

**The lived psycho-educational experiences
of orphaned children
living with their extended family members
in Soweto, South Africa**



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Prologue

This master's thesis is written as part of the Masters' program Education, Socialization and Youth Policies. The chosen specialism in this program is Education, Youth, International Cooperation and Aid.

This thesis has been written in cooperation with the University of Johannesburg, and under supervision of the following supervisors:

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The data for this thesis was collected in Soweto, South Africa, between January 2015 and April 2015, in cooperation with a non-governmental organization (NGO), Ikageng, which is active in Soweto.

Abstract

The death of parents due to factors such as violence, traffic-accidents and diseases, has caused a growing population of orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates showed that almost 19% of all children in South Africa are orphaned. Research showed that, compared to non- orphaned children, orphaned children are more disadvantaged. For that reason it is important to explore in what way systems in the community can contribute to ensure better outcomes for orphaned children. The aim of this research was to identify the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members in Soweto, South Africa. In this qualitative research, the sample consisted of six orphaned children, three boys and three girls, between the age of 12 and 14 years old. Data was collected through individual, semi-structured interviews, the compilation of collages by the orphaned children and a focus group discussion. In this research, the majority of the psychological experiences of the children were positive. The children perceived their extended family members as caring, both emotionally and practically, and understanding. In regard to their educational experiences, in the experience of the children, their extended family members encouraged them to work hard. However, the children perceived their teachers as making fun of them, doing things to hurt their feelings, and gossiping about them.

Key words: Educational experiences, extended family members, orphaned children, psychological experiences, South Africa

Introduction

The death of parents due to factors such as violence, traffic-accidents and diseases, such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), has caused a growing population of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa (Kuo, Operario & Cluver, 2012; Wallis, Dukay & Mellins, 2010). Estimates of The South African Census of 2011 show that the population of children who have lost either one or both parents is increasing. According to these estimates, 3.374.971 children younger than 18 years old have lost one or both parents. This corresponds to 19% percent of all children in South Africa. Or, in other words, one in five children is an orphan (STATS, 2012). The vulnerability of these children is worsened by the high incidence of poverty and violence in South Africa (Dawes, van der Merwe & Brandt, 2007). The population of all orphans in South Arica is unevenly distributed in the nine provinces of the country: Gauteng; KwaZulu-Natal; Limpop; Mpumalanga; Northern Cape; North West; Western Cape; Eastern Cape; and Free State. According to the estimates of The South African Census of 2011, the highest number of orphans is in Kwazulu Natal. The Gauteng province, in which Soweto is situated, has the third largest number of orphans, with a number of 8084 (STATS, 2012; Strategic Plan, n.d.). The exact number of orphaned children living in Soweto is unknown.

In the South African context a distinction can be made between single and double orphans. Single orphan refers to a child with one living parent and one parent who is reported to be deceased or the vital status of the parent is unknown. Double orphan refers to a child of which both parents are reported deceased, or one parent is reported to be deceased and the vital status of the other parents is unknown (Case, Paxon & Ableidinger, 2004). In this research, the focus will be on double orphans. From now on, the word orphan will refer to those children under the age of 18 of which both parents are reported to be deceased, or one parent is reported to be deceased and the vital status of the other parent is unknown.

The protection of children is a major issue in the legislation of South Africa. South Africa takes part in several international, and national agreements in order to protect the rights of children. An example of an international agreement is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by South Africa in 1995. On a national level, the Department of Social Development (DSD) oversees the welfare and development of all children in South Africa, including orphaned children. In 2005, the DSD developed the OVC Policy Framework, in which OVC refers to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Chereni & Mahati, 2014). The OVC Policy Framework emphasizes the importance of families and local communities for an effective response to OVCs. According to the

Framework, care and protection of OVC should be realized through a combination of statutory services, such as cash transfers and community based approaches, at different levels of society. The Framework prefers an approach in which the government department is combined with non-State actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector players (DSD, 2005).

Despite the commitment of the South African government to help vulnerable children, such as orphans, it seems that they need the additional support of others, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to make sure that all children have access to the resources and services that they are entitled to. They can be seen as playing an important advocacy role for the rights of orphans (Rosenberg, Hartwig & Merson, 2008). In some cases, the role of NGOs is considered to be critical. For example in townships such as Soweto where little, or even no support, is available. NGOs can provide food, clothes, and sometimes, healthcare assistance (Murray, 2010). The families and orphaned children in this research are both financially and emotionally supported by an NGO. This NGO pays the school expenses of the orphaned child, and a social worker visits the family once a month.

Research shows that, compared to non-orphaned children, orphaned children are more disadvantaged, since not having a caring parent or an appointed caregiver, can lead to extraordinary risks of poor nutrition and health care, inadequate schooling, migration and homelessness (Dabis & Ekpini, 2002; Foster & Williamson, 2000; Gilborn, 2002). Therefore it is important to explore in what way systems in the community, such as the educational system, could contribute to ensure better outcomes for orphaned children.

Psychological experience of orphaned children

In this research, the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members are assessed. The death of a parent is a crisis for any child, since it means losing the love, support, guidance, stability and security that parents provide. Besides that, it means losing a link with the past and the possibility of a shared future (Wild, 2001). Compared to their non-orphaned peers, both orphaned boys and orphaned girls experience higher levels of psychological distress (Nyamukapa et al., 2010). Research from Foster and colleagues (1997) shows that the stress, grief and anxiety of orphaned children during and following the death of their parents are exacerbated by feelings that they are exploited and stigmatized, and discriminated against. This stigmatization was based on their orphaned status. Research by Foster and colleagues (1997) show that, besides these factors, other factors make coping with the situation more difficult and painful for orphans. Examples

of other factors are: having to drop out of school, an increased work load, difficult relationships with new caretakers and social isolation, lack of visits and neglect of support and responsibilities by relatives, given to the children.

