

Orphaned Adolescent Males in Sub-Saharan Countries: Sexuality Challenges Experienced

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on the challenges experienced by orphaned adolescent males in Sub-Saharan countries. Literature research indicates that due to lack of physiological needs (for example, parental support, stable environment, clothes) due to orphanhood, a disproportionate number of male youth are prone to myriad of risk sexual behaviour such as substance abuse, promiscuity, sexually transmitted infections and teenage fatherhood. Guided by multi-theoretical approaches including Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model and Theory of Planned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen, this paper employed systematic review to critically analyse the electronic journals and doctoral theses highlighted the plight faced by this marginalized cohort. Based on the literature findings, this paper argues that orphaned adolescent males may flourish and cope with adversity provided the school, church and governmental sectors collaborate in providing skills and social support necessary to buffer against deviant peers and exposure to disorganized environment.

INTRODUCTION

The number of orphans globally is estimated at 153 million, varies according to different countries (Pacione et al. 2012). Mthobeni and Peu (2013) highlighted South Africa as having the second highest orphan rate that is estimated to 1.5 million to 3 million as compared to Nigeria with the number of orphans estimated to be 2 400 000 while in Namibia they are 115 000. In Rwanda, more than one million children below age 18, not only were orphans but lived in child-headed households following the war that took place in 2005 (Ntaganira et al. 2012). The World Bank (2013) found that of the 17 million Uganda's children, 8 million were classed as orphans. Orphanhood is a generic categorization used to describe a parental status, as well as socio-economic condition of children whose ages are 18 and below and have lost one or both parents due to various causes such as HIV/AIDS, wars, accidents and abandonment (Ansell 2016; Hampshire et al. 2015).

Subsequent to parental death which often leads to poor protective factors for adolescent male orphans, literature demonstrated that such youth become vulnerable and increase the statistics of academic failure, teenage fatherhood, imprisonment and risk sexual behaviour (Doku

et al. 2015). The term risky sexual behaviour encompasses an array of factors leading individuals to an engagement in sexual intercourse or activities prematurely (that is, early sexual debut) with multiple sexual partners, under alcohol and drug influence for economic survival (Jewkes and Morrell 2012). Adolescence is a term derived from the Latin word '*adolescere*' which means to grow and it is a stage between 13 and 18 years of age in which the adolescent male goes through significant physiological, emotional and psychological changes. Drawing from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach, adolescent males are in the genital stage - a time of growth spurt or puberty (that is, sexual hormones become intense, penis gets enlarged) and aggressive instincts resurface, an interest in girls increases (Swartz et al. 2011) and their need to belong to peers emerges (Weiten 2013).

As a result, such orphaned adolescent males have been found to report slow development in emotional intelligence and self-regulation in terms of coping with environmental stressors such as peer pressure, poverty, rejection and poor life skills that encompass communication, and decision making skills around sexual behaviour (Brook et al. 2011). Since there is growing scientific evidence that orphaned adolescent males suffer increased psychological distress

in many parts of Africa (Elegbeleye 2014; Ratele et al. 2012; Vagi et al. 2016), this paper attempts to answer the following questions; (i) Which factors are associated with orphaned adolescent males to engage in risky sexual behaviours in Sub-Saharan countries? (ii) Are there approaches relevant in addressing the risky sexual behaviour among orphaned adolescent males in Sub-Saharan countries?

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this research paper are as follows;

- (i) To critically assess the factors and challenges pertaining to orphaned adolescent males' sexual behaviours in Sub-Saharan countries.
- (ii) To suggest approaches relevant in addressing the risky sexual behaviour among orphaned adolescent males in Sub-Saharan countries.

