

**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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**PRETORIA**

Dedicated to my husband Peter  
and daughter Lemogang-Zoë

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## **SUMMARY**

### **A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR EARLY ADOLESCENT AIDS ORPHANS**

**by**

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**DEGREE: DOCTOR PHILOSOPHIAE (D.PHIL)**

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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 crisis 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.

**OPSOMMING**

**‘N LEWENSWAARDIGHEIDSPROGRAM VIR VROEE ADOLOSSENTE VIGS  
WEESKINDERS**

**deur**

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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 uitdagings waarmee hulle gekonfronteer word, te bied. Probleme in verband met ouerloosheid soos wetlike en etiese -, sosio-emosionele -, opvoedkundige – en finansiële kwessies asook kinderhuishoudings is geïdentifiseer. Aangesien die studie op vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders fokus, is adolessensie as lewensfase met spesifieke klem op vroeë adolessensie bestudeer. Hierna het die navorser die nuut ontwikkelde lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolessente weeskinders (AIDS ORPHANS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM) beskryf en ten slotte die empiriese resultate, gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings weergegee.

Die breekdoel van die studie was om ‘n lewensvaardigheidsprogram vir vroeë adolessente VIGS weeskinders te ontwikkel en die 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 adolessente VIGS weeskinders? (b) Watter lewensvaardighede benodig VIGS weeskinders? Die hipotese is soos volg geformuleer: Indien vroeë adolessente die lewensvaardighedsprogram 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 gerig is op 'n probleemoplossende proses naamlik die ontwikkeling van 'n intervensie program om die lewensvaardighede van vroeë adolessente 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 adolessente VIGS weeskinders te eksploreer. Die fokus van die tweede fase was kwantitatief aangesien die doel daarvan was om 'n lewensvaardighedsprogram, gebaser op die inligting wat in die eerste fase ingesamel is, te ontwikkel en die effektiwiteit daarvan empiries te toets. Die navorser het van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudvoering 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 adolessente 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 nodig te eksplorieer 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 ontnem word. Die bevindinge het verder bevestig dat daar tans geen lewensvaardigheidsprogram 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 ontwikkel.

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

- (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 groeppvraelys wat as voor- en natoets op beide groepe benut is. Slegs die eksperimentele groep het egter die lewensvaardigheidsprogram 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 waarneembaar was (naamlik ten opsigte van self-identiteit en self-waarde, kommunikasie, selfhandhawing, self-bewussyn, selfhelp 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 waarneembaar 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.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
SUMMARY	iv
OPSOMMING	viii

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Rationale for the study</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Problem formulation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4 Goal and objectives of the study</b>	<b>10</b>
1.4.1 Goal	10
1.4.2 Objectives	11
<b>1.5 Research questions and hypothesis</b>	<b>11</b>
1.5.1 Research questions	12
1.5.2 Hypothesis	13
<b>1.6 Research approach</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.7 Type of research</b>	<b>15</b>
1.7.1 Type of intervention research	16
1.7.2 The process of intervention research	16
1.7.3 Application of the intervention design and development model in this study	17

1.7.3.1 Problem analysis and project planning	17
1.7.3.2 Information gathering and data synthesis	20
1.7.3.3 Design	22
1.7.3.4 Early Development and pilot testing	23
1.7.3.5 Evaluation and advanced development	26
1.7.3.6 Dissemination	27
<b>1.8 Research design</b>	<b>28</b>
1.8.1 Phenomenological design	29
1.8.2 Comparison group pre-test post-test design	30
<b>1.9 Research procedures</b>	<b>31</b>
1.9.1 Data collection	31
1.9.2 Data analysis	34
1.9.2.1 Data analysis (qualitative)	35
1.9.2.2 Data analysis (quantitative)	36
<b>1.10 Pilot study</b>	<b>36</b>
1.10.1 Feasibility of the study	36
1.10.2 Pilot test of data collection instruments	38
1.10.2.1 Semi structured interview schedule	38
1.10.2.2 Life skills programme and questionnaire	38
<b>1.11 Description of the research universe, population, sample, delimitation /boundary of sample and sampling method</b>	<b>39</b>
1.11.1 Research universe	39