Research shows that among the common reactions of children to terminal illness or death of a parent, are feelings such as depression, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation, loneliness, anger, confusion, helplessness, anxiety and a fear of being alone (Wild, 2001). Feelings of guilt and shame are particularly reported if the children experienced limited or distorted communication about the illness and death of their parents. These feelings may be further compounded by a sense of isolation. The child may feel embarrassed or uncomfortably unique because it has a dead parent (Wild, 2001).

There are several protective and vulnerability factors to be differentiated that might make individual children more or less susceptible to the stresses associated with the loss of a parent. These mediating factors include current and preceding characteristics of the individual, the family and/or the broader social environment (Wild, 2001). The age of the child is considered to be an important factor for health and educational outcomes; younger children who experience loss seem to experience more frequent illness, and older children are more likely to be withdrawn from school to take care of their younger siblings. Family factors seem to be the most significant moderators of children's adaptation to the loss of parents. Of central importance is the functioning of the level of the primary caretaker of the child, and the quality of care and support they are able to offer the child (Wild, 2001). When being cared for by someone other than a parent, several factors are associated with psychological distress, such as child labour, psychical abuse, stigma and discrimination. The presence of these factors is more common among orphans (Nyamukapa, 2010).

The effect of orphanhood on psychological distress depends on the social context of the orphaned child. Cared for by loving, skilled and committed extended family members, is considered to be a protective factor for the development of behavioral and/or emotional problems (Pivnick & Villegas, 2000) However, inadequate care, in the form of basic needs not being met, is associated with greater psychological distress (Nyamukapa, 2008). Children may be more or less likely to suffer from psychological distress, or to develop resilience, depending on moderating factors, such as the sex, the age and social background of the child, and the form and timing of parental loss. Being an orphan can result in immediate, possibly short-term effects, such as trauma, poor health and absenteeism at school, that develop over time. It also can result in more gradual effects on psychological well-being, such as fewer educational qualifications and skills in family disintegration and destroyed family networks.

These mediating factors can result in psychological distress and are common in orphaned children (Nyamukapa et al., 2010). Research shows that not only support inside the family is an important moderator. Effective social support from friends and adults outside the family of the child, for example teachers and church leaders, seem to be an important moderator for the adjustment of children to the death of their parents (Wild, 2001).

In former research, orphans have reported difficulty concentrating at school, due to factors such as worry and sadness because of the loss of their parents. These concentration problems may be linked to posttraumatic stress (Cluver & Gardner, 2006; Forehand et al., 1999). Research by Bhargava (2005) shows that, compared to boys, the educational experiences of girls are more affected by the emotional loss of their parents; girls were less likely to participate in school.

Some of the experiences of orphaned children overlap with those of other vulnerable groups (Cluver & Gardner, 2007). Research shows that both non-orphaned and orphaned children report distress from the death of both their parents and other family members (Richter et al., 2004; Raveis, Siegel & Karus, 1998). Several risks can be associated with childhood bereavement, such as witnessing traumatic death and financial instability caused by the death of both their parents. Both orphaned children and refugee children may both have experiences such as displacement, multiple moves from one place to the other, and bullying (Cluver & Garner, 2007).

In sum, in regard to the lived psychological experiences of orphaned children, feelings such as depression, hopelessness and fear of being alone are feelings orphaned children experience. The extent of the effect that orphanhood has on the psychological well-being of orphaned children, depends on the social context of the orphaned child. Factors such as worry and sadness may result in difficulty concentrating at school. The educational experiences of girls seem to be more affected by the emotional loss of their parents.

Orphaned children and their extended family members

The extended family of orphaned children is the most viable and preferred option for children in South Africa, after their parents are deceased (Department of Social Development, 2002; Dunn, Jareg & Webb, 2003; UNICEF, 2003). In their research, Gray and colleagues (2006) found that, after the death of their parents, most orphaned children in Soweto lived with their extended family from the paternal side. In Soweto, the majority (67%) of the household structures is an extended family structure (Gray et al., 2006). Children who remain close to their biological extended family after their parents are deceased, are more likely to be better

cared for (Ansell & Young, 2004). The role of institutions in the care of orphaned children is decreased, since 2001. In 2005, less than 2% of orphaned children lived in institutional settings (Anderson & Philips, 2006). This might be due to findings that show that young children in institutional care are at risk of harm in terms of their attachment and development, if these children are not moved to family-based care by the age of six months (Johanson, Brown & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2006). There is a difference between the western concept of family and household and the African concept of family and household. The western marriage is mostly based on individualism and independence, whereas the African marriage is based on collectivism and interdependence. In western societies, in most cases, family refers to a conjugal pair, maintaining a household with their biological, or adopted children. In African societies, family refers to a much wider circle of people, in which uncles and aunts are also included (Sigwana-Ndulo, 1998). In this research, the extended family of orphaned children refers to the wider circle of people, and includes uncles, aunts and grandparents of the children. Extended families who are taking care of their orphaned relatives, face several challenges that go along with this responsibility, such as additional financial costs. (Freeman & Nkomo, 2006). NGOs can fulfill an important role in the support and provision of resources of the extended family members, who are taking care of their orphaned relative (UNICEF, 2006).

