



The Covid-19 Pandemic's Experiences with Youth in Tshikombani Village, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Mudau T. J.*

School of Human and Social Sciences,
University of Venda, South Africa
[*Corresponding author]

Manyage T.

Centre of Higher Education Teaching and Learning,
University of Venda, South Africa

Mavhungu H.

University of Venda, South Africa

Abstract

This study looked at the issues that young people are facing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic leaving them orphans. Since these are the areas that are most affected when family members pass away, the study concentrated on the social, economic, educational, and psychological effects on adolescents. The goals of the study were to explore the experiences of young people who were left orphaned by COVID-19 by looking at the pandemic's consequences on the economy, society, and education as well as developing measures to help with those effects.

This study used a qualitative methodology, gathering data from primary and secondary sources and analyzing it using a theme approach. According to this survey, the majority of respondents experienced difficulties academically as well as socially and financially after losing one or both of their parents to COVID-19. Support in the form of money and emotional support was recommended to lessen the respondents' suffering and the detrimental effects of their parents' absence. The government should engage with non-governmental groups to provide food and school uniforms to orphans; the orphans' grant should be enhanced; and social workers should continually visit all orphans in their homes. These are the recommendations made by this study.

Keywords

COVID-19, Effects, Pandemic, Orphaned youth

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Orphanhood is defined by UNICEF (2013) as the loss of one or both parents together with caregivers, and it can have very serious consequences. A child who has lost one or both parents to death is referred to as a "orphan," according to UNICEF (2020). A child who has lost both of their parents is referred to as a double orphan, while a single orphan has only lost one of their parents. An orphaned child who has lost both of their parents is called a paternal orphan; an orphaned mother is called a maternal orphan. The South African Constitution defines a child as someone under the age of eighteen. Estimates state that at least 64.5 percent of children experience poverty and live in low-income households (UNICEF, 2020). Children are most affected by food insecurity because they have difficulty accessing basic education and facilities like clean water and sanitation. Furthermore, there is a lot of violence against children in South Africa.

The emergence of COVID-19 has had a profound effect on families worldwide. Families have little time to prepare children for the anguish they will experience in the event of a parent or caregiver passing away because COVID-19 can cause death in a matter of weeks. Research indicates that the pandemic's consequences might cause abuse and developmental impairments in children, even in cases when one parent survives (Guo et al 2020). Children who lose their primary caregivers are more likely to live in poverty, suffer from mental health problems, and be the victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. In this setting, there is an increased risk of suicide, adolescent pregnancy, exposure to

infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, and chronic illnesses (Kidman, 2016). Beginning in the Chinese city of Wuhan in early December 2019, the coronavirus illness (COVID-19) spread quickly, with cases confirmed in almost every nation on earth. As a result, it has become a significant global public health emergency (Mohan and Nambiar, 2020). As of January 2021, China's COVID-19-related orphanhood rate was 0.2%. Compared to other nations, such as South Africa, where the rate of orphanhood was 3.1%, this was a low percentage.

In this context, it is crucial to focus on all family members who are normally responsible for raising children, including grandparents in addition to parents. In multigenerational households, grandparents are playing a bigger role as caregivers for their grandkids (Chamie, 2020). Around 50% of children in the Asia-Pacific area and 38% of all children globally live in extended family households with their grandparents (Panter-brick, 2019). Grandparents often provide psychosocial, practical, and financial support to their grandkids, despite being the group most susceptible to COVID-19. Brazil ranks second in the world for COVID-19 mortality, and 70% of children get financial help; these factors limit the options for kinship care (Camarano, 2020). 40% of grandparents who live with their grandchildren in the United States are the primary caregivers, whilst 40% of grandparents in the United Kingdom also regularly provide care for their grandkids (Camarano, 2020). In Africa and Latin America, custodial grandparents often act as guardians for their grandchildren whose parents have moved for work, passed away from AIDS or another illness, or have been torn apart by conflict or violence (United States Population Division, 2020).

According to a recent poll, South Africa has the highest number of Covid-19 orphans on the African continent, with 94,625 individuals having lost their parents or other primary caregivers in the year prior (Macupe, 2021). According to the study, which covered 21 countries, the epidemic claimed the lives of almost 1.5 million children in 2021, leaving them without parents or other primary caretakers. Because of COVID-19, many young people in the Eastern Cape became orphans. This made matters worse because a large number of them were already living in homes that were impoverished; some of these orphans have now been adopted by their extended family. More than 32,000 children in the Western Cape have been reported to have lost a parent or parents (May, Witten, & Lake, 2020).

EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON ORPHANED YOUTH

With 7.22 orphans per 1000 people, South Africa ranked second out of 21 countries in research published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* (2020), after Peru (8.28). By October 2021, the analysis estimated that 5.2 million children had become orphans or had lost a caregiver because of Covid-19; however, estimates are often underreported in regions like Africa. Children of all ages are impacted by bereavement, according to *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, South Africa (2020). They may also experience inadequate care, a shift in the attitude of the surviving parent or caregiver, food hardship, subpar housing, and family disintegration. Young, bereaved children need urgent full-time care and ongoing attention for their early childhood development. Their future development, physical well-being, and emotional state are strongly influenced by the caliber of care they receive.

In Africa and Latin America, custodial grandparents are often caregivers of grandchildren whose parents have travelled for work, passed away from AIDS or other illnesses, or have been torn apart by conflict or violence (Phillips, 2020). Adoption and foster care are two more family-based care models that can be significantly restricted by mitigation measures. Data from April 2021 indicates that many of the countries with the highest incidence of COVID-19-related death may require more than four years to develop protection for the entire population, even though many grandparents fall into the older age categories that the WHO targets for vaccinations. Consequently, COVID-19 will persist in its role as a cause of parent and family fatalities, providing children with fewer options than they had before to the outbreak (Phillips, 2020).

Data on the level of caregiver-related COVID-19-related mortality are needed to direct global measures. Variations in fertility, delayed conception, categorized features of parent death, and rates where co-residing grandparents are the primary caregivers can all have an impact on the impact of these deaths on the children. Furthermore, the number of multigenerational households may also be a factor, as it is often linked to the pre-pandemic prevalence of female employment and single parenthood (COVID (2020).

THE SOCIAL EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON ORPHANED YOUTH

Children who live in homes where the pre-pandemic income level was maintained are four times less likely to encounter violence than children living in families where all or most of the income was lost during COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2021). The likelihood of violence experienced by children during the period was twice that of children whose schools remained open. The ability of children to receive enough nutrition is at stake when they live in poverty. In research, over two-thirds of parents stated that the high cost of food prevented them from providing their kids with a healthy diet (World Health Organization, 2021).

Orphans raised by custodial grandparents may suffer from COVID-19 secondary trauma after losing their parents (Goldman, 2020). Previous epidemics have demonstrated that children who have ineffective responses to the death of a parent or caregiver—even in cases when the parent or caregiver survives—will suffer detrimental psychological, neurocognitive, economical, and biological effects (Goldman, 2020). These effects are made worse by isolation connected to mitigation, closings of schools, and the inability to participate in customs related to sorrow. In such a situation, effective bereavement methods are essential, including psychosocial support groups, open communication, allowing surviving caregivers to receive adaptive mourning, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (Goldman, 2020).

Psychological risks include physical, sexual, emotional, and domestic abuse. It's crucial to stop violence and promote good parenting, especially in high-stress households adjusting to new care arrangements. Research-proven programs designed for online and digital platforms have demonstrated potential in reducing parental stress and averting abuse (Chamie, 2021). Although most mourning children have someone to look after them, children whose parents or caregivers died as a result of COVID-19 are more likely to be taken from their relatives and institutionalized. While some will be put in foster, adoptive, or kinship care, others will remain with their single parents. According to Chamie (2021), 4200 children in New York State are orphaned as a result of COVID-19, and 23 percent of them could wind up in foster care. Nonetheless, institutionalization should be avoided at all costs since it impairs a person's ability to fully develop psychologically, physically, and cognitively. Money should be used to support family-based care instead.

A surviving adult's ability to work is limited by lost income and childcare obligations, which could further lower the standard of living for households. The long-term effects on children's development include worsening adult income and academic performance. Evidence from the HIV/AIDS epidemic suggests that government social protection programs reduce poverty and its related effects (World Health Organization, 2020). This is due to the fact that, in addition to the pandemic's numerous and grave negative effects on kids, families, and communities, most national governments and many donors have seen a significant decrease in their financial resources and operational involvement, which has limited their ability to provide children with services like schools and health centers. In order to lessen the pandemic's detrimental societal impacts, personal protective behaviors must be emphasized in all initiatives assisting families and children (World Health Organization, 2020).

