AUTHOR:
Jace Pillay

AFFILIATION:
South African Research Chair, Education and Care in Childhood, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, Soweto, South Africa

CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Jace Pillay

EMAIL:
jacep@uj.ac.za

POSTAL ADDRESS:
GNA 119, Robert Sobukwe Building, Soweto Campus University of Johannesburg

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EARLY EDUCATION OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN: A CRUCIAL ASPECT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

In the last decade there has been a significant escalation in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in various parts of the world, more particularly, in Sub- Saharan Africa. The author strongly asserts that early childhood education is the main vehicle to address the concerns of OVC in order for them to develop skills and human capital as future adults in order to improve the outcomes for governance and economic development in Africa. He argues on the basis of inclusion that a social justice framework is essential in taking the rights of OVC into consideration. Adopting a bio- ecological systems theoretical model the author presents research findings on the educational, psychological and social experiences of OVC to motivate the need for African governments to take on the responsibility of addressing the plight of OVC through early childhood development and education interventions if they are serious about economic sustainability and prosperity. Although the research discussed in this paper was conducted in South Africa the author believes that the findings could easily depict what happens in the rest of Africa. In concluding, the author considers the implications of the findings in relation to future policies and directions needed for crucial development in Africa.

Keywords: *Africa, bio-ecological systems, early childhood education, development, governance, human capital, inclusion, orphans, social justice, vulnerable children*

OPSOMMING

Gedurende die laaste dekade was daar 'n aansienlike verhoging in die aantal wees- en kwesbare kinders (WKK) regoor die wêreld maar veral in sub-Sahara Afrika. Die skrywer argumenteer sterk dat vroeë kinderopvoeding die hoofvoertuig is om die bekommernisse oor WKK aan te spreek deur die ontwikkeling van vaardighede en menslikekapitaal vir toekomstige volwassenes en daardeur die bestuurs- en ekonomiese ontwikkeling in Afrika te stimuleer. Hy agumenteer dat deur inklusiewe opvoeding 'n sosiaal-regverdige raamwerk belangrik is om die regte van WKK in ag te neem. Deur van 'n bio-ekologiesesisteemsteorie model gebruik te maak hou die skrywer navorsings voor wat gebaseer is op die opvoedkundige, sielkundige en sosiale ervaringe van WKK om die behoefte vir die aanvaarding van verantwoordelikheid om die lot WWK deur vroeë-kinderontwikkeling en opvoedkundige intervensies deur regerings in Afrika te motiveer indien hulle ernstig is oor ekonomiese volhoubaarheid en voorspoed. Alhoewel die navorsing wat in hierdie referaat bespreek word in Suid Afrika gedoen was glo die skrywer dat die bevindinge verteenwoordigend is van dit wat in die res van Afrika gebeur. Ter afsluiting, beskou die skrywer die implikasies ten opsigte van die bevindinge as deurslaggewend vir toekomstige beleids- en opvoedkundige-rigtinggewing vir noodsaaklike ontwikkelinge in Afrika.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to point out that the early education, inclusion and development of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are crucial for social justice and

good governance in Africa. The reality of the situation in Africa is that the numbers of OVC are growing at an alarming rate largely as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Ramsden, 2002; Masando, 2004; Pillay, 2012). In the context of this paper, an *orphan* refers to a child who has lost one (single orphan) or both parents (double orphan) "due to AIDS, other illnesses, violence or other causes of death" (Skinner & Davids, 2006:1). This may also include desertion, unwillingness and inability of parents to care for their children (Skinner, Tsheko, Mtero-Munyati, Segwabe, Chandiwana, Nkomo, Tlou & Chitiyo, 2004). The definition of what makes a child vulnerable is complex and focuses on three core areas of concern: *material problems*, including access to money, food, clothing, shelter, health care and education; *emotional problems*, including insufficient caring, love, support, space-to-grieve and containment-of- emotions; and *social problems*, including a lack of supportive peer groups, role models to follow or guidance in difficult situations, and risk-factors in the immediate environment (Skinner & Davis, 2006: 2). There are multiple vulnerabilities that children can be exposed to from their early years, including HIV/AIDS and other illnesses; disability; poverty; limited access to services; physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect; and violence and substance-abuse within communities (Skinner & Davids, 2006; Desmond, Richter, Makiwane & Amoateng, 2003).