Theoretical Approaches

To achieve the research objectives of this paper, the Ecological System Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour would be the guiding theoretical frameworks. However, other relevant theories such as attachment theory, social exchange theory, social learning theory as well as myopic theory would also be infused to give impetus and deeper understanding surrounding orphaned adolescent males in Sub-Saharan countries.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Model

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model postulated that individuals' behaviours are influenced by factors at different levels and these factors may include individual level, family, organizations, community and the entire society (Chimphamba-Gombachika et al. 2012). For instance, these adolescents' behaviours at an individual level may be influenced by the knowledge, skills, beliefs and the attitudes that they hold. Peer influence in the family, policies and rules of the organizations, community with its established norms and the society with its cultural context and the national policies may all impact negatively or positively on the person-

ality and the behaviours of the adolescents (Shai et al. 2012).

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour pioneered by Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) has a notion that people are rational beings and that a person's engagement in certain behaviour is determined by beliefs, attitudes with its consequences which predict the intentions to engage in that action (O'Hara 2009). Planned behaviour theory posits that the person's intention to engage in risk behaviour is predisposed by culture, attitudes and beliefs (Espada et al. 2016). In other words, orphaned adolescent males may intentionally engage in risky behaviour owing to the subjective norms and beliefs they hold about that behaviour. As a result, their attitudes shape their beliefs which make them not to comply with health behaviours but influence their risky behaviour intention (Kolawole 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a systematic review to search for published peer-reviewed studies that investigated the sexual behaviour of orphaned adolescent males living in Sub-Saharan countries (for example; South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Swaziland, Botswana, Tanzania). Electronic searches of articles that were assessed for this study are indexed PsycINFO, Excerpta Medica database (EMBASE), Scopus and International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) and were conducted in January 2016. Because this research method has no restrictions, however, the researchers concentrated on the articles published between 01 January 2009 and 31 December 2016. The 53 articles had to meet the following inclusion criteria; (a) adolescent males whose age do not exceed 18 years old, (b) participants are affected by multiple factors such as poverty, parental death, disorganized environment, culture, sexual abuse, violence, drug abuse or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of this paper was to provide an update of the use of a systematic observation method in assessing the literature findings per-

taining the sexual behaviour of orphaned adolescent males in Africa. A large body of research found that the factors influencing orphaned adolescents risk behaviour are multifaceted, and may include poverty (Muruiki and Moss 2016), substance use and delinquent peers and non-school attendance (Setlalentoa et al. 2010, Yi et al. 2010). Furthermore, lack of positive role models or authoritative caregivers (Kidman and Palermo 2016) contributes towards risk-taking behaviour such as pornography viewing and early sexual debut (Kheswa and Notole 2014). In cases where culture is embraced, orphaned adolescent males who have not undergone traditional male circumcision become ridiculed and ostracized by the same society which discourages medical male circumcision (Kang'ethe and Nomngcoyiya 2016). These factors are discussed below;

Lack of Sex Education

Risky sexual behaviour among orphaned adolescents is proliferated by the disappearance of traditional sex education and gives rise to lack of access to adequate sexual health information and services (Lambani 2015). Evidence showed that lack of sex education leads adolescents to construct their own sexual identities based on different socio-cultural contexts and the contextual meanings of sexuality (Bhatasara et al. 2013). In a study conducted to explore gender roles in the African culture, Ratele et al. (2012) documented that risky sexual behaviour by orphans is influenced by different social norms, which promote patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity. To support this assertion, in Tanzania (Wambura et al. 2011) it was found that adolescent males are encouraged to view men as providers, tough and in the process they model after their double standards which contribute to risk sexual behaviour.