THE MENTAL EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON ORPHANED YOUTH

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a range of effects on children, including psychological, emotional, physical, social, and cultural effects (Dalton, Rapa, & Stein, 2020). These effects have further implications for children's education, mental health, and way of life (UNICEF, 2020). When COVID-19 spreads tragically within extended family groups, children may suffer numerous bereavements. Children afflicted by COVID-19-related family member mortality may lose one parent rather than both. A child's mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, along with school abandonment, low self-esteem, and an increase in risky sexual behavior, are prevalent following the death of a parent.

Psychosocial risks for kids and teenagers without parents or other primary caregivers include a higher chance of despair, suicidal thoughts, and PTSD. Negative socioeconomic outcomes are strongly associated with adult mortality, and the availability of biomedical care may be necessary to successfully address psychiatric, socioeconomic, and neurocognitive issues. If efforts are made to expedite equitable access to vaccines, vaccinations and therapies can both save the lives of parents and caregivers (Jacob et al., 2020). Children who have had some mental abnormalities include those whose parents are positive for COVID-19, those who have lost one or both of their parents due to the virus, and those who were placed in isolation or under quarantine due to the nationwide lockdown. Some children who were exposed to lead poisoning during the epidemic developed severe and disruptive psychopathology, according to study findings (Danese et al., 2020). These children were seen to have mood problems, behavioral challenges, substance usage, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts.

Children who have had some mental abnormalities include those whose parents are positive for COVID-19, those who have lost one or both of their parents due to the virus, and those who were placed in isolation or under quarantine due to the nationwide lockdown. Some children who were exposed to lead poisoning during the epidemic developed severe and disruptive psychopathology, according to study findings (Danese et al., 2020). These children were seen to have mood problems, behavioral challenges, substance usage, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Psychosocial Theory

In the 1950s, Erik Erikson developed psychosocial theory, which is the foundation of social science research. According to psychosocial theory, sometimes referred to as "person-in-environment (PIE) theory," an individual's personality changes over time in response to their surroundings and interactions with friends, family, and the community. Humans go through phases as children, teenagers, and adults, growing in independence, self-reliance, identity, creativity, and intimacy; but, there's a risk that people will also develop a capacity for mistrust, guilt, humiliation, loneliness, and despair at every turn brings confusion into their lives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

In the 1950s, Erik Erikson developed psychosocial theory, which is the foundation of social science research. According to psychosocial theory, sometimes referred to as "person-in-environment (PIE) theory," an individual's personality changes over time in response to their surroundings and interactions with friends, family, and the community. Humans go through phases as children, teenagers, and adults, growing in independence, self-reliance, identity, creativity, and intimacy; but, there's a risk that people will also develop a capacity for mistrust, guilt, humiliation, loneliness, and

despair at every turn. Conflict arises, for example, when teenagers try to figure out who they are in relation to what their parents, teachers, and community demand of them.

Research Design

This study is ethnographic in nature, meaning that researchers watch study participants in their natural surroundings and/or engage with them. A methodical approach to thoroughly examining the daily lives and experiences of the subjects of a study is ethnography. The study method of ethnography can yield a comprehensive grasp of a group's shared culture, customs, and social dynamics (Caulfield, 2023); hence, employing this design will enable the researcher to obtain the social dynamics of the youth who are orphaned. Thus, the goal is to help the researcher relate to these young people and develop an understanding of their routines, behaviors, and priorities from an empathic perspective (van Dijk, 2010).

Population and location of the study

The youngsters of Tshikombani village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa, comprised the study's population.

Sampling procedure

In research, sampling refers to the process of choosing a subset of the target population. In most research, it is not possible to include the complete population of interest in participation, so data collection is done on a smaller group (McCombes, 2019). Non-probability sampling is a technique used in research projects where the population or the likelihood of choosing a sample member is not known. There are various forms of non-probability sampling, and this study will use a non-random sampling technique where selection is made using criteria other than pure chance. In non-random selection, the sample is chosen depending on the researcher's judgment, experience, and convenience; this method is biased by nature (Byju, 2017).

Data collection method

The methodical process of gathering information on relevant variables in order to test hypotheses, address specific research questions, and assess results is known as data collection (Kabir, 2016).