OVC are at greater risk of dropping out of school, and this poses an immediate and long-term economic and social threat to the development of African countries. Hence, focussing on their early development is crucial since research shows that the development of children into adults largely depends on the education and care that they are exposed to during their childhood years. This sets the foundation for their success in later education, and thus their preparedness for the future workplace. Clearly, the social fabric of a society is influenced by the performance of its young. The author contends that it is essential to integrate knowledge about education and care for OVC in their early years of school so as to promote their optimal development. The argument presented is that if the psychological, educational and social experiences of OVC are not researched and supported through strategic interventions in the early years of school then there is a strong possibility of a further depletion of human resources and scarce skills. This contention is supported by the Global Campaign for Education, which identifies "early childhood care and education - especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged as the first goal agreed on by 164 governments in Dakar in 2000. Pursuit of this goal will help individuals escape from poverty and fulfil their potential, to help combat inequality within and between communities and nations" (Munoz, 2012:4); this should be one of the strategic priorities of African governments. This line of reasoning is further supported by research which has demonstrated that early childhood is the period during which quality, care and education programmes can do the most to break the cycle of inequity that has dominated the lives of millions of children and families. However, this is ironic considering that many African governments still do not prioritise, or often even include, early childhood in their education strategies or other national plans. As such, this paper addresses the following concerns: the need for African governments to invest in early childhood development and education; theoretical perspectives pertinent for conceptualising education outcomes for development and equality, the educational, psychological and social experiences of OVC, and crucial aspects of governance needed in Africa to improve equality outcomes for OVC.

2. THE NEED FOR AFRICAN INVESTMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

According to Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (Department of Education, 2001:1) early childhood development "refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers". The aim is to provide equal opportunities for all children to develop to their full capacity in the following areas: physical, cognitive/mental, emotional, social, spiritual and moral. Child development research has shown that most

accelerated brain development occurs before a child turns three years old. In this period children, "develop their abilities to think and speak, learn and reason and lay the foundation for their values and social behaviour as adults" (Department of Education, 2001:1). Over the last five decades there has been general consensus amongst all people studying child development that prenatal growth and early childhood experiences set the foundation for long-term health and development of children into adulthood (Huston, 2011). In fact Shonkoff (2010:357) points out that "interactions among genetic predispositions and early experiences affect the extent to which the foundations of learning, behaviour, and both physical and mental health will be strong or weak".

A proliferation of research publications have indicated a significant correlation between poverty and its negative impact on early childhood development (Lee, Burkham, Honigman, Ready & Meisels, 2006; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Crosby, Dowsett, Gennetian & Huston, 2010; Duncan, Ziol-Guest & Kalil, 2010). This negative impact is clearly visible in the lower educational achievements, health problems, and low positive social behaviour of children from lower income families (Halle, Forry, Hair, Perper, Wandner, Wessel & Vick, 2009). The Department of Education (2001:12) stated that "children raised in poor families are most at risk of infant death, low birth- weight, stunted growth, poor adjustment to school, increased repetition and school dropout". Furthermore, South African CHILD GAUGE (2012) noted that children have a greater chance of not being enrolled at schools if they come from homes with limited economic resources, their parents have low education levels, and if they are single or double orphans. Research has indicated that the cognitive development of more than 200 million children in developing countries under the age of five have been negatively affected by poverty, poor health and under-nutrition (Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter, Strupp & the International Child Development Steering Group, 2007). In developing countries nearly one billion children are deprived of one or more of the following: "drinking water, sanitation, nutrition, health, shelter, education, or information" (Delamonica & Minujin, 2007:362). Studies have pointed out those children from low income families are more exposed to hazardous social and physical environments (Benveniste, Carnoy, Rothstein, 2003; Borstein & Bradley, 2003; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Evans & English, 2002). As such, they are "exposed to more turmoil, violence, separation from their families, instability, and chaotic households" (Evans, 2004:77).

