

CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN CHILDREN, THEIR STRENGTHS AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ENABLING THEM REACH HEALTHY ADULTHOOD

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate the challenges African children face throughout developmental transitions in the pathways of growing up to healthy adulthood in most African settings with particular reference to Cameroon. The transitional periods are tasks related and effective transitions characterised by effective demonstrations of skills and competences in the performance of specific tasks engaged in through socialization process. Accordingly, the paper also attempts to identify the accompanying agentic strengths and cultural mechanisms through parental and community support that enabled them reach healthy adulthood. This ethnographic study that was carried out amongst 15 ethnic groups of the West, North West, South West and Littoral regions of Cameroon revealed that despite the challenges and adversities faced by these children, their ingenuity, resilience and cultural assets play important role in mediating positive outcomes so they can participate effectively to ensure their inputs and optimize the development of skills, competences, attitudes. Hence, children can be able to mitigate challenges at different stage as they transit to healthy adulthood. These have implications for their personal epistemologies as they move through the different transitions in the developmental pathways. The study draws data from both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to substantiate the discussions with support from relevant explanatory theories and literature

Key Concepts: Challenges, Transitions, Children, Strengths, Cultural perspectives, Healthy Adulthood, Research and Resilience

Introduction

Children of today indisputably are the custodians of tomorrow's world. Their development towards responsible adulthood is of key importance to every society. Since the advent of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, the world has made significant progress in reducing poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, reducing child mortality and improving access to better health care. Yet, 57 million children of primary school age are currently not in school. In a bid to meet up vision 2030 and the new seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world in general and Africa in particular still faces social, political, cultural and economic challenges, most of which affect children and youths. Poverty, access to quality education and health, conflict and war are some categories of challenges faced by African children through their developmental path to adulthood. Embracing the global values of sustainable development the African Union

Commission in its Agenda 2063 clearly states that Africa's development should be people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. This entails strengthening the role of Africa's women through ensuring gender equality and parity in all spheres of life (political, economic and social); eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; creating opportunities for Africa's youth for self-realisation, access to health, education and jobs; and ensuring safety and security for Africa's children, and providing for early childhood development (AUC, 2015).

The continuous existence of African societies depends on the ability of these societies to socialise their children in the art of survival and sustaining cultural values in the socialization process. The future of any society is determined by the quality of its children and the level of commitment towards the protection of its most vulnerable members, the young and the old (Boakye-Boaten, 2009). According to AUC (2015) there is need for an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics to inculcate the spirit of Pan Africanism. A view that is strongly propagated in AU 2063 agenda. Africa must relived the stress on growing up for African children facing myriad challenges by tapping deep into its rich heritage and culture, ensuring that the creative arts become major contributors to Africa's growth and transformation; and restoring and preserving Africa's cultural heritage for meaningful and healthy growth. Nevertheless, in spite of many obstacles Africans have (and still struggling) struggled to maintain and perpetuate their culture through rigorous socialisation techniques, which involves the inputs of all community members. Most communities in Africa have survived because of their ability to form organic communal bonds, which seeks to protect each and every member of the society (Boakye-Boaten, 2009). Though African children continue to face new challenges but they remain resilient as they tap from their rich cultural heritage to build up strengths through communal socialisation to enable them reach healthy adulthood.

It is therefore important for us to commence our reflection with indigenous conceptualisation of key terms such as childhood, culture and adulthood. This conceptualisation will form the bases of current deviations that come as a result of globalisation, mobility and digital revolution, that pose new challenges for African children

1. Challenges For African Children



Pictures From Internet

Children are an important part of the community and they should be protected at all times to ensure they succeed in life most often this is not the case predominantly in Africa (Daniel, 2013). According to The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2002), children in Africa are affected by many different types of abuse, including economic and sexual exploitation, gender discrimination in education and access to health, and their involvement in armed conflict. Other factors affecting African children include migration, early marriage, differences between urban and rural areas, child-headed households, street children and poverty. This paper considers some of these challenges that African children nowadays are forced to live with.

Redefining the African Personhood and Process of Child Development

One of the greatest challenges faced by African children is redefining the African conception of childhood with growing challenges first from colonisation and now globalisation, urbanisation, mobility and digital revolution. Who is an African Child? And how can child development process in Africa lead to production of adults that can face 21st century challenges? All of these, remain fundamental questions that should be answered because identity formation, self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy are key psychological parameters within childhood that determine the process of development as children evolve towards adulthood with the ability to overcome challenges..

Indigenous perception of childhood was and still is a social construct, whereby the whole society actively participated in socialising children to be responsible, knowing how to live with others and so are equipped with cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills necessary for environmental adaption and economic development. Children grew up with a firm and progressive knowledge of what they will become as adults. Today, influence from western cultures is fast eroding the communal dimension to child development in Africa that facilitated the development of an African identity. Rwomire (1998) postulates that the role of colonial education in the service of imperial domination and economic exploitation caused a number of undesirable effects, such as economic inequality, social stratification, cultural and intellectual servitude, devaluation of traditional culture, and curricula that were irrelevant to the real needs of society. In present day Africa, children face the challenge of whether to focus on self in development or on the group as African culture is more communal than individualistic (Nsamenang & Lamb, 1994).

While the above principles are important in redefining identity, the loss of indigenous languages exacerbates the situation... Different indigenous and local communities develop knowledge systems through a tradition of invention and also develop languages through which to articulate their knowledge. The loss in languages is also linked to the issue of formal education. In most African countries formal education is conducted in English or French. The use of local languages in some African schools is restricted to the primary school years. As a result, today the younger generations are not able to articulate themselves fully in many of the local languages. Where the use of indigenous language declines, the older generation who still speak their native language fluently usually gets frustrated because of the gap this creates in learning among the younger generation. The discontent is exacerbated as they observed how children and youths when speaking mix the native language with the official language. They equally frown particularly at

youngsters who use the native language to talk about nonnative concepts. On the other hand, traditional knowledge does not translate easily into official languages. This has implications for the transmission of knowledge from the elders to the younger generation. As indigenous languages disappear in Africa so too does the knowledge that is embedded in such languages. Consequently, such loss of language results in loss of biodiversity and even identity. If a language dies, a knowledge system partly or completely dies with it (Gupta, 2003). The conservation of languages becomes a crucial factor for conserving taxonomies because each word, conceptually speaking in the context of a natural resource, is a category (Gupta, 2003).

In accentuating, the Pan-African and Humanistic spirit and values underpin the fact that an individual's humanity can only be affirmed when an acknowledgement is made of the humanity of others. No human being can therefore exist as an island. African cultures express respect, compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. These values constitute the strength of Africans as a people. African traditional values are deeply rooted in communal philosophies by which, one person's pain is the pain of the other, similarly his/her wealth is also that of the other and so the salvation of one person becomes that of the other (Manda, 2009). Inculcating these values and spirit very early in child development builds on the child's inner strength to cope with life challenges.

