

'Bad childhood is one that is full of sickness. Like my sisters there, they cannot walk, they cannot talk, and they cannot do anything for themselves. They are the kind of children who have bad childhood and so need help.'

In the above statement, the girl was referring to two of the children who were physically disabled. These two could not walk nor talk and for that matter could not do anything for

themselves though they were old. All the time they had to be assisted by other children in order to be able to bath, eat, go to their rooms and do any other thing they had to do. For some of the children, bad childhood is one of lack and want. In other words, when children do not have the necessary provisions in life like food, clothing, shelter and the like, it renders them vulnerable. Some of the informants said they do not know who is a vulnerable or an unhappy child.

5.5 Adults' Meaning / Interpretation of Good and Bad Childhood

Just like I did with the children in the institution, I sought to find out from adults their own views about how good childhood should be like and the vice versa. In all the four interviews, the care-givers pointed out that a good childhood is one where children are provided for not taking into account where they are. One of the care-givers admitted that it would have been better if children were with their parents but in the absence of that, we cannot say children in the institution are vulnerable because they are provided for. In an interview with her, she said;

'I think a good childhood should be one where children get their basic needs met. If children are given what they need to survive, they will not end up on the streets because by ending up on the street, they endanger their lives. It would have been better though if children were with their parents but if that is not possible for some reasons, I think it should not be so much of a problem so far as they are provided for wherever they are'.

In the interview, one of the mothers argued that whether children live in institutions or with their parents, they experience good childhood when they are given their basic needs. The opposite was what they used to describe a bad childhood. In an interview, all of them said if children lack their needs in life, it renders them vulnerable and that is a bad childhood. In an interview with one of the mothers who had worked in the institution for a longer time, she stated that;

'A child will become vulnerable when parents or guardians are unable to provide for them. This will push the child on the street and this is bad especially for the girl child because they may be abused sexually by some bad people in the deceit of giving them money'.

For these care-givers who were interviewed, a child being in the institution does not necessarily make them vulnerable. However, the inability to provide for the child, whether they are with their parents or in an institution, makes the child vulnerable.

5.6 Children's Subjective Assessment of Their Well-Being in the Institution

5.6.1 Introduction

Children living in institutions are a part of the group of children considered to be living in difficult circumstances. These groups of children have dominated the media spotlight and attracted both academic and NGO attention. While far from typical of third world children, Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) merit attention, in part because of high profile they have in the Western imagination of the Third World and in NGO policy. It is important that such children's lives are understood and they are not merely on the receiving end of emotional but uninformed responses (Ansell, 2005). Thus, before any intervention programs are designed for children living in difficult circumstances, the children's experiences must first be appreciated in order to know the right kind of intervention that will be beneficial to such children. Some scholars argue that in doing research, children's explanations, perspectives and views must also be examined since they are knowledgeable on issues that concern them. It is based on these above-mentioned assertions that this study sought to hear the opinions of children on their well-being and what meanings they give to a good and bad childhood.

Every human being has needs. These needs could be physical, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual and many more. Often times when these needs are met, one is likely to experience a sense of good feeling. This section will therefore discuss the well-being of children in different areas of their lives and from their own point of view. Well-being has been used to mean a comfortable state. The subjective well-being of children will cover different areas like education, personal needs, health and emotional needs which are all connected to their well-being.

5.6.2 Personal Needs

In this study, personal needs are used to mean food, clothing and shelter. Children's provision of their needs is one of the determinants of their well being. When participants were asked how they felt about their provision of these basic needs, most of them said they were comfortable with regards to food, clothing, foot wear and shelter. Luther (1999) states that essential in the well-being of children is support and provision of their needs. If children's needs are met, it gives a sense of well-being. Thus, one of the overall determinants of well-being is the acquisition of needs.

In regards to this, I asked children if they had their needs such as food, clothing, footwear and others they deem relevant met and majority of them responded in the affirmative as one of the informants declared;

'Because we have a lot of people donating to us, we don't really have a problem when it comes to food and clothes and other things like school bags. We also have a place where we can sleep so in this area, I think we are all comfortable'.

The responses of the children indicated that they did not face challenges when it came to this area of their lives because they had a lot of people providing for them. For those who had peculiar needs such as an additional school uniform, school bags and others, they had their sponsors who provided for them even though the institution also did their best to give all the children what they needed.

5.6.3 Education

Education is one of the very essential needs of children and as such, of great importance in our societies, Ghana not excluded. Aside the love and care parents or guardians give to children, one other powerful thing they can offer their children is education. It is in regards to this that article twenty-eight (28) of the UNCRC has emphasized the role of state parties in children's education; 'State parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall make primary education compulsory and available free to all' (UNCRC). In compliance with this Ghana has what is called free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE). This

program is to ensure that all children in Ghana are able to enjoy the right to basic education. Thus, children will attend school without paying school fees. However, parents or guardians still have a role to play by providing the necessary items that their children will need for school like school uniforms, school bags, books, pens and many more. It is important to emphasize that this program, FCUBE, does not operate in the private schools in Ghana. Children who attend private schools still pay school fees whiles those who attend the government schools benefit from the program (FCUBE).

