AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ELDERLY IN THE RURAL AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF MBIRE DISTRICT WARD 17

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to investigate into the challenges faced by the elderly in rural areas, a case study of Mbire District. This study intended to bring out the socio-economic status of the elderly people in Mbire, to bring out the social and economic challenges being faced by the elderly and also to assess the coping mechanism being used by the elderly people in Mbire. The researcher used a case study research design to carry out this research. The case study was carried out in Mbire District and the research had a sample size of 40 elderly people and 6 key informants. Data was obtained through self-administered questionnaires and conducting interviews and was analyzed manually and presented using Microsoft Excel. All of the respondents alluded to the fact they were facing economic challenges in the quest to live their own lives and bringing up the children that they care for. The most economic challenges that were pointed out were mainly challenges linked to the provision of food, clothing, educational requirements as well as health needs. The elderly people are caring for a considerable number of children whose parents have died of HIV and AIDS and some whose parents are in the cities fending for the family or have just neglected the children. The research unearthed the coping mechanisms utilized by the elderly in the face of all these challenges and problems. The elderly make use of the remittances that are provided by their children, they also sale the products they produce in their plots of land like vegetables, and other horticultural produces, there is provision of food aid by the government and other nongovernmental organizations which sustain them in times of dire need. There is also need to build social networks for the elderly people so that they can be connected to each other. Social networks bring opportunities, not only to meet with other elderly in similar circumstances but also to establish a supportive social network. They will be able to share information and experiences and to address the challenges that they are collectively facing.