Poverty and Malnutrition

According to the United Nations MDGs report, extreme poverty has declined significantly over the last two decades showing the proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions to be 12.9 per cent in 2014–2016 (UN, 2015). Despite the progress made in ending poverty and hunger, these still remain a major challenge for children in Africa. According to research by UNICEF, approximately 20,000 kids die every day because of poverty. Furthermore, around 28% of kids in Africa are likely to be stunted or underweight. Poverty is closely related with starvation, as parents have insufficient financial resources for catering for the food requirements of their children. Starvation then leads to malnutrition and that is why most African nations now depend on external food donations so as to feed their people. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where the incidence of malnutrition is increasing. The countries experiencing very high rates of stunting are Burundi, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, and Zambia, where more than 45 percent of children are affected. Malnutrition is a major risk factor to other health problems (WHO 2007). Besides its implication on children's health, it does have direct affect cognitive functioning leading to learning ability (Daniel, Steven & Stephen, 2005).

Globalization with rapid urbanisation as a function of rural/urban migration and population growth also remain major challenges for quality living for children. Inadequate access to better nutrition, sanitation and potable water threatens healthy living conditions for growing children, adolescents and youths. There is increasing poverty as a function of family displacement and socio-economic upheavals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1&2) states the following:

1. SDG 1.5 relating to poverty states that by 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations----- and other economic, social and ---.

2. SDG, 2.1, pertaining to hunger, states that by 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular, the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

Changes in Educational Systems and Poor Access to Quality Education

The introduction of Western-based educational curricula and formal schooling has had a massive impact on the local knowledge that underpins traditional community based management (Ruddle, 2001). This no doubt creates a mismatch in responding to children specific developmental needs that are context specific because of the differences between cultural indigenous knowledge and that of western knowledge systems.

The African region has experienced an impressive increase in the number of pupils enrolled in primary school. It is however not clear whether such quantitative perspective addresses the relevance and quality of the type of education required for any African child. Between 1990 and 2012, the number of children enrolled in primary schools more than doubled from 62 million to 149 million. In sub-Saharan Africa, 15 countries introduced free primary education since the year 2000, enabling more children to attend primary school. Despite tremendous gains in primary school enrolment, no African country has achieved universal primary education. Globally, 58 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2012. Of that number, 38 million were in Africa. About half of all out-of-school African children will never step foot in a school in their lifetime (AAI, 2015). Despite this growth, quality and equity challenges are manifested in terms of disparities in gender, regional location, minority groups, pastoral and nomadic communities and the poor. This poses challenge for SDG 4 that addresses inclusion of all. According to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025), quality of education as measured by learning outcomes has been a concern. Some of the children going through the system are not acquiring the knowledge and skills expected at each stage or for their personal development. In some instances, data on learning achievements point to more than two-thirds of the children failing to read competently at the grade levels they (were or) are in.

Child Labour

According to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child, every child shall be protected from all forms of economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. The charter provides specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse.

While child labour is found in all regions of the world, it is overwhelmingly a developing country phenomenon. In percentage terms, Africa already has the highest incidence of child labour, with approximately 41 per cent of all children between 5 and 14 years old involved in economic activity... Participation rates of children in the labour force are higher in the countries

of Sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly half the children in the 10-14 years age group are working. Estimates suggest that in Benin, 27 per cent of children work, in Burkina Faso 51 per cent and in Burundi 49 per cent. In Kenya, Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda the estimated rates are between 40 and 46 per cent. In Mali 54 per cent of children are estimated to be working. In Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Zimbabwe the figures are between 20 and 30 per cent.

The major factors responsible for the growth in child labour are rapid population growth as a function of rapid urbanisation, having implications for, deterioration in living standards and the incapacity of education systems to cater for all children of school age and provide them with a decent education. Among developing regions, Africa has the highest participation rate of girls: approximately 37 per cent of girls work in Africa, The ILO says that although boys account for roughly three out of every five child labourers, the proportion of girls may well be higher; activities carried out in and around the household are generally under-reported. Household work is reported to be the main reason for about one-third of the youngsters who do not attend school. They were either never enrolled or were obliged to drop out of school because of full time housework. If such full-time housework were taken into account, the number of girls could even exceed that of boys.

Child labour is an overwhelmingly rural phenomenon, with as many as 70 per cent of all child laborers involved in agricultural production. Most African economies, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain predominately rural. "If present trends continue," says the ILO report, "at least a further 400,000 children per year in Sub-Saharan Africa aged 6-11 would remain out of school and would, in all likelihood, join the pool of child laborers." To this number must be added the increasing number of children who try to combine work and school, bringing a total of at least one million new child workers on to the labor market for the next 10-15 years. Most children in Africa work fulltime to support their poverty stricken families in farms, selling in the market and so on. There are also those who work as house helps. Forced child workers work in very tough conditions that do not have any resemblance to free employment. They receive so little salary and yet do the lion's share of work. They are normally coerced to work harder than their physical capabilities and also under settings that seriously threatens their safety, development and health (Daniel, 2013). According to ACRWC (2002), child workers in Sub-Saharan Africa account for about 80 million children or 4 out of every 10 children under 14 years old which is the highest child labour rate in the world.

Conflict and War

Africa's historical antecedents, as well as past modes of exploitation, and distribution of Africa's natural resources have engendered many problems. The ownership, exploitation, and distribution of Africa's natural wealth too often has fostered and fuelled civil conflicts and war, compounding the already dire situation of poor countries and rural populations (Nnadozie *et al.*, 2003). War many times leads to virtual breakdown of societies because of family displacements, slowdown in economic activities and poor access above all children are drafted and used as soldiers. These conflicts have had a significant impact on health care and consequently on the lives of children.

With forty per cent of Africans aged 14 or younger, Africa is officially the fastest growing continent in the world. Sadly, it is also the most conflict-prone region with three out of 10 African children living in fragile, conflict-affected regions or countries, and an estimated 12 million children internally displaced throughout the continent. In South Sudan alone, 750,000 children were internally displaced, 320,000 registered as child refugees, hundreds were killed, and more than 12,000 recruited and used by the government and opposition forces as child soldiers in armed conflict during 2014 (STC, 2016). Despite strong international, regional, and domestic legal frameworks protecting children during armed conflicts, a recent study by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) found that there is inadequate political commitment to effectively protect children from conflict and crises. It also noted weaknesses in existing laws and implementation of them, as well as the non-ratification of international laws in some instance. The disruption of education through attacks on schools and the use of schools for military purposes require urgent attention to ensure that the outlook changes from a generation at risk to a generation of children empowered to contribute to the peaceful development and rebuilding of communities in East and Southern Africa region. An estimated 12.6 million primary-school aged children are out of school in conflict affected states in Sub-Saharan Africa, with South Sudan home to the highest proportion of out-of-school children in the world (51% of primary and lower secondary school aged children) (STC, 2016).

HIV/AIDS and Access to Health Care

Despite progress made in health care in Africa, the region still faces challenges. The gap between the rich and the poor still leaves many African children vulnerable to many diseases. One last important influential factor that has affected children in Africa has been the ravaging effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is estimated that about 7000 deaths in Africa are AIDS related (Bass, 2004). This has had and continues to have a profound impact on children. Firstly, in many communities that have been ravaged by the AIDS pandemic, children have lost many of their parents and caretakers. The family structure which used to be a haven for children is on the brink of total extinction because many of the members have been claimed by AIDS. Bass (2004) further posits that “AIDS has broken up the family structure, and it is now common to see grandparents caring for children, countless children caring for children, and many orphans caring for orphans” (59). Many of these children have had to play the roles of adults without adequate preparation and support from the family system. The resulting consequences have greatly affected the ability of children to just be children.