Interestingly, most Ghanaians for some reasons believe that the government schools are not good enough because teachers do not pay attention to children's needs like it is done in private schools and will prefer to send their wards to private schools if they have the means. This notion of private schools being better than government schools in Ghana influences children's attitudes as it instills a good feeling in children who attend the private ones. Most children who attend private schools in Ghana are likely to say they attend one of the best schools.

The interviews conducted with the children living in the institution revealed that most of the children attended one of the very good schools in Ghana, in their own opinion. Thus, all these children had access to education which most of them claimed they were not getting when they were with their own families. For those who were able to go to school whiles with their parents, they could not get the needed materials that could facilitate their learning as a result of poverty. Not only were the children happy because they were going to school but they were happy with the school they attended as one of the boys asserted;

'The school I attend is one of the good and advanced schools. They train us well and the teachers have time for us unlike some other schools'.

From the response of this boy, it is evident that he considered himself to be fortunate because he had the chance to attend that school. In another interview, one of the girls gave her reason why she loved her school so much;

'I love my school because they train us and again, they do not beat us. When you do something wrong, they (meaning the authorities) will warn you about three times before you are beaten.'

Such opinions from the children generally indicated that almost all of them felt comfortable with the school they were attending. All of them also said they had the necessary items needed to facilitate their learning like books, pens, school bags and the like. For some of them, the school was sponsoring such items, for others their foster parents sponsored them and the rest of the children had theirs provided for by the institution. Most of the children had such a good feeling about their school and were comfortable with it probably because most of them attended private schools which in their views were better than government schools as stated earlier. This good feeling about their school positively influenced their sense of well-being subjectively. They considered themselves as being comfortable.

5.6.4 Emotional Needs

The role of parents or guardians is the role of a provider in all respects. It is essential that the basic needs of children like providing food, clothing, and shelter are met. However, working to meet only the physical needs of children is not enough. Children, just like adults, need to be satisfied emotionally. The children showed how they had their needs met but not emotionally. Considering the number of children as against the care-givers, there was no time for care-givers to give special attention to any of the children unless they were ill.

From my observations, it was rare to see a care-giver for instance carrying a child. This could be due to the fact that the children were more than the care-givers so there was not enough time for children to be carried. Care-givers most of the time had to attend to other 'important' things instead of just sitting to chat with a child in her arms. From my observations, children received special attention sometimes from the volunteers who visited them. Probably because the volunteers did not have much to do when it came to cooking and washing for children, they spent most of their time with the children which in a way satisfied their emotional needs. It is worth noting that the questions that were aimed at gaining knowledge on the emotional needs of the children did not fully achieve that aim since most of the responses to such questions were not really clear. It could be that the questions were not well formulated or the

children were just not willing to talk about it. In an interview session, one of the boys in responding to whether he would like his younger brother who was staying with their mother to join him there since he said he was comfortable said;

'You don't understand. I can't talk about it but I prefer my brother to stay with our mum. When I grow up and get a job, he can come and stay with me'.

On giving this response, I connected it to his emotional need though he did not say so. I did so because staying with one's parents gives a sense of belongingness so if he claimed he had his needs met in the institution, yet would not be happy to have his younger brother there, then probably, there was lack in a certain area of his life which I attributed to his emotional needs. Again the fact that most of the children claimed they would have wished to be with their parents in spite of all what they were getting showed that they still lacked in some areas of their lives which could be attributed to the emotional needs. Thus, in this area, they did not have a positive sense of well-being.

5.6.5 Health Issues

The Webster's dictionary has defined health as a noun which refers to the general condition of the body or mind. Thus, health is related with the state of functionality of the body of an organism especially the human body. The World Health Organization has also defined health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO). Traditionally, health has been defined to mean the absence of presence of disease. However, WHO's definition of health does not only cover physical well-being but also mental, social and others. As can be seen from the above definitions, there is no general agreement as to what health is because health cannot be measured (http://www.bukisa.com/articles/357439_definition-of-health). In this study, questions related to health were asked in line with the traditional definition for health, 'the presence or absence of a disease. 'The purpose of asking questions that were related to their health was to find out how they assessed the sickness; thus whether it was serious or not, if they were sent to the hospital and also if they received enough attention when they were sick.

