

The self-concept and academic performance of institutionalized and non-institutionalized HIV/AIDS orphaned children in Kisumu municipality

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Abstract: *The HIV/AIDS pandemic has increasingly become a major factor in the emergence of orphans in the developing countries. These orphans are usually traumatized due to the multiple losses, isolation, stigma and grief. The study sought to investigate the effect of institutionalization of children on the self-concept of the AIDS-orphaned children and to investigate the relationship between self-concept and academic performance of the AIDS-orphaned children. The ex-post-facto research design was adopted. A total of 138 orphaned pupils that is 67 boys and 71 girls participated in the study. The study was based on Rogers' (1951) theory on self-concept. Data was analyzed using the t-test and the correlation coefficient. The study found out that there was a difference in self-concept and academic performance between pupils orphaned by HIV/AIDS living in institutions and those living with extended families, guardian homes and in parental homes. The difference in self-concept was not significant but the institutionalized orphans performed better academically than those who are non-institutionalized. The study recommended that since stigma and discrimination is still very rampant in schools, children should be taught against such behaviors to avoid orphans feeling different, and they should be treated as ordinary children. This would enhance their self-concept and academic performance.*

1. Introduction

HIV/AIDS is a disease that was first reported in America in 1981, and since then, about 40 million people world wide have been infected with the deadly virus. The virus is sexually transmitted, and it is also passed on through direct blood-blood contact, such as through contaminated needles or blood transfusion. The other common route is the transmission from an HIV-positive mother to her baby. The consequence of the latter channel of transmission is that more than 13 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS globally, 11 million of them being from sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya has lost 1.5 million adults, who have left behind about 1.3 million orphans under 18 years of age (Government of Kenya, 2001). In Kenya, there are several orphanages, which have been established to care for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, and provide them with education.

The problem of children starts long before the death of a parent. Death is merely the culmination of a period of sickness, often followed by inadequate family guidance and emotional support, and limited support to education inadequate socialization, nutrition, material and financial support. Long impact on the orphans themselves is difficult to ascertain. Twenty years after the epidemic first appeared, a generation of children orphaned by AIDS is emerging from a childhood deprived of stability, love, and nurturing. This gives us the picture of the kind of children we have in our primary schools. Some schools have even been reported to refuse to admit AIDS orphaned children (Kwama, 2003). This raises a significant number of questions, for example: how do they perform in class and how do they perceive themselves?

The HIV/AIDS orphans end up in several destinations after their parents' death. They include: extended families, guardians' homes, orphanages and parental homes with those failing to get accommodation in these residential destinations turning to the streets as their "home". The Rapid Assessment Analysis and Planning Process (RAAPP) by the Kenya Government on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), 12% of households are comprised of orphans taking care of themselves. While 84% of paternal orphans live with

their mothers, 54% of maternal orphans live with their fathers.

According to the Government of Kenya (July, 2004), the first areas to be affected when a child is orphaned is their academic performance and self-concept. The assessment gives the percentage of double orphans aged 10-14 years attending school at 70% lower than that of children living with at least one parent (93%) and children who have lost one or both parents (85%). This assessment also revealed that the ratio of female orphans to female non-orphans attending school is 0.9, while the ratio of male orphans to male non-orphans attending school stands at 0.93, meaning that chances that both male and female orphans attending school are lower than their non-orphaned counterparts.

2. The formation of the self-concept.

The main factors determining the formation of the self-concept of an individual are the environment as well as people with whom the individual lives, who play a very crucial role in the moulding of the self concept. These people are called the significant others and they include parents, teachers, peers and sibling. Morgan (1956) claims that people describe a given individual in terms of various personality traits and when these traits are consistently applied, the person often accepts them as descriptions of him or her.

If parents praise and love a child, if playmates respect and give attention to the individual, he forms a picture of himself as a desirable person and hence develops a positive self-concept. On the other hand, if parents and peer reject and criticize the individual and are indifferent, this leads to a derogatory self-picture resulting in inferiority feelings. Morgan stressed that the treatment a child receives has some relation to his traits and abilities. The physically strong is more likely to win the admiration of his playmates than the weak one. The intelligent child has greater opportunity of gaining success and praise in school. Relations with family members and peers may therefore influence the child's personality trait and this can affect his or her academic

performance. This study investigated the difference in academic performance and self-concept of Aids- Orphaned children who are institutionalized and those who are not institutionalized.

3. The self-concept and academic performance

This study investigated the self-concept and academic performance of AIDS orphans, by comparing the performance of those who live in institutions or orphanages with those living in the other destinations with the exception of those in the streets.

Self concept is how one characteristically feels about oneself (Durojaye 1976, p. 246) Self-view is important in determining how one learns and behaves as has been observed by Burns (1982). He further reported that, Success or failure in schoolwork or life appears to depend as much on how a person feels about the qualities and attributes he or she possesses as on these qualities themselves. Formation of self-concept starts in early childhood stages where the family socializes and shapes the child's self- concept. The school also has a role to perform in improving and adding to the self-concept of a child (Durojaye, 1976.)

