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Prevalent Forms of Child Abuse Among Pupils in Lower Primary Schools in Gatimu Zone in Nyandarua West Sub- County, Kenya

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Abstract

Child abuse is a social phenomenon which erodes the fundamental human rights of the child. Basing on the context of this study, child abuse is perceived as any act of omission or commission by individuals and any conditions resulting from such acts, which deprive children equal rights and liberties and or interrupt with their optimal development. Child abuse takes various forms and it is committed by parents, guardians, caretakers and so on. The world has assumed increasingly the character of a global village and the issue of child abuse has gained universal attentions with regards to its impacts on both education and holistic development of children. This study sought to investigate the prevalent forms of child abuse in Gatimu Zone in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya. To achieve this purpose, a sample of 42 respondents was randomly selected for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument used to collect data. Test re-test reliability of the instrument was established, while Parson Product moment correlation analysis was the statistical technique considered appropriate. The result of the analysis revealed that child abuse in forms of physical and emotional forms of abuse were the most prevalent even though some sexual abuse were noted among the pupils in lower primary schools.

Keywords: Prevalent forms of child abuse, child abuse, pupils in lower primary

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is referred to as any act or series of acts of child abuse or neglect performed by a parent or other caregiver that result in harm. (Umobong, 2010) It involves a practice whereby children are maltreated, battered or deprived of some basic needs in the home, street, religious house or at school by the elderly (Denga & Denga, 2007). Following the great concern of child abuse, many organizations emerged which protect children from various violence and condemned child abuse as unethical and immoral. This has been shown in the constitution across the world in each nation, whether developed or developing. Despite, this significant efforts and steps that were taken by these organizations, there are still high incidences of the problem of child abuse across the globe.

Throughout history, children were considered as property and parents had the unrestricted authority to do a child whatever they deemed necessary. In ancient Rome, the father had the authority to sell, kill, sacrifice or do anything to a child as he saw fit. Typically, the father exercised this authority if the child was born, deformed, weak, disabled or in any way different than what was considered normal (Alokan & Olatunji, 2014). In America, during industrialization, children were placed in apprenticeship workhouse, orphanages, placement mills, factories, farms and mines (Fang, Brown, Curtis & James, 2012). In England, five year old children who were supposed to attend schools worked for 16 hours a day in factories which shackled in chains. They often whip them to get them to work harder.

In Nigeria, there are still high incidences of the problem of child abuse. These are prevalent cases of violent physical abuse which sometimes lead to death of the child, child sexual abuse, child labour, child emotional abuse and child neglect (Sambo & Abubakar, 2016). The media reports show that children abound on streets hawking their wares when they should be in school laying solid foundation of their future (Sunday Newspaper Lagos Jul. 16th 2011 as quoted in Aliyu & Garba, 2012). However, some abused children that manage to be in school do not fully devote their time to their studies.

In Kenya, over 3 million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence each year. About two-thirds of abused children are being parented by battered women and of the abused children; they are three times more likely to have been abused by their fathers (GOK, 2001). Meanwhile, child abuse can occur in the form of physical assault, neglect, sexual abuse child abandonment, child battery and child neglect, little is known about the most prevalent forms of child abuse among children in lower primary schools in Nyandarua County It is against this ground that the researcher finds it viable to investigate the most prevalent forms of child abuse among lower primary pupils in Gatimu Zone in Nyandarua West Sub-county.

1.1 Statement of the Problems

The problem of child abuse has generated a lot of concern in the society since it has an adverse effect on the development and upbringing of the child particularly within primary school age. For instance, it affects the child's psychological wellbeing as well as his adjustments to his cultural and social environment. The nature of the home environment where the child grows influences the child's general up-bringing. Studies have illustrated that if the abuse is severe a child may run away repeatedly from his or her home, without seeking appropriate help from the authority. Unfortunately, many begin to express the anger they have felt for so long, not at home, but in delinquent behaviour in school. Many reports

suggest that child abuse is in the form of neglect, abandonment, maltreatment, deprivation, starvation which was meted out on the child by parents or guardians as corrective measure or disciplinary procedure to bring sanity has done more harm than good. Reports have also shown that abused children exhibit more aggressive behaviour; have poor self-concept and difficulty in developing meaningful relationships in the school environment. However, little studies have been done to investigate the forms of child abuse occurring among pupils in lower primary schools in Gatimu Zone Nyandarua West Sub-County, hence the focus of the study.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This main purpose of the study was to establish the most prevalent forms of child abuse among lower primary pupils in Nyandarua West Sub-county.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

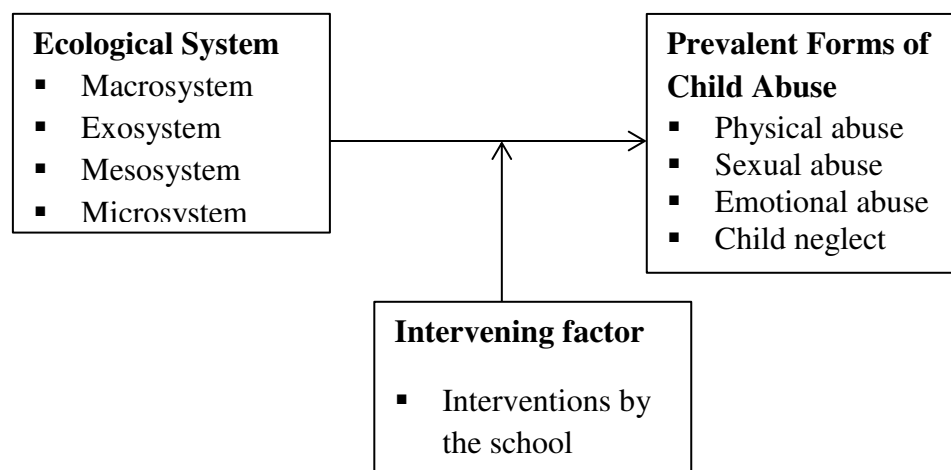


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

2.0 RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Prevalent Forms of Child Abuse

2.1.1 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult forcefully have sexual activity with someone against their wish. Herrenkohl (2005) disclosed that globally, at least one out of ten girls have been abused sexually at one stage of their life. This entails behaviours such as rape, incest, oral sex, touching a child's sexual organs, showing pornography to a child, child trafficking and all forms of sexual activities done by someone in higher authority or greater power than the child such as siblings, parents, teachers, and elder ones around, members of the family, maids, and gate keepers among others.

