



An Investigation into the Causes of Teenagers School Attendance Failure in Hopley Slum, Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Failure of teenagers in school attendance should be a cause of concern for parents. Teenagers living in Hopley slums are not attending school due to poverty and lack of school fees. Some Parents for the teenagers are not affording paying schools fees for their children because they are not employed. The data collected from Focus Group discussions and observations made showed that instead of attending school, teenagers are engaged into forms of entertainment such as prostitution, drinking alcohol, dancing, gambling, vending and collecting water bottles. In an attempt to mitigate the teenagers' plight, food hampers and clothes were distributed. A pictorial aid and graduation program was organized for teenagers. After the graduation program, teenagers desist entertainment and developed an interest for school attendance. 13 teenagers out of 35 (not attending school) participated in the pictorial aid and managed to graduate. After graduation, they were immediately enrolled into school. This article is an investigation for the causes of slums with an attempt to examine the lack of education for children living in Hopley slums which is located in Harare. A strategy program for assisting teenagers for a free school enrollment was developed and implemented with an intervention. If teenagers are assisted and enrolled into school, there is a probability that they will desist from the vice and pursue education.

Keywords: slum, teenagers, education, entertainment.



Introduction

The concern over education of children in slums is not a new phenomenon in the twenty-first Century. Some scholars registered great concern regarding this matter. Lanyado (2018), states that the greatest literature of the nineteenth century tells vivid stories of children who were rejected, abandoned or subjected to cruelty by those who were meant to be protecting them. Sadly, the arrival of the new millennium with its rapid and massive changes in global urbanization also promoted the expansion of slums with the repetition of child negligence. The slums which are increasing also contributed largely to the number of children who are not attending school. UN Habitat (2003) found that children living in slums are among the most disadvantaged, with less access to education and are distinguished by poverty, lack of public services and more health problems.

Due to economic challenges faced in slums, some children are deprived the privilege of getting education. Even though teenagers are raised in slums, they are still precious in the eyes of God and they deserve decent education. Hopley slum which is located to the southern part of Harare- the capital city of Zimbabwe is another slum community with some teenagers failing to attend school.

Instead of attending school, some teenagers from Hopley slum go vending, queue for water, dig bottles for sale from dumpsters, attend Nyau dancing, drink alcohol and participate in prostitution. There is a fearful indicator showing that if the children fail to attend school, they will be illiterate, commit crimes and their lives spoiled. It is with this background that a project which seeks to develop, implement, and evaluate a strategy for an intervention with a free educational program for the teenagers who are failing to attend school in Hopley slums was initiated. The objective of the research was to identify and assist teenagers who are failing to attend school in Hopley slums. Teenagers were to abstain from entertainment and be in school. The implementation of the research study and intervention process was justified by the data collected from the findings and with the resources funded for school fees. This article gives an over view for the program development, implementation and intervention.

Phenomenon of Slums

The rationale behind providing a historical narrative of slums is to provide a determinant that substantiates the need for a research towards an intervention for the children in slums. The word “slum” may mean various things to different people. United Nation habitat (2003) defines a slum as characterized with inadequate access to safe water, inadequate access to sanitation and infrastructure, poor structural quality housing, overcrowding and insecure residential status (UN Habitat, 2003). In this paper, the two words “slum” and “squatter settlement” shall be used interchangeably.

In the past, people perceived slums as temporal phenomenon thinking that one day they wake up to find them disappear because of urban development (UN Habitat, 2003). This assumption was just a nightmare because slums did not vanish away as expected, instead, they increased alarmingly. It is reported that in the early 1950s and the immediate post-independence period, developing countries adopted a policy of benign neglect or a laissez –faire attitude towards



slums (UN Habitat ,2003). Globally, the prevalence of slum settlement is on a high note mostly in poor countries. Indeed, one researcher commented that, the number of slum dwellers in the world has already crossed the one billion mark (Hossain, 2011, p.1).

Factors Underlying the Rise of Slums

The most common factors which promote squatter camps are poverty, hunger, mental illness, societal inequality, homeless, racism and discrimination. Towards the area of education for children in the slum, there is less engagement within the affected communities. Migrants leave for the world's cities and every day new pockets of slums emerge. UN –Habitat (2003) states that slums, are the products of failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems, and a fundamental lack of political will.