Adolescent - Caregiver Communication

Puffer et al. (2012) highlighted that orphaned adolescents relationships with caregivers that are characterized by poor communication often lead to myriad risky sexual behaviour such as early sexual debut because they have never been adequately equipped to resist peer pressure (Muhadisa 2013). According to Frantz et al. (2015) when there is poor support from the fam-

ily, the orphaned adolescent males find themselves losing self-control that manifests itself through substance abuse, violent behaviour and risky sexual behaviour. In agreement with this phenomenon, Kidman and Palermo (2016) highlighted that risky sexual behaviour of orphans is associated with having experienced a dysfunctional parenting, or disturbed family and poor caregiving. Drawing from Bowlby's (1988) attachment theory, adolescents' failure to derive secure attachment especially from the caregivers during infancy, often leads to difficulties in forming stable relationships later in life. To overcome their emotional void, Ismayilova et al. (2012) stated that in Uganda, lack of parental guidance led orphaned adolescents to become at a higher risk of early onset of sexual activity. Furthermore, such adolescents were also likely to experiment with substances (that is, drugs and alcohol) and engage in sexual intercourse with multiple partners for economic survival. From the literature findings, this current study speculates that these orphans may leave home to live on the streets or informal settlements which are localities of high risk in issues of sexually transmitted infections and sexual abuse. A better explanation for this marginalized group to leave home is brought by Mogotlane et al. (2010) who established that it is due to some extended families that are unable to respond to the traditional way of taking responsibility to raise these children. In addition, Mogotlane et al. (2010) argued that physical abuse in some instances propels orphaned adolescents tend to stay alone even before they can be fostered.

Traditional Male Circumcision

Traditional male circumcision entails teachings and performances of sexual rites that are endorsed by society and prepares young males for manhood in order to gain respect and cultural identity in the community (Gwata 2009). According to Kang'ethe and Nomngcoyiya (2016), Xhosa-speaking people especially in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, traditional male circumcision is coupled with education about being a man and includes mentorship for responsible adulthood as well as sexual health. During the cultural ceremonies and dowry negotiations, traditionally circumcised men are legible to take part, and that adds value and sense of belonging to their well-being. However, Riess et al.

(2014) found that in Kisumu, Kenya, adolescent males who have not undergone traditional circumcision are regarded as incomplete and become ostracized in their communities because they have not fulfilled the societal norms. It therefore means orphaned adolescents lacking the presence of older male role models may not be able to partake in these rituals, thus affecting their social status in the community. This argument is in line with Maughan-Brown (2011) who found that culture may be discriminatory towards orphans because when they are still not traditionally circumcised, such adolescent males may be treated with contempt as compared to their circumcised counterparts. But since it is imperative for adolescent males to be supported by paternal relatives such as uncles in identifying the legalized traditional surgeons and pay for the surgery, why should orphans' rights to culture be overlooked by the very same community members who may be having knowledge that the biological parents died of HIV/AIDS especially if the boy was still young? It is for this reason that in a study conducted in Cape Town to explore a critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness, the findings by Ratele et al. (2012) showed that fatherlessness leads to the higher psychological distress to the orphans, high engagement in risky behaviour, and weak internal locus of control. According to Takatshana (2013) adolescents with a weak internal locus of control are more likely to abuse alcohol with the belief that it might help them to forget about their problems. Because of intrapersonal conflicts, adolescent orphans may experience identity confusion (Gatsi 2014). For instance, according to Marcia's four types of statuses of identity development, that include diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement, orphaned adolescents may score high on diffusion since their behaviour is characterized by disinterest, apathy, and lack of direction which are predisposed by lack of exploration and commitment.

Pornography, Social Media and Substance Abuse

In a study conducted to explore the impact of pornography on adolescent males sexual behaviour in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, Kheswa and Notole (2014) found that adolescents who experienced lack of father figure, were

prone to engage in aggressive sexual behaviour due to influence from peers. Similarly, in Ethiopia, Meheret (2014) found that 26.7 percent of orphaned adolescents were encouraged by their friends to engage in premarital sex. It was also found that 86.5 percent had drunken alcohol before engagement in casual sex and 33.3 percent viewed pornographic materials. Thus, Mkandawire et al. (2013) are of the opinion that there is a need for child-headed households to be assigned foster parents because in Malawi, the adolescent males double-orphan were at risk for contracting STIs (for example, Chlymadia, Syphilis) relative to their male non-orphan peers. It is clear from these literature findings that authority figures meant to protect the rights of children do not take actions to prohibit and imprison shebeen or tavern owners selling alcohol to children less than 18 years of age. This calls for Universal Declaration of Human Rights of Children (UNICEF 2014) because in Malawi, Jere (2013) found that the pubs open for the whole day and there are no age restrictions with respect to who enters their outlets for alcohol consumption.