Based on the OVC Policy Framework, a range of social protection services are provided for OVCs and their families by the DSD, such as the Foster Child Grant (FCG), Care Dependency Grant (CDG), Social relief of distress benefit, the Older Person's Grant, the Disability Grant and Grant-in-aid (Chereni & Mahati, 2014). Although OVCs in South Africa are entitled to social grants until they reach the age of 14, research shows that only a small proportion receive these, because of insufficient capacity, and inadequate resources of the government, and an increase of OVCs (Rosenberg, Hartwig & Merson, 2008). On a more local level, the Gauteng Department of Social Development is responsible for the wellbeing of all children in the province, including orphaned children. The department has developed several services to protect the lives of the children. Examples of such a service, are the Social Welfare and Specialist Social Services. The purposes of these services are threefold: Ensuring the provision of social protection and statutory services aiming to safeguard the wellbeing of individuals and families; ensuring a safe living and nurturing environment in which the human rights are protected and respected; ensuring that designated people and/or institutions take required action necessary to protect the wellbeing of vulnerable groups.

Among the key focus areas are the care and protection of vulnerable groups, such a

orphaned children, child care and protection, and services to families (Social Welfare and Specialist Social Services, n.d.). Another way in which the Gauteng province tries to care for and protect orphaned children specifically, is the Child Protection Register in which all vulnerable children under the age of 18 in need of care and protection and living in the Gauteng province are recorded. With this register, the DSD is able to determine high prevalence rates of orphaned children in communities (Child Care and Protection, n.d.).

The traditional childcare system in African cultures can be seen as a hierarchical system. In this system, the center is formed by the nuclear family, followed by the extended family and the immediate community: the neighborhood, clan, tribe and society at large. As in western societies, the nuclear family has the primary responsibility for the care of children. When the nuclear family becomes incapable of providing care, for example through death, it is assumed in the childcare system that the responsibility is increasing by the extended family through the “economy of affection”. In the traditional system, beyond the extended family, the responsibility for the care of children rests with the community, usually consisting of people in the same neighborhood, or belonging to the same clan or tribe. The last layer in the traditional childcare system is the state. Beyond the state is the international regime which is characterized by legal instruments and human rights standards governing the care of children (Chirwa, 2002).

With this traditional childcare system in mind, orphanhood does not only have implications for the orphaned child itself, but also for the extended family system. Although the extended family system is relatively large in the African context, studies are indicating that due to factors such as poverty and disease, the extended family system is overwhelmed, and members are increasingly reluctant to take in additional orphaned family members.

Nevertheless, the extended family is considered to be the best option for children, after their parents have passed away (Karmli, Sswemala & Ismayilova, 2007).

In the recent years there has been a growing interest in the capacity of the extended family to take care for the children of family members who have died, because of an increase of orphaned children due to factors such as AIDS. In regard to the role of the extended family for the caring for orphaned children, there are several approaches to be differentiated.

Currently, literature about the role of the extended family in caring for orphaned children is contradictory. Where some authors state that the extended family only faces a lot of challenges in taking care of the orphaned child, others perceive the extended family as a powerful and fluid entity with the capacity to easily adjust to changing circumstances (Abebe

& Aase, 2007; Chirwa, 2002; Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). In this research, two of these approaches will be discussed.

One approach in regard to the role of the extended family in caring for orphaned children is the social rupture thesis by Chirwa (2002) which suggests that the extended family cannot cope with the demands placed on it by children orphaned by AIDS. Social rupture occurs when HIV/AIDS attacks, weakens and destroys the nuclear family, and the effects spread outwards until they affect society at large. The implication of the social rupture thesis is that the extended family is disintegrating under the additional strain of AIDS. Another implication of this is that children's care is not assured at a "satisfactory" level (Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). Children may find themselves excluded from relationships with family members, and are therefore forced to form their own households (Chirwa, 2002). Although currently the social rupture thesis only is assessed in relation to AIDS, it is likely that the implications of the social rupture thesis for children, apply for children irrespectively despite the cause of the parental death.

Research supporting this approach is focused on how the extended family is not able to take additional children into their homes which leaves these children cut out of family and some social relationships (Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). The social rupture thesis is quite dominant in explaining the change of extended family childcare arrangement. However, in the thesis there is a lack of attention to the diversity of households and the varied and nature of childcare and fostering arrangements, since the thesis only is based on orphaned children orphaned by AIDS (Abebe & Aase, 2007; Chirwa, 2002; Foster, 2000; Meintjes & Giese, 2006). The social rupture thesis ignores the fact that in the past, the extended family always has been changing and adapting to broader social and economic changes in the society. Factors such as labour migration, the emergence of a cash economy, urbanization, famine, and political change are changes in the broader social and economy that causes changes and nuances in the household and the nature of care and fostering arrangements (Foster, 2000; Madhavan, 2004; Nyamukapa & Gregson, 2005).