The Sub -Saharan cities are not immune to the challenges of slums due to urbanization. The UN- Habitat (2003) reports that Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of the urban population resident in slums. Many slums create challenges for many children who are likely lose the privilege of attending school. Chinua Achebe also concurs by asserting that we have lost the twentieth century, we are bent on seeing that our children also lose the twenty first century (Adeyemo, 2012). Many Sub-Saharan cities like Kibera in Kenya are affected with slums. Kibera slums in Kenya is the largest slum in Nairobi, and the largest urban slum in Africa (Stenger,2006). Children in slums experience challenges of school attendance. Slums continue to have a low priority in many education programs and the children in slums have complex needs Kielland (personal communication, September 18, 2015). Zimbabwe is a sub Saharan country which is adversely affected with slums. The Capital City of Zimbabwe (Harare) is not absolved.

Need for Education

According to Millennium Development Goal statics, there are many primary school age children who are not attending school. MDG (2010) confirms that about 57 million primary school age children do not attend school. Education need to be tackled to develop the capacity of people to feed themselves, overcome poverty, hunger and illiteracy. Through education, children develop knowledge, skills and acquire attitude which will be necessary for coping effectively within their environment. Education is meant to support the harmonious development of children. Globally, education is viewed as a powerful tool for the development of any society and the much needed human capital. The primary goal of education to any given nation is to prepare individuals for knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ngwenya, 2017). Children should not be deprived of education due to the hierarchical strata of the societal classes. The society is divided into classes and this promotes ethnocentrism. Maier (2015) states that the whole world can be divided into three groups those who have what they need, those who do not and those in between. Every child should be privileged to get education.

The right to general education for all children is a fundamental human right which is contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC). Article 28 of the UNCRC recognizes the right of the child to education, making primary education compulsory and available to all (UNCRC, 1990) . Appropriate measures such as introducing of free education and



offering financial assistance should be opened. Every community should make primary education compulsory as well as free to all children. Education is the right tool to use in fighting hunger. Nyerere states that education is not a way to escape poverty, it is a way of fighting it (personal communication, November 24, 2019). Therefore, exposing children living in slums to quality education is not only a way of escaping poverty but a way of fighting it.

Even though many international and regional charters on human rights recognize education as a basic right for every child, sadly, children from the squatter camps are deprived of education. Many slum children are not attending schools because “there is a severe scarcity of public schools that are accessible and affordable to the children living in squatter settlements UN – Habitat (2003).

Educating children in slum communities is crucial even for the parents and the whole community within which affected children live. There is still much work to be done in educating children that are raised under slum conditions. Otchet, (2012) Confirms that the world has just a few short years to make good on the promise to fulfill every child’s right to primary education. School systems are losing children due to inefficiencies, which lead to early school leaving. It is far more difficult and costly to reach children once they leave school than to address the barriers and bottlenecks in the systems. An appreciation of the challenges which affected parents who located in Hopley slum community in Harare, will enhance one’s understanding of the proliferation of slums and the causes which are impacting many teenagers from school attendance.

Life Style at Porta Farm

Formerly, residents in Hopley slum community came from Porta Farm which was located along Bulawayo Road, opposite Morton Jaffray water plant which is before the town of Norton. The town of Norton is 40km west of Harare. Life at Porta farm was pleasant. Porta Farm was a peaceful and loved home which provided sources of income for its residents. Parents could provide enough food for their children. Teenagers were not associated with vice. Many farm workers owned gardens on small patches of land. There was clean and plenty of water for house hold purposes and gardening. During the rainy season, they grew corn/ maize. Others reared chickens because of the availability of space. Arguably, the yield from the gardens, patches of land and sales of chicken, augmented the salaries.

Well -wishers built a primary school close by, where children could attend after paying a small amount in tuition fees. Hence education was affordable and accessible to teenagers. Parents could afford the fees because they were employed. Teenagers attended school unlike the situation in Hopley where many factors contribute to teenagers not getting into school. These include parents’ inability to pay fees due to unemployment, lack of enough food, lack of water and entertainment.

Life pattern at Porta Farm took a sudden change during the wintry season in June 2005 when the residents were relocated to Hopley Farm. Hopley Slum community is located to the Southern side of the Capital City - Harare. Sadly, after the relocation, parents lost employment, alternative sources of income and accommodation. Parents failed to pay school fees for their teenagers due to lack of income. Families could not find any land to productively use for survival.



