

ABSTRACT

The epidemic of HIV/AIDS in Gem, among other causes of death, has worsened the orphan problem. Reports from the Ministry of Health and the Education office, Gem sub-county, 40% of the students in the secondary schools are either partial or total orphans. Ugenya sub-county has about 32 % of the students orphaned while in Bondo sub-county; orphans make up 28% of the total student population yet these are neighboring sub-counties. Orphan hood is a cause of trauma that contributes to the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that may result from the experience or witnessing of traumatic events such as death of a loved one. Orphanhood has been associated with behavior problems and poor academic performance. The purpose of the study was to assess Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms among orphan students in Gem Sub-county. The objectives of the study were to find out the prevalence of PTSD symptoms among orphan students in secondary schools in Gem sub-county, determine gender differences in PTSD symptomatology among orphaned students in Gem sub-county, establish the relationship between personality traits and PTSD symptoms among students who are orphaned in Gem sub-district and examine the role of social support from school in alleviating PTSD symptomatology among orphaned students in Gem sub-county. The study was based on the Dual Representation Theory by Brewin, Dalgeish and Joseph that proposes two types of memory developed by trauma victims and the phenomenology of PTSD. Descriptive survey design which involved qualitative and quantitative strategies to collect data was used in the study. The target population consisted of 52 Deputy Head Teachers and 4568 orphans. Simple random sampling was used to identify a sample of 354 orphans using the Krejcie and Morgan formula. Pilot study was carried out among 118 orphans from 3 schools in Gem sub-county. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the instruments was .7 for the IES-R .8 for the Big Five Personality Test and .7 for the interview schedule. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. From the study, it was found that there was high prevalence of PTSD symptoms among orphaned students (over 50% had PTSD symptoms) with intrusion symptomatology scoring highest in Gem sub-county. Females had higher prevalence of PTSD symptomatology than males. Neuroticism was a dominant personality trait among the orphaned students and social support was perceived to be important in alleviating PTSD symptoms although most schools did not have social support systems. It is recommended that to reduce the prevalence of PTSD symptoms among orphans, counseling and child psychology be taught to all teachers.