Most of the children, on asking if they had ever fallen ill since they came to the orphanage home, replied they had. Apart from some few individuals, most of these children thought that the sickness was not 'any serious sicknesses', most of them exclaimed. Some of the children said when they fell sick, it was the house father who took care of them and some also said it was the aunties. Some children also stated that though they had fallen ill before, it was some years back as one of the boys reported;

'Yes, I have fallen sick before and I think it was malaria. It was a serious one so I was taken to the hospital by our father here and he was the one who took care of me during those times. That was about five years ago' (Source, fieldwork 2010).

In another interview, one of the children, though had also fallen ill and said it was malaria, did not see it as any serious sickness as he stated;

'I have been sick before, malaria, but it was not serious so i was not sent to the hospital. We have a clinic here so if the sickness is not serious, you will be sent to the clinic here but if it is serious, you will be sent to hospital. When we get sick, it is the aunties who take care of us' (Source, fieldwork 2010).

One of the participants also when asked if she had fallen ill ever since she came there said yes. This girl was one of the children who had stayed in the institution their whole life and did not know any parent or where she came from. From all her responses to the interview, she seemed to be very comfortable and sees herself to be fortunate because of what they receive from the institution and her response to the question related to health was no different as she reported;

I fall sick sometimes and anytime I fall sick the aunties take good care of me. If it is serious, they send me to the hospital but if not, I am given first aid at home (Source: fieldwork 2010).

These examples stated above and most of the responses the participants gave indicated that in the area of their health, they were comfortable. Most of their responses showed that they were well taken care of when they fell sick. Thus, their care-givers gave them enough attention when they were ill and when necessary, they were taken to the hospital. The chances that one may assume that children living in the institutions do not receive enough attention are high probably because of the number of care-givers as against the number of children being taken

care of. However, according to the children, in the area of their health, they claimed they were comfortable not only because they are sent to the hospital for good treatment when they are sick but also because they have attention from their care-givers. This also gives them a positive sense of well-being.

Generally, most of the children, apart from their emotional needs which they could not talk much about, had a positive attitude to the assistance they received in terms of education, personal need and in the area of their health. Because all these are connected to well-being, it gave children a positive assessment of the well-being subjectively.

5.7 Coping Strategies/ Resilience.

The categories of children who are said to be living in difficult circumstances have been identified with a lot of vulnerabilities. All these vulnerabilities notwithstanding, most children are able to adapt certain strategies that help them to cope in the difficult circumstance which in turn makes them resilient. Thus, most these children, in spite of their 'vulnerabilities', manage to find a way to deal with the circumstance they find themselves in to make a better life out of that circumstance. Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue that children's ability to change some of the adverse conditions for the better clearly indicates that children are not only passive subjects of social structures but can be said to be social actors with agencies. Children are therefore not complete victims of circumstances and social structures as one may think but are able to utilise their agency in order to be able to cope with a situation.

Institutional care is gradually losing acceptance because it has been identified with a lot of challenges for children. Consequently, community-based approach of caring for children is being recommended where children who have lost parents will live in families instead of living in institutions (http://www.ovcghana.org/what_is_cri.html). Tolfree however cited that;

It is important to recognize that there is no single ideal alternative to institutional care. Children have differing needs that relate to, among other things, their age, personal characteristics and cultural background. Children are not passive recipients of care, but

active agents, and some find ways of improving their own situations, within institutions, individually or with their peers (Tolfree, 1995, cited in Ansell, 2005).

Thus, though children living in institutions are categorized as part of the group of children living in difficult circumstances and are therefore seen as vulnerable, most of these children are able to find means of coping which affirms the claim that children are social actors with agencies.

Several factors may account for why some children may be able to cope in a difficult circumstance. Firstly, the support such children receive helps them to be able to cope. Much of the studies that have been conducted on children living in poverty and other unfortunate situations have indicated that most of these children receive support (Woodhead &Montgomery, 2003). Assistance may either come from the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), families, churches, and philanthropists, amongst others. Children's reliance on such supports gives them the ability to cope. Personal history also affects coping skills. Children who have had past records of approval and acceptance are more likely to be resilient than those who have been subjected to humiliation and failure (Garbarino, 1999 cited in Boyden &Mann, 2005).

In this section, discussions will be made on the strategies children employ in coping with their new environment (institution). It must be noted that for some of the children, the institution has been the place where they have grown up. All their lives, that is where they have lived. For others, it was a new environment to them. Further discussions will highlight the implications of these two groups of children and their experiences. During the interviews, children were not asked emphatically how they were coping in the institution. However, answers to questions like 'are you a happy child?' and 'what makes you happy?' gave indications of how they were coping in the institution. Different answers highlighted different coping strategies the children were using. The first question that was asked in relation to their coping strategies was 'are you a happy child?' and amazingly, most of them responded in the affirmative. Table 2 presents the responses given by informants.

Table 3: Do you consider yourself as a happy child?