The situation in South Africa alone is alarming since research has indicated that one fifth of children are single orphans, two thirds of them live below R575 per month, over a third have at least one unemployed adult in the family and over two million children live in poor housing (Meintjies, Hall, Marera & Boulle, 2010). Taking all of the above into consideration it is not surprising that the average Grade three learners scored 35% in literacy and 28% in numeracy in the annual national assessments (Department of Education, 2012).

The problem with poor quality early childhood education and care is that it sets the foundation for what happens in the child's adult life as well. In their review of several studies Holzer, Schanzenbach, Duncan and Ludwig (2007) found that poor children in comparison to non-poor children experienced difficulties in school, and as adults were less successful in the labour market, had more health problems, were more prone to committing crime, and displayed more socially unacceptable behaviour. Other studies found that early environmental deprivation had a negative impact on adult cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron & Shonkoff, 2006), as well as adult physical and mental health (Barker, Eriksson, Forsen & Osmond, 2002; Danese, Pariante, Caspi, Taylor & Poulton, 2007). In their study Duncan, Ziol-Guest and Kalil (2010) found that early economic deprivation of children negatively affected their earnings and work hours as adults.

The discussions thus far explicitly indicate that early childhood education is critical to the positive development of children. This is further supported by research on early childhood education programmes which poignantly claim successes in child development. For example, Karoly, Kilburn and Cannon (2006) found improvements in school achievement and social

behaviour as a result of the Perry Preschool Project and the North Carolina Abecedarian Program which they claim continued right into adulthood. The Early Head Start programme in the USA noted an increase in the language and literacy skills of especially three year-olds (Love, Kisker, Ross, Raikes, Constantine & Boller, 2005). Similarly the Sure Start community–based programme in the UK identified more positive social behaviour and independence in three year-olds whilst their parents displayed more positive parenting styles and provided more stimulating home environments (Melhuish, Belsky, Leyland & Barnes *et al.*, 2008).

Based on the above discussions the author believes that there are compelling arguments for governments, especially in developing countries, to invest in early childhood development. The first argument relates to the commitment to advance children rights (Pillay, 2014a). Most countries have endorsed the Convention on Children's Rights and most African States ventured further by signing the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children. This in itself promotes the need for early childhood interventions, especially for orphans and vulnerable children. Secondly, research cogently points out that the first seven years of a child is characterised by accelerated physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral development. For instance, by two and half years 50% of the child's brain reaches its adult weight and by age five this reaches 90% (Department of Education, 2001). Inevitably this would imply that if the conditions under which children are raised and nurtured are not addressed while they are still young then there is the risk of irreversible brain damage and stunted physical growth. In South Africa alone this would be the case for 40% of its children (Department of Education, 2001). Thirdly, there are strong economic arguments. For example, children becoming more productive and better earners as adults leading to increased living standards; lesser funds needed for learning support and rehabilitation services; and better economic opportunities for women. One would expect that these in turn would lead to stronger social and economic growth of local communities and nation's at large (Department of Education, 2001). Fourthly, early childhood intervention is likely to reduce social and economic disparities as well as race and gender inequalities that persist in society, thus assisting in breaking the "inter-generational cycles of poverty, disease, violence and discrimination" that exists in society (Department of Education, 2001:4). Fifthly, a country is only good as its people so for it to compete in the global economy it has to invest in human development which starts from birth. Last but not least, democratic societies do well by transmitting espoused values to it citizens from their early years of development. The above arguments provide a strong motivation for why African governments should invest in early childhood development and education.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES RELEVANT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

According to the Department of National Education (2001) the main tenets of inclusion are the following: all children are capable of learning and need support, education structures and systems should serve the needs of all learners, there should be a respect for differences in learners based on age, gender, language, culture, disability, HIV and other diseases, and both formal and informal learning should be acknowledged. One may argue that all these tenets are crucial for the education and development of orphans and vulnerable children so socio-economic status should be added to the list mentioned above. Furthermore, the policy of inclusion should consider children holistically (Engelbrecht, 2004, Du Toit & Forlin, 2009; Daniels, 2010). As such Bronfenbrenner's (1986) bio-ecological systems model is an appropriate theoretical framework to consider for the development and equality of OVC. As such, children should be viewed as individuals functioning in various systems, such as, the family, school and community. All these systems are both influenced and influence each other. For example, poverty experienced by OVC at the personal or individual level is most likely to affect their family lives, school performance and community interaction. Together with the policy of inclusion and bio-ecological systems model the context of OVC should be considered within a social justice theoretical framework. This framework endorses children's

rights and strongly augments fair and equal opportunities for all children to reach their full potential in life. A social justice framework implicitly demands a paradigm shift from a needs-based approach to a rights-based one as far as children are concerned. Adopting a bio-ecological systems model the author discusses below research findings related to the multi-level experiences of OVC.

4. PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF OVC

The author believes that it is essential to explore the psycho-educational and social experiences of OVC in order to secure best outcomes for equality and improved living standards for them. Hence, he presents research findings on OVC he has conducted in the last six years which he integrates with the findings of other researchers. Aligned to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory the author presents the findings at the multiple systems level. The contention is that no level can be viewed in isolation since they all contribute to the holistic experiences of OVC.

4.1 Personal level

This level is characterised by the psychological experiences and changing roles of OVC.

4.2 Psychological experiences

Pillay (2011) found that OVC experience strong feelings of sadness and anger because of their disadvantaged environmental conditions. Not having parental or adult guidance often leaves them feeling helplessness and hopelessness, especially when they did not receive any psychological support to help them cope with the death of parents or caregivers (Sloth-Nielsen, 2003; Pillay, 2011). Since the death of parents and caregivers are mainly due to HIV/AIDS orphans had to commonly deal with stigmatization (Beddy, 2011), victimisation and intimidation. Anxiety, depression and stress appear to be common amongst OVC (Donald & Clacherty, 2005; Maqoko & Dreyer, 2007). Furthermore several researchers have noted low self-esteem in OVC (Desmond, Richter, Makiwane & Amoateng, 2003; Iwanisec, 1996; Le Roux, 1994; Louw, 1998). Studies have also found OVC to experience difficulty with social relationships and behaviour (Cluver, & Gardner, 2007).

4.3 Changing roles

OVC are further psychologically affected by the changing roles that they are forced to take up due to the loss of their parents or adult caregivers (Pillay, 2011). Many of them are still in need of adult love and care but now they have to act as parents to younger siblings. The situation with regard to girls appears to be more psychologically distressing since patriarchal influences are strongly entrenched in African culture and traditions (Ejoyi & Ayo-Odongo, 2006; Ewelukwa, 2005; Kiguwa, 2008; Leatham, 2005; Visser & Moleko, 2012; Shefer, Stevens & Clowes, 2010).

4.4 Home/family level

Substantial studies have pointed out that OVC live in families that experience severe forms of poverty (Daniel, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005). The study by Pillay (2011) provided descriptive data on the living circumstances of OVC involved in his study. Most of them lived in houses that had broken windows, doors and roofs which threatened their safety from inclement weather and criminals. It was normal for them to sleep on the floor with a single blanket since furniture such as beds, tables and desks for doing their schoolwork were actually luxuries in their impoverished context. OVC mostly live in overcrowded homes that are very unhygienic due to the lack of proper sanitation and ablution facilities. Children often share communal toilets and this makes them vulnerable to child predators. Over-crowding is a common problem experienced in child-headed households.

Despite the negative effects of poverty noted in the preceding discussion it is important to point out that some studies do not automatically equate poverty with school failure (Au, 1993; Buckner, Mezzacappa & Beardslee, 2003; Luthar, 2003; Ungar, 2004).

4.5 School level

Pillay (2011) found that the main concerns that OVC expressed about their schools centred on their relationships with other learners and their teachers. The majority of the OVC pointed out that they were often mocked and picked on by other learners because of their poor socio-economic circumstances. For example, they could only wash their school uniform during the weekend since they only possessed one set. Often they went to school without bathing since it was a tedious and time-consuming task in the morning to boil water on a fire because they do not have electricity. As such, many of them have a bad odour which results in them being mocked and isolated by children who came from better socio-economic environments (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006).