Another approach is a more optimistic one which perceives the families as a dynamic entity. This approach recognizes that the family is a fluid set of relationships that is constantly evolving to meet the demands placed upon it. It also states that in the majority of the cases, social rupture is not actually apparent (Abebe & Aase, 2007). According to this approach, extended families are always, and have always been, restructuring and reshaping constantly in response to wider social and economic factors in the society (Madhavan & Gibbs, 2009). A supporting study of Madhavan (2004) states that in South Africa

grandparents always have been important in the provision of childcare, because of consequences of the structure of *apartheid*. Migratory labour patterns meant that parents were living far away from their children, while the children were taken care of by grandparents. The similarity between the situation described by Madhaven (2004) and the situation of orphaned children is that in a lot of circumstances grandparents are the primary caregivers after the biological parents were deceased. The difference is that this time the care is permanent instead of temporary.

In sum, being an orphan not only has implications for the orphaned child itself, but also for their extended family members. The lived psychoeducational experiences of orphaned children are shaped by the way their extended family members are treating them. In this context, several approaches of the extended family can be differentiated. One approach is the social rupture thesis which suggests that the extended family cannot cope with the demands placed on it by childcare and the approach in which the extended family is seen as a dynamic entity. Based on the lived psycho-educational experiences of the orphaned children, it will be examined if the approach of the family in taking care of their orphaned relatives is a social rupture one, or if they perceive themselves as a dynamic entity. It can be assumed that the psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children being taken care of by extended family members with a social rupture thesis approach are less positive, in comparison of the psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children being taken care of by a family that themselves as a dynamic entity.

Orphaned children and education

The growing amount of orphaned children has caused an increase of studies about their lives and their challenges. One aspect that has received special attention is education. The importance of education is widely acknowledged. As United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) stated in 1990, education lies at the foundation of lifelong learning and human development. Besides that, according to UNESCO education is the key in understanding the intergenerational transmission of inequality (UNESCO, 1990). Research shows that poor educational outcomes in childhood are likely to have a lasting effect into adulthood. For that reason, educational outcomes do have a prominent place in the assessment of the implications of being an orphan (Ardington & Leibrandt, 2010).

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is responsible for the education of all children in the Gauteng province, in which Soweto is situated. The GDE has several special

services for orphaned children and their extended family members. Two examples are the provision of free uniforms for orphaned children, and the exemption of school fees for orphaned children and their families (Parental Guideline Booklet, n.d.; Basic Education, n.d.).

The South African school context is an interesting one. Despite the fact that South Africa has almost universal enrollment in primary school, the educational system is still characterized by racial inequities and high rates of repetition of classes with many students never completing secondary school. In contrast to other countries in which the school enrollment is high, in South Africa there haven't been any substantial increases in enrollment over the last fifteen years (Anderson, Case & Lam, 2001).

Despite the almost universal enrollment in primary school, research shows that in South Africa, compared to non-orphaned children, orphaned children are less likely to be enrolled in school (Case, Paxson & Ableidinger, 2004; Case & Ardington, 2006). A possible explanation for this matter could be found in the finding that the development of children is influenced by the absence of a parent (Deleire & Kalil, 2002).

One theory in regard to this is "Hamilton's Rule" by Hamilton (1964) which states that the quality of care depends on the biological connectedness of caregivers and children. This implicates that children growing up without biological parents are worse off than non-orphaned children growing up under the same living conditions. For example, orphaned children who are raised by their extended family are worse off than their cousins being raised in the same household. A possible explanation for this is that the financial and social investment from the extended family in orphaned children is lower than the investment in non-orphaned children. An implication of Hamilton's Rule, is that the extended family of orphaned children invests, both financially and socially, less in the education of their orphaned relatives than in the education of their own children.

In line with Hamilton's Rule, the comparative study of Coneus, Mühlenweg and Stichnoth (2014) shows that orphaned children, compared to non-orphaned children being raised under identical living conditions, do lag behind in regard to educational outcomes. The disadvantages orphaned children experience with respect to educational outcomes, are that orphaned children have lower enrollment rates, and lower educational at a given age. According to Coneus and colleagues (2014), at least a part of the differences between orphans and non-orphans growing up in the same household can be explained by differential treatment from their extended family members, who tend to favor their own biological children, in other words, Hamilton's Rule. Nevertheless, Coneus and colleagues (2014) are

cautious with this finding, since it is possible that the orphaned children experience lower parental investments prior to living with their extended family members.

Orphaned children who attend school are faced with challenges that non-orphaned children are not faced with. For example, they experience emotional challenges as a result of losing their parents. Their situation is worsened by the fact that they are attending schools in which the teachers do not always have the capacity to respond in an adequate way to the emotional needs of orphans. The combination of their own emotional problems and having teachers that don't know how to deal with these emotional problems, may result in a less successful school period as wished and as possible for orphaned children (Motha & Frempong, 2014). For that reason, Motha and Frempong (2014) are advocating for special training for the teachers of orphaned children to help them address these emotional challenges.

The death of parents has a great impact on children's schooling, since parents are no longer available to supervise homework and support other educational activities (Motha & Frempong, 2014). Besides that, parents do no longer have the ability to influence their children's education through the provision of financial and emotional support (Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). For that reason it is not surprising that the death of parents can have a detrimental effect on children's schooling.

The question central in this research is: *What are the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members in Soweto, South Africa?*

Methodology

The aim of the study is to identify the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members in Soweto.

In order to answer the research question a qualitative approach has been used because of the nature of the research question. Qualitative research allows for in-depth analysis of the data and importance will be given to worlds of the participants (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011). The qualitative approach used for this study is the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research examines the lived experiences of human beings and tries to understand the essential "truths" of the lived experience. In phenomenological research it is believed that truth and understanding of life can emerge from people's life experiences (Byrne, 2001).