Responses	Frequency
Yes	14
No	0
Not sure	3
Total	**17**

As shown by table 2, a large majority of the children claimed they were happy children. None of them said they were unhappy and few of them were not sure whether they consider themselves as happy or not. One may expect that these children who are living without their parents may consider themselves as unhappy but that was not the case. From most of their responses, one can comfortably say that most of these children have learnt to cope because of the support they receive as one of the boys claimed;

'*When my mother told us to come here because she did not have money to take care of us, me and my brother, I did not want to come so when I came I was not happy but now I am happy . My brother is also happy here.*'

The question that comes to mind after hearing such responses is 'what has changed?' Why are children who were not willing to come to the institution now saying they are comfortable and happy there? One of the likely answers to this question came up when I asked the children how soon they would wish to leave the institution. Majority of the children said they would leave when they were through with their education. Table 3 presents the responses children gave during the interviews when they were asked how soon they would wish to leave the institution.

Table 4: How soon do you wish to leave this institution?

Responses	Frequency
When I finish my education	13
Anytime my mother comes for me	2
When I am eighteen years	1
When I get a job	1
Total	**17**

From the table above, one of them said he would leave the institution when he gets a job. In his explanation, he meant that when he grows up and gets a job, then he will leave whiles another boy said he will leave when he is eighteen years. I asked why so and he explained that in the institution, once you are eighteen, you should leave for others to also have a chance to come there. Two of them also said they will leave any time their mother decided to come for them. These children were ready to leave at anytime irrespective of the fact that they had their needs met. Majority of them however declared that they would leave when they were done with their education. Apart from the children who had lived in the institution all their lives, almost all the children said they were not willing to go when they were being sent there. After some years of being there, they were now comfortable to live there. Majority of the responses in table 3 shows that the children were willing to leave when they were done with their education. These responses bring out the competence of the child with an agency. As argued by social studies of childhood, children are not passive but active social beings who know what is good for them. Most of the children were able to reason that going back to their families may deny them their education and were therefore willing to stay until they were done. These children were actively involved in matters that concerned them.

The responses given in table 3 depict how majority of the children considered themselves to be happy probably because they received support in their education amongst others. Reliance of the children on such support probably had enabled them to cope with the conditions in the

institution. Thus, one of the factors that influenced children's coping abilities was the support they received in the institution in terms of food, clothing, shelter, education and many more.

During the FGDs, one of the things that became obvious was the fact that children who saw themselves as intelligent and therefore received praise from adults (care-givers or teachers) were more resilient and confident than the other children. During the discussions on their education, one of the boys tried explaining to me how some of them receive sponsorships for their schooling;

'The school I attend is one of the best in Ghana and it is the school that sponsors us. The school asked our mother (referring to the director) to select ten of us to come there for free. After one academic year, two out of the ten were asked to stop the school. It was later that they (the authorities) told us that if we do not perform well, we will be asked us to leave the school like they did to two of our friends. Later, our mother selected two more to replace those who left.'

The boy who narrated this story talked with so much confidence because he had been in the school for many years implying that he was an intelligent student. Some of the children with similar stories felt good about themselves as they received praise from adults. All the children who had such stories also claimed they were happy children. Probably, they had learnt to cope through the approvals they received which had given them a feeling of self worth. This is in line with the assertion made by Garbarino (1999) that children's personal history affects their coping abilities. Children who have experienced rejection and failure are less likely to be resilient than those who have experienced acceptance and approval. One of the children who received praise for his intelligence stated:

'They laugh at us in school but me when they laugh at me, I don't care. Sometimes my brothers are worried when the other children laugh at us but me, I don't mind them because I don't care. They can laugh and laugh, I don't care'. After all, I'm even intelligent more than them. My teacher always says that and our aunties here always like my end of term report from school.

This boy had received a lot of praises both from teachers in school and care-givers at home and that probably made him resilient than some of the children. Though he also faced a problem of stigmatization like most of the children, he was still able to cope. The praises he received had built some inner competencies in him. Another means of coping by some of the children in the institution was their personal stories. Literature does not only point to children's own inner abilities and resources but also places emphasis on the role of interpersonal relationships as a vital factor mediating risk and resilience. Werner and Smith (1992) stated that the presence of an adult, at least one supportive adult can have a great impact on the resilience of the child. Most of the children had been adopted by people (adults) who provided for them specifically aside the help they all received. These adults had become like foster parents to the children, though the children still lived in the institution. Anytime such adults came around, children who had been adopted received special attention. They (adults) sponsored the children and so were interested in their well being. Some of the children relied on the presence of these adults as a means of coping. The sponsors of a child had become significant in the life of a child because the adults made them feel special. One of the children in narrating what happens anytime her sponsor came around said;

'Anytime my sponsor comes here, he brings gifts to all of us. When he is about to leave, the aunties will call me to the office where he will have a chat with me and give me what he brought specially for me. Sometimes he visits me in school to ask my teachers how I am performing. I'm always happy to see him.'