1.11.2	Research population	39
1.11.3	Research sample	40
1.11.4	Sampling method	41
1.11.4.1	Purposive sampling	41
1.11.4.2	Accidental sampling	42
1.11.5	Delimitation/Boundary of the research project	42
<b>1.12</b>	<b>Ethical issues</b>	<b>44</b>
1.12.1	Confidentiality	45
1.12.2	Harm to participants	45
1.12.3	Informed consent	46
1.12.4	Voluntary participation	47
1.12.5	Collaboration with other role players	47
1.12.6	Results of research	48
<b>1.13</b>	<b>Limitations of the study</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>1.14</b>	<b>Definitions of key concepts</b>	<b>49</b>
1.14.1	Life skills	49
1.14.2	Programme	50
1.14.3	Life skills programme	50
1.14.4	AIDS	50
1.14.5	HIV	51
1.14.6	Orphan	52
1.14.7	AIDS orphans	52



1.14.8 Adolescence	53
1.14.9 Early adolescence	53
1.14.10 Need	53
1.14.11 Problem	54
<b>1.15 Contents of research report</b>	<b>54</b>

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HIV/AIDS AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON**

<b>2.1 Introduction</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>2.2 Definitions of HIV/AIDS and understanding of AIDS</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>2.3 The historical background of HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>2.4 AIDS: A global problem</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>2.5 AIDS in Africa</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>2.6 AIDS in South Africa</b>	<b>74</b>
2.6.1 The background of AIDS in South Africa (1982-2003)	75
2.6.2 The current status and future projections of the AIDS epidemic in South Africa	79
2.6.3 The dynamics of the South Africa's epidemic	80
<b>2.7 Modes of HIV transmission</b>	<b>81</b>
2.7.1 Sexual transmission	82
2.7.2 Vertical transmission (Mother-to-child transmission)	83

2.7.3	Blood transmission	84
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Risk factors regarding HIV infection</b>	<b>85</b>
2.8.1	Biological and sexual risk factors	85
2.8.2	The social status of females	88
2.8.3	Poverty as a risk factor	90
<b>2.9</b>	<b>The AIDS development process</b>	<b>92</b>
2.9.1	Primary HIV infection	94
2.9.2	The asymptomatic or silent stage	95
2.9.3	The minor symptomatic phase of HIV disease	96
2.9.4	The major symptomatic phase of HIV infection	97
2.9.5	The severe symptomatic phase (AIDS-defining conditions)	99
<b>2.10</b>	<b>Voluntary counseling and testing (VCT)</b>	<b>103</b>
2.10.1	HIV counseling	105
2.10.1.1	Pre-HIV-test counseling	107
2.10.1.2	Post-HIV-test counseling	109
2.10.2	HIV testing	110
2.10.2.1	HIV antibody tests	113
2.10.2.2	The HI virus tests	113
2.10.3	Requirements for voluntary counseling and testing	114
<b>2.11</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>116</b>
2.11.1	Strengthening the immune system	116

2.11.2	Treating opportunistic infections	117
2.11.3	Anti-retroviral therapy (ARVT)	118
<b>2.12</b>	<b>The impact of AIDS in South Africa</b>	<b>123</b>
2.12.1	The demographic impact of AIDS	123
2.12.2	Impact on the economy	125
2.12.3	Impact on the health sector	127
2.12.4	Impact on the educational sector	128
2.12.5	Impact on the individual, households and the welfare sector	129
<b>2.13</b>	<b>Prevention strategies</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>2.14</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>138</b>

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **AIDS ORPHANHOOD AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Definition of concepts orphan and AIDS orphan</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Orphanhood: The African perspective</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>The extent of the problem of AIDS orphans</b>	<b>145</b>
3.4.1	World wide	146
3.4.2	Africa	147
3.4.3	South Africa	150

3.4.4	North-West Province	152
3.5	<b>The socio-emotional implications of the rising statistics of AIDS orphans and difficulties faced by AIDS orphans</b>	153
3.5.1	Poverty	153
3.5.2	Pressure on the extended family	156
3.5.3	Aging parents caring for AIDS orphans	158
3.5.4	Child-headed households	160
3.5.5	Children’s social and emotional development	162
3.5.6	Education	164
3.5.7	Health care	168
3.5.8	Emotional trauma and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS	170
3.5.9	Children’s exploitation and HIV infection	173
3.5.10	Loss of family security and identity	174
3.5.11	A bleak future and life of crime	175
3.6	<b>The rights of AIDS orphans</b>	176
3.7	<b>Impact of AIDS on skills development</b>	181
3.8	<b>Conclusion</b>	183

