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The need for early childhood interventions for orphans and vulnerable children: An African perspective

In the last decade, there has been a significant escalation in the number of orphans and vulnerable children in various parts of the world, more particularly, in Sub-Saharan Africa. The author strongly asserts that early childhood interventions, particularly in the fields of health and education, are essential to address the plight of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in order for them to develop skills and human capital as future adults in order to break the cycle of poverty. Adopting the bio-ecological systems and social justice theoretical models, the author presents his current research findings on the educational, psychological and social experiences of OVC in South Africa. He argues that African governments should take on the responsibility of addressing the plight of OVC through early childhood interventions if they are serious about economic sustainability and prosperity. However, government cannot do this on its own so the joint collaboration of local communities and stakeholders will be necessary from an African perspective. Based on the findings of the study, the author challenges the rigorous application of the medical model and several western theories to children within the African context. In conclusion, several recommendations are made for the enhancement of the physical and mental health as well as the education and care of OVC during their early childhood years. Although the research discussed in this paper was conducted in South Africa, the author believes that the findings could easily depict what happens worldwide since OVC are prevalent even in the wealthiest of countries.

Biography

Jace Pillay completed his PhD in 1996 at the Rand Afrikaans University in South Africa. He is the South African Research Chair in Education and Care in Childhood. He has published more than 25 papers in reputed journals and has been serving as an Editorial Board Member of two highly reputable international journals. His research has been presented in numerous international conferences.

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