The World Health Organisation (2011) is becoming increasingly involved in integrated programming for children and youths development. A WHO study, entitled “the importance of caregiver-child interaction for the survival and healthy development of young children” reviewed salient results in the field (Behrman, Alderman & Hoddinott, 2004). The WHO article, entitled “Mental health and severe food shortage situations: Psychosocial considerations” (Davis, 2000) stressed that “... it is crucial that nutritional and psychosocial interventions are integrated”. The World Bank also promotes integrated Early Childhood and Youth Development, health and nutrition programming (Behrman, Alderman & Hoddinott, 2004). Unfortunately, this is not always the case in developing Sub-Saharan African countries, where narrowly focused sectorial programmes still abound. Indeed, even within the health sector, separate micronutrient and

immunization systems continue to exist- often owing more to donor requirements than national policy. Sometimes sectorial and sub-sectorial programmes have led to costly, unnecessary and counterproductive duplications of “delivery systems” for young children, youths and their parents leaving many vulnerable children without primary health and Early Childhood and Youth Development services (Barón & Melton, 2010).

Despite these challenges facing children in Africa, there are some good signs of improvement and more can still be undertaken.. Most importantly, Africa’s economic development plan is now African-led. Better partnerships between donor countries and African states have led to enhanced aid being used much more effectively.

According to Daniel (2013), several African nations have made genuine progress:

- Kenya introduced a system of free primary schools for every child, which has helped to bring back over 1 million children into school.
- Mozambique has significantly reduced poverty rates by about 25% and has improved the number of school going children.
- Uganda has also reduced HIV infection rates from 20% to 6% in a span of 10 years. This has reduced the cases of child orphans because of HIV/AIDS.
- In Tanzania, over 10,000 schools were built and many more teachers recruited so as to enable the country achieve its MDGs.

These best practices are laudable. Such experiences should be shared..

2. Strengths of African Children

Most African children in the face of challenges remain resilient because of the quality of the holistic approach in socialisation process where the focus is more on skills development through engagement in cultural activities. In addition the socialization addresses values and spirituality. . All aspect of child development is addressed not in isolation but as integrated concentric rings of realities using strategies and actions that employ cognitive, physical, social, emotional, moral and spiritual developmental issues. The developing personality through the above process is unique to each African child who should be able to develop resilient skills to cope with life challenges.

Cognitive Strengths

From an early age children begin to develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. The cultural values imparted to them by their families and communities shape their identity and their relationship to their environment and other peoples. They seek answers to fundamental questions about existence from the adults that influence their lives. Religious or spiritual institutions create a space for children to put into practice the belief systems of their culture. Belief systems and the structures that maintain them play an important role in psychosocial well-being. They can offer understanding and acceptance in situations that are overwhelming and inexplicable. During periods of disruption and loss, belief systems can create a sense of connection with others and a sense of hope for something better to come.

- **African children develop contextually important skills at times at the expense of academic ones**

A study conducted by Sternberg, Grigorenko, Nokes, Geissler, Prince, Okatcha and Bundy, in 2001 in Usenge, Kenya, near the town of Kisumu, showed that the 85 children chosen for the study were poor in abstract problem solving skills in fluid-ability tests (i.e., tests of flexibility in thinking) and crystallized ability tests (i.e., tests of accumulated knowledge of words and related concepts). Nevertheless these children were good in practical problem solving skills because they were able to identify the natural herbal medicines, where they come from, what they are used for and how they are dosed that the villagers believe can be used to fight various types of infections.

Oloko's (1994) research on schoolchildren's street trading in Nigeria revealed both its adaptive and maladaptive functions. However, one strand of her findings corroborates Brazilian evidence that, "despite their poor performance in school tasks [the street-trading] children were very competent at solving arithmetical problems in the context of buying and selling items of different prices".

- **African children have substantial practical skills that go unrecognized in academic tests**

A test of children's classification skills was carried out by Irwin, Schafer and Feiden (1974) on unschooled Liberian children. When a test on sorting out geometric shapes was given to these children, they performed poorly. But looking at the Mano cultural practices of Liberia, the sorting of rice is central to their economic activities. Rice variations are talked about in everyday discourse. Distinct variations of rice can be used as the logical equivalent of distinct variations of geometric shapes. When asked to sort bowls of rice, the Liberian children all performed well.

- **Africentric conceptions of intelligence may be different from Eurocentric conception.**

Studies in Africa in fact provide yet another window on the substantial differences. For example, Serpell (1994) found that Chewa adults in Zambia emphasize social responsibilities, cooperativeness and obedience as important to intelligence; intelligent children are expected to be respectful of adults. Kenyan parents also emphasize responsible participation in family and social life as important aspects of intelligence (Super & Harkness, 1997). In Zimbabwe, the word for intelligence, *ngware*, actually means to be prudent and cautious, particularly in social relationships.

It should be noted that Africans do not emphasize exclusively social notions of intelligence. These conceptions of intelligence focus much more on social skills than do conventional US conceptions of intelligence, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of cognitive aspects of intelligence. For instance, Grigorenko (2001) have found that ideas about intelligence among the Luo people of Kenya consist of four broad concepts: *rieko*, which largely corresponds to the Western idea of academic intelligence, but also includes specific skills; *luoro*, which includes social qualities like respect, responsibility and consideration; *paro*, or practical thinking; and *winjo*, or comprehension. Only one of the four—*rieko*—is correlated with traditional Western measures of intelligence.

Social and Personality Strengths

All children need friends. Friends provide comfort and support. Through creative play they can examine difficult experiences in a safe environment. Interaction with peers also plays an important role in social development. Children put into practice the social and cultural teachings they receive from their parents and community leaders. They explore the boundaries of appropriate visualise and social expectations. Peer relationships provide the best environment for the development of social skills, and a child's identity and sense of belonging.

- **Social Competence with Peers**

There is a link between the quality of sibling relationship and the child's social competence, or ability to manage and sustain relationships with peers. Herrera & Dunn (1997), for instance, reported that young children using constructive conflict resolution strategies, such as mitigating a conflict or conciliating, were more likely to use similar conflict resolution strategies with a friend several years later.

Tacit African theories posit children's innate capacity to be agents of their own developmental learning in multi-age peer groups in which parental values and actions prime responsible intelligence by permitting older children to serve as peer mentors (Nsamenang, 2004). When direct parental care and intervention is no longer required (Zempleni-Rabain, 1973), children are "better together" within the free spirit and self-regulation of the peer culture; they inter-stimulate and mentor each other, disagree and defer to more forceful and competent peers (Nsamenang and Lamb 1995). Children 'graduate' from one role setting and participative sector of the peer culture to another, steadily maturing toward adulthood. The boys and girls who are poised for the responsibility of adult life are to be evaluated as proficient on the basis of their social, moral, intellectual, and practical prowess within the peer culture.

Peer mentoring an activity in which novices advance their skills and understanding through participation with more skilled partners in culturally organized activities. The extended value of the apprenticeship model is that it includes "more people than a single expert and a single novice: the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another" (Rogoff 1990).