## CHAPTER 4

### ADOLESCENCE AS A LIFE PHASE WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON EARLY-ADOLESCENCE

<b>4.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Adolescence described</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>The adolescent stages</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Early adolescence</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Adolescence as a developmental stage</b>	<b>195</b>
4.5.1	Physical development	196
4.5.2	Psychological development	198
4.5.2.1	Body image and appearance during early adolescence	199
4.5.2.2	Body image, self concept and self esteem	200
4.5.2.3	Internalized patterns of thought	203
4.5.2.4	Adolescents' identity development	203
4.5.2.5	Adolescents' identity crises	205
4.5.2.6	Adolescents' sexuality	206
4.5.2.7	Parental attitudes towards adolescence sexuality	209
4.5.3	Cognitive development	210
4.5.4	Social development	212
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Adolescents risk-taking behaviors</b>	<b>216</b>
4.6.1	Indiscriminate sex and Sexual Transmitted diseases (STDs)	217
4.6.2	Drug abuse	219
4.6.3	Teenage pregnancy	222

4.6.4	Adolescent violence	226
4.6.5	Crime and Juvenile Delinquency	227
4.6.6	Diet and eating disorders	230
4.6.7	Adolescents and death	233
4.6.8	Depression and suicide	234
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Predisposing factors that expose adolescents to risky behaviors</b>	<b>239</b>
4.7.1	Poverty	239
4.7.2	Disturbed family life	242
4.7.3	Parent-Adolescent conflict	244
4.7.4	Peer pressure	246
4.7.5	Child sexual abuse	248
4.7.6	Lack of recreational facilities	251
<b>4.8</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>252</b>

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **A REVIEW OF LIFE-SKILLS WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON EARLY-ADOLESCENTS**

<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>The concept life skills</b>	<b>256</b>

<b>5.3</b>	<b>Historical development of life skills</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives</b>	<b>261</b>
5.4.1	Ecological perspective	262
5.4.2	Empowerment approach	264
5.4.3	Experiential learning theory	266
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Life skills theory</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>The importance of life skills to adolescents</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>Areas of knowledge in adolescents' life skills development</b>	<b>274</b>
5.7.1	Knowledge of the human body	275
5.7.2	Healthy life style	275
5.7.3	Time management and setting lifestyle goals	275
5.7.4	Assertiveness	277
5.7.5	Interests, values and ideals	278
5.7.6	Self-esteem	278
5.7.7	Sexuality	281
5.7.8	Decision making	282
5.7.9	Stress	284
5.7.10	Peace education and conflict resolution	285
5.7.11	Environmental awareness and care	285
<b>5.8</b>	<b>Classification of life skills</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>5.9</b>	<b>Effective life skills</b>	<b>288</b>
5.9.1	Communication skills	288

5.9.2	Interpersonal relationship skills	291
5.9.3	Assertiveness skills	292
5.9.4	Problem-solving skills	294
5.9.5	Decision-making skills	296
5.9.6	Conflict resolution skills	298
5.9.7	Critical thinking skills	300
5.9.8	Creative thinking skills	302
5.9.9	Self awareness	302
5.9.10	Empathy	304
5.9.11	Coping with emotions	305
5.9.12	Coping with stress/stress management skills	305
<b>5.10</b>	<b>Life skills education</b>	<b>307</b>
5.10.1	Objectives of life skills education	310
5.10.2	Methods used in life skills education	312
5.10.2.1	Group work	312
5.10.2.2	Role-playing	315
5.10.2.3	Brainstorming	317
<b>5.11</b>	<b>Life skills programmes</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>5.12</b>	<b>Requirements for learning life skills</b>	<b>320</b>
5.12.1	A supportive relationship	321



5.12.2 Learning from example	322
5.12.3 Instruction and self instruction	323
5.12.4 Information and opportunity	324
5.12.5 Learning from consequences	324
5.13 <b>The role of social workers in life skills education</b>	325
5.14 <b>Life skills in the context of a helping approach</b>	327
5.15 <b>Conclusion</b>	334

**- CHAPTER 6 -**

**A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR EARLY ADOLESCENT AIDS  
ORPHANS**

<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>6.2 AIDS orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>6.3 The rationale for the development AIDS orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>342</b>
<b>6.4 Methods used in AIDS orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>6.5 Requirements for learning life skills in AIDS Orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>6.6 The content of AIDS orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>345</b>
6.6.1 Description of sessions and activities to be used in each session of the AIDS orphans life skills programme	348
6.6.1.1 Session one: A good sense of identity and self esteem	348

