

CHALLENGES FACED BY GRANDPARENTS IN MANAGING EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS OF ORPHANS IN THE ERA OF HIV/AIDS

Joyce Njeri Kinyua

Lecturer, Karatina University

ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, HIV/AIDS menace has devastated the social and economic fabric of African societies and made orphans of a whole generation of children. Despite donors' initial view of orphans as a short term humanitarian disaster; they now acknowledge the long term social consequences of African children growing up without parental love and guidance. Thus the potential for these children to form a large group of dysfunctional adults, which could further destabilize societies already weakened by AIDS, has increased the urgency of finding an effective solution to the orphan problem. Africa hosts 95% of the world's 13 million children orphaned as a result of AIDS. These orphans' psychosocial needs are a growing concern. Orphans in Africa suffer recurrent psychological trauma, starting with the illness and deaths of their parents, followed by cycles of poverty, malnutrition, stigma, exploitation, and, often, sexual abuse. As the epidemic takes its toll on adults, many orphans have come to rely on ageing and often impoverished grandparents. Whilst the phenomenon of grandparents caring for grandchildren is not new, there is growing acknowledgement in the community that the number of children in such care arrangements is growing and that relatively little is known about how such developments are shaping the lives and identities of the grandparents involved. These care arrangements take place in a complex space marked by paradox and ambiguity, particularly in relation to the grandparents' social, financial and legal status, as well as their social and emotional well-being, that current policy contexts fail to adequately recognize. To

understand the Real challenges facing grannies charged with this responsibility, the paper examines whether their support plays a mediating role in improving mental health functioning of orphaned children.

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