This is in line with the assertion that significant others in the life of children help them to be able to cope in difficult circumstances (Dawes, 1992 cited in Boyden & Mann, 2005). Other ways children coped in the institution was the social support from peers. Children who did not have their siblings in the institution had formed some for themselves. In a group of two or three, some of the children had come together and said they were siblings. They supported each other and offered help when one of them needed. An eight year old girl narrating her story during the interviews said anytime someone wanted to beat her, she went to call her big brother. I further went ahead to ask if she had come to the institution with him or if they were siblings already and she said;

'*He became my brother when we came here. He always comes to make sure I am fine and have eaten. When I was younger, he use to help me when I was preparing for school, bath and dress me. Because of him, no one can beat me*'.

A thirteen year old girl who had not been able to form such ties and had no brother or sister in the institution showed her displeasure during the interview as she stated;

'*I wish my younger sister was here. My younger sister is with my mother now but I wish she was here so that when I wake up in the morning I can get someone to bath and dress up for school. If she comes here, I'll be happy*'.

Thus children relied on their peers, either biological brothers and sisters or friends as a means of coping and making themselves happy in the institutions. Another medium which can be said to be employed by the children as a coping strategy was play. Most of the children confirmed that anytime they played, they felt happy as stated earlier. The institution had a play ground for the children and they were allowed to play most of the time. As discussed on the theories of play, that when people play, they tend to forget their problems. Probably, play was one of the mediums through which the children relieved their emotions and thus, served as a coping strategy.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

In summary, this chapter will concentrate on the findings of the research with regards to the research objectives. The research aimed at gaining knowledge on the experiences of children (orphans) living in institutions. The main aim of the research was to gain knowledge on how children in vulnerable situations assess their sense of well being. This chapter will highlight the results of the research as well as discuss the possible reasons why such results were obtained. The specific group of vulnerable children who were studied in this research were orphans living in institutions. This section will finally outline some recommendations associated with the findings in this area for further research.

6.2 Summary of Objectives, Theoretical Perspectives and Methods Used.

This research explored the experiences of children living in institutions, their well being as well their coping strategies. The main aim of the research was to gain knowledge on how children in vulnerable situations assess their sense of well being. Some of the questions that the research attempted to answer were:

- What is a good childhood for children in their own perspective?
- What are children's experiences in the institution?
- In what situations do adults think children are vulnerable?

The use of theories in research cannot be denied. Theories can be used as a guide in research. It is also being applied during analysis to get insight into an empirical data. Social studies of childhood together with children's rights were the theories used in this study.

The main articles that have been used in this study from the UNCRC are articles 3 and 12; article 3 talking about the best interest of the child and article 12 which declares children's participatory rights. The ' best interest of the child' which can also be found in article 4 of the

ACRWC states that all decisions made on behalf of the child should be in the child's best interest. The UNCRC advocates that children should be given rights to express their opinion. However, if decision should be made on behalf of the child either by parents or the public, it should be in the interest of the child. The participatory rights as stated by the UNCRC asserts that children should be given rights to express their opinions about issues concerning them. The participatory rights have actually brought up a lot of contentions. The question that comes to mind when we talk about the participatory right is; should children of any age be made to enjoy these rights? Children of certain ages may not be able to decipher between what is right or good for them. As a result, that child cannot be left alone to do what he or she wants as a way of serving him or her with the participatory right. The child has the right to be protected from anything that will be harmful to him or her. Refusal to do that will be denying them of rights due them.

Another theory that has been used is the social studies of childhood which lays emphasis on the competence of the child as well as studying children in their present condition and from their perspective. This theory also emphasizes the need for childhood to be described as socially constructed. To describe childhood as socially constructed or indeed any phenomenon is to suspend a belief in or a willing reception of its-taken-for granted meanings as stated by James, Jenks and Prout, 1998. Thus, childhood should be constructed in context. Again, the rejection of adult view on children's research is another feature of sociology of childhood. The field seeks to involve children's perspective more than adults when the study has to do with children. Children are regarded as social actors and must therefore not be considered as passive subjects who are victims of structures in society. If children are considered as social actors, then their voices must be allowed in research and their opinions given due weight since they know themselves.

The study made use of qualitative methods. In doing qualitative research, one gains subjective understanding of a particular area of study. Considering the objectives of the study, qualitative approach was necessary in order to gain in-depth knowledge of what was being researched. As stated by Elliot (1999), 'the question shall determine the method.' Thus, the choice of methodology is influenced by the objectives or purpose of the study.