They were relocated close to the Capital City whose fast life they were unable to cope up with. Parents were incapacitated to the point that they could not send their children to school.

Resettlement program did not only deprive the people of a place they had called home for a long time but it also took away their sources of income which ultimately affected their ability to send their children to school. Some teenagers were stranded and failed to attend school. This resulted in a high number of school drop outs in the area. Some teenagers from this slum community are not attending school due to several factors.

The research was targeted in Hopley slum community -Zone one. The place was suitable for the study location because of its proximity to the centers of entertainment. Also the researcher partnered with Hopley Seventh day Adventist Church which is located in this area. It was comfortable and cost cutting for the participants who hosted the research team.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was ideal for this research because of its effectiveness in extracting reality from the minds of those affected. Qualitative method involves direct interaction with respondents (Creswell, 2013). The data collected was to inform the intervention towards the teenagers living in the slum. A research team was set. Data was collected from Focus Groups discussions and observations.

High ethical standards which also implies honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability and openness are essential (Chapman 1995). Participants' interests and respect was safeguarded. Burgess (2005) states that participants must be given sufficient detail about the nature of the research, the procedures involved and the objectives of the study. Research participants were freely handed and signed research consent forms. This was done so that the participants confirmed their willingness in participating in the research program.

Research Instruments

Tim Sensing mentions that tools to collect data from the setting are chosen based on the particular demands of the project (Sensing, 2011). Data was collected from observations and Focus Group discussions. Nine open ended focus group guide questions were translated from English into the local language called Shona. An iPad and Samsung phone were used for taking pictures after seeking consent from the participants.

Data Collection

Primary data was transcribed and immediately prepared for analysis. Sensing (2011) states that data collection is a critical issue for the project and requires skills. Data was captured, edited, analyzed and interpreted. To have validity and reliability in data capturing, the researcher applied the means of data triangulation. Basically triangulation is cross checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced study (Sensing, 2011). The advantage of triangulation is that it permits the



researcher to compare and contrast data collected from observation and discussions. After data collection, the next step is data analysis (N' Masami, Matthew & Mariah, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data collected from Focus Group discussions and observations was analyzed edited and applied through using Vivo coding method. Coding refers to the process of assigning numerals or other symbols to answers so that responses can be put into a limited number of classes (Gaurav & Kothari, 2019). Vivo coding uses participants' words. Vivo coding uses words and phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as cords (B' Mathew, Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). For consistency of data analysis, data cleaning was done. Data cleaning is for consistency and treatment for missing value (R' Johnson, Burke & Larry, 2014).

Sampling Procedure

A sample is a set of elements taken from a large population. Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population (R' Johnson et al., 2014). The population target was teenagers and their parents. A purposive sample method was applied in the sampling process. Purposive sample method involves people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to the research (Sensing, 2011). The selection process was guided by an appropriate principle which was a chain sampling. Chain sampling first identifies or selects people with interest. The first person or group of people identified then gives the lead and connections to the next family or group of people to dialogue with. Tim confirms that chain sampling is "where people you interview first give you leads and connections about who to ask next (Sensing, 2011). Through the assistance of the research team and members from Hopley SDA Church, the first few families with teenagers not attending school were identified. The families then led and connected the research team to other parents with teenagers not attending school. The researcher worked with two sets of samples which were a group of teenagers and a group of parents.

Nine Focus Group guide questions were used and these had open ended questions so that respondents were given an opportunity to freely express themselves. Moderators gathered the data from the answers given in response to Focus Group guide questions and observations. For accuracy in data collection, photographs were taken after consent was granted by the respondents. An iPad phone and a tablet were used for this purpose. The written information was analyzed, compared and contrasted for accuracy in data capturing.

Focus Group Findings

There were three Focus Groups (A, B and C) which collected data. The Focus Groups were comprised of the following members respectively, church members, parents and teenagers. The Focus Groups met on different time. An analysis of the data collected from the three Focus Groups, showed that there are challenges in the slum community which have impacted negatively on the teenagers' ability to attend school. The table below shows the combined causative factors from the three Focus Group discussions. The causative factors were noted to be the challenges that hinder children from attending school.