Research in Kenya has suggested that there is a strong relationship between academic achievement and self-concept (Mwaniki, 1973). Writing on the great importance of ones views towards oneself, Wright (1960) asserts that; "The kind of person you think you are becomes endowed with remarkable powers. It influences and often decisively the way one perceives the intention of others, the choice of associates, the goals set for oneself and much more" (p. 38).

Jordan (1981) in America quoted research studies done by Combs et al (1959), as researchers whose findings support the hypothesis that self-concept is positively related to academic performance. This means that a learner with a higher self concept will perform better in academic tasks than a learner whose self-concept is low. Quoted by the same researcher are studies by Banmster (1968) cited in Mwaniki (1973) and Purkey (1970). These researchers do agree that self-concept has a strong relationship with academic performance. According to these studies

inadequacies in self-concept have been reportedly, implicated as a causal factor in academic performance problems. In this study, orphan hood by HIV/AIDS has been associated with low self-concept due to stigma and discrimination by society, thus it totally agrees with the researcher.

Reck (1980) reported that a pupil with a positive self-concept stands a better chance of performing better than a pupil with negative self-concept. Given this premise, Reck pointed out that, educators have become increasingly interested to enhance self-concept either as a means to the end of academic achievement or as an educational end itself.

Few studies have dealt with self-concept and its effect on school achievement in Kenya. Mwaniki (1973) carried out an investigation of self-concept and academic achievement among the seventh grade pupils in a rural and urban community. The study did not report sex differences in self-concept and achievement between urban and rural children. She found that on self-concept scale she developed a modified Sears and Sherman self -concept inventory (1963) both urban and rural boys tended to rate themselves as being good in mathematics and in fact out performed rural boys and girls in that subject. The study also reported that urban girls outperformed urban girls and rural boys and girls in English. In general, the study reported that in terms of the school subject self-concept measure, boys possibly considered and took their work much more seriously than girls. She however, recommended for further investigation in the area of self-concept and academic achievement. Mwaniki(1973) conducted the study on a population and sample comprising of girls and boys from both rural and urban areas and tested them in particular subjects notably mathematics and English.

4. Purpose of the study

This study aimed at investigating the effects of institutional care on the children's academic performance and self-concept, by comparing orphans living in institutions with those living with extended families, in guardian homes

or in their parental homes. Therefore, based on the preceding literature this study assumed that the way students perceived themselves and their residential destination could have an impact on their self concept and academic performance. The objectives of this study were: to investigate the effect of institutionalization of children on the self-concept of the AIDS-orphaned children and to investigate the relationship between self-concept and academic performance of the AIDS-orphaned children.

5. Methodology of the study

Population and sample.

In this study, the population comprised the children orphaned by AIDS and in this study orphans referred to “total orphans”, that is children who have lost both parents as opposed to “semi orphans” who have lost one parent.

The study sample included the total number of 138 orphans between ages 10 to 15 years whose parents have died of AIDS in Kisumu Municipality. Orphans who are at least 10 years old could describe what they think about themselves. Lists of the total orphans between ages 10 and 15 years were obtained from the children’s Department in the District and the Aga Khan Rural Development Offices and orphanages in Kisumu Municipality hence they were purposively selected. From this information it became easier to know the schools where they learn thus the choices of schools involved in the study.

This study adopted the purposive sampling procedure to select schools where the orphans attended and also the orphans who live in extended families and guardians’ homes. A total of 10 schools were sampled. Two schools were used in the pilot and eight were in the actual survey. All were chosen according to the location of orphanages. This was because some of the orphanages had no schools of their own, thus sending their children to the nearest primary schools. Three of these schools were located within the orphanages while the others had orphans both from orphanages outside and also those living with families. Two of the ten schools were

used for pre-testing the questionnaire while eight were included in the final study.

In the study, all the orphans whose parents died of AIDS were chosen from classes 4, 5 and 6 in all the sampled schools. These children were assumed to be cognitively able to understand the questions in the questionnaire. The children's Department in Kisumu provided the information about these AIDS-orphaned children. The Aga Khan Rural Development Project also helped in the location of the orphans.

Pupils in primary school were chosen for the study. AIDS death rates started going up in the late 80's and 90's; majority of those who were born around this time lost their parents to the disease (Kodero, 2002). The respondents (children orphaned by AIDS) were stratified by two variables; residential destination and sex. The respondents were first grouped according to their residential destinations: institutions or orphanages, and extended families or guardians homes.

Research design.

The study used ex-post-facto research design. This is because, the children were already orphaned, existing examination results were used, and the fact that the effects and causes of differences between the two groups of orphans had already occurred. The residential destinations studied had already influenced the orphans' self-concept and academic performance. However, this study was also correlation in design because it investigated the relationship between two dependent variables: academic performance and self-concept of children orphaned by AIDS.

