

Policy Brief: Long-term stigma, anxiety, and depression in HIV/AIDS-orphaned children

Citation: Boyes, M. E. & Cluver, L. D. (2013) Relationships amongst HIV/AIDS-orphanhood, stigma, and symptoms of anxiety and depression in South African youth: A longitudinal investigation using a path analysis framework. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 1 (3), 323-330.

HIV/AIDS-orphaned children are at increased risk of mental health problems, and HIV/AIDS-related stigma is an important risk factor. However, how HIV/AIDS-orphanhood, stigma, and mental health are related over a longer time period remains unclear. This research is a collaboration between South African government, the National Action Committee for Children Affected by AIDS (NACCA), Oxford University, and Cape Town Child Welfare.

The Questions:

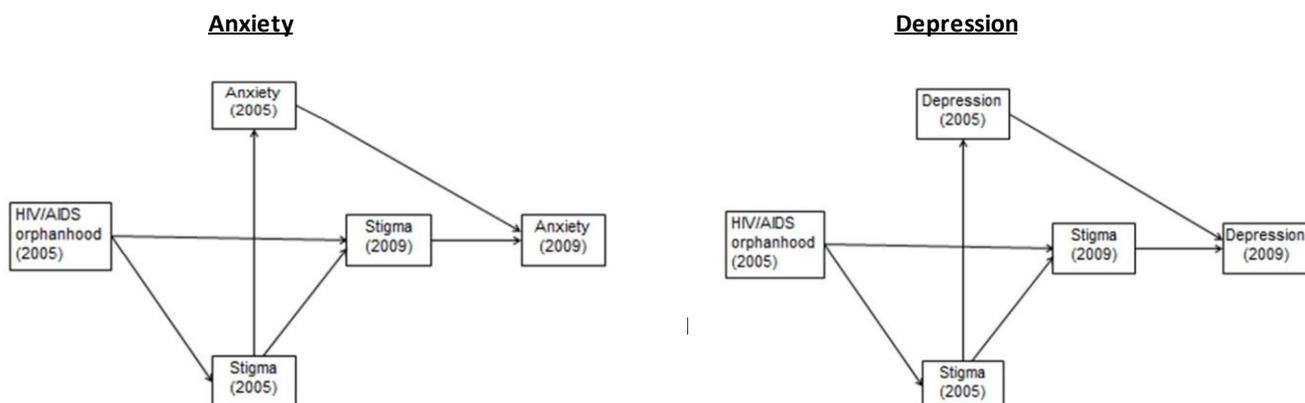
- Is HIV/AIDS orphanhood associated with long-term poor mental health outcomes?
- Is there a link between HIV/AIDS orphanhood and long-term stigma?
- Is stigma a key driving factor in the negative effects of HIV/AIDS orphanhood on mental health?

The Research:

- 1025 youth (540 male and 485 female) from poor communities around Cape Town were interviewed and followed up four years later (71% retention).
- Validated measures of stigma, anxiety and depression were used.
- Longitudinal path analysis modelling techniques were used to identify long-term linkages.

Findings

- 1) Being HIV/AIDS-orphaned is associated with anxiety and depression at both initial measurements and four years later
- 2) HIV/AIDS-orphaned children experienced higher rates of stigma than other children at both initial measurements and four years later
- 3) There were no direct relationships between HIV/AIDS-orphanhood and anxiety or depression.
- 4) Instead, HIV/AIDS-orphaned children experienced more stigma and this was associated with more anxiety and depression at both time points.



Conclusions:

- There is a clear link between HIV/AIDS-orphanhood and long-term mental health outcomes
- However, this link operates indirectly through persistent stigma (as well as other factors)
- It is crucial that attempts be made to address the psychological problems of HIV/AIDS-orphaned youth
- Interventions aiming to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma may help promote the mental health of HIV/AIDS-orphaned children in South Africa

This research was generously funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and the Nuffield Foundation.