A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR EARLY ADOLESCENT AIDS ORPHANS

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A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR EARLY ADOLESCENT AIDS ORPHANS

by

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Dedicated to my husband Peter
and daughter Lemogang-Zoë
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SUMMARY

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND CRIMINOLOGY
DEGREE: DOCTOR PHILOSOPHIAE (D.PHIL)

In this study an attempt was firstly made to define, describe and explicate the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS providing a basis for understanding the multidimensional nature, key characteristics and impact of HIV/AIDS in terms of its background, the current status as well as the future of the epidemic. Literature concerning HIV/AIDS in general, global and in particular the South African situation was discussed. Secondly the concept AIDS orphans was investigated after which grounding, description and explanation of the problems and needs of AIDS orphans were presented in order to give a clear picture of challenges faced by these children. Problems of orphan-hood such as legal and ethical issues, socio-emotional issues, educational issues, financial issues and child-headed households were identified. The study focused on early adolescent AIDS orphans therefore adolescence, as a life phase with specific emphasis on early adolescence was reviewed. Hereafter, the researcher presented a newly self-developed life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans (i.e. AIDS ORPHANS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME) followed by all the empirical research findings, a general summary, conclusions and recommendations.
The broad aim of the study was to develop and empirically test the effectiveness of a life-skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans.

Two research questions and a hypothesis were formulated for the study. The research questions included: (a) what is the nature and prevalence of socio-emotional needs and problems of early adolescent AIDS orphans? (b) What are the life skills needed by early adolescent AIDS orphans? Accordingly the hypothesis of the study read: If early adolescent AIDS orphans undergo a life-skills programme then their skills will be enhanced in order to cope better with their socio-emotional needs and problems.

In the context of applied research the type of research conducted in this study was intervention research. This type of research was relevant for this particular study because it is a problem-solving process seeking an effective intervention programme for the promotion of life skills for early adolescent AIDS orphans. In view of the fact that the AIDS orphan situation is a crises for the whole nation innovative preventative positive educational programmes for children orphaned by AIDS are deemed pivotal.

The focus of this research study was two-folded using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of the study was qualitative and explorative in nature. The aim of the researcher was to have a broader understanding of the phenomenon HIV/AIDS, the socio-emotional needs and problems of and life skills needed by early adolescent AIDS orphans in South Africa. The focus of the second phase was to develop a life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans, based on the information collected in the first phase of the study and then to empirically test the effectiveness of the newly developed life skills programme. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with a schedule to collect qualitative data during the first phase of the research. During the second phase, the researcher utilised a self-constructed group administered questionnaire to collect quantitative data before and after implementation of the life skills programme (pre-test and post-test).
In order to explore the socio-emotional needs and problems of and life skills needed by early adolescent AIDS orphans, a phenomenological design seemed appropriate.

The research design was selected to reach the first three objectives of the study, namely:

a) To conceptualise theoretically the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS and AIDS orphans, the specific characteristics, needs and problems of early adolescents as well as life skills for early adolescents;

b) To explore and identify the nature and prevalence of socio-emotional needs and problems of early adolescent AIDS orphans;

c) To explore and identify the life skills which AIDS orphans, in their early adolescent phase need to improve their coping capabilities;

Qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with a schedule was collected. The sample thus included 40 respondents i.e. 10 social workers, 10 caregivers and 20 AIDS orphans. The empirical research findings based on the first part of the study confirmed that HIV/AIDS has forced vast numbers of children into precarious circumstances, putting them at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. AIDS orphans are especially vulnerable to HIV infection for a host of social and economic reasons including poverty, sexual exploitation, violence, and lack of access to HIV information and prevention services. The consequence of this is that children are often socially isolated and deprived of basic social services. The findings further confirmed that there are currently no life skills programmes specifically designed for early adolescent AIDS orphans in South Africa. Deficiencies in life skills contribute to the vulnerability and exploitation of these children. Life skills were viewed as crucial in improving the quality of life of AIDS orphans. Life skills can enable adolescents to develop sound and positive view of life.

The researcher also applied the comparison group pretest-posttest design (i.e. a quasi-experimental comparison group pretest-posttest design) with respondents to reach the last three objectives of the study, namely:
d) To develop a life-skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans;

e) To empirically test the effectiveness of the developed life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans; and

f) To suggest practical recommendations for further utilisation of the newly developed life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans.