There is only one borehole for the whole community in zone one - known as Hardy. teenagers who should be in school queue for water till the wee hours of the morning. Instead of being in school, teenagers are into vending, gambling, dancing, prostitution, drinking alcohol from shebeens and selling plastic bottles picked from dumps

Divorce rate is high due to parental negligence due to wayward single parents who engage in sexual activities in the full glare of their teenagers because they own a single room. Teenagers are affected psychologically and end up partaking in sexual activities for money. There is a high number of single mothers who are failing to provide for their teenagers' daily needs as well as pay for their school fees. Teenager girls are also attracted into sex business at a place known as Anthony in Hopley community. There are shanty rooms which are rented by sex workers. Teenager girls were charging sexual clients Zimbabwe \$10 bond per a sex session and Zimbabwe \$50 bond per overnight sex sessions. Below is a table which summarizes causative factors which compel teenagers in Hopley slum to fail to attend school.

Table 1: Causative Factors that Compel Teenagers in Hopley Slum to Fail to Attend School

Environmenta l	Poverty/Hunge r	Peer Pressure	Parental	Entertainmen t	Un known
Lack of enough water	vending	Prostitution	Higher divorce rate / dysfunctional homesteads,	Drum beating and singing	School dropouts
Collection of plastic bottles from dumpsters		alcohol,	Prostitution	Dancing	
		Shebeen	Unemployment		
			Sugar daddies		

The table shows causative factors which compel teenagers in Hopley to fail to attend school. The research team discovered 45 teenagers from Hopley slum Zone one, were facing challenges in attending school. Out of 45 teenagers, the research team managed to work with 33 teenagers. In coding the number of teenagers who are affected, the researcher applied an acronym VIPAWF. Simply the acronym will be V for vending, I for interest, P for prostitution, A for alcoholism, W for water and F for fees. Out of the thirty-three teenagers who were discussed with, it was found that ten were not in school due to vending. Four teenagers had no interest in education. Three teenagers were into prostitution. Five teenagers were into alcohol drinking. Three more teenagers faced water challenges. Furthermore, ten have indicated school fees challenge. In coding the figures, the researcher used the acronym VIPAWF. The figures appeared as follows V=8, I=4, P=3, A=5, W=3, F=10. The team discovered that many teenagers are affected by vending, lack of school fees and alcohol.

Intervention Strategy

After analyzing and evaluating the data, the intervention strategy was formulated and it constituted three initiatives. The initiatives applied finally lead to the intervention with an assistance towards the teenagers who are failing to attend school. The Initiatives were: (a) provision of food and clothes(b) Pictorial Aid and certification program. (b) Fundraising and implementation.

A Pyramid of Needs

Abraham Maslow's Pyramid of Needs plays a significant role in the development of children. The pyramid of needs is comprised of a five-tier model of human needs as shown in the diagram below. At the base of this pyramid are the basic physiological needs for every person. The hierarchical levels of the needs from the pyramid's bottom and ascending upwards are physiological, safety, love /belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization. McIntosh and Rima (2007) confirmed that the pyramid of needs is arranged hierarchically, ranging from basic physiological needs at the base to safety needs, needs for affection and belonging, the need for esteem, and ultimately the need for self-actualization.