In traditional Africa, the peer group plays a pivotal role in the development of this genre of cognition because, from toddlerhood, the child comes more under the purview of the peer culture than of the adult world.

- **Social Interconnectedness**

From an early age, the intertwining of education fosters not only an 'interpersonal connectedness' but also forms a holistic relatedness to "the family and the universe" (Callaghan 1998). This means formal, informal and non-formal sectors of education in Africa are intrinsically related to one another. Hence children develop social interconnection between what takes place in school, home and society at large. Thus, an African theory sees the child not as a

lonesome individual, but as one connected into the social and emotional ties and obligations of a participant in communities, beginning with the family, kin, and peer group. African social thought does not focus on the autonomous self, but on the individual's interpersonal connectedness (Kagitcibasi, 2007). "It is in rootedness in an ongoing human community that the individual comes to see himself/herself as a man or woman" (Menkiti, 1984,); African 'individuality' is not sovereign but embedded in the psychosocial and emotional matrices of a human community. If the above unique skills and qualities are well harnessed, the children will be able to reach their full potentials as they progress towards adulthood. African cultures are endowed with multiple agents of socialization that can enable children overcome challenges and reach healthy adulthood. This approach to socialisation strengthens the growing child's ability to develop a strong internal agency that enables him/her to manage challenges faced as they grow up.

3. Cultural Perspectives Enabling Children Reach Healthy Adulthood

Africentric cultural perspectives are underpinned by harmonious relationships between the physical, human/social and spiritual dimensions of the cosmos. Within the context of African cultures, they are psychologically and philosophically connected in such a way that one cannot construe of one without the other. For children to reach a healthy adulthood, they must be able to draw strength from the physical, human, social and spiritual aspects of life in a holistic fashion that guarantees all developmental aspects of life.

Effective psychosocial support draws upon, and is consistent with, local culture. Culture plays a significant role in shaping our sense of identity, our social roles, our values and our sense of purpose. Based on these indicators of identity, we derive meaning in our world and make sense of the events taking place around us. People and institutions in our communities foster culture by maintaining traditions, negotiating changing norms and values, and transmitting knowledge, practices and values from generation to generation. Emergency situations can have an enormous, and potentially destructive, impact on the cultural values and systems that are so crucial to an African's sense of well-being. In particular, children rely on the structures and systems in their communities for their social development. These are important concerns for psychosocial support interventions in emergencies. Parenting outcomes (family and primary care giving), folklore, indigenous games, peer mentoring, rites of passage are important cultural mediating factors that can enable children to reach adulthood.

The Family or Primary Care Givers

Research has demonstrated that parent-child relationship quality has been associated with a wide variety of child outcomes. (Nsamenang & Lamb, 1994; Weaver & White, 1997; Richman, LeVine, New, Howrigan, Welles-Nystrom, & LeVine, 1988). The type of relationship between the parent and the child has implications for behaviours such as aggression, depression, intelligence and self-esteem. (O'Connor & Scott, 2007).

Family processes are core factors in determining whether or not children do well in emergency situations. Families are the basic unit of society, and the well-being of children is closely linked to that of their parents. In all societies, families try to protect and meet the basic needs of children. However, understandings of what constitutes the family vary from setting to setting. In some places, the family can be defined as the child's immediate relatives; parents, brothers and sisters. In other places, there may be a far wider extended family including grandparents, aunts and uncles and more distant relations within a clan, village or community. Some cultures have established systems for foster care; others may be reluctant to accept the practice. Again, there will be pronounced cultural variations.

Whatever the structure, in most cases, families provide the best environment for meeting the needs of children. Attachment to care givers is one of the fundamental building blocks of child development and determinants of psychosocial well-being. In addition to providing care and protection, the family is where children learn how to behave with other people, where they learn their history, language, culture, and the customs of their community. If children feel that their families are able to protect them and provide for their emotional and physical needs, their level of distress is likely to be reduced. In the household, a return to some semblance of family routine, with age- and gender-appropriate activities for children provides a sense of structure and routine.

Clearly, an important aim of all psychosocial support such as appropriate living conditions, balanced and regular meals, proper family hygiene, and positive engagement in family activities, collaborating with other family members and feeling connected. All these, strengthen the capacity of families to nurture and support their children at the household level, as well as fostering the social networks that would normally sustain mothers and fathers effort in childrearing. Preserving family unity helps to minimise the effects of emergencies on children through family get together, sharing and providing communal support. It is in the best interests of the family that wherever possible, caring for children is provided within the family setting.

Culture as a Mediating Influence in Emergencies

People in different cultural contexts perceive, interpret and make sense of events and experiences based on their distinct norms, beliefs and values. In this way, psychosocial well-being is closely linked to culture because the ways in which people experience, give meaning to and express wellness and distress are tied to specific social and cultural contexts. Parents associate children and youths in diverse cultural activities so they can learn and transfer the experiences in problem solving contexts. At the local level, even traditional healing practices are used, which may be inadequate in some cases. Psychosocial support activities for problem solving are based on appropriate indigenous beliefs and approaches towards individual's mental health and well-being. This process helps re-establish the capacity of not only the family but also the community to assist its children and youths when found in difficult situations. Parental and community support since are based on the beliefs and value systems of the people greatly strength local capacities to assist those in need have support. This is the case because strategies employed are relevant and meaningful as would be discussed below...

a) Folklore (Oral Language)

Much of African indigenous knowledge is imbedded in oral language and tradition in the form of folklore. Africans teach their children and from very early through the use of proverbs, riddles, folktales, songs, legends and myths. They constitute the primary representations of knowledge through which children, youths and elders learn the culture, history customs, moral and spiritual aspects of the society, clan and tribe. Amongst the Bamileke people of Cameroon, Tchombe (2011) highlights cognitive and practical skills children gain from participation in the world of folklore. Folklore acted as models, provoked and encouraged inputs from the child that drew the attention of others, enabling them to develop listening skills and vocabulary and turn-taking skills during conversation. All of the aforementioned are valuable for sustainable learning strategies that focus on group oriented activities and increase knowledge about the homeland and its ancestors (Tchombe 2011).

Proverbs is also used, defined as summary statements of generalised truths that have been accumulated through the experiences of preceding generations. Their educational value lies in the fact that they are used by elders to teach youngsters about experiences of the past that they should emulate or avoid. For example, among the Shona these teachings are usually preceded by the words: “*Vakuru vedu vanoti ...*” or “*Vakuru vedu vaiti ...*” (Our elders used to say ...” or “Our elders say...”). The appeal to the *Vakuru* who may belong to the dead or are very much advanced in age also comes from the Shona proverb that states, “*Nzira inobvunza vari mberi.*” (Literary: You should ask those who are ahead for directions to your destination, viz: You should ask the experienced for assistance). In communicating with children and youth through such proverbs, they are already being oriented towards how and where to get assistance when the need arises. Proverbs were (and are) also used to inculcate in children and youths a sense of responsibility. For example, among the Shona, a child could be advised not to waste time on issues that has no value. An elder could say to him or her, “*Gunde repwa rinonaka asi hariiswi mudura*” (The green stalk of maize may be sweet but it cannot be harvested and stored in a granary). This proverb, informs on examples of experiences of value that the child or youth may have gone through or observed (Nyota & Mapara, 2008) and that can be used to solve new problems.