Socio-economic Status

Awino (2010) highlighted that due to increased poverty, orphaned adolescents were more likely to experience poor health, poor nutrition and academic failure which may restrict them from setting and achieving realistic goals. Muruiki and Moss (2016) found that orphans in Ivory Coast were prone to report lack of adequate food, shelter, clothing and schooling as compared to non-orphans. As researchers, the belief is that such youth may find itself trapped in child labour, substance abuse and subsequent unsafe sexual practices to overcome the scourge of hunger. Also, because maturation is inevitable, it is important to remember that during adolescence, orphaned male youth would experience sexual urges and have a desire to engage sexually with significant others. But how do they protect themselves from contracting sexually transmitted infections especially if they live in informal settlements which are far from the clinics to access condoms? In Burkina Faso, owing to poverty, Yode and LeGrand (2014) found that a disproportionate number of adolescent male orphans end up practicing unsafe sex because they could hardly afford a pack of condoms that

costs 50 or 100 CFA francs and for fear of being stigmatized by carrying condoms, this cohort cited that even if they have money, they avoid being ridiculed by shopkeepers since the society is culturally embedded.

Challenges Associated with Orphanhood among Adolescent Males

Child Labour and Sexual Abuse

Orphaned adolescents are more likely to develop anger that stems from the feelings of inadequacy that result from lack of support due to parental death. Furthermore, their experience of poor health is aggravated by the exposure to danger since after death of parents they are forced to seek employment which exposes them to abuse, poor salaries and exploitation (Braithwaite et al. 2013). Owing to civil wars in Mozambique which left many women and children destitute and illiterate, Dava et al. (2013) found that in Chokwe District, adolescent males became orphans and that forced them to become street vendors and work on the farms for long hours without getting paid. Subsequently, Bhat (2014) noted that these adolescents began to perform poorly academically, and displayed depressive symptoms owing to lack of emotional support. Ganga (2013) found that for they were unable to concentrate at school, developed poor self-concept and self-acceptance and became vulnerable to alcohol abuse and unsafe sex. But since the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) has set a broad framework policy for the protection of children below 18 years old from child labour (Saul et al. 2014), why farmers, domestic workers and brick companies do not get arrested for contravening these laws?

In the same vein, sexual abuse against orphaned adolescent males can have an adverse impact on core aspects of behavioural, physical, social and emotional development throughout life (Vagi et al. 2016). However, the gaps in literature show that sexual abuse on adolescent males has not been much reported in many parts of Africa (World Health Organization 2013). Lockhart (2008) in ethnographic study in Tanzania, orphaned male youth who lived in the streets were reported to be subjected to the practice of *kunyenga* (that is, engagement to anal sex with older males in exchange for protection,

shelter and money). In Kisumu Village, Kenya, Auerswald et al. (2012) found that orphans would be coerced in anal sex even by street-based leaders after having been intoxicated with glue and other drugs. Since in this instance, such orphans may not be conclusively classified as homosexuals, however, they may intentionally attend the pubs or liquor outlets where they would be most likely to be proposed by or fall prey on gay adult males who may manipulate them to develop sexual relationships especially if such adults appear to have money. Sadly, though the South African governments has progressive policies such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act 38 of 2007) (Bhamjee et al. 2016) which categorically forbid any form of sexual expression (that is, kissing, masturbation, vaginal or anal penetration) between adults and adolescents irrespective the adolescent gave a consent, sexual violation continues to escalate. Drawing from van de Rijt and Macy's (2006) social exchange theory, which is based on the notion that individuals tend to have a sexual relationships in which their basic needs are likely to be met, adolescent males may sustain such unions secretly and find it hard to resist the gifts such as jewellery and clothes.