Sample

A multi-case study design was used in which each participant was treated as an individual case. The sample consisted of six orphaned children, three boys and three girls, between 12 and 14 years old. All the participants were double orphans, living with their extended family members in Soweto, South Africa. The participants were accessed through a non-government organization (NGO), Ikageng, located in Soweto. This NGO serves more than 850 vulnerable children, including orphaned children, in Soweto through the provision of food, parcels, psychosocial support, home visits, education scholarships, after school study groups and tutoring, and peer support groups. Ikageng also supports the families of the vulnerable children, both financially and psychologically; it pays the school expenses, in case the financial resources of the family are insufficient, and a social worker of Ikageng visits the family on regular basis. What makes Ikageng relevant for this research, is the fact that among the children they serve are orphaned children. Purposive sampling was used, because of the existing relationship between Ikageng and the University of Johannesburg.

Ethics

In order to do research in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg, every research needs to be cleared ethically by the Faculty of Education Research and Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg. This committee attempts to protect the rights of the children in every research, and for that reason, every research get judged on factors such as ways in which the researcher attempts to protect the rights of the children. One of the requirements of the committee, is an informed consent in which either the child itself or it's caregiver approves with the child participating in the research, and the audio recording of interviews. This research was ethically approved by Faculty of Education Research and Ethics Committee. Every child and the director of Ikageng signed an informed consent form, and allowed the researcher to record the interviews.

Analysis

The approach in this research, was the phenomenological approach. In this approach it is believed that knowledge and understanding are embedded in the everyday life, and that knowledge cannot be quantified or reduced to numbers or statistics (Byrne, 2001). For that reason, the data in this research was only collected through qualitative methods. In order to understand the lived psycho-educational experiences of the children as well as possible, and because of triangulation purposes in order to improve the validity of the data, three qualitative data collection methods were used: 1. Semi-structured interviews, 2.

Compilation of collages by the orphaned children themselves and an interview about these collages, 3. A focus group meeting. In the collection of the data, most attention was on gathering as much details as possible about the lived situation of the orphaned children, rather than their abstract views or interpretation. The collection of the data took place at Ikageng in Soweto. The six semi-structured interviews were individual, face-to-face interviews which were held in the boardroom of Ikageng. The collages were created by the children individually and took place at Ikageng. Afterwards, an individual, face-to-face interview was held in which the children were invited to explain their collage to the researcher. The focus group was held in the boardroom of Ikageng. All six children were present for the focus group.

In this research, the main goal of the interview was to get a complete description as possible of the psycho-educational experiences of the orphaned children. For that reason, questions were asked in which these experiences had a central role, such as *What are your feelings about living with your extended family members?*, *Could you tell me something about your school experiences at home?*, *Could you tell me something about your school experiences at school?*, *How is your family involved in these experiences?* The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were all recorded and afterwards transcribed. The interviews had a duration of approximately 30 minutes each.

The second data collection instrument was the compilation of, and an interview about collages by the orphaned children themselves that depicted their lived psycho-educational experiences. The inclusion of non-linguistic methods in the research (such as the compilation of collages) allows the researcher to access different levels of experience of participants, including experiences that cannot easily be put into words (Bagnoli, 2009). In other words, for this research, the compiling of collages allowed the orphaned to express themselves in an alternative way, and allowed the researcher to access different layers of their lived psycho-educational experiences. With the collage, the children had to express what it is like for them to live with their extended family members in regard to their school experiences. Because in phenomenological research the lived experiences of the participants are assessed, the explanation of the collages was done by the orphaned children themselves. As an external person, the researcher would be unable to understand and explain the collage in an adequate way. The explanation of the children was recorded and afterwards analyzed through thematic analysis.

The third data collection instrument was a focus group interview. A focus group refers to a group discussion in which participants focus collectively on a specific issue (Wilkinson, 1998). During the focus group interview, the children were allowed to discuss their lived

psycho-educational experiences with each other. A focus group is a unique data collection instrument, because of the ability to generate data based on the synergy of the interaction in the group (Green, Draper & Dowler, 2003). For that reason it is important that the members of the focus group feel comfortable with each other and engage in a discussion (Rabiee, 2004). In order to accomplish this feeling of comfort, the focus group interview was the last data collection instrument in this research. The children got the chance to meet each other in an informal setting during the compilation of the collages, so they had the opportunity to get acquainted. In the focus group interview, the main goal was to get a complete description as possible of the psycho-educational lived-experiences of the orphaned children. The children discussed questions such as: *What is it like for you to live with your extended family members? What is good about living with your extended family members? What is not good about living with your extended family members? Could you tell me something about the role your extended family members have in your school experiences?* The questions were used as a guideline to point the discussion in the right direction. The focus group interview lasted until data saturation occurred.

After the data was collected, the data was analyzed through a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. A theme refers to something important in the data in relation to the research question. It represents some level of patterned response within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, the data was collected through different data collection techniques. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify, analyze and report the themes that occurred in the different data collection techniques. This makes thematic analysis a suitable data analysis technique. Based on the theoretical framework of this research, several codes were designed to divide the content of the interviews, the collages and the focus group in. The codes were based on the research question: Psychological experiences, positive psychological experiences at home, negative psychological experiences at home, educational experiences, educational experiences at home, positive educational experiences at home, negative educational experiences at home, educational experiences at school, positive educational experiences at school, negative educational experiences at school. In the educational experiences at home and at school, most emphasis was on the psychological aspects of the educational experiences

of the orphaned children. For analyzing the data, the program NVivo was used (QSR NVivo, version 10).