6. Results and discussion.

Effects of institutionalization on the self-concept of the HIV/AIDS orphans

The first research objective sought to investigate the effect of institutionalization of children on the self-concept of the AIDS-orphaned children. Consequently, the first research question asked if there was a difference in self-concept between institutionalized and non-institutionalized AIDS-orphaned children. To answer this question self-concept results from the self-concept scale administered were considered and mean scores for institutionalized and non-institutionalized AIDS-orphaned children were computed. The mean scores for the two groups of orphans are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Self- Concept of AIDS-Orphaned Children*

		Self – Concept	
Residential destination	n	Mean	SD
Institutionalized	57	54.08	22.30
Non-Institutionalized	81	54.33	18.38
Total	138	108.41	40.68

To test whether or not the mean scores for institutionalized and non-institutionalized AIDS-orphaned children were significantly different, t-test for independent samples was used. The results of this analysis showed that there was a statistically non-significant difference in self-concept of institutionalized and non-institutionalized children, $t(136) = -0.07, p > .05$. It was therefore concluded that there was no significant difference on the self-concept of institutionalized and non-institutionalized AIDS-orphaned children.

The self-concept and academic performance of the AIDS-orphaned children.

The second objective was to investigate the relationship between self-concept and academic performance of the AIDS-orphaned children. The second research question asked if there is a correlation between self-concept and academic performance of AIDS-orphaned children. In order to answer this question the AIDS- orphaned children were asked to complete the self-concept scale and their mean scores were computed. Moreover their marks for end term examinations were added and averaged. The mean scores for self-concept and academic performance for each child were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation and the results of the analysis is reported in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 *Correlation between Self–concept and Academic Performance of institutionalized AIDS-Orphaned Children*

	Self-concept	Academic
Performance		
Self –Concept	-	0.17
Academic performance	0.17	-

On correlating the each research subject’s scores on self-concept and average marks in the end of term exams, the findings presented in table 3 below were obtained.

Table 3 *Correlation between Self –concept and Academic Performance of non-institutionalized AIDS Orphaned Children*

	Self-concept	Academic Performance
Self –Concept	-	-0.13
Academic performance	-0.13	-

The results of the analysis indicate that the institutionalized AIDS- orphaned children had a statistically significant positive correlation between self-concept and academic performance, $r=.17$, $p<.05$, while those of non-institutionalized had a statistically non-significant negative correlation $r=-.13$, $p>.05$. It was then concluded that there is correlation between self-concept and academic performance of AIDS-orphaned children who were institutionalized and that institutionazation is likely to boost academic performance of the AIDS orphans.

7. Conclusion and the way forward.

This study was set to investigate the difference in self-concept between institutionalized and non institutionalized AIDS orphaned children. The findings of this study indicated that there was a statistically non- significant difference. This finding is in agreement with other studies which have highlighted the effects of HIV/AIDS on one's self-concept. In most cases, HIV/AIDS kills both parents.

Multiple deaths in a family make children sad and isolated, lowering their self- concept and this can affect their academic performance especially when they are made to appear inadequate in the presence of peers who are not orphaned. Ntozi (1997) cited in Kodero (2002) said that Kinsmen or clan members who care for orphans often struggle to the extent of reducing the general livelihood within the households. It is also documented that many orphans are Living miserably with their relatives, and they become second-rank children, who do more work around the household than the other children, and they are often absent from school or when sick are not attending health facilities. These situations were seen to be similar to those in Kisumu District among extended family members who care for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

The Christian background of most of the institutions help in promoting positive attitudes among the orphaned children which make them see one another as equals. This is further reinforced by the counseling departments of these institutions which work to ensure these children feel loved

and cared for; thus giving hope for these otherwise hopeless children.

Institutionalized pupils' high self-concept is attributed to the treatment they get from their respective caregivers. Most institutions or orphanages do not discriminate against orphaned children. On the other hand, in extended families and guardian homes, boys are viewed with a lot of suspicion by the host children. They are seen as intruders who have come to take away their inheritance (land and property) and this is made worse if the children of the host family perform poorly in school. The host children fear they can infect them with the disease. However, the knowledge of having relatives around them, gives them a sense of belonging thus building their self-image despite the difficulties they go through. This explains why there is no significant difference in their self-concept compared to those who live in institutions.

This study sought to find out if there was a correlation between self-concept and Academic performance of AIDS-orphaned children. The results in table 2 and table 3 Indicated that the institutionalized AIDS-orphaned children had a statistically significant Positive correlation between self-concept and academic performance, while those of non-Institutionalized had statistically non significant negative correlation. It was then concluded that there is a correlation between self-concept and academic performance of AIDS-orphaned children who were institutionalized. From this finding, it is apparent that that institutionazation is likely to boost academic performance of the AIDS orphans and therefore the study recommends that as much as possible the society should try and place the AIDS orphans in institutions which provide the required care.

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