Riddles are used to foster quick thinking on the part of the youngsters. Riddles have proven that IKS (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) are not static, but a form of education and entertainment, that some people today call edutainment, that is a combination of education and entertainment. Lusweti (1984) makes clear the objectives of riddles when he states that there is a type of art form that involves metaphorical or poetic comment on things within the environment. Riddles are closely related to proverbs, but they are usually meant for the education and entertainment of children. Play, forms of entertainment is functions of childhood and youthhood. Thus the examples above enhance learning about the environment through entertainment. Building capacity through this medium helps children and youth to be strengthened and can face challenges. Songs are another tool that was used as a form of education.

African educational philosophy guided the educational process in traditional. African societies ensuring children grew up to be socially responsible and productive members of the community (Okawah, 2002). By looking at the oral traditions of African peoples, such as proverbs, we may get a good idea of some of the philosophical aspects of the African educational systems. These identified ideas can be incorporated into the day-to-day educational processes to enhance problem solving skills.

Folktales, proverbs, riddles, idioms and songs can be understood as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination because, when reflected upon, they act as mirrors for seeing things in a particular way. More than any theoretical discussion or philosophical writing, they throw light on the concrete reality of lived experience; they serve as important pedagogical devices because they provide experiential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible (Manen, 1990). As learners break into (analyze) the proverbs or stories they are able to reflect on the meanings and implications embedded in the experiences.

b) Indigenous Games/Play songs

By participation in social games and play the child is able to develop intellectual behaviours that are both cognitive (numbering, imagination, problem solving, language, understanding, comprehension, attention etc.) and social (child's ability to; give and receive help from peers, keep friends and playmates, manage conflict, learn future gender roles, manage success and failure, live and work together with others, participate in community tasks, celebrate with others and feel for others in times of worry and distress) (Nyota and Mapara, 2008). In African cultures, as the child grows, his/her social world is not as limited

Nyota and Mapara (2008) highlight two important ways by which the African child interacts with peers and siblings. This is done through African traditional games and play songs. Berger (2000) has remarked: If a child's learning is not aroused by his or her parents, it may be aroused – and powerfully – when the child begins to compare his or her skills with those of other children of the same age. Berger (2000) emphasizes the fact that older African elder children who have mastered the skill or graduated from apprenticeship so to speak normally give the apprentice child guidance. The critical element of these games is guided participation. The older child who has mastered the skill and the learner child interact in order to accomplish a task. As they do so, the mentor is both sensitive and responsive to the needs of the learner.

From all of the above, social activities through indigenous strategies parents and the community act as mentors supporting the their children and youths through enhancing thinking skills,, making them interested in their surroundings, working with them collaboratively and encouraging their cooperations, enhance their problem solving skills by challenging them, make them enthusiastic about the evnts in their environment.

The above steps show that cognitive development during children's games is a social process. They also show the need for emotional involvement – sparking motivation, maintaining enthusiasm and dealing with frustration.

Parental and community efforts to encourage children and youths participation traditional games, play, songs,dance and other cultural activities is their effort to develop in children and youths sustainable skills, attitudes and competences to handle interpersonal relationships, crisis and develop more social and cognitive competences including leadership skills all of are transferable different life situations..

c) Interwoven curriculum

African indigenous education was for an immediate introduction into society and preparation for adulthood. It was largely informal and emphasized job orientation, social responsibility, spiritual and moral values, and community participation. These aims were interwoven with the content and learning processes which were derived from the needs / purposes of the society and its patterns of work. Education was, therefore, relevant and closely linked with productive activity. There was no division between manual and intellectual education or between theory and practice; learning occurred in social settings as lived experiences. From an early age, children simply accompanied adults to the farms and markets where they participated by observing and emulating what adults did. From about age six, children could be seen with tiny blunt utensils digging the soil, planting seeds, chasing birds away from crops, and harvesting, fetching wood and water. Over the years, they acquired necessary knowledge about the land, the soil, different seasonal crops, and trees that were imbued with spirits.. From years of observing and emulating their mothers and other significant adults, girls learned how to take care of their families and how to balance household chores with those of farming and formal learning where this becomes necessary.

d) Rites of Passage

Taking cognisance of children and adolescent cognitive behaviours and search for identity, many cultures choose to deal with these problems in different ways. Within African, some cultures still practice initiation ceremonies marking the so-called puberty rites, which are the beginning of social probation or internship: a period of intense social induction, the definitive preparation and training for adulthood.

With empirical support from studies carried out in Africa (Worthman & Whiting, 1987; Askari, 1968; Yatta, 2007), we shall consider the cognitive importance of puberty rites and how these rites help adolescents to effectively emerge as responsible adults. Rites of passage as a functional group process are designed to structure and bring meaning to the various transitional stages of human life. Cognitively, adolescents who successfully pass through these rites of passages must have applied their mental processes of attention, perception, comprehension, memory recollection and recognition. Adolescents emerge from these rites with enduring cognitive skills of adulthood problem solving (sexual and marital problems), creativity and responsible decision making (Adegoke, 2001). Most African societies traditionally have their own social institutions that recognise the period of adolescence. These institutions train, prepare and initiate male and female adolescents into adulthood. As a result, many African communities have ceremonial rites that are arranged to support the adolescent in their transition to adulthood (Adegoke, 2001). We shall examine a few examples.

i) *Ngweko* Puberty Rite of the Kikuyu Community in Kenya (Worthman & Whiting, 1987)

In a study of the Kikuyu community in Kenya, the enormous educational, social, moral and religious value of the initiation rites among the Kikuyu people was pointed out. The Kikuyu youth were not only initiated into the adult status of womanhood, but also into an age set of maidens and bachelors. By means of a sacred ceremony called *Ngweko*, the parental generation transferred to the youths the responsibility of regulating premarital sex and initiating the process of making selection, with peers as a major source of mutual support and regulation in this process. The *Ngweko* has been described as a viable solution to the problem of premarital sex and mate selection in middle level societies, especially those who have been maidens and

bachelors for a long time. Similar practices have been reported for other societies in Africa, particularly in East and South Africa.

ii) *Ovia-Osesse* Festival of the Ogori People in Nigeria (Askari, 1968).