The researcher developed a life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans namely AIDS Orphans Life Skills Programme. The evaluation of the self-developed life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans was done by a self-constructed group administered questionnaire in the pre-test i.e. before implementation of AIDS orphans life skill programme, and post-test with both the experimental (30 respondents) and comparison group (30 respondents). The sample thus included a total of 60 early adolescent AIDS orphans and the empirical data was collected to include 2 measurements once before and once after the intervention (AIDS orphans life skills programme).

The findings confirmed that there was a statistical significance difference in the experimental groups life skills (i.e. sense of identity and self-esteem, communication, assertiveness, self-awareness, coping and stress management, decision making, problem solving, conflict management and a healthy life style) with a 95% chance that the results were due to AIDS Orphans Life Skills. There was not statistical difference in the experimental groups critical and creative thinking skills. Nine out of ten key elements of AIDS orphans life skills programme were thus successful in that they promoted life skills amongst early adolescent AIDS orphans. AIDS orphans life skills programme is perceived as having had the impact that was hoped for.

Key words

Life skills, programme, life skills programme, AIDS, HIV, Orphan, AIDS orphan, adolescence, early adolescence.
In hierdie studie is ‘n poging aangewend om die fenomeen van MIV/VIGS te definieer, te beskryf en te verduidelik ten einde ‘n basis daar te stel om die multi-dimensionele aard, kenmerke en die impak van MIV/VIGS ten opsigte van die agtergrond, huidige status sowel as die toekoms van die epidemie te verstaan. Literatuur in verband met MIV/VIGS in die algemeen asook hoe dit werelwyd en spesifiek in Suid Afrika voorkom, is bespreek. Tweedens is die konsep VIGS weeskinders ondersoek waarna die begronding, beskrywing en verklaring van die probleme en behoeftes van hierdie kinders weergegee is ten einde ‘n duidelike beeld van die uitdaginge waarvan hulle gekonfronteer word, te bied. Probleme in verband met ouerloosheid soos wetlike en etiese, sosio-emosionele, opvoedkundige – en finansiele kwessies asook kinderhuishoudings is geïdentifiseer.

Aangesien die studie op vroeë adolesente VIGS weeskinders fokus, is adolessensie as lewensfase met spesifieke klem op vroeë adolesensie bestudeer. Hierna het die navorser die nuut ontwikkelde lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolesente weeskinders (AIDS ORPHANS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM) beskryf en ten slotte die empiriese resultate, gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings weergegee.

Die breek doel van die studie was om ‘n lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolesente VIGS weeskinders te ontwikk en dieselfde effektiwiteit daarvan empiries te toets.
Twee navorsingsvrae en 'n hipotese is vir die studie geformuleer. Die navorsingsvrae was die volgende: (a) Wat is die aard en voorkoms van die sosio-emosionele behoeftes en probleme van vroeë adolesente VIGS weeskinders? (b) Watter lewensvaardighede benodig VIGS weeskinders? Die hipotese is soos volg geformuleer: Indien vroeë adolesente die lewensvaardigheidsprogram deurloop, sal hulle lewensvaardighede bevorder word wat hulle in staat sal stel om hul sosio-emosionele behoeftes en probleme beter te hanteer.

In die konteks van toegepaste navorsing is daar van intervensie navorsing gebruik gemaak. Hierdie tipe navorsing was toepaslik vir die studie aangesien dit gereg is op 'n probleemoplossende proses naamlik die ontwikkeling van 'n intervensie program om die lewensvaardighede van vroeë adolesente te bevorder.

'N Gekombineerde kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe benadering is in hierdie studie gevolg. Die eerste fase van die studie was kwalitatief en eksplorerend van aard. Die doel van hierdie fase was om 'n bree begrip vir die verskynsel van MIV/VIGS te ontwikkel asook om die behoeftes, probleme en lewensvaardighede van vroeë adolesente VIGS weeskinders te eksploreer. Die tweede fase was kwantitatief aangesien die fokus van die doel daarvan was om 'n lewensvaardigheidsprogram, gebaseer op die inligting wat in die eerste fase ingesamel is, te ontwikkel en die effektiwiteit daarvan empiere te toets. Die navorser het die semi-gestrukureerde onderhoudsvoering gebruik gemaak om kwalitatiewe inligting tydens die eerste fase van die studie in te samel. Gedurende die tweede fase het die navorser 'n self-ontwerpte groepvraelys gebruik om kwantitatiewe data by wyse van 'n voor- en na-toets in te samel.