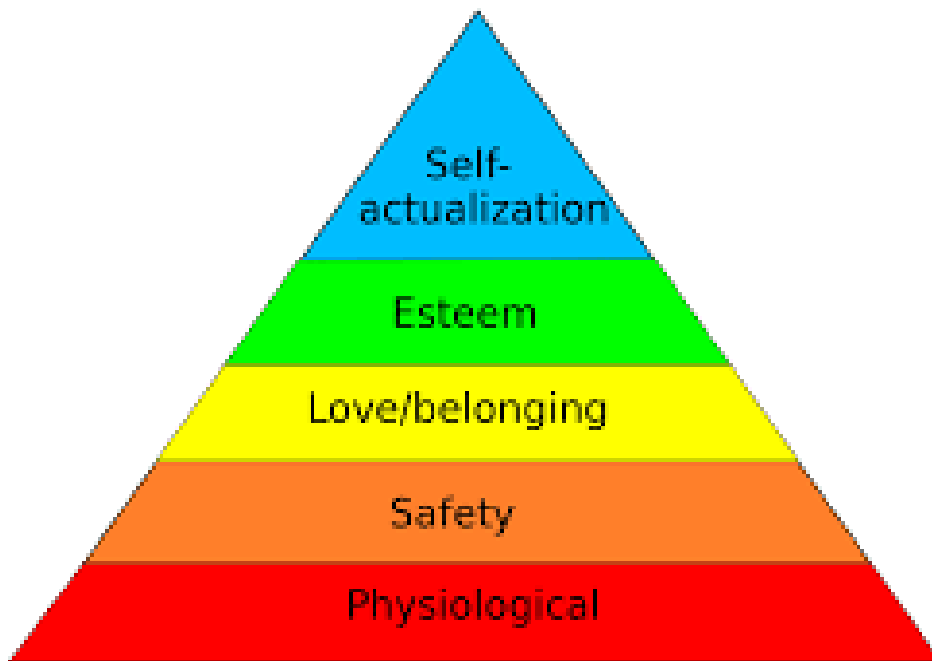


Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's Pyramid of Needs

The diagram shows five human needs which play a significant role in the development of children.

Maslow concept is that every child operates on the basis of the needs and wants of the pyramid of needs. The researcher realized that physiological needs for the children of Hopley slum



were hunger and clothes. Hence the implementation of the intervention began with a response to the needs of the children as shown in the pyramid of needs.

The researcher took notice of the basic needs which were vital for the daily survival for the children. Children can perform better in school if their basic needs are provided.

Kline (2019) states that before students can excel at their full potential in a classroom, we must ensure that their basic needs are met. Hence the implementation program began with the provision of food and the distribution of clothes to the needy children in Hopley slum community. Once the basic needs are met, children can progress to their full potential. If basic needs are not met, students may struggle to meet their full potential (Kline ,2019). The implementation process as explained in the following section, attempt to respond to the needs of the children as stated in Abraham Maslow's Pyramid of Needs.

Implementation Account

The implementation program for teenagers who were not attending school in Hopley slum community begun on November 24, 2019 and should have ended by the 21st of May 2020. But due to the Covid- 19 lockdown, the program stretched up to August 2020. To establish a positive outcome, the team cautiously followed the program outline. There were risks associated with the implementation, however the team managed to master the challenges as risk takers. The team realized that a change starts as small and then it gains momentum. A vision may be grand and distant, but the way to reach it is by putting one foot in front of the other. These small, visible steps are more likely to win early victories and gain early supporters (Kouzes & Posner ,2017). Community outreach activities, which were carried out with respect to the implementation are stated below.

Food Distribution

The researcher met with the teenagers at Hopley SDA Church on the 26th of June, 2020 and was assisted in distributing of food hampers by the church members and together with the team members. The program started at 9am and ended by 10am. Since it was during the Corona Virus lockdown, health regulations were followed. Mothers from the slum community escorted their teenagers and assisted them to carry the food hampers. The program ended with prayer offered by the first elder of Hopley SDA Church. Ten days following this program, mealie meal (corn meal) was distributed. The mealie meal distribution program was carried on the 6th of July, 2020 at Hopley SDA Church. The distribution started at 9am and ended by 9:45am. Twenty -three teenagers attended the program and each of them received a 10 kgs packet of mealie meal.

At the end of the distribution program, teenagers were encouraged to keep up the hope of going back to school and desist from entertainment. A brief lecture explaining the impact of vending, entertainment, alcoholism and prostitution on education and their lives was given. The objectives of the lecture were (a) to enable the teenagers to understand that even though they were poor, hungry and living with unemployed parents, they all belonged to a loving and caring God. (b) They should quit entertainment and be in school. (c) To assist teenagers to value their health and education.



Clothes Distribution

Many people in the slum community are not employed so many teenagers are in need of clothes. Christ's approach was to mingle with the people and then provide their needs. In following the example of Jesus, the research team partnered with a philanthropist woman who donated clothes and blankets for the slum community. On the 15/07/2020, at half past eight in the morning, the philanthropist met with the teenagers and parents in the Hopley SDA Church.

There was a brief prayer session program held in the church. As food for thought, the researcher read and explained Mark 10:14. The emphasis he gave was that Jesus welcomes all children for His blessings. Jesus loves all teenagers from Hopley and nothing should stop them from getting education.