Results

The sample of this research exists of six orphaned children, living with their extended family members.

Kemi¹ is a 13 year old girl, attending high school. Both her parents are deceased; her mother passed away when Kemi was 2 years old and her father when she was 8 years old. She has no living siblings, since her brother also passed away. Kemi doesn't know how old she was when her brother passed away. Kemi lives with her grandmother, her cousin and his girlfriend. She lives with her extended family since she was born; before her parents passed away, she lived with her parents and her extended family, and after they passed away without her parents.

Adams is a 14 year old boy, attending high school. Both his parents are deceased: his father passed away when Adams was 3 years old and his mother when he was 10 years old. He has three living siblings: one older sister and two older brothers. In 2004, Adams moved with his sister and his brothers to the house of his grandparents to live with them. It didn't come forward whether the mother of Adams moved with him and his brother and sister to the house of his grandparents.

Felix is a 12 year old boy, attending primary school. His mother passed away when Felix was nine months old. In that same time, Felix' father took Felix' sister and left. Until now, Felix and his family don't know where they are and they consider his father and sister to be dead. Felix is the youngest of four children; he has one living sister, one living brother, and one sister of which no one knows whether she is still alive or not. Together with his brother and sister he lives with his grandparents. In the interview, it didn't come forward for how long Felix has lived with his grandparents.

Fifi is a 13 year old girl who attends high school. Both her parents are deceased; her mother passed away when Fifi was 2 years old and her father passed away when she was 10 years old. She has two living siblings; an older sister and a younger sister. With her sisters, Fifi lives with her grandparents and her cousin. In the interview, it didn't come forward for how long Fifi has lived with her grandparents.

¹ Due to privacy reasons, the names in the research are fictitious names

Caroline is a 12 year old girl who attends primary school. Both her parents are deceased. Caroline was 8 years old when her mother died of HIV/AIDS. In 2012, she moved with her father to the house of her extended family members. He lived with Caroline until he was killed. It didn't come forward in the interview in what year exactly her father was killed. Caroline has a twin sister who disappeared; Family members of Caroline came over to her house and took her sister with them and now Caroline doesn't know where she is. Caroline doesn't remember the exact year when this happened. She also has a half-brother with whom she shares the same mother but they both have a different father. Caroline lives with two of her aunts and her two cousins – a boy and a girl.

Nelson is a 13 year old boy, attending high school. His mother passed away when Nelson was 7 years old. His father disappeared one day and is considered to be passed away too by Nelson and his extended family members. Together with his older and younger sister, Nelson lives with his grandparents. Nelson doesn't remember since when he lives with his grandparents.

Psychological experiences

When asked about the feelings the children have about living with their extended family members, it is notable that in the interviews all children express feelings of joy and happiness because of the fact that their family members are taking care of them, both emotionally and practically. To the children, emotional care includes having extended family members who understand them, and having someone to talk to.

“I love my granny because she can understand me and when I ask her something she would do it for me.” ~ Kemi (13), Interview

“What makes me happy is that I have someone to talk to when I have my problems. Someone I can sit down with of my family members and talk to them.”

~ Fifi (13), Interview

In the perspective of the children, emotional care also includes being able to talk about anything with their extended family members and not having subjects they cannot talk about; from feelings about not having enough money to buy the clothes the children would like to buy, to feelings of anxiety during the night because of being afraid to die or taken away by something bad. The answers in this matter seem to be contradictory; the answers at one point are more positive than at another point. For example, during the interview Fifi (13) reported that she could talk about anything with her extended family, but during the focus group she

reports that problems she experiences with her friends, is a subject she cannot talk about with her extended family. Or, like Felix (12) who first reports he can talk about anything with his grandparents, but during the focus group he reports that he feels that he cannot always talk about his parents with his grandparents, because it will “freak them out”.

Practical care is perceived as having family members doing things for them when they ask them to do something, and financial support. Feelings of happiness are reported in regard to the things their extended family members are buying for them, such as shoes, and clothes. In the experience of most of the children, their extended family members are not making a difference in how they treat their biological own children and their orphaned relative:

“What makes me really happy about living with my extended family is that when we go to a mall she just spends money on me, because she don’t care that I’m not her son but she cares about I’m her daughters child.” ~ Felix (13), Focus group

However, some of the children do experience a difference in treatment of their extended family members in how they are treating their biological own child and their orphaned relative:

“Sometimes I will tell her, at school we have a trip and then she can’t pay for me and she will pay for her own child (...) and then when her child comes back, she will talk to him but she won’t talk to me.” ~ Caroline (12), Collage

The psychological experiences of the children living with their extended family members are mostly positive. However, there are also things the children experience as less positive. They experience feelings of unhappiness in regard to their extended family members having not always have enough money to buy the clothes they want, or for the trips at school:

“What I want to be different is that I want them to pay for trips and sign the papers.” ~ Felix (12), Focus group

In sum, the experiences of the children seem to be contradictory. For example, when asked about things they don’t like about living with their extended family members, at first the children mention that there is nothing that they don’t like, while asking the same question later in the research process, the children do come up with things they don’t like.

Educational experiences

The educational experiences of the orphaned children can be divided by educational experiences at home and educational experiences at school. In the educational experiences, the psychological aspects of these experiences are emphasized.

