

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING
CHILD ABANDONMENT IN NAIROBI*

BY
JASSIE NJOKI GICHUKI

*A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Arts in Christian Education*

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2007

JULY, 2007

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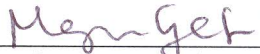
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July, 2007

Student's Declaration

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING
CHILD ABANDONMENT
IN NAIROBI

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted
to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi
Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

(Signed) 

Jassie N. Gichuki

July, 2007

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the factors influencing child abandonment in Nairobi. Data were collected through open-ended interviews at Lang'ata Women's Prison with thirteen women who were jailed for child abandonment. Thereafter, data were analyzed and transcribed.

The findings revealed that desperation is the governing factor explaining the phenomenon of child abandonment. Nevertheless, some combination of three contributing factors drove these women into desperation, resulting in child abandonment. These factors, namely: destitution, isolation and injustice, taken singly may not have resulted in the same sense of hopelessness, but combined they resulted in desperation.

I concluded that the new phenomenon of child abandonment is spreading all over Kenya, especially in the urban areas. This conclusion paved way for recommendations that appeal for programs that will foster unity and teamwork in eradicating the phenomenon.

TO

This work is dedicated to my dear husband, George Gichuki and our wonderful children: Jacque and Dennis, Rosemary and Kinyua, Ed, Eva and Robert for the immeasurable support they gave me during the overwhelming moment of study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks to the Almighty God for giving me the strength and wisdom to bring my studies to a good end. You are worthy of my whole being.

I wish to deeply thank those who have contributed to the completion of this study in numerous ways:

My special acknowledgement goes to my able supervisor, Dr. Starcher who selflessly and patiently worked with me, to bring this study to a good completion. I am equally thankful to my second reader, Rosemary Mbogo for her immense availability, guidance and encouragement, throughout my learning experience at NEGST. My appreciation goes to Dr. Suraja Raman for keeping me focused in the course of this study. I do deeply thank the library staff for their heartfelt and thorough services in locating and issuing books and other articles to me.

My appreciation to Pastor Elijah Wanje for walking with me through this academic journey: in prayer, encouragement and even keeping his library open for me to borrow books.

My sincere gratitude to the dynamic Precept Gals who have indeed, held my hand in prayer, encouragement and providing a learning setting for my practicum.

I am grateful to my two good friends: Connie Mureithi and Jane Munio who walked with me as they listened to my endless chatter about my research and opening my mind to new ideas, to bring this study to auspicious completion.

I would feel cheated if I failed to mention the Prison's officials and my participants at Lang'ata Women's Prison for facilitating the interviews.

And to my wonderful family: my husband George Gichuki and our children: Jacque and Dennis, Rosemary and Kinyua, Ed, Eva and Robert – I salute and honor you for your love, encouragement and patience. Thank you for your immeasurable support, to bring my educational studies to a good end. Love you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A baby had just been born and was abandoned along a sidewalk in a Nairobi suburb of Kayole. The police rushed the baby to Nairobi Children's home, a temporary government home for abandoned children. I was called, and the baby was immediately committed to my orphanage, with all the relevant documents concerning his brief history. When I took the baby in my arms I was shocked to find the pathetic state the cute little boy was in. He wore nothing but a small tattered cloth. I dressed him warmly and, after feeding him some milk, drove off with my little prince to the orphanage. We named the boy after my husband, George Gichuki. We have bonded so well that my family has decided to meet all his basic needs in terms of food, tuition, medical expenses and clothing. George is one child whose arrival to the orphanage has, indeed, enriched my life for I have experienced real joy and fulfillment in the work that God has called me to do, in serving Him. Sometimes, I look at the adorable child and just wonder, "Why did his mother just walk away from her innocent child?" My study seeks an answer to this disturbing question.

Child abandonment, a new phenomenon in Kenyan society, is becoming alarmingly rampant and disturbing, especially in the Nairobi area. It is affecting society economically, politically, socially, spiritually and emotionally.

I am conducting this study from personal experience because I manage a home for abandoned children and have witnessed the real problem of child abandonment and its complexities. According to the records held by the Orphanage and the

