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Mental health and coping resources of adolescents affected by parental HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa**Comfort B. Asanbe***College of Staten Island/City University of New York (CSI/CUNY), USA*

Statement of the Problem and Objective: There is a gap in the literature on the psychological health of children in the context of parental HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. We examined several indicators of mental health and coping strategies in a sample of orphans and vulnerable children and youth (OVY) in rural South Africa, to determine if there were significant differences among three groups, the role of gender and age, and whether coping strategies predicted mental health outcomes in this populations.

Method: Participants included 175 adolescents (aged 11–18 years) from a low-resource community, and consisted of non-orphans (n = 57), orphans due to AIDS (n = 62), and orphans due to other causes (n = 56). All (175) participants rated themselves on age-appropriate Youth Self-Report (YSR), and 95 completed The Children's Coping Strategies Checklist (CCSC). Little's MCAR test revealed that the CCSC missing data did not display a specific pattern. Mental health problems are determined by elevated T-scores on the YSR cut-off for borderline or clinical range on specified scales. A higher aggregate mean score on a specific CCSC subscale indicates more usage of that coping strategy.

Results: A higher proportion of orphans by AIDS reported elevated scores on internalizing problems, females showed higher risks for psychological problems, and a majority of the participants expressed emotional discomfort through physical symptoms. In addition, active coping strategy negatively predicted internalizing and general psychological problems. A participant's gender and age did not predict the coping strategies used.

Biography

Comfort B. Asanbe, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the College of Staten Island/City University of New York, and a research fellow at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her research focuses on identifying the factors that pose a threat to the psychological health of children; especially those related to parental drug use, pre and postnatal drug environments, and most recently, children impacted by parental HIV/AIDS infection and death. She is a representative of the American Psychological Association (APA) at the United Nations (UN), and she has co-chaired the 14th Psychology Day at the UN event. She is a member of the Committee on Mental Health with a special interest in the de-stigmatization of mental illness. She is a licensed psychologist in New York.