In regard to the educational experiences at home, the majority of the experiences of the children is positive. The children experience feelings of happiness about the

involvement of their extended family members in their education. A reoccurring theme is the perception of the children in regard to the responses of the extended family members to the results on exams of the children. The responses vary from most positively to most negatively:

Interviewer: How does she respond when you have a very good result? What does she do then?

Kemi: She will just smile...haha...and say: I told you that, keep going, you will get this cause you want to to get it. ~ Transcription interview Kemi (13).

It seems that the education of their orphaned relatives is important for the extended family members. They want them to improve their achievements by encouraging them to work harder in case an exam is failed.

“As my name [means] encourage, she always encourages me.” ~ Kemi (13), Interview Encouragement of children in order for them to improve their achievements is not unique for children (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). However, the findings in this research seem to be contradictory with existing literature, since research shows extended family members tend to invest less, both financially as socially, in the education of their orphaned relatives (Hamilton, 1964). Not every child experiences encouragement of his or her extended family when an exam is failed. Feelings of sadness occur when extended family members are not willing to talk with the child in case an exam is failed.

Another reoccurring theme is the help the extended family offers their orphaned relatives with their homework. In their experience, the children perceive their extended family members as willing to help them with their homework, but that it is the children themselves who turn down the help. This finding shows that the extended family members in this research are involved in the education of their orphaned relatives, while research shows that extended family members invest less socially and financially in the lives of their orphaned relatives (Coneus, Mühlenweg & Stichnoth, 2014). The children feel that they don't need help because they don't struggle with subjects, or because they do their homework at school and ask their teacher for help in case they have questions. The children experience feelings of happiness about the fact that, if they have any questions about their homework, they are able to ask their extended family members these questions:

“What makes me happy is that I do my homework on my own, but they help me with Zulu homework because I didn’t start at a Zulu school when I was little.”

~ Felix (12), Focus group

In regard to their educational experiences at school, the relationship between their extended family members and the school the children are going to is a major theme. The children experience mixed feelings about the fact that their extended family members don’t always know their teachers.

“I wish my family to know my teachers, but at the same time I don’t want to.”

~ Adams (14), Focus group.

These mixed feelings are caused by the fact that their extended family members and teachers will talk about the children, which is perceived to be both positive as negative. What the children perceive as positive, is that their extended family members will know the favorite subjects of the children at school. However, what the children perceive as negative is that their family will know about their problems. Another fact that causes the mixed feelings, is that the children perceive the behavior of their teacher as inappropriate:

“What is good (...) is because my aunt gets to know my favorite subjects (...) and the bad thing is [that] this teachers, she is very shouting and then you don’t even understand [her] and that is why I don’t like [my extended family to know my teacher]. She [the teacher] is gonna say everything, even when you talk in line up, she gives you points for nothing.” ~ Fifi (13), Focus group

Having teachers that don’t respond in a proper way, seems to be another major theme in the educational experiences of the children. Where the children feel encouraged at home, at school they perceive that teacher does not encourage them at all. They perceive their teachers as making fun of them, doing anything to hurt their feelings, and gossiping about them.

“Yeah, they gossip. Cause our teachers are [like] foreigners so they always gossip in class because we don’t understand their language (...) You are looking and you don’t know what they are saying.” ~ Kemi (13), Focus group

Being made fun of is an experience the children not only have with their teachers, but also with their classmates:

“I will tell my mother because she can see at the school I have a problem. Then she will ask me what happened and then I tell them: the children they will laugh at me because I don’t have a mother, because every children they are with their mom at school. Then I will cry and they will ask me why do you cry, and then I will just go because I don’t like to speak.” ~ Caroline (13), Interview

Please note that with “mother” Caroline refers to her aunt.

In sum, the majority of the educational experiences of the children in this research are positive, both at home as at school. In regard to the educational experiences at home, the children perceive their extended family members as encouraging them to improve their achievements. In regard to the educational experiences at school, the relationship between their extended family and their teachers seems to be a reoccurring theme in the experiences of the children in this research. The children experience mixed feelings about their own relationship with their teachers.

Conclusions and discussion

According to the latest estimates, 19% of all children in South Africa has lost either one or both parents (STATS, 2012). The vulnerability of these orphaned children is worsened by the high incidence of poverty and violence in South Africa (Dawes, van der Merwe & Brandt, 2007). Research shows that the extended family of orphaned children is the most viable and preferred option for children in South Africa, after their parents are deceased (Department of Social Development, 2002; Dunn, Jareg & Webb, 2003; UNICEF, 2003). The aim of this research is the identification of the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children, living with their extended family members in Soweto, South Africa. In the educational experiences, a distinction was made between the educational experiences at home and, the educational experiences at school.

What is striking in regard to the results, is the fact that the information given in the interviews, collages and focus group meeting sometimes seems to be contradictory. The more the children spent time with the researcher, their openness about their lived experiences with their extended family members increased, which resulted in the sharing of negative experiences. Whereas the children during the interviews were mostly positive about their extended family members, the children shared more negative experiences during the collages and even more during the focus group. In this research, some of the answers of the children are contradictory. An explanation of this matter can be found in one of the key issues in researching children; the extent to which the researcher is perceived as an expert in the research topic. Compared to older children, younger children may be more suggestible and more inclined to respond in a way they think the researcher expects them to respond. The increase of more negative experiences throughout the research, may be due to the fact that the children felt they were more involved in the research, and felt they were not seen as subjects of research (Mahone et al., 1996). At the same time, there was an increase in the contact

between the research and the children, which led to a decrease of the view of the children of the research being an expert in the research topic, and an increase of trust from the children towards the researcher.