6.6.1.2 Session two: Communication skills	350
6.6.1.3 Session three: Assertiveness skills	352
6.6.1.4 Session four: Self awareness	354
6.6.1.5 Session five: Coping with stress and emotions	355
6.6.1.6 Session six: Decision-making skills	358
6.6.1.7 Session seven: Problem-solving skills	360
6.6.1.8 Session eight: Conflict-management skills	361
6.6.1.9 Session nine: Critical and creative thinking skills	363
6.6.1.10 Session ten: Maintaining a healthy life style	364
<b>6.7 Planning for a life skill lesson</b>	<b>365</b>
6.7.1 Defining the target group	365
6.7.2 A code of conduct for the life skills class	365
6.7.3 Activities	366
6.7.4 The researcher's role	367
6.7.5 Assessment	367
<b>6.8 Minimum criteria for implementing AIDS orphans life skills programme</b>	<b>367</b>
<b>6.9 Conclusion</b>	<b>368</b>

**- CHAPTER 7 -**

**EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

<b>7.1 Introduction</b>	<b>369</b>
<b>7.2 Qualitative findings (First phase)</b>	<b>372</b>
<b>7.2.1 Research methods</b>	<b>373</b>
7.2.2 Social workers' responses	377
7.2.2.1 Demographic information of social workers	379
7.2.2.2 Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described by social workers	380
7.2.2.3 Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described by social workers	389
7.2.2.4 Life skills needed by AIDS orphans as described by social workers	395
7.2.2.5 Summary of social workers responses	397
7.2.3 Caregivers responses	405
7.2.3.1 Demographic information of caregivers	406
7.2.3.2 Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described by caregivers	408
7.2.3.3 Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described by caregivers	415
7.2.3.4 Life skills needed by AIDS orphans as described by caregivers	420
7.2.3.5 Summary of caregivers' responses	422
7.2.4 AIDS orphans' responses	428
7.2.4.1 Demographic information of AIDS orphans	429
7.2.4.2 Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described by AIDS orphans	431

7.2.4.3 Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans as described AIDS orphans	436
7.2.4.4 Life skills that AIDS orphans need (AIDS orphans)	439
7.2.4.5 Summary of AIDS orphans' responses	439
<b>7.3 Quantitative findings (second phase)</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>7.3.1 Research methods</b>	<b>447</b>
<b>7.3.2 Data analysis and interpretation</b>	<b>448</b>
7.3.2.1 The respondents' age group	449
7.3.2.2 The respondents' gender	452
7.3.2.3 The respondents' race	456
7.3.2.4 The respondents' home language	457
7.3.2.5 The respondents' level of education	459
7.3.2.6 Respondents' parental status	461
7.3.2.7 Respondents' remaining parent	463
7.3.2.8 Living arrangements of respondents	464
7.3.2.9 Siblings under respondents' care	473
7.3.2.10 A good sense of identity and self esteem	475
7.3.2.11 Communication skills	480
7.3.2.12 Assertiveness skills	485
7.3.2.13 Self awareness skills	489
7.3.2.14 Coping and stress management skills	492

7.3.2.15	Decision-making skills	496
7.3.2.16	Problem solving skills	500
7.3.2.17	Conflict management skills	504
7.3.2.18	Critical and creative thinking skills	508
7.3.2.19	Maintaining a healthy life style	511
7.3.3	Collective summary of life skills	514
7.3.4	Collective summary of the test of significance	517
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>520</b>

**- CHAPTER 8 -**

**GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>8.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>521</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Literature study</b>	<b>525</b>
<b>8.2.1</b>	<b>General introduction to the study</b>	<b>525</b>
8.2.1.1	Summary	525
8.2.1.2	Conclusions	525
8.2.1.3	Recommendations	527
<b>8.2.2</b>	<b>HIV/AIDS as a social phenomenon</b>	<b>528</b>

8.2.2.1 Summary	528
8.2.2.2 Conclusions	529
8.2.2.3 Recommendations	530
<b>8.2.3 AIDS orphanhood as a social problem</b>	<b>531</b>
8.2.3.1 Summary	531
8.2.3.2 Conclusions	532
8.2.3.3 Recommendations	533
<b>8.2.4 Adolescence as a life phase with specific emphasis on early adolescence</b>	<b>534</b>
8.2.4.1 Summary	534
8.2.4.2 Conclusions	535
8.2.4.3 Recommendations	536
<b>8.2.5 A review of life skills with specific emphasis on early adolescents</b>	<b>537</b>
8.2.5.1 Summary	537
8.2.5.2 Conclusions	538
8.2.5.3 Recommendations	539
<b>8.2.6 A life skills programme for early adolescent AIDS orphans</b>	<b>540</b>
8.2.6.1 Summary	540
8.2.6.2 Conclusions	540
8.2.6.3 Recommendations	541
<b>8.3 Empirical research findings</b>	<b>541</b>
<b>8.3.1 Qualitative findings based on needs, problems of and life skills needed by early adolescent AIDS orphans</b>	<b>541</b>