Interviews

An interview is a conversation with a specific objective in mind. "Simple format, questions and answers, power dynamics, and imbalance" is how Anderson et al. (2010) characterize the procedure. Interviews often involve two or more participants, including the interviewer and the interviewee. Compared to other types of communication, interviews are typically more goal-oriented when two or more people are involved. According to Walliaman (2017), another feature of interviews is their question-answer format. An interview's main characteristic is its question-and-answer format, which allows the interviewer to elicit additional information about a particular phenomenon. One benefit of using interviews is that the interviewer can immediately obtain specific information from the participants (Anderson et al., 2010). In order to collect data for this study, 15 participants will be asked questions that are relevant to the research topic during interviews.

Data analysis

According to Muhammad (2015), data analysis is the process of carrying out particular calculations and assessments in order to extract meaningful information from data, with the aim of compiling and arranging the collected data in a way that provides answers to inquiries. The data was analyzed using a thematic approach, which is a qualitative research method that seeks to comprehend a particular phenomenon by locating recurring themes within a wider body of data. It has been extensively employed in studies pertaining to research participants' health and well-being. To ensure familiarization, the gathered data will be read and reread. Afterwards, codes will be generated by finding intriguing aspects of the data, which will then be compiled into possible themes. Based on the ultimate concepts that are developed, pertinent corroborating quotes will be found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings are based on the analysis of the social, economic, educational, and psychological impact of COVID-19, on orphaned youth, within Tshikombani village.

Biographical information of the respondents

Age of the respondents

Table 1 The table below shows the respondents' age range.

12-16	89%
17-21	11%
22-26	0%

Respondents to this study were asked to provide their age. The age ranges provided by the respondents are shown in the above table. The respondents in this study range in age from 12 to 26. The majority of study participants are between the ages of 12 and 16. There were very few responders who were between the ages of 17 and 21, and none who were between the ages of 22 and 26.

Gender of the participants

Table 2 The table below shows the gender of the respondents.

Female	73%
Male	27%

This study requested the respondents to state their gender. Majority of the respondents in this study were female and few were male.

Presentation of data

The year that respondents became orphans;

Participant 1: *“My mother fell sick due to COVID 19 and died in 2021. I had hoped that she will fight this Covid-19 but unfortunately, she did not. She was our only source of income and pillar of strength. I had never imagined this life without her and her support but here I am living this meaningless life. she was my dearest. I miss her every day. After my father’s funeral, my heart healed fast knowing that I still have my mother who would take good care of us, and I never thought she will leave us anytime soon. I had always imagined her cheering me up during my graduations when I am done with high school level. She used to encourage me to study hard and do the best for me to change the situation at home. I am just happy that I had never lost any focus in my studies after her death because I know it is what she always wanted me to do. I do not think I will ever heal from this wound. Now I must figure out this life alone.”*

Participant 4: *“My mother and father passed away in the same week in 2021; they were both admitted at the same hospital. I used to visit them every now and then while they were still at the hospital, and they would smile, and I had a hope that they will come home one day. I still cannot believe that I buried my father a week after my mother’s funeral as he died just after my mother’s funeral. Saying your final goodbyes is not easy to people you dearly love and who used to support you in all areas of life. My parents were the best friends to each other and to me. After my mother’s death my life took a U-turn. It was like I am starting a new life and I had to figure out the way on my own. This had never been easy. I never in my wildest dream imagine myself, living without my lovely mother I always feel empty. I do not think there is a way that I will heal after this painful event”.*

Participant 6: *“My mother had COVID-19 for a week and died because she was struggling to breath. I had hoped that she will fight Covid-19 because that was what she had always promised us, that she will get better and come back to us. Looking at the statistics of people who recovered after Covid-19 always gave me hope that my mother will one day be amongst the recovered ones. After being informed of my mother’s death I thought it was a just a bad joke; that someone will come and tell me it was just a joke. She was a source of joy and always ensured that I have everything that I need.”*

The majority of responders said they had lost their moms, a small percentage said they had lost their fathers, and four said COVID-19 had caused them to lose both of their parents. According to this survey, the majority of participants lost one or both of their parents in 2021. The results of this study are consistent with those of Maya and Sandhiya (2021), who found that in comparison to 2020, the majority of young people lost a parent or parents in 2021.

