

## **“No one has been seen standing in front of these taverns looking at these kids’ IDs”: The social and environmental challenges faced by psychosocial support interventions for adolescent orphans**

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The psychosocial support programmes that are intended to enhance the psychological and emotional functioning of vulnerable adolescents in low-income communities are at risk of achieving less positive impact due to social and environmental risk factors such as high prevalence of local taverns, peer group pressure and wrong role models among others. Research shows that, good health and overall wellbeing are often achieved through the influences of both downstream factors (interventions) and upstream factors (social and environmental resources). The current study explored the challenges faced by psychosocial support interventions offered to adolescent orphans to achieve psychological and emotional wellbeing as well as positive caregiving relationships with primary caregivers. The exploration was based on the narratives of stakeholders who provide the mentioned services. The study used qualitative method with a narrative inquiry approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 6 stakeholders who were purposefully selected. Findings reveal that due to scarcity of sports and recreational centres for youth, some orphans often opted to spend leisure time at taverns during weekends and school holidays. This usually occurred when caregivers were at work. It was further explained that the choice to drink alcohol was also influenced by peer pressure and the multiple taverns surrounding these orphans. Although it is illegal to sell alcohol to under 18-year-olds in South Africa, in most cases, township taverns do cater younger adolescents -as reported by stakeholders. Even though interventions’ efforts to keep orphans on positive developmental paths were mostly commendable, boredom and local taverns remained high threats to the developmental outcomes of these vulnerable adolescents. Existing interventions need to be strengthened and increased in size and numbers. Furthermore, the government should prioritise training tavern owners on adequate management of these structures as well as on the detrimental outcomes caused by serving alcohol to underage adolescents who needs protection instead.

**Keywords:** Psychosocial support interventions, Adolescent orphans, Taverns, Stakeholders.

### **Biography**

Petunia Tsweleng is currently a fulltime doctoral student. She have a B.Ed. Educational Psychology honors degree and a psycho-socio masters' degree in Child and Family Studies. She is also a qualified Assessor and Moderator (registered with the HWSETA). She specializes in child, family and community development. She worked for three community-based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), in Cape Town, South Africa. Her work focused mainly on Child and Family Psychosocial Wellbeing, Adolescent Development and Community Health Wellness.

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