Ten einde die sosio-emosionele behoeftes en probleme van asook die lewensvaardighede wat vroeë adolesente VIGS weeskinders benodig, te eksploreer, is daar van die fenomenologiese navorsingsontwerp gebruik gemaak. Hierdie ontwerp is geselekteer ten einde die volgende navorsingsdoelwitte te bereik:
(a) Om die fenomeen van MIV/VIGS en VIGS weeskinders asook die spesifieke kenmerke, probleme, behoeftes en lewensvaardighede van vroeë adolessente teoreties te konseptualiseer;

(b) Om die aard en voorkoms van die sosio-emosionele behoeftes en probleme van die vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders te ondersoek en te identifiseer;

(c) Om die lewensvaardighede wat vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders benodig te eksploreer en te identifiseer met die oog op bevordering van hul hanteringsvermoens.

Ten einde kwalitatiewe inligting in te samel is semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met 10 maatskaplike werkers, 10 versorgers (caregivers) en 20 VIGS weeskinders gevoer. Die empiriese bevindinge het bevestig dat ‘n groot aantal kinders in gevaarvolle omstandighede geforseer word wat hulle in ‘n risiko situasie plaas om self HIV geïnfekteer te raak. HIV weeskinders is om verskeie sosio-ekonomiese redes kwesbaar vir HIV infeksie naamlik onder andere armoede, seksuele blootstelling, geweld asook ‘n gebrek aan HIV inligting en voorkomings dienste. Die gevolg hiervan is dat hierdie kinders dikwels isoleer en van basiese maatskaplike dienste onteem word. Die bevindinge het verder bevestig dat daar tans geen lewensvaardighedsprogram spesifiek vir vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders in Suid Afrika bestaan nie. ‘n Gebrek aan lewensvaardighede dra by tot die kwesbaarheid en blootstelling van hierdie kinders. Lewensvaardighede word beskou as noodsaaklik om die lewenskwaliteit van VIGS weeskinders te bevorder en hulle in staat te stel om ‘n gesonde en positiewe lewensbenadering te ontwikkels.

Die navorser het die kwasi-eksperimentele vergelykende groep voortoets-natoets ontwerp gebruik om die laaste drie doelwitte te bereik naamlik:

x
(a) Om ‘n lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders te ontwikkel;
(b) Om die effektiwiteit van die ontwikkelde lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders empiries te toets;
(c) Om praktiese aanbevelings vir verdere benutting van die nuut ontwepte lewensvaardigheidsprogram te maak.

Na die ontwikkeling van die lewensvaardigheidsprogram is die effektiwiteit van die program getoets deur ‘n steekproef van 60 respondente doelgerig te selekteer en in ‘n eksperimentele groep (30 respondente) en ‘n vergelykende groep (30 respondente) te verdeel. Toetsing van die effektiwiteit van die program is gedoen deur middel van ‘n self-gekonstrueerde groepvraelys wat as voor- en natoets op beide groepe benut is. Slegs die eksperimentele groep het egter die lewensvaardigheid sprogram deurloop. Effektiwiteit is bepaal deur die verskillende metings met mekaar te vergelyk.

Die bevindinge het bevestig dat daar ‘n statistiese verskil in 9 lewensvaardighede van die eksperimentele groep waarnembaar was (naamlik ten opsigte van self-identiteit en self-waarde, kommunikasie, selfhandhawing, self-bewussyn, self-help en stres bestuur, besluitneming, probleemoplossing, konflikbestuur en ‘n gesonde lewensstyl) met ‘n 95% kans dat die resultate aan die betrokke program toegeskryf kan word. Daar was egter geen statistiese verskil by die eksperimentele groep ten opsigte van die vaardigheid van kritiese en kreatiewe denke waarnembaar nie. Nege uit die tien lewensvaardighede waarop die program gefokus het was dus suksesvol bewys en kon daar gevolglik tot die konklusie gekom word dat die program die impak het waarna in hierdie studie gestreef is.

Sleutel woorde:
Lewensvaardighede, program, lewensvaardigheidsprogram, VIGS, HIV, weeskind, VIGS weeskind, adolessent, vroeë adolessent.
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