As the findings show, in regard to the psychological experiences of the orphaned children, the majority of the experiences seem to be positive. The children perceive their extended family as caring, both emotionally and practically. To the children it feels that their family members are understanding, and that they are able to talk about anything with their family. Besides that, overall, the children perceive their extended family members as not making a difference between their biological children and their orphaned relative in regard to practical and emotional care. This is notable, since existing research shows that the quality of care depends on the biological connectedness of caregivers and children (Hamilton, 1964). An implication of this rule is that orphaned children who are raised by their extended family are worse off than their cousins being raised in the same household, because the financial and social investment of their extended family members in orphaned children is lower than the investment in non-orphaned children. A possible explanation for this contrast, can be found in the role that NGOs can play in the support of orphaned children. Research shows that in some cases, the role of NGOs is considered to be critical. In townships, such as Soweto, NGOs can provide food and clothes. The children and their families in this research are both emotionally and emotionally supported by an NGO. The insufficient financial resources of the family are completed by this NGO, so that the children won't suffer any harm from a lower financial and emotional investment of their extended family members.

Nevertheless, the children perceive the financial problems of their extended family members as problematic, since it causes differences between the orphaned children and their environment. This is in line with existing literature, which states that poverty is a key cause in distress by children in general, and also by orphaned children (Giese, Meintjes, Croke & Chamerblain, 2011).

In regard to the role that the extended family has in taking care of orphaned children, several approaches can be differentiated. In this research, two of these approaches are discussed: the social rupture thesis, and the approach in which the extended family is seen as a dynamic entity. Based on the responses of the orphaned children in this research, the approach applicable on the behavior of the extended families, is the approach in which the extended family is seen as a dynamic entity. The families seem to be able to meet the demands placed upon them; they are capable of supporting their orphaned relatives, both

emotionally and financially. Besides that, the social rupture seems to not be apparent in the families, since the families are able to take their orphaned relatives into their homes.

In regard to the educational experiences at home, the majority of the experiences of the children in this research is positive. The children perceive their extended family members as encouraging in regard to their education. This is notable, since existing literature shows that with the loss of a parent, the children experience a lack of financial and emotional support, which can have a detrimental effect on children's schooling (Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). Another notable finding, is that the children are offered help with their homework, but that the children don't feel they need help. The involvement of the extended family members in the education of the orphaned children in this research, is conflicting with existing literature, since research shows that more distant and older extended family members of orphaned children are either less able or less willing to take interest in the education of orphaned children (Nyamykapa & Gregson, 2005). Besides that, research shows that economic distress of caregivers, affects the relationship between caregivers and children negatively, and results in less supportive behavior of the caregiver towards the child (Conger et al., 2002). For that reason, a possible explanation for the contrast between the findings in this research and existing literature can be found in the fact that the families in this research are supported by an NGO, financially. The economic stress, and therefore the related less supportive behavior of the extended family towards the orphaned caregiver, caused by the care for another child in the household, has been taken away by the financial support of the NGO.

In regard to the educational experiences of the orphaned children at school, a major theme is the relationship between the orphaned children and their school teachers. The children perceive their teachers as not encouraging, making fun of them, and doing anything to hurt the feelings of the orphaned children. This is in line with the literature, which states that in most cases, orphaned children are attending schools in which the teachers not always have the capacity to respond in an adequate way to the emotional needs of orphans. Besides that, the status of orphaned children very often is stigmatized by their environment (Atwine, Cantor-Graae & Bajunirwe, 2005; Motha & Frempong, 2014).

In this research, there are several limitations to be identified. A limitation of this research is that only orphaned children living with their extended family members were included. In future research, a comparison could be made between the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members and the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living in orphanages, in order

to explore whether there is a difference in regard to the psycho-educational experiences. Another limitation is the small sample size included in this research. However, orphaned children in South Africa are well protected by the government, and therefore not very accessible. Orphaned children are most accessible through NGO's. Therefore, all children in this research are living in a specific context; they are all supported by the NGO Ikageng.

The findings in this research lead to several recommendations for future research, and policies. Consistent with existing literature, the children in this research perceive their teachers as not sensitive for their emotional needs (Motha & Frempong, 2014). For that reason, the development of a special training for teachers, in which the challenges they might face in teaching orphaned children have a central role, would be desirable. In this training, the teachers should be offered assistance in how to consort with the emotional challenges their orphaned learners are faced with, as a result of losing their parents.

One of the key issues in researching children, is that children tend to perceive the researcher as an expert in the research topic. This leads to the children given answers that they think are acceptable for the researcher. For that reason, it is important to invest a lot of time in the relationship between the researcher and the children. By doing so, the trust from the children towards the researcher can increase, and the view of the researcher as an expert in the topic field can decrease, so that the answers of the children are honest answers.

In this research, all children and their extended family members are supported, both financially as emotionally, by an NGO, which can be considered as an explanation for some of the contrasts between this research and the existing literature. Future research should be focused on either orphaned children living with their extended family members without the support of a NGO or an combination of orphaned children with the support a NGO and without this support, in order to explore the influence of NGOs in the psycho-educational experiences of orphaned children living with their extended family members.

Summarized, despite the limitations, this research is considered to be complementary to the existing research about the lives orphaned children in South Africa, since the lived psycho-educational experiences of children are identified. However, there still are important things unknown, which can be seen as directions for future research.

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