Parents respondents had, prior to COVID-19

Participant 2: *“Prior to COVID-19, I had both parents; in 2020 I lost my father. The following year I lost my mother. That was the heaviest year of my life, losing two people that you dearly love is not easy, especially ones that used to take care of you. I cannot go a day without thinking about them, more especially when I want to cook and there is nothing to cook”.*

Participant 3: *“COVID-19 took away my remaining parent, my mother. Although I always knew that one day she will be gone forever, I never expected her to be gone by now. It is painful whenever my young siblings ask me when our mother is coming back so that she can give them money as she always did. It is at that moment that I realize that she has left a huge gap that none of our relatives is willing to fill.”*

Participant 5: *“Before covid 19 I had my father as a remaining parent, but he passed away due to Covid 19. There are fathers out there who do not take care of their children and people label them as ‘useless’, but my father was extra special. He had been a father who always ensure that we are well taken care of, and we get almost everything that we want. Right now, I do not want anyone to even mention anything about COVID-19 because it opens all the healed wounds.”*

The majority of respondents said that, prior to COVID-19, they had just one parent; the remaining respondents had both parents. This suggests that prior to their deaths from COVID-19, the majority of the orphans in Tshikombani village had only one parent. This study's results are in line with those of a study by Hillis et al. (2021), which showed that most respondents had only one parent that passed away during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Academic performance of respondents

Participant 2: “After losing my parents due to Covid 19, my performance at school dropped badly. Their passing affected me badly to such an extent that I could not focus on school. Memories that we had together used to come into my mind even when I am in class. I would sometimes hear their voices while I am home. I guess I have not healed properly from their death. My parents were not educated but their support in my academics was huge; you would swear they were educated.”

Participant 4: “I lost my mother to Covid 19; she was my only remaining parent. Things started to change, and I started to perform badly at school. I began to misbehave at school, and I would speak and respond to teachers the way I like. I was very angry at everyone and taking my pain out on everyone. The pain of losing my parents was too much and I felt like I cannot go through this phase alone; someone also has to feel this pain, so, I started to perform badly at school.”

Participant 6: “I have been an average learner, prior and after my mother’s death. My mother’s death did not affect me academically. I have accepted that my mother is gone and there is nothing I can do to bring her back. I just continue with my studies with the same energy. I believe that death is everyone’s journey, and it was my mother’s turn to go, and life should, therefore, continue.”

The majority of respondents reported that they were having difficulty focusing in class and that no one was helping them with their academic difficulties. Some of the responders said they had never experienced academic difficulties because they had people in their corner, therefore they recovered more quickly than they had anticipated. Nevertheless, they disliked having no one to support them when they had to deal. According to this survey, the majority of the orphans in Tshikombani village reported having poor academic performance. According to a study by Roelen (2020), COVID-19 caused the majority of orphans to begin doing poorly after losing a parent or parents.

Provision of food for the respondents

Participant 1: “After losing my parent to COVID-19 my grandparents have been the ones who provide us with food. I do not know how life would have been, had it not been for my grandparents who are always willing to make sure that we go to bed with a full stomach. Regardless of how much she makes each month, we never ran out of food. We always have something to eat.”

Participant 5: “I get food from my grandparents. After my parents’ death my grandparents took it upon themselves to provide for us. My parents’ absence is never felt because of their support. Their social grant has been helpful towards ensuring that there is always food in the household.”

Participant 8: “I get food from both my sibling and grandparents. My sibling is working so after getting paid, he always gets us food to eat, although, it is not enough but he tries. Where he fails to provide us with food, my grandparents are always available to assist us. Even when there is food, they will add some food.”

The majority of respondents get meals from their grandparents, a small percentage from their siblings, and some from their mother's family. This suggests that many of the orphans in Tshikombani village are being cared for by their grandparents after one or both of their parents passed away from COVID-19. The results of Roelen's (2020) study, which showed that most orphans receive their food and clothing from NGOs, do not align with the conclusions of this study.

Participant 4: “My life changed completely after losing my parents to COVID-19, I started to struggle financially. Their old age social grant used to go a long way. I never lacked basic needs while they were still around. The social grant is not enough but it ensures that at least we get the necessities at home. No matter how small the money was my needs are always taken care of.”