Another example of puberty rites in Africa is the *Ovia-Osesse* festival of the Ogori people in Nigeria. Ogori is a small town in Kogi State of Nigeria. Kogi State is located in the transition zone between the southern rain forest and the northern Savannah, and also a confluence of cultures of northern and southern regions of Nigeria. The festival has, in recent years, become a crowd-pulling event and a tourist attraction. *Ovia-Osesse* is a maiden festival aimed at initiating maidens into womanhood preparatory to marriage (*Ovia* means bride). The origin, growth and development of the festival are long and windy. Many scholars believe that the festival is as old as the Ogori people themselves. *Ovia-Osesse* is the climax of several activities such as fattening, traditional education, and training. Traditionally, *Ovia-Osesse* evolved from a simple rite of passage that is meant to be an initiation ceremony of young teenagers to adulthood into a formal training school that lasted one to three years for both sexes, the boys had theirs known as *Igifofo* festival.

iii) Mende Secret Society initiation rites to Adulthood in Sierra Leone (Yatta, 2007)

There were aspects of pre-colonial Mende education which could be described as 'formal' because there was a specific program and a conscious division between teachers and learners. Two examples of this kind of 'formal' education were the apprenticeship system and the education provided by the *poro* and *sande* secret societies. In the apprenticeship system youth (usually boys) from an early age would be assigned for years to experts to learn vocational skills such as craftsmanship, artistry, weaving and blacksmithing. The *poro* and *sande* secret societies carried out the initiation or 'coming-of-age' education of Mende boys and girls respectively. In the 'sacred bushes' of these societies, boys and girls were not only circumcised but also underwent trials of endurance, received information on tribal and sexual customs and learned the secrets of masked figures like the *sowei* and the *gbeni*. The duration of this coming-of-age education ranged from a few weeks to several years and, like informal education, it was directly connected with the needs and purposes of the community. Because it was for entering adulthood, the work and ways of adults provided the material for this education.

From these examples, it is very clear that traditional adolescent rites-of-passage in Africa are designed to provide a cultural framework for dictating roles and responsibilities of adulthood that will benefit the individual and the sponsoring community. They also serve as effective ways of instilling in adolescents not only knowledge and skill but also the values and motivation needed to foster healthy adult roles. It should also be seen as one of the strengths of the traditional African societies that should be revived and reformed in places where they have existed as part of the ways to support transition to adulthood (Adegoke, 2001).

In her study of the Bamilike people of the Western Region of Cameroon, Tchombe (2011) highlights three important cultural strategies for socializing African Children to responsible adulthood. These include **Interest driven, communication and mediated mutual reciprocity**. Interest-driven strategy is not only that children are actively engaged in these activities but that the activities are of interest to the children. The strategy of communication informs through storytelling, narratives, dialogues and conversations where children are informed through

different forms of communication/interactions using the Bamiléké language to engage their interests in activities warranting their collaboration or cooperation in group work. The strategy of mediated mutual reciprocity is based on the principle that ensures a match rather than a mismatch between children's knowledge and the expectations of the cultural context of learning.

Tchombe (2011) in her study further explains the cultural expectations as children develop through the two phases of childhood, to adolescents as they are prepared for adulthood.

- **Early childhood: 0-6 years.** The child's interests are attracted more by the objects in their environment, which generates much talk, storytelling, singing and conversations with the caregivers who usually is an older sibling. These verbal activities ("good morning", "Have you messed up the floor? or the bed?", "Say thank you", "Clean up", "Good girl") are intensified during feeding, toilet training and bathing of the child. This suggests that very early children's capacity to interact is built.
- **Childhood: 6-12 years.** This stage demands the inculcation of cultural knowledge and skills for sustenance and continuity. During this period, the enrichment strategies are complex because of the increasing demands made on the child. Though the approach becomes increasingly authoritarian, interactions occur as the child is made to remember the names, functions of the family members and their importance. Storytelling focuses on family tree and lineage with various forms of initiations such as initiation into family business, property, age group, family group and farmer's group, traditional dance groups and cultural choir group. These are characterized by engagement in practical activities that are approved by elders and older siblings which are of importance to the child's cognitive development. Implicated peer mentors and adults observe, advice, counsel and initiate the child. The role of siblings and peers are very significant as they play together, dance, share family stories, sing, and hold conversations on topical upcoming traditional events. During this period, children are made responsible for major family businesses such as farming, trading and record keeping.
- **Adolescence: 12-19 years.** Transition to adolescence is a prelude to preparing for adulthood. The enrichment strategies are not only more complex and dynamic but make demands on the adolescent to be more responsible, mature, creative and be problem solvers. The parenting style used can be described as falling within a continuum from authoritarian to being authoritative. Stories told are family oriented, on bravery, tribal wars and family history of how the family came to settle where it is. The narratives are more analytic and critical, highlighting values and models for emulation. During these important sittings, the adolescents are encouraged to ask questions to demonstrate their understanding, awareness and the possibility of sharing acquired knowledge. Such actions demonstrate a sense of responsibility, which is evidence of growing maturity, social competence and implied growing into an intelligent person from a Bamiléké perspective. Major activities are initiation to cultivation of the farm and trading, construction of bridges with the use of bamboos or tree-trunks and construction of houses with traditional materials and engaging in other traditional activities such as traditional meetings and age-group membership.

The discussions above orient on how African children's capacity to face challenges is built very early through socialization, enabling them to grow towards healthy adulthood.

At each stage some challenges are prominent such as poverty, ill-health, hunger, lack of access to quality education and health facilities, dropping out of school because of absence of financial support. The empirical study below confirmed some of the perspectives

4. Methodology

The current study on challenges faced by African children, their strengths and cultural perspectives enabling children reach healthy adulthood was carried out amongst 15 ethnic groups of the West, North West, and South West and Littoral regions of Cameroon. The study sought to answer three specific research objectives, namely, to examine:

- a) The challenges faced by African children.
- b) Strengths of African children in addressing the challenges.
- c) Cultural perspectives enabling children reach healthy adulthood.

An ethnographic research design was chosen for the study whereby children and their parents were studied in their natural cultural environment. Using a purposeful sampling technique, 79 parents, 32 children and 32 adolescents participated in the study. The study employed both qualitative (focus group discussions with children and adolescents) and quantitative (questionnaire for parents) methods data collection and analysis. Descriptive statistics and a systematic process of thematic analysis were used to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

5. Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study are represented in terms of the three objectives of the study.

Objective One: Challenges Faced by African Children

The following table shows the frequency responses of the 79 sampled parents on the various challenges faced by children.

Table 1: Parents' responses on challenges faced by their children

ITEMS	Agree Response Frequency	Percentage Agree	Disagree Response Frequency	Percentage Disagree
Poverty	71	89.87	8	10.13
Malnutrition	59	74.68	20	25.32
High rate of illiteracy	68	86.08	11	13.92
Negative cultural beliefs	47	59.49	32	40.51
Disease affliction /ill health/ Epidemics/ Endemics/ Pandemics	53	67.09	26	32.91
Family conflicts	63	79.75	16	20.25
Loss of parent/ parents	42	53.16	37	46.84

Community conflicts. insecurity/wars	22	27.85	57	72.15
Natural hazards/ disasters	49	62.03	30	37.97

The findings showed that out of the 79 parents that participated in the study, 89.87% indicated that poverty was the highest challenge faced by children. This was followed by High rate of illiteracy 86.08%, family conflicts 79.75%, malnutrition 74.68%, disease affliction 67.09%, natural hazards/ disasters 62.03%, negative cultural beliefs 59.49% and loss of parent/ parents 53.16%. Only a minority of parents (27.85%) indicated community conflicts, insecurity/wars as a major challenge faced by children. These findings are represented in the following chart.