6.3 Life History and Subjective Well-Being in the Institution

The fact that a child is an orphan does not necessarily mean he or she will end up in an institution. In other words, it is not all orphans who live in institutions. Before an orphan is sent to an institution, there should be a major cause. When a child becomes an orphan, the automatic outcome is not institutionalization. Therefore, one of the efforts of the research was to establish or to find out the various reasons that brought children (orphans) to the institution. Directly or indirectly I sought to find out from children the cause for their movement into the institution. From the responses of children, I established that the kind of life children lived or the kind of childhood they had before coming to the institution influenced their experiences and assessment of their well-being in the institution. In other words, the life history of children affected their experiences.

In an attempt to answer for the reasons why children lived in the institution, the study revealed that poverty was a major cause. Although some of the children went to the institution after the death of one or both parents, the underlying factor was poverty. The responses from the children revealed that either their surviving parent or family members they lived with could not take care of them due to poverty. Most of the children I interviewed had come from the rural areas in Ghana into the institution and such children had a good assessment of their well-being. In other words, they felt life was fine or comfortable for them. One of the characteristic features of the rural areas in Ghana is the level of poverty. Thus, children who had come from such poor areas were living a life of lack. According to their responses, they did not have most of their needs met. Coming to the institution was then a solution to their deprived life. Orphans coming from rural areas who had lost single or both parents came to the institution because either their surviving parent could not cater for their need or after the death of both parents, no family member could take up responsibility for them as a result of poverty. It cannot be stated that all children in the institution had a poor background even though most of them did. Coincidentally, almost all the children I interviewed seemed to have an unpleasant background and this informed their responses. Their poor background probably explained why most of them felt comfortable in the institution despite the numerous problems associated with institutional care. At least, in the institution, they had their basic needs such as food, clothing, foot wear, education and shelter met

Studies on poverty show how the provisions of basic needs are prerequisites in enjoying other aspects of life. Providing basic needs in several ways, affect other needs. For instance, having access to shelter has the ability to affect children's feeling of safety in a more positive way. Also, providing children with food or access to proper food can influence their health positively. Good health will sequentially affect their active participation in activities that goes on in their environment. As stated earlier, the study revealed that most of these children had come from deprived background. Therefore getting access to their basic needs in the institution was a sort of relief.

From these findings, I sought to infer the implication for a community-based approach of caring for children in institutions. I attempted to understand how re-integrating children into the communities and to their families will be effective. Most of the children I interviewed said they were not ready to leave the institution until they were done with their education. The initial response of most of the children to life in the institution was that of despair due to separation from their families. However, upon seeing the prospects in the institution, the attitudes and perceptions of most of the children changed. Some of the children stated emphatically that they were not willing to leave even if another family member comes to take them out of the institution and their reason was that they were not sure if those family members were really their family members and if they could take care of them as declared by one of the participants;

'I know now they kill children for money so if someone comes and says he is my uncle so I should go with him, I won't go because I don't know any of my family members. They could kill me for money. Or what if I go and they can't take care of me?'

Other children who had visited some of their relatives also said they were not willing to leave the institution to their relatives' home because the place was boring them as has been referenced earlier. For fear that children would lose their sponsors, some of the children also said they were not going to leave the institution until they were older. Therefore children in cases like this were ready to stay in the institution than to go back to families where they had moved from as a result of poverty and where they could not be secured of their needs being provided for them in terms of their education, food, shelter and the like.

In contrast to what I have said above, a study conducted with street children by Phiri (2009) in Zambia revealed that the children were not willing to be in the institution as an intervention for them. I tried to identify the reasons for the different responses to institutions by children. The reason was however stated clearly in the study conducted by Phiri. The children who participated in his research were street children who were economically active. Therefore sending them to institutions meant they were going to be 'economically redundant and as such would be insignificant to their home economics' (Phiri, 2009). Thus the children who were sent to the institution from the streets were working on the street which some of the children used to support their homes. However, the children who participated in my research were not economically active before coming to the institution. This goes to confirm what I said earlier that the kind of life children lived before coming to the institution has an effect on their experiences, perceptions and assessment of their subjective well-being.

In conclusion it can be said that though living in orphanages or institutions is not an ideal option for OVC, it is also not as worse as it may be perceived generally. Children consider themselves as being comfortable though they find themselves in a situation where they are considered to be vulnerable. However, Boyden and Mann (2005) declare that though many children may remain competent in the face of adversity, experiences and research has warned against presuming that such children are invulnerable. Again, children's competent behavior in the face of adversity and effective coping should not be considered as a high level of happiness since people who are able to overcome adversity successfully may have difficulties in their relationships and experience some depression later in life (Garmezy, 1993 cited in Ungar).