Impaired Psychosocial Well-being

According to Setlalentoa (2010) psychosocial well-being of orphaned adolescents may get impaired due to boredom as a result of lacking cognitive stimulation as compared to non-orphans owing to family disorganization, poverty, loneliness, and unemployment. In Soweto, Gauteng Province, South Africa, Mdletshe (2014) reported impaired psychosocial well-being of orphaned adolescent males due to lack of father figures who should have instilled sexual values and attitudes, and harness self-confidence in making well informed decisions. In another Nigerian study conducted to explore the development of alternative interpretation and the story of an orphaned boy affected by HIV/AIDS and father abandonment, the findings by Elegbel-eye (2014) showed that risky behaviour of orphans was exacerbated by the exposure to crime that results from lack of guidance and support from parents. Prior exposure to criminal behaviour, McGrath et al. (2009) found that in Umkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal, South Afri-

ca, such adolescents had engaged in early sexual debut because their paternal death impacted negatively on the psychosocial well-being and affected their coping strategies. It therefore means that in developing countries, prisons will continue to be overcrowded by orphans as compared to non-orphans because there are no strategies to combat their plight. No wonder in Angola, Cole and Chipaca (2014) found that the three orphans from thirty juvenile offenders housed at Observation Center in Luanda, cited that their parents died during war. These orphans had criminal records between six and eight previous offences ranging from robbery, murder to possession of weapons. In addition, they mentioned the influence of peer pressure while staying on the streets, snuffing petrol and other illegal drugs. Drawing from alcohol myopic theory by Steele and Joseph (1990) which suggests that alcohol constrains one's ability to connect immediate experience with previous experience and interrupts emotions and cognition, no wonder serial killers are sexually aggressive and lack empathy towards significant others. In sexual encounters, Rehm et al. (2012) found that owing to blurred vision and intoxicated mental functioning, adolescent males engaged in unprotected sex and the possibility of contracting STIs could be high.

Effective Approaches to Address the Risky Sexual Behaviour among Orphaned Adolescent Males in Sub-Saharan Countries

To mitigate the adverse circumstances faced by orphaned adolescent males, Muriuki and Moss (2016) proposed that the policymakers should inject money into the Departments of Education and Social Development to train paraprofessional social workers. Their role could be pivotal in ensuring that those who have already contracted HIV adhere to the treatment, receive quality healthcare and sex education. Anema et al. (2011) projected that the impact of ART (antiretroviral treatment) expansion to orphans in 10 Sub-Saharan countries, namely; Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda would increase their life-span and contribute towards making them realize their future goals. Having elucidated the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory for this research paper, it could be speculated that some

of these orphans may realize their sense of self-worth, reclaim their sense of purpose and go back to school because the government are in pursuit of putting in place structures to build their resiliency effect.

Furthermore, vocational training for orphans may substantially reduce the rate at which alcohol and drugs are consumed by youth due to boredom and lack of recreational facilities especially in rural areas. To support the assertion above, in Ugandan study among adolescent orphans, findings showed that provision of resources such as education and economic opportunities reduced the risk sexual behaviour while contributed to the behaviour, attitude and development of hope for the future (Ssewamala et al. 2009). In other words, Snyder's (2002) hope theory affirms that irrespective of adverse circumstances that any adolescents may find themselves, when there are agencies (that is, churches, youth centres) to reinforce the good behaviour in youth, orphaned adolescent may show commitment and feel empowered in attaining their goals.