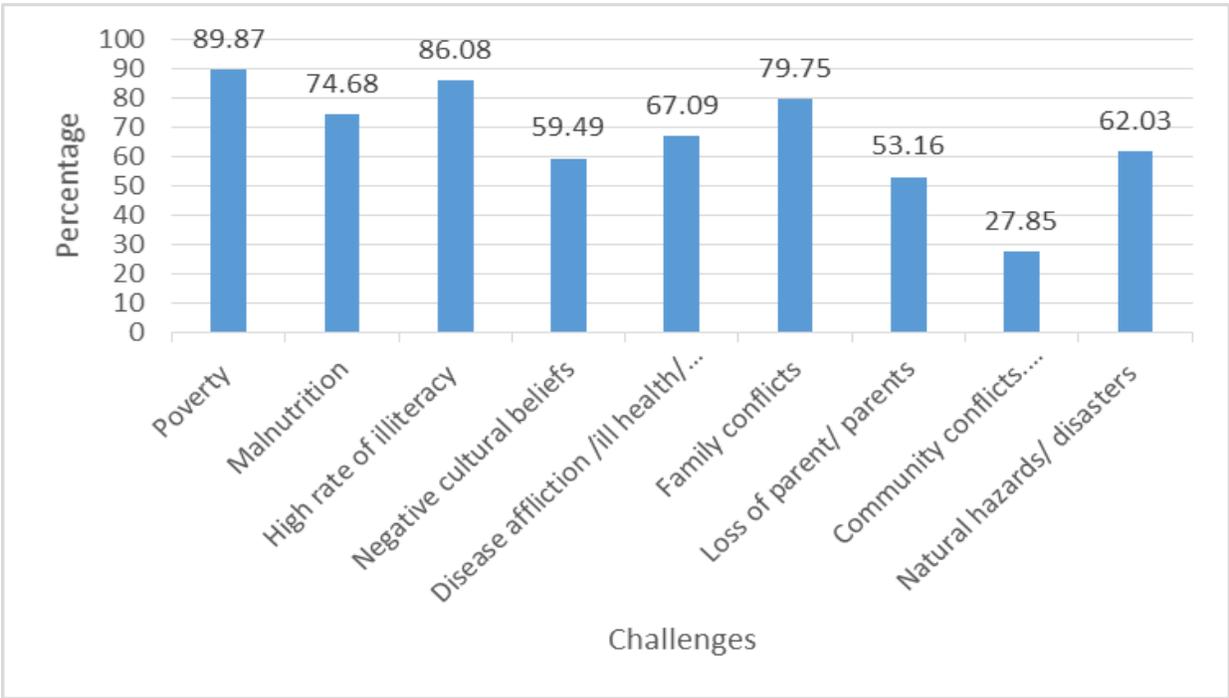


Figure 1: Parents’ responses on challenges faced by their children

The responses of parents were supported by three groups of focus group discussions carried out with 32 children and 32 adolescents. A thematic analysis of the responses of children and adolescents is represented in the conceptual diagram below.

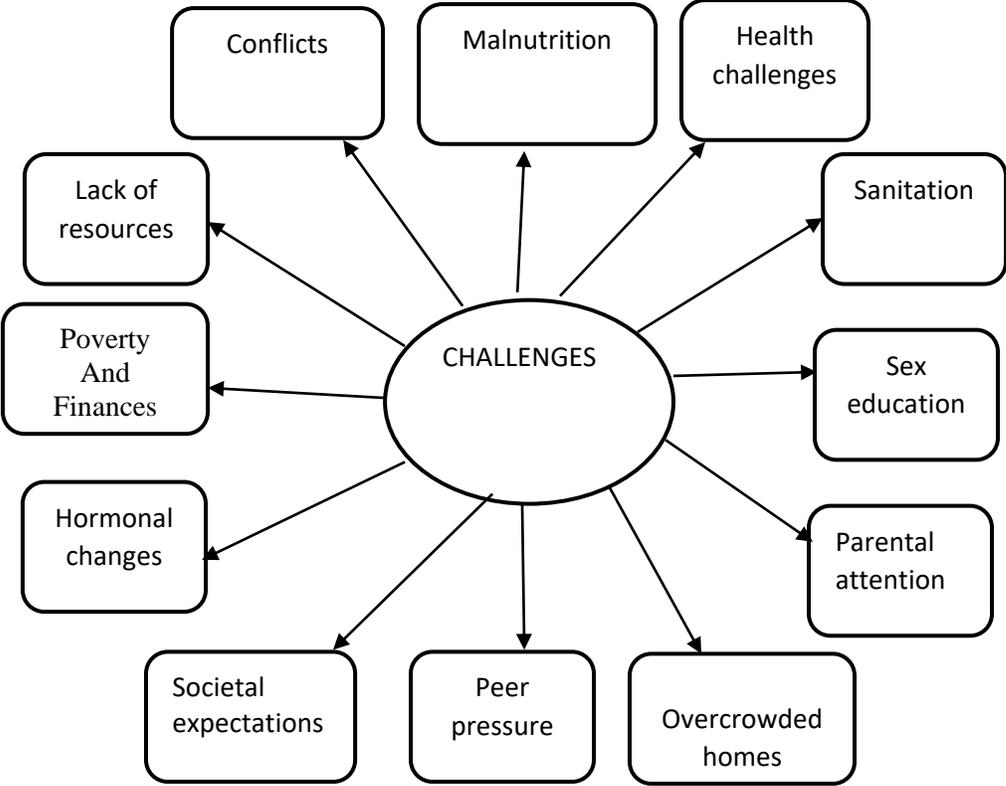


Figure 2: Thematic diagramme of the responses from children and adolescents on challenges faced

These challenges are linked to aspects of sustainable development goals 1. 2. and 3 in particular.

Objective Two: Strengths of Children

The following table shows the frequency responses of the 79 sampled parents on the various cognitive and social/personality strengths possessed by African children.

Table 2: Parents’ responses on cognitive and social/personality strengths of children

ITEMS	Agree Response Frequency	Percentage Agree	Disagree Response Frequency	Percentage Disagree
Cognitive Strengths				
Contextually Cognitive Skills (Problem Solving)	69	87.34	10	12.66
Substantial Practical Skills (Creativity)	56	70.89	23	29.11
Multiple Intelligences (Multi-tasking)	75	94.94	4	5.06
Social and Personality Skills				
Social Competence with Peers	70	88.61	9	11.39
Social Interconnectedness	60	75.95	19	24.05
Respect	62	78.48	17	21.52
Pro-social behaviours	65	82.28	14	17.72
Resilience	71	89.87	8	10.13

According to the findings parents were positive and indicated that African children had strengths such as multi-tasking 94.94%, resilience 89.87%, social competence with peers 88.61%, problem solving 87.34%, pro-social behaviours 82.28%, respect 78.48% social interconnectedness 75.95% and creativity 70.89%. These findings are represented in the following figure.