OVC noted that some teachers did not have an understanding of the socio-economic conditions in which they lived (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006, Taggart, 2007; Taggart & Pillay, 2011). Often teachers expect of them to complete homework when they do not have space and desks to do their homework. Some of them cannot do their homework when it gets dark because they do not have electricity or money to purchase candles. Some teachers do not take cognisance of the plight of OVC and unfairly compare them to children who have better resources. This reaction from teachers often demotivates OVC from succeeding in school (Masitsa, 2008). However, it is imperative to note that many OVC also reported very positive experiences with some teachers, especially guidance and life orientation teachers (Pillay, 2011). These teachers went out of their way to be extremely kind and considerate to OVC, for example, they organised food hampers and school uniforms and arranged extra learning support classes for OVC who struggled with their schoolwork. Such positive attitudes of teachers are most likely to contribute to the cognitive, behavioural and emotional empowerment of OVC (Bennell, 2005; Lethale & Pillay, 2013).

4.6 *Academic Achievement*

As noted earlier in this paper, poverty has a negative impact on the mental and physical well-being of OVC (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2000) which is most likely to have deleterious effects on their academic performance (Nesengani, 2005). This was confirmed by Pillay and Nesengani (2006) who found that many OVC experienced difficulty with academic achievement due to poor concentration and their inability to complete school tasks. Many of them did not have sufficient time to complete their homework because of household chores and caring for younger siblings- a problem that was commonly reported by girls. Many OVC could not concentrate because they do not have sufficient food to eat on a daily basis (Mogotlane, Chauke, van Rensburg, Human & Kganakga, 2010). In fact some of them only went to school to receive the meal that was provided at school. The academic achievement of OVC was also negatively affected by their absenteeism from school. Often this was due to them not completing their schoolwork or them resorting to begging on the streets so that there was food for the day for the family (Pillay, 2012).

4.7 Community level

Whilst some OVC reported that they received support from their local communities in terms of food and clothes, an overwhelming majority portrayed a very negative image of their respective communities (Pillay, 2012). This was largely due to concerns about safety, violence and crime. Many girls reported that they were sexually violated by men in their communities (Phasha, 2008). Some girls had to offer men sexual favours for so-called protection from other men. Violence and crime in the community were common social problems mostly due to poverty and substance abuse (Govender & Killian, 2001). Often OVC were the easiest targets because they had no adult protection.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In South Africa alone it is estimated that 10 million children fall within the birth to nine years' range (Department of Education, 2001). The problem with this figure is that 40% of families in the country live in gross poverty with rural families being the worst affected. The literature reviewed earlier in this paper bear testimony to the fact that children raised in poor families are "at risk of infant death, low birth weight, stunted growth, poor adjustment to school, increased repetition and school dropout" (Department of Education, 2001:12). Over the years many studies (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) on child development have correlated poverty with low cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social and moral development in children. Some have also highlighted psychological difficulties in children as a result of impoverished environments (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). More disconcerting is the evidence provided by several researchers that most of the problems children face in their early lives affect them in adolescence and later in adult life (Duncan, Ziol-Guest & Kalil, 2010). For example, it has been noted that children raised in poor families themselves become poor in adulthood. Many girls raised in poor families also end up having underweight and unhealthy babies. So the vicious cycle of poverty is perpetuated across generations.

Taking the above into consideration the author contends that it makes sense for government to invest in the early development of children. Several research findings have provided substantial evidence to indicate the benefits of early childhood intervention programmes (Winsler, Tran, Hartman, Madigan, Manfra, & Bleiker, 2008). The Head Start Program in the US and the Sure Start Program in the UK have been deliberate attempts by the respective governments of these developed countries to give children a better start for a successful life by providing equal opportunities for all children (Currie & Thomas, 2000; Gilliam & Zigler, 2004). This is all the more reason why governments of developing countries should rise to the occasion and follow suit. Poverty is highly prevalent in developing countries so the problems experienced by children in their early years of life are expected to be more intensive and extensive. Thus far in this discussion much has been said about the importance of early childhood development for all children in general. However, now the author argues that OVC are in a worse situation by virtue of them not having parents or adult caregivers, living in extreme poverty, and being exposed to various forms of vulnerabilities, exploitation, victimisation and intimidation. The studies conducted by the author- together with the findings of other researchers - provide a vivid description of the psychological, educational, social and economic challenges OVC confront on a daily basis. Adopting a bio-ecological systems theoretical perspective the author explored the experiences of OVC from multiple levels, namely, personal, family, school and community. This provided a holistic picture of OVC revealing their sadness, anger, depression and anxiety emanating from their poor socio-economic circumstances which cut across the four levels mentioned. Their psychological difficulties coupled with their family problems contributed to their academic difficulties at school. Also community concerns, such as violence, crime, and substance abuse had a direct negative impact on personal and family safety and security of OVC. Hence, none of the four levels mentioned are mutually exclusive- they all influence and are influenced by each other.