Participant 6: “I started to struggle financially when I lost my mother who used to assist financially. I was her priority when it comes to anything that requires money. Before I even ask for financial assistance, I had already known that I will get assistance from her. I guess this is my new reality; I must accept that she is gone, and no one will ever treat me and take good care of me, like she used to do.”

Participant 9: “After her death things started to take a U-turn in my life, the financial support that I no longer got from my mother brought a financial struggle into my life. I feel like I had not appreciated my mother a lot for her financial support. It is now that I get to see how important she was in my life. I really wish she could return for just a day so that I can thank her enough. I cannot even afford simple things that I used to take for granted.”

These results show how the respondents' lives were altered, especially in terms of money, after losing their parents. Respondents who lost a parent or parents to COVID-19 had financial difficulties. According to these replies, the majority of the orphaned respondents in Tshikombani hamlet who lost a parent or parents due to COVID-19 struggled after losing a financial supporter. According to Maya and Sandhya's (2022) research, the majority of orphans experienced financial difficulties following the loss of a parent or parents as a result of COVID-19.

Challenges faced by respondents

Participant 3: “After losing my parents to Covid 19, I started to have financial challenge that I never had prior to their death; they had helped me with every financial challenge that I had had. Even if they had no money, they would ensure

that they do piece jobs, get something, and help me. That is how blessed I was by having them in my life. If they were around up to now, my life would have been different.”

Participant 5: “A challenge that I have faced after the death of my father is academic challenge. My father’s death affected me to such an extent that I could not focus on school. He used to pay for all my extra lessons classes, now I have no one to pay on my behalf. He would sit beside me, while I am studying. After school he would ask if I had homework or any schoolwork that I had to do, just to ensure that I do not forget any schoolwork.”

Participant 8: “My father, who was my remaining parent died. When he died, I started to have financial challenges. He was a bread winner, always willing to assist with any financial assistance that I may require from him. He used to give me monthly allowance to make sure that I have enough money for anything that I may need. I would not be having any financial challenges if he was around. He cared a lot, to the extent that he would give me his last money that he set aside for transport to his workplace.”

The majority of respondents reported having difficulty in school following the death of their parents. These results go counter to those of Maya and Sandhiya (2021), who found that the majority of orphans primarily struggle with money issues.

Support received by respondents

Participant 2: “I am not satisfied with the support I receive from my family after the death of my parents. I used to get financial and academic help from my parents and now I am really struggling to get any satisfying assistance. My parents used to help me academically; I would not struggle with my academics if they were around. Now, there is no one to help me academically. My financial needs were also taken care of by my parents. Money was least of my worries while they were still around.”

Participant 6: “I am not really satisfied; I am getting academic assistance, but I am not satisfied with the financial assistance that I am getting. The academic assistance I used to receive from my parents, I am still receiving the same from my relatives. They have been helpful academically. I never struggled with even a penny when my parents were still around, but after their death, it has been a struggle to get a penny from those who are around me.”

Participant 9: “After my mother’s death I started to get support, but it is not as satisfying as the support that I was getting from my mother. Before my mother’s death I used to receive any kind of support from her, although she was not that rich, but she used to make sure that I had everything I need. She used to cover my school’s financial needs. Whenever I had a problem, she would sit beside me and try to find a solution to all my problems. I never struggled to get someone to talk to, especially, one that I would trust like her, but now it is not easy to get someone like her.”

While some respondents claimed they were satisfied, the majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the support they are receiving in the wake of their parents' deaths. These results suggest that Tshikombani village's orphans are not getting the assistance they require. These outcomes confirm the findings of Chu et al.'s study from 2022, which showed that the majority of COVID-19 orphans are dissatisfied with the support they receive after losing their parents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key conclusions from the experiences of young people left orphaned by the COVID-19 epidemic in Tshikombani Village, Limpopo, South Africa, are summed up in this section. In addition, it offers suggestions and a conclusion based on the study's key findings. This study sought to understand the experiences of young people who were left orphaned by the COVID-19 pandemic. The youth's effects in the areas of education, psychology, social work, and economics were evaluated. This study also took mitigation measures for the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on orphaned youth into account.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Investigating the experiences of youth orphaned by Covid 19

According to the study, young people who become orphaned due to COVID-19 are having a hard time adjusting to their new situation. Children who were left orphaned by COVID-19 said they were going through a trying time since they depend on their parents for emotional, social, and economical assistance, and this has damaged many important aspects of their lives. The majority of respondents stated that although their family members had promised to take good care of them during the funerals, these members had never followed through on their promises; it was all just a way to make them feel better during the funerals. As a result, they have no one or very few family members to assist them in matters that require financial support. It is difficult for young people who are orphaned to obtain basics due to a lack of financial assistance. In the absence of these essentials, the abandoned children often lose focus on their schoolwork. Since most of the orphaned teenagers reported finding it difficult to interact with other students at school, they lack a sense of belonging when they are around other people.