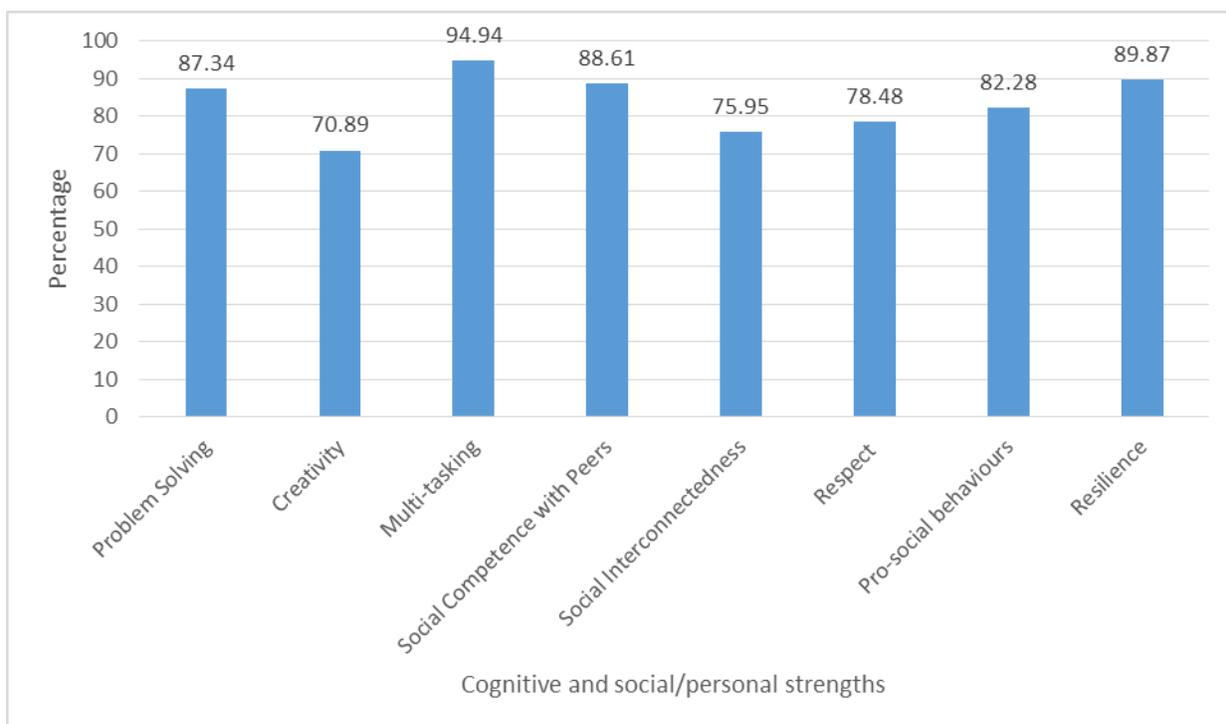


Figure 3: Parents' responses on cognitive and social/personality strengths of children

Objective Three: Cultural perspectives enabling children reach healthy adulthood.

Based on the responses from parents and children, the social support services enabling children to reach effective adulthood were classified by ranking the mean averages of all scores. The lesser, the average the more predictive the item on support service. These findings can be viewed on the table below.

Table 3: Social Support and Services for Children

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND SERVICES	Average	Rank
Family	2	1 st
Values	4,4	2 nd
Common Initiative Groups	4,8	3 rd
Churches	5	4 th
Non-Governmental Organizations	5,4	5 th
Peer group	5,6	6 th
Beliefs	5,8	7 th
Knowledge systems	6,6	8 th
Social welfare services	7	9 th
Mass Media	7,2	10 th
Rites of passage	10	11 th

The implications of the present study is that though African children face enormous challenges, the findings equally reveal that African children possess cognitive, social and personality strengths as well as social support services that if well exploited they will reach effective adulthood. It illustrates through the first three support elements, the significance of collaboration and values. The family for any African child is a very important. No adult African move completely away from family. In order to actualize the full potentials of African children, it is important to address a theory that emphasises the role of the child as major instrument in learning and development

6. Harnessing Psychological Theories for Healthy Childhood Development: The Case of Mediated Mutual Reciprocity.

This paper focuses on socio-cognitive challenges experienced by children in current changing African Society as they grapple with decision making in the management of each day's events, such as Poverty and Hunger (SDG 1&2), in the context of globalisation and growing urbanisation, digital and ICT divide. Socio-cognitive process is illustrative of mind theory in how peoples express their thoughts and feelings about self, others and events base on their perceptions. Many psychological theories have been proposed over the years to explain human behaviour generally but it is important to address theories from a cultural perspective. Social competence, for example, from an African perspective reflects an intelligent person. Such African worldview embodies causal processes having considerable import. Socio-cognitive processes as personal determinants of human functioning takes cogniscance of the context of functioning Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1986), addresses the argentic socio cognitive view that focuses on processes of self-organizing, self-reflecting, and self-regulating. In fostering self-regulation skills in the process, enables children to direct their attention, manage emotions, keep track of rules, and inhibit their impulses and fears. Accordingly, it controls their behaviours in other adaptive ways using socio-cognitive processes.

These competences constitute the focus of the socialisation of the African child. African children and adolescents most often show healthy development in spite of adversity, which is evidence of their ability to be resilient. Fostering resilience in children requires strengthening their personal resources which African parents and the culture address by engaging children in enhancing cultural activities. Resilient children have protective skills inculcated during socialisation and supportive environments through family settings and community. Through their engagements with human and material resources at home and community, they develop creativity self-reinforcing skills and abilities and above developing problem skills, whereby intrinsic motivation is significant. Parents and community ensure the enhancement of children's strength equipped with independence, autonomy, problem solving skills and creativity. For this to happen the children must be able to negotiate, recognize, influence, innovate and direct in ways that affects and influence the behaviours of others insignificant ways changing trends and action positively.

In order to achieve a healthy adulthood, therefore, children and adolescents themselves must be active participants in the developmental process. Mediated Mutual Reciprocity explains how engaged the child is in his or her development

Unlike other social constructivist perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978) that emphasize on the role of the adult in leading a child through his or her zone of proximal development, mediated mutual reciprocity sees the child and adult as co-constructors of knowledge where the child has more responsibility in solving any problem. The child is the focal point in the acquisition or development of any new knowledge that is constructed because it is the child, not the adult that initiates development. These skills and competences are inculcated during socialisation. First, they face challenges because their own developmental pattern is superimposed on them as if they are passive participants in sustainable development. Mediated Mutual Reciprocity gives both the children and adults opportunity to reciprocate and mutually mediate knowledge in the process because knowing learning are facilitated more as children have mastery of the cultural context...

Conclusion

Despite the challenges and adversities faced by children in Sub Saharan Africa, the presence of protective factors within children, their families and communities can play an important role in mediating potentially harmful outcomes. Children are resilient. They have capacities to meet their needs and overcome adversity. These internal capacities are strengthened by functioning families, cultural values and influences, and the existence of supportive persons and structures in the community. The paper concludes by recommending that the following:

- Improve psychosocial support at the individual, family and community levels so children in difficult situations can be supported
- Promote healthy development through nurturing appropriate competences, skills and values very early in children's development. The essence is not only to manage childhood problems as an important strategy for protecting child development but also equipping them with skills for positive growth and development.
- Preserve key indigenous resources and protective systems to enable children develop resilience.
- Invest on the development children's human and social capital early so they can become more able to influence their own level of risk and degree of resiliency.

Finally put in place an assessment tools that can be used to inform on child's degree of strengths to face life's challenges in cultural contexts. Where such assessment, produces negative results, programmes for the orientations of parents, children and community can be put in place to provide the necessary education that must be based on the realities of the context generating the challenges... This cannot be left to chance as there is great need to focus on decreasing an individual's children's exposure to adversity by increasing their individual's internal resources, and mobilising protective processes in the social systems that surrounds them

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