During distribution, the number of teenagers doubled as compared with the previous figure. In total, there were of forty-eight teenagers. However, the philanthropist brought enough clothes for all teenagers who were present. She worked together with the Hopley SDA leadership during the clothes distribution program. The distribution program lasted longer than expected. Instead of finishing earlier, the distribution ended after eleven O'clock in the same morning. That was a moment of deepening the relationship with the community especially with the teenagers who were not attending school. After the program, the teenagers were asked if they were wishing to be in school with their new clothes and many showed their wish to be back in school provided fees were paid. In preparation for getting back into school, the researcher promised them a pictorial booklet program.

Pictorial Booklets, Certification and Enrollment

Several studies indicate that researchers have found that pictures can facilitate learning in early childhood classrooms (Einarsdottir, 2005). Colorful pictorial booklets were nicely designed and with thirteen pictures of heroes and heroines from the Bible. The pictorial program was a response to the love and belonging needs since children desire for strong peer relationships and acceptance. The researcher realized that children could learn faster with pictures and appreciate the lessons being given. Byrnes and Wasik (2009) confirm that photographs can help children learn the language for how they feel, which contributes to their social and emotional development as well as language development. Teenagers were free to write down answers in either the local language (Shona) or English. Few and simple questions were asked for each picture. The pictorial booklet exercise was meant to enable the teenagers to understand how Jesus made other teenagers heroes and heroines. If they could get education, Jesus would make them heroes and heroines too. The pictorial booklet program became a gateway for the enrollment of the unschooled teenagers. In participating in the program, the teenagers showed their interest and commitment for schooling. Thirteen teenagers participated in the pictorial booklet reading assignment. After completing the assignment, the pictorials were collected back for grading. The pictorials were collected on the 12th June, 2020 and thereafter certificates were handed to the teenagers.

The venue for the program was Hopley SDA Church. Parents for the teenagers and Hopley Church members attended the mini graduation ceremony. Health regulations were monitored strictly by keeping social distances. Teenagers needed an encouragement in attaining education, so



the certification program was the best way for encouraging them. At the end of the program, the first elder for Hopley SDA Church gave a charge encouraging teenagers to continue with education. Teenagers showed an interest in school attendance. This event motivated the teenagers for further education.

Thirteen teenagers participated in the pictorial aid program. After finishing their pictorial lessons, they got enrolled into school. They were enrolled into school and continued with education. The only limiting factor was the availability of enough the resources. The researcher did some fundraising for the school fees of the teenagers. He secured fees for all the thirteen teenagers who participated in the pictorial program. The fundraising program is still in progress.

Evaluation

The research program accomplished its purpose. The intervention strategy was quite successful. Through program implementation, the research team mingled and ministered to the teenagers through social activities. Teenagers were inspired to be back in school and advance with education. Lectures on transformation of good character and behavior were given to the teenagers. The teenagers promised to quit alcoholism, prostitution and entertainment. The parents were greatly benefited from paying school fees and also with their teenagers who refrained from joining gangs of prostitution and alcoholism. Society as a whole function more effectively when people help one another, help the less fortunate and eliminate social problems (Johnson, 2018).

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility in promoting the education of children is paramount. Melgosa (2012) states that research confirms that parents can become their children's best and most influential teachers. In matters impacting students' achievement, parents are the most influential. Fulgham (2008) states whereas teachers are one of the most important in school factors impacting students' achievement, parents are generally identified as the most important. The performance of children is linked to the support which parents give. If children are not urged to attend school, they will become playful. Patterson (2008) argues that "teenagers school performance is strongly tied to parental attitudes and expectations. More support is needed from parents. It is the duty of parents to provide "culturally stimulating environment for their adolescent offspring by exposing them to art, literature and music (Patterson 2008).

Conclusion

Lessons on how to quit alcoholism, prostitution, gambling and entertainment were given to teenagers not attending school. Thirty-three teenagers quit entertainment and are ready to return to school. Due to financial limitations, the researcher managed to only source school fees for thirteen teenagers. Currently thirteen teenagers were enrolled are in school. The researcher worked with a profound research team which was skillful. The implementation and intervention were timely. The researcher and the team ministered to the slum community and implemented all the prescribed approaches. In mingling with the teenagers, the team discovered that the teenagers were friendly and keen for education.



The intervention program was complemented with the pictorial series which enabled teenagers to learn stories of heroes from the Bible. The stories inspired the teenagers with hope and ambition for education. It was through fellowshipping with the teenagers and assisting with school fees that many of them desired to continue with their education.

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