Examining the economic and social effects of COVID-19 on the orphaned youth

This study found that the orphaned youth had experienced financial hardships since losing their parents. This is because, even though some of them have working siblings, their wages were insufficient to meet all of the young people's needs. As a result, they used to rely entirely on their parents for any financial resources. These orphans had no trouble getting

food, school uniforms, or other needs before COVID-19 destroyed their parents' life; now, however, they are having difficulty getting them. Their academic performance has suffered as a result, and they are no longer as engaged in their studies or as prolific as they once were. For the majority of orphans, their parents served as their main social support system. It has never been simple to rely on any of the other family members for social assistance after losing one or both parents. Even though the majority of them currently live with at least one family member, they still find it challenging to be as open with them as they were with their parents. It is evident from the majority of respondents' statements that they isolate themselves from other students at school that they find it difficult to interact socially with their peers.

Examining the educational and psychological impact of Covid 19 on orphaned youth

As a result of the psychological effects of losing their parents, the majority of young people who were orphaned by COVID-19 found it difficult to concentrate on their academic work. Because of the unpredictability in their living circumstances, they were unable to focus in class. The majority of parents who passed away used to help their kids in their academic endeavors and made sure they devised a strategy to support them through any difficulties they encountered. They made sure that their assignments for class were completed on time every time. Their parents, who would have made sure that their schoolwork was consistent, are no longer in their life. The results also showed that orphaned kids frequently isolate themselves from others at school as a result of their higher levels of psychological distress. This has an influence on their academic performance because they are unable to ask for assistance from others.

Coming up with strategies to mitigate the effects associated with the COVID-19 pandemic on orphaned youth

The majority of respondents recommended that they should have both financial and psychological support in order to lessen the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences. In an effort to bridge the gap that their loved ones had left, family members should make an effort to honor the promises they made to the orphans during the parents' funerals. Groups ought to get together to provide food, stationery, and financial support. They will be able to concentrate entirely on their studies thanks to this help. Orphans should have free access to counseling since it will lessen their burdens and provide them someone with whom to confide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher offers the following advice to interested parties, including the South African government, social workers, and educators, based on the study's findings:

- It should be mandatory for social workers to visit orphans in their homes in order to evaluate their living circumstances and offer emotional assistance to those who require it.
- Grants are given to orphans; yet, the government must always balance the orphans' grant against the expense of life. Due to the significant increase in living expenses, the orphans' needs cannot be fully met by this award.
- Families should make an effort to support orphaned children; the government could collaborate with certain organizations to provide school uniforms, food, and other necessities to the needy.
- Family members ought to make an effort to help kids who have COVID-19 orphans.
- It is the responsibility of educators to make sure that they follow up with these students on a regular basis and give them the support they need to succeed academically.
- Steps should be taken to guarantee that the young people who are orphaned receive assistance for their education. One way to do this is by offering these young people scholarships.
- Leaders in the community should develop projects and programs to assist young people who feel alone among their classmates.
- Raising awareness of issues pertaining to orphaned youth would help to lessen prejudice against them in the community and at educational institutions.

REFERENCES

1. Bhandari, P. (2020) What Is Qualitative Research? Methods & Examples. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research>
2. Camarano, A.A. (2020). Depending on the income of older adults and the coronavirus: orphans or newly poor? *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 25, pp.4169-4176.
3. Caulfield, J. (2023). What is Ethnography? Retrieved May 31, 2023, from <https://www.scribbr.com/Methodology>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). 'The Hidden U.S. COVID-19 Pandemic: Orphaned Children — More than 140,000 U.S. Children Lost a Primary or Secondary Caregiver Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.' CDC Newsroom. 7 October. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p1007-covid-19-orphaned-children.html>
5. Chamie J. Increasingly indispensable grandparents. Sept 4, 2018. <https://archive-yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/increasingly-indispensable-grandparents>
6. Chu D.T, Thi H.V, Al- Tawfiq J.A, Memish Z.A. (2022). Children orphaned by Covid-19: A grim picture and the need of urgent actions. *Travel Med Infect Dis.* 2022 Nov-Dec; 50:102446. Doi:10.1016/j.tmaid.2022.102446.Epub2022 Sep 3. PMID: 36064076; PMCID: PMC9439863????
7. Dalton, L., Rapa, E., & Stein, A. (2020). Protecting the psychological health of children through effective communication about COVID-19. *The Lancet – Child & Adolescent Health*, 4, 346–347.