6.4 Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

The thesis sought to portray children living in institutions as competent social actors who view their being in the institution as a form of intervention instead of looking at them with the glance of vulnerability and hopelessness. Though challenges children face in institutions cannot be denied, it should not be over-emphasized either as they may not consider themselves to be in a terrible state as may be perceived by the public. On the other hand, it can be argued that the perception that the public has about children living in the institution as being vulnerable is what drives them to donate to them which alleviates their vulnerabilities.

Once they are in an institution and are being supported by the government, churches, individuals and other clubs, it is advisable to appreciate their experiences and well-being subjectively before any further intervention program is proposed by policy makers.

However, I cannot fail to mention that further research is required in this area to explore children's experiences after they have left the institutions. All the long term effects on children who ever lived in institutions whether positive or negative, can be well appreciated if a follow-up research is conducted on these same children to understand them better. It is not bad to assume by experience that children who have lived in institutions may have a challenge of coping in societies and forming healthy relationships later in life (www.ovcghana.org). It will however be best to understand those children's lives and experiences from their own perspectives and this is well captured on the front page of the website of Save the Children Norway; 'when children are affected, save children a comment' (http://www.reddbarna.no/om-oss/presse).

A Study of the Experiences and Subjective Well-Being of Orphans Living In Institutions In Ghana

REFERENCES

Abebe, T. (2009). Beyond the 'orphan burden': understanding care for and by AIDS-affected children in Africa. In; Geography Compass 2(6).

Abebe, T. (2008). Earning a living on the margins. Begging, street work and the socio-spatial experiences of children in Addis Ababa. In: *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography 90(3).*

Abebe, T. (2008*). Ethiopian Childhoods: A Case Study of the lives of Orphans and Working Children,* unpublished ph.D. Thesis, Department of Geography, NTNU.

Abebe, T. (2007). 'Changing livelihoods, changing childhoods: patterns of children work in rural south Ethiopia.' In: Children's Geographies. VOL. 5.

Abrams, L. (1998). *The Orphan Country. Children of Scotland's Broken homes from 1845 to present day.* John Donald Publishers Ltd. Edinburgh

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Alderson, P.(2000). *Young Children's Rights*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Archard,D. (1993). *Children: Rights and Childhood*. London

Ansell, N. (2005). *Children, Youth and Development*. Routledge, ch.7: Children in especially difficult circumstances.

Ansell, N. & van Blerk, L. (2004). 'Children's migration as a household/family strategy: coping with AIDS in Southern Africa.' In: *Journal of Southern Africa Studies,* vol. 30

Barker, J. (2003). Is it fun? Developing child centered research methods. *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy. Vol. 23* (2): 33-58

Boyden, J. & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations. In: Ungar, M. ed. *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to resilience across Cultures and Contexts*. London: Sage.

Briefing Paper, Social Policies, UNICEF, (2009). Produced with funds contributed by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

Christensen, P.H. (2004). 'Children's participation in ethnographic research: issues of power and representation.' In: *Children and Society* Vol. 18, No.2

Davies, J.M. (1998) 'Understanding the meanings of children: a reflexive process', *Children and Society* 12(5)

Diener, E., Oishi, S. & Lucas, R. (2003). Personality, Culture and Subjective Well-Being: Emotional and Cognitive Evaluations of Life*, Annual Review of Psychology, Vol 10*:403-425

Ennew, J. (2005). Prisoners of childhood: Orphans and economic dependency. In: Qvortrup, J. ed. *Studies in Modern Childhood: Society, Agency, Culture*. London: Palgrave.

Ennew, J. & Boyden, J. (1997). *Children in focus: a manual for participatory research with children*, Stockholm: Radd Barnen.

Ennew,E., Abebe, T., Bangyai, R., Karapituck,P., Kjørholt, A., Noonsup, T., Beazley, H., Bessell, S., Daengchart-Kushanoglu P. & Waterson, R. (2009). *The right to be properly researched. How to do rights-based, scientific research with children.* Black on White Publications

Eldring, Sabata Nakanyane, and Malehoko Tshoaedi. (2000). *Child Labour in the Tobacco Growing Sector in Africa.*

Fottrell, D. (2000). One step forward or two steps sideways? Assessing the first decade of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

General Assembly of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labour Survey*.

Greig, A., Taylor. J & MacKay, T. (2007): *Doing Research with Children,* Second Edition, Sage Publications, London

Hay, I. (2000): *Qualitative research methods in Human Geogr*aphy, Oxford University Press, Melbourne

James, A. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. In: *American Anthropologist* 109(2)

James, A. Jenks, C. & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing Childhood.* Cambridge. Polity Press.

Kjorholt, A. T. 2008. Children as new citizens: In the best interest of the child?

Kristiansen, M. (2009). *The quality of life of children living in residential care facilities: A comparative study of three children's homes in Accra and Cape Coast, Ghana*. (Unpublished master thesis).

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann S. (2009) *Interviews: Learning the craft of Qualitattive Research Interviewing.* Sage Publications, London.