Furthermore, the author argues that the early childhood development of OVC must be contemplated from an inclusive philosophy that promotes a social justice framework that endorses their rights as children. A social justice framework does not only focus on the needs of children but more so on their rights to have such needs met (Pillay, 2014b; Shriberg, Wynne, Briggs, Bartucci & Lombardo, 2011). In this regard the author believes that governments, and African ones in particular, have a crucial role to play. This leads to the last but not the least of the critical objectives posed in this paper, that is, the crucial aspects of governance needed in Africa to improve equality outcomes for OVC by addressing their psycho-educational and social problems through early education interventions.

Research has shown that an investment in early childhood development is actually an

investment in the economic future of a country (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Children who have equal opportunities early in life tend to be more productive and have better life satisfaction as adults. As such, African states should view an investment in early childhood development as a crucial aspect of governance. Since OVC comprise a significant percentage of the population in African countries it will be essential for African states to give particular attention to the plight of OVC – who in many instances may become the future leaders of such states.

The author postulates that the crucial aspects of governance in African states would depend on policy initiatives directed at improving the early lives of all children. A study by Schutz, Urspung and Woessmann (2005) found that education policies that promote comprehensive school systems and early-childhood education increases the equality of educational opportunity for children from diverse backgrounds. Several other authors have also indicated the importance of early-childhood education in providing equal educational opportunities for children (Garces, Duncan, & Janet, 2002; Magnuson, Christopher, Waldfogel, 2004; Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield & Nores, 2005). Hence, the author supports the view that education policies in African countries should comprehensively support early-childhood education. Inevitably this would increase the possibility of providing equal educational opportunities for OVC.

South Africa is one example in sub-Saharan Africa that has taken the lead in developing policies on improving early childhood development even though some may argue that it has good policies but fall short in terms of implementation. For example, the democratic South African government has introduced policies that established a national system of reception year provision for five year olds, established funding proposals to make this a reality in poor and rural communities, and introduced inter- sectoral programmes for children from birth to four years (Department of Education, 2001). This is evident in the no fees school admission policies for poor families and communities. This is further supplemented by policies that make it possible for free health services for pregnant mothers and their children living in poor circumstances. The author contends that it will be good if other African states could also have such policies for OVC. However, there are particular aspects that the author would like to single out for further policy development based on his findings. These include, but are not limited to, the better management of social grants to ensure that OVC actually get the funds; the safety and security of OVC; access to counselling services at schools and local communities; aftercare support centres, school homework support programmes; learning support for OVC; better housing facilities for OVC; improved health services; better training and support for teachers working with OVC; and special policies to promote the well-being of orphaned and vulnerable girls who are the targets for sexual abuse and exploitation as revealed in this paper. However, addressing OVC concerns needs systemic intervention so policies directed at improving the lives of poor families should also be promulgated, such as, earning supplements directed at correcting wage inadequacies, tax policies that do not penalise the poor, and job creation policies (Huston, 2011). An integrated coordinated strategy that involves the different sectors of government together with relevant stakeholders in the community is needed for policies pertaining to OVC to be developed and successfully implemented.

6. CONCLUSION

The scope of this paper was limited to the early education interventions for OVC. However, this was deliberate on the part of the author who intended to shed light on the educational, psychological and social experiences of OVC with the main aim of expressing the need for deliberate government intervention to improve the early childhood development of OVC. Since there are almost a billion OVC children worldwide who fall within the early childhood range, most of them being in Africa, it is imperative for governments to take full responsibility for improving the quality of education in the early years of childhood. African governments,

in particular, should not only focus on what children need to grow and succeed in life but should actually see it has government's responsibility to fulfil the rights of children as an act of social justice. In the long term improving the quality of early childhood education and the inclusion of OVC in this endeavour is bound to be a strategic investment in future human capital, especially in developing countries.

7. NOTE

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