8. Guo J, Feng XL, Wang XH, van IJzendoorn MH. Coping with COVID-19: Exposure to COVID-19 and Negative Impact on Livelihood Predict Elevated Mental Health Problems in Chinese Adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2020; 17(11):3857. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17113857>
9. Goldman P.S, Bakermans-Kranenburg M.J, Bradford B. Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children 2: policy and practice recommendations for global, national, and local actors. *Lancet Child Adolesc Health*; 2020; **4**: 606–33.
10. Hillis SD, Unwin HJT, Chen Y, Cluver L, Sherr L, Goldman PS, Ratmann O, Donnelly CA, Bhatt S, Villaveces A, Butchart A, Bachman G, Rawlings L, Green P, Nelson CA 3rd, Flaxman S. Global minimum estimates of children affected by COVID-19-associated orphanhood and deaths of caregivers: a modelling study. *Lancet*. 2021 Jul 31;398(10298):391-402. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01253-8. Epub 2021 Jul 21. PMID: 34298000; PMCID: PMC8293949.
11. Kabir, S.M.S. (2016). *Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines*. Book Zone Publication, ISBN: 978-984-33-9565-8, Chittagong-4203, Bangladesh.
12. Kentor RA, Kaplow JB. Supporting children and adolescents following parental bereavement: guidance for health-care professionals. *Lancet Child Adolesc Health*. 2020 Dec;4(12):889-898. doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30184-X. PMID: 33217358.
13. Kramer, S. (2021) U.S. Has World's Highest Rate of Children Living in Single-Parent Households. Pew Research Center.
14. Kramer S. US has world's highest rate of children living in single- parent households. Dec 12, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/12/u-s-children-more-likely-than-children-in-other-countries-to-live-with-just-one-parent>.
15. Macupe, B. (2021). SA's has highest number of Covid-19 orphans of Africa. City Press
16. May, J., Witten, C. & Lake, L. (Eds.). 2020. *South African Child Gauge 2020*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town
17. Maya, P., & Sandhiya, R. (2021). Issues confronted by orphans and orphanages on Covid-19 during pandemic, worldwide: The reality. *Psychology*, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology.
18. McCombes, S (2020). *Descriptive Research*. Scribbr
19. Mohan, B.S., & Nambiar, V. (2020) Covid-19: An insight into SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Originated at Wuhan City in Hubei Province of China. *J Infect Dis Epidemiol* 6: 146. doi.org/10.23937/2474-3658/1510146
20. Muhammad, I. (2015) The art of data analysis: *Journal of Allied Health sciences Pakistan*. 1. 98-104.
21. Pew Research Center. Religion and living arrangements around the world. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2019
22. Phillips SP, Carver L. (2015) Early parental loss and self-rated health of older women and men: a population-based, multi-country study. *PLoS One*; **10**: e0120762.
23. Roelen, K. (2020), Coronavirus and poverty: we can't fight one without tackling the other – Poverty Unpacked, <https://poverty-unpacked.org/2020/03/23/coronavirus-and-poverty-we-cant-fight-one-without-tackling-the-other/>
24. Sadruddin A.F.A, Ponguta L.A, Zonderman A.L, Wiley K.S, Grimshaw A, Panter-Brick C. How do grandparents influence child health and development? A systematic review. *Soc Sci Med*. 2019 Oct;239:112476. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112476. Epub 2019 Aug 7. PMID: 31539783.
25. UNICEF (2020). Geneva Palais briefing note on the impact of COVID-19 on children.
26. World Health Organization. (2016). *INSPIRE: seven strategies for ending violence against children*. World Health Organization.
27. Walliman, N. (2017) *Research Methods: The Basics*. Routledge, London.