Lee, N. 2001. *Childhood and Society. Growing up in an age of Uncertainty*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Martin Woodhead and Heather Montgomery. 2003. Understanding Childhood.

McGillivray, M. and Clarke M. (2006). Human Well-being: Concepts and Measures. In: McGillivray M. & Clarke M. eds. *Understanding Human Well-Being*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan

Meintjes, H. & Giese, S. 2006. Spinning the epidemic. The making of mythologies of orphanhood in the context of AIDS. In: Childhood 13(3).

Mikkelsen, B. (1995): *Methods for development work and research. A guide for practitioners*, Sage Publications Ltd. London

Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare ILO. 1997. *International Labour Office - Bureau of Statistics, Economically Active Population 1950-2010, STAT Work.*

Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare - Ghana

Montgomery, H. (2008). *An introduction to childhood: Anthropological perspectives on children's lives.* Wiley- Blackwell

Phiri, D. (2009). *Listen and assist. Children's experiences as a resource for intervention.* (Unpublished master thesis)

Prout, Alan, & James, Allison. (1990). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, promise and problems. In: James, A. & Prout, A. eds. *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press

Punch, S (2002) : Research with children: The same or different from research with adults? *Childhood. Vol 9* (3): 321-341

Solberg, Anne. 1996. The challenge in child research: From 'being' to 'doing'. In: Brannen, J. & O'Brien, M. Eds. *Children in Families: Research and Policy*. London: Falmer Press

Sudharshan C. and Harold C. 1998. Child Labor and Schooling in Ghana. In *Child Labor and Schooling in Africa: A Case Study of Ghana, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia* Washington, D.C.: World Bank

US Dept. of State. 2001. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2000*

U.S. Department of State. 2004. *Country Report on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Ghana*, Washington, D.C

U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6d.

Woodhead, M. & Faulkner, D. 2000. Subjects, objects or participants? Dilemmas of psychological research with children. In: Christensen, P. & James, A. eds. *Research with Children. Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press

Internet Sources.

http://www.reddbarna.no/om-oss/presse

http://www.ovcghana.org/why-not-orphanages.html

http://www.gipc.org.gh/home.aspx

http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=1&_=3

http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/education/

APPENDICES

Interview guide for children living in institutions in Ghana.

This interview guide seeks to gain knowledge on how children in vulnerable situations, and in this case orphans assess their own sense of well-being.

Personal Information.
- Age ………………………………….
- Sex   M (   )   F (   ).
- Where do you come from?
- How long have you been in this institution?
- What brought you here?

Lived Experiences.

Family Relations.
- How did you decide to come to this institution?
- Who decided that you come here?
- Are you in touch with your family members?
- Do your family members visit you?
- Do you visit your family members?
- Do you know any relative of yours?
- Who brought you here?
- Which of your parents do you know?
- Do you know any of your aunties or uncles?
- Would you like to be with your aunty or uncle?
- What is the occupation of your parent?
- Do you know the educational level of your parent?

Thoughts about being in this institution.
- Can you tell me about how you came to this institution?

- Were you informed about coming to this institution?

- Will you recommend your siblings (if any) to come here?

- For how long have you been here?

- How will you feel if someone decided (probably a relative) to come and take out of this institution?

- Do you wish to leave this institution soon?

- How soon will you wish to leave this institution?

- How do you see this place?

Emotional sense of well being

- On what occasions are you very happy?

- What makes you happy?

- Why does it make you happy? (in connection to number 20).

- Do you sleep alone?

- Who do you sleep with?

- Who would you wish to sleep with?

- How do you call your care-givers?

- Who dresses you to school? (depending on child's age)

- Do you sometimes feel scared?

- What makes you feel scared sometimes?

Social sense of wellbeing.

Education

- Do you go to school?

- Where do you go to school?

- Do you like the school in which you are?

- If no, where would you wish to go to school?

- Why do you like that school? (In relation to number 30).

- Do you have enough books for your school?

- Do you get most of the items required in school?

Health Related Questions.

- Have ever fallen sick since you came here?

- Do you have any idea what kind of sickness it was?

- In view, was it a serious sickness?

- If it was serious, were you expecting to be taken to the hospital

- Were you taken to the hospital?

- Who took care of you when you fell sick?

- Were you taken to the hospital when you fell sick?

Social Networks

- Do you have best friends?

- Who is your best friend?

- Are you allowed to play with your friends most of the time?

- Do you love to be with your friends?

- Do your friends love coming around you?

General Questions

- Who do you think is a disadvantaged child?

- What is a good childhood in your view?

- Who do you think is a happy child?

Work Experiences

- Were you working before coming to the institution?

- Was it paid work?

- Were you comfortable with the work?

- Do you work here in the institution?

- What kind of work do you do?