Reviewer's report

Title: Children's psychosocial outcomes in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty in South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 26 March 2014

Reviewer: Shahidul Islam

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

BMC Public Health reference styles have not been used in the articles (Both in the references and in the body of the article).

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract

Background: In abstract, background statement is not linked to the objective. It looks that the statement has been presented discretely. More particularly, authors should clarify the objective clearly in the statement. The rationality of the study should also be clarified here.

Conclusion: The conclusion in the abstract is not precisely drawn from the results and discussion sections.

Background

The background discussion could be more informative. The authors could do this by reviewing extensive relevant literature. As stated before, the justification of the research has not been well articulated. This section could report of what is being told in the article. Even it has not been said that what lacks for other studies. Some of the statements need references.

The authors failed to utilize appropriate conceptual and theoretical framework which could guide the research and specifically the research question precisely. Critical review of the literature could provide conceptual foundation for this research. The literature review is not theoretical. This paper should have a theoretical argument, constructing a space within which this article could emerge.

In the third paragraph, second line, it has been mentioned that 'this research stemmed from concern in the early 2000s about the number of children left orphaned by the HIV epidemic' but it has not been clarified what changes happened to the situations over the period and particularly, in present situation. A more complete comparison with the data from similar settings could help the readers to get an overall idea about the importance of the research.

The authors have used the first person 'we' in some sections (for example paragraph two) but they have not maintained the similarities throughout the
Methods

Methods, Sampling: It has not been clarified why some orphans and some non-orphans were selected and not others. It is not clear what sorts of processes/techniques were followed to communicate with the parents and guardians and, more particularly, how and what processes were taken for seeking the consents from them?

Data collection: Data collection processes have not also been explained elaborately.

Data analysis: Although the process of data analysis using SPSS has been discussed, some of these are generic.

Discussion

The authors introduce the theory for the first time in discussion section, for instance ‘social ecology of resilience’ (it would be good of the authors discussed all the important concepts or theories initially in the background section and then re-emerge in the discussion section in the context of empirical study) though the authors have not integrated the theory into other aspects of the study. Some of the discussions lack support of relevant literature.

The issues of stigma which might have contributed to the children’s psychosocial outcomes have rarely been discussed in the article.

Discretionary Revisions

Title

BMC Public Health journal guides to use study design in the title of the article. Therefore, authors could include study design in the title of the article.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interest