8.3.1.1	Summary	541
8.3.1.2	Conclusions (demographic information)	542
8.3.1.3	Conclusions (socio-emotional needs, problems of and life skills needed by AIDS orphans)	545
8.3.1.4	Recommendations	556
<b>8.3.2</b>	<b>Quantitative findings based on the evaluation of a life skills programme for early adolescents AIDS orphans (AIDS orphans life skills programme).</b>	<b>557</b>
8.3.2.1	Summary	557
8.3.2.2	Conclusions	558
8.3.2.3	Recommendations	561
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Aim and objectives of the study</b>	<b>563</b>
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Closing statement</b>	<b>564</b>

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<b>References</b>	<b>565</b>
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## LIST OF APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Written letter of approval from the Department of Education in the North-West Province	592
Appendix 2: Written letter of approval from the Department of Social Services, Arts, Sports and Culture in the North-West Province	593
Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview schedule (Tswana)	594
Appendix 4: A self-constructed group administered questionnaire (Tswana)	599
Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview schedule (English)	617
Appendix 6: A self-constructed group administered questionnaire (English)	626
Appendix 7: Informed consent letter	644
Appendix 8: AIDS Orphans Life Skills Programme	646

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Group administered questionnaire used with comparison group group pretest-posttest design	34
Table 2: Global summary of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (December 2004)	67
Table 3: HIV/AIDS statistics of the eight top countries in sub-Saharan (2003)	70



Table 4: HIV prevalence (%) and numbers of people tested by province in South Africa	76
Table 5: Stages of HIV infection	93
Table 6: Projected orphan population in the North-West Province	149
Table 7: Developmental sequence of the primary and secondary sexual characteristics	193
Table 8: AIDS orphans life skills programme – Programme sessions according to topic and goal	346
Table 9: Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans (social workers)	380
Table 10: Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans (social workers)	389
Table 11: Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans (caregivers)	408
Table 12: Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans (caregivers)	416
Table 13: Social needs and problems of AIDS orphans (AIDS orphans)	431
Table 14: Emotional needs and problems of AIDS orphans (AIDS orphans)	436
Table 15: Age composition of respondents participating in the study	450
Table 16: Gender of respondents participating in the study	452
Table 17 The respondents age by their gender	454
Table 18: Home language of respondents participating in the study	457
Table 19: The respondents level of education	460
Table 20: Parent status of respondents	462
Table 21: Living arrangements of respondents participated in this study	465

Table 22: Living arrangement by gender of respondents participating in this study	469
Table 23: Living arrangement by the age of respondents participating in in this study	471
Table 24: Frequency distribution of the respondents to a good sense of identity and self esteem	476
Table 25: Mean scores of respondents' life skills regarding a sense of identity and self-esteem	480
Table 26: Frequency distribution of communication skills	481
Table 27: Mean scores of respondents' communication skills	484
Table 28: Frequency distribution of assertiveness skills	485
Table 29: Mean scores of assertiveness skills	488
Table 30: Frequency distribution of the respondents' statements to self awareness	489
Table 31: Mean scores of respondents' responses to statements on self-awareness	491
Table 32: Frequency distribution of coping and stress management skills	493
Table 33: Mean scores of respondents' coping and stress management skills	496
Table 34: Frequency distribution of decision-making skills	497
Table 35: Mean scores of decision-making skills	499
Table 36: Frequency distribution of problem-solving skills	500
Table 37: Mean scores of problem-solving skills	503

Table 38: Frequency distribution of conflict-management skills	505
Table 39: Mean scores of conflict-management skills	507
Table 40: Critical and creative thinking skills	509
Table 41: Mean scores for critical and creative thinking skills	511
Table 42: Frequency distribution of maintaining a healthy life style	512
Table 43: Mean scores of maintaining a healthy life style	514
Table 44: Frequency distribution of life skills as a whole	515
Table 45: Collective summary of the tests of significance	517
<b>Table 46: Accomplishment of the study objectives</b>	<b>563</b>

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Classification of life skills	286
Figure 2: A column chart of the age of respondents participating in the study	451
Figure 3: A cylinder chart of the gender of respondents participating in the study	454
Figure 4: A column chart of respondents' age by their gender	456
Figure 5: A cone chart of respondents' home language	459
Figure 6: A column chart of respondents' level of education	461
Figure 7: A paradigm chart of respondents' parental status	463
Figure 8: A column chart of respondents' remaining parent	464
Figure 9: A column chart of respondents' living arrangement	467
Figure 10: A column chart of respondents' living arrangement by gender	471