DISCUSSION

It is evident that an alarming number of orphaned adolescent males may be victims of sexual abuse and STIs owing to poverty because they are lured to drug abuse by older counterparts, who, in turn, engage them in anal sex "*kunyenga*". In these instances, it is common that there are no lubricants to ease penetration and condoms to minimize transmission of STIs. The health implication of this practice includes haemorrhoids or piles due to frequent friction and stretching of the anus while being penetrated (Eze et al. 2016), which may give rise to human papillomavirus (HPV) and anal cancer. Research found that large penises may tear the internal anal sphincter, thereby stopping complete sealing of the anus and causing fecal mucus seepage (anal incontinence) (Altomare 2017). Furthermore, since Cole and Chipaca's (2014) research in Angola showed that orphaned adolescent males ended up in prison for robbery, it should be mentioned that in many prisons, juveniles may be physically and sexually abused by older male inmates especially if they have no financial support from their relatives to buy food. A better explanation for such sub-cultural practices in prisons whereby food is exchanged for

anal sex is brought by Kheswa and Lobi (2014). These scholars found that at Middledrift Correctional Centre, Eastern Cape, young inmates reported to practice anal sex not on their own accord and would find it difficult to inform the correctional officers for fear of embarrassment.

Because there is a general trend amongst orphaned adolescent males of poor socio-economic status, majority of them may not complete their formal schooling owing to fragmented financial support. It could be assumed that, such vulnerable youth may not escape child labour such as working at the taverns and selling coals. Consequently, their health may be compromised because most taverns operate all night long and lack of sleep (that is; insomnia) may contribute towards impaired judgement, weight loss and headaches (Comer 2013). Carrying heavy bags of coals on the shoulders almost daily may be detrimental to their spinal cords and affect their lungs as they should package them. Although the Social Department of Welfare in countries such as South Africa provides social grants for orphans and at the government schools there is provision for learners from indigent families, still, the education system is deficient in terms of ensuring that these learners attend school regularly. Furthermore, from the researched literature findings, there is no evidence of longitudinal studies of orphaned adolescent males who have been traced to determine their psychological well-being. It therefore means, in African countries, the government is still far from addressing the plight of orphaned adolescent males because there seems to be no effective strategies specifically to assist this cohort to reclaim its psychological well-being even after they have served their sentences in prison. What could be speculated is that, majority of orphaned adolescent males in Africa would remain being ill-equipped in the areas of positive sexual behaviour, decision-making and overall general well-being.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature findings, it is clear that the orphaned adolescent males in many parts of Africa, experience negligence and are prone to risky sexual behaviour. For as long as the community does not protect orphans from those who exploit them by giving them alcohol and

drugs, crime would escalate because the research findings indicated that this group of young people learn to fend for themselves for economic survival. It could be questioned how often the orphaned adolescent males become exploited through child labour and sexual abuse as there is dearth of research around adolescent male orphans. In conclusion, this paper highlighted that adolescent males without parental support owing to orphanhood show some delay in emotional and cognitive development, which give rise to posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression and hostility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the ecological framework, the belief is that should there be an improvement in one area such as provision of shelter under the guidance of foster caregiver (s) for orphaned adolescent males living on the streets and in informal settlement, this might in turn, reduces sexual abuse from homosexual men who prey on them because they are financially poor. Consequently, their self-esteem is likely to develop because their cravings for experimentation with drugs and alcohol would have been discouraged as most foster institutions focus on spirituality. Also, the Ministry of Education should deploy clinical and educational psychologists to offer psychotherapy to orphans who are still at school to deal with the loss of their parents and associated stigma especially if their parents died of HIV/AIDS. To reduce their planned behaviour to deliberately engage in risky sexual behaviour due to boredom, the need for extramural activities in schools is imperative. This paper recommends that the extramural activities should be compulsory and examinable for every learner so that they may be actively involved although there are still schools which conduct their classes under the trees with no resources such as computers and relevant books to expose learners to different sporting codes and sex-education.

Finally, the traditional leaders should create a platform for orphaned adolescent males to be traditionally circumcised at a price subsidized by the government in the same way the Department of Health budgets for medical male circumcision (MMC). In this way, the cultural identity of orphans would be restored.

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