Globally it is estimated that child sexual abuse is 19.7% prevalent for females and 7.9% for males. It is also estimated that children are mostly abused by persons familiar to them with an approximately 30%

being relatives of the child, 60% being friends and only 10% of sexual offenders are estimated to be strangers (WHO, 2007).

Using a sample of 4,023 children in the United States of America, Snyder (2000) found out that 8.1 percent of the respondents have experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime, with 74 percent of the victims knowing their abusers well, while 32.5 percent of the victims were the abusers friends. Similarly, Ebigo (2003) disclosed that children who are abused sexually have high risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, unwarranted pregnancies and abortion related problems.

2.1.2 Emotional or Psychological Abuse

This type of child abuse occurs when a child's emotions, social life and intellect is being tampered with (Denga & Denga, 2007; Falaye, 2013). Yelling at children and bullying are examples which may affect children's self-esteem and confidence. Children's emotions are affected if they witness fights at home or if they are from broken homes. Emotional abuse also occurs in the school, by seniors or bullies, teachers and adults. When the basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, health) of a child are not met, such a child is being neglected. Neglect is a form of abuse which usually happens when a care-giver ignores the child and does not care about the existence and well-being of the child. Hammer (2001) postulated the psychological theoretical model which concentrated on the personal and interpersonal attributes of the abused person and the abuser.

The following are signs exhibited by children who have been abused emotionally: unhappiness, fright and distress, aggressive behaviour, and acting anti-socially, or acting maturely than their age. They also tend to encounter difficulties with academic achievement and school attendance, find it difficult to make friends, show signs of physical neglect and malnourishment and experience incontinence and mysterious pains (Muema, 2012)

2.1.3 Physical Abuse

This is when a child is aggressively abused by an older person. Most countries with laws on child abuse consider it as when injuries are deliberately inflicted on children or when the activities of adults put children at glaring risk of injury or loss of life. Such activities by adults which could make the child have burns, lacerations, illegal bruises, scratches, broken bones, rough treatment and repeated mishaps that could cause physical injury can be regarded as physical abuse (Theoklitou, Kabitsis & Kabitsi, 2012). Both boys and girls are abused; it differs from one culture to another and from one stage of child's development to another. What is seen as child abuse in developed countries could be seen as normal or a way of discipline (Pareda, Guilera, Forms & Gomez-Benito, 2009).

The ways of dealing with a youth may be a form of abuse when done to a young child. Similarly, Isangedighi (2000) pointed out that physical child abuse, which is a global phenomenon, is when physical injury is being inflicted on a child or when a physical force is used on a child which causes the child harm. It include acts like beating, biting, throwing, hitting, shaking, pinching, punching, kicking, poisoning, burning, slapping or strangling which may or may not leave physical marks. Physical abuse could be accidental or not and might result from punishment.

2.1.4 Child Neglect

According to Calam and Franch (1987 as quoted in Theoklitou et al., 2012), children are regarded are said to be neglected if they are denied or are deprived of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, love, and other essential needs. A survey carried out in Egypt revealed an estimated that about one million young ones live on the streets of Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt (Falaye, 2013). In Rwanda, a study by Khatiri (2004, cited in Denga & Denga, 2007) revealed that 35% of children who live in the streets were less than ten years old. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2010, about 10 million children less than 15 years in Africa are formally employed, working long hours under hazardous conditions and being poorly paid. In Kenya, many neglected children are victims of separated parents or those born out of wedlock (Kenya News Agency, 2013).

From the reviewed literature, the number of studies of the prevalence of different forms of violence against children is high. Thus, it has now become possible to synthesize the findings of many different researches to arrive at more accurate estimates of prevalence to allow a more comprehensive comparison of different regions of the world, Nyandarua West sub-county being unexceptional. The current study sought to establish the most prevalent forms of child abuse in Nyandarua West sub-county's lower primary schools.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design using survey method since a sample was selected from the target population and the results were generalized.

3.2 Target Population and Sample

The target population for this study was 42 public primary schools in Nyandarua west sub-county. This study used purposive sampling technique, where out of the three zones in Nyandarua west sub-county, only the Gatimu zone was selected. Gatimu zone has 14 schools and all of them were included in the sample. Three lower primary teachers from each of the 14 schools were randomly selected to participate in the research interview.

3.3 Research Instruments

The researcher made use of questionnaires as the main tool for collecting primary data.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research Tools

The questionnaires were pretested in two public primary schools in the Weru zone which neighbors Gatimu zone to establish whether the respondents would understand the research items to give the desired results. Based on content validity, the researcher sought expert advice from the supervisor to ensure relevance of items on the instruments against the set objectives. Reliability of the instrument was established with Pearson product moment correlation analysis being the statistical technique.

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation

Data gathered using the questionnaires was coded, assigned labels according to variables and categories. Frequency tables and percentages were used to present the information. Cross tabulation of absenteeism and academic performance against specific form of child abuse was done to establish the relationship. Mean and standard deviations were used to discuss the findings. Inferences were made from specific data under each theme and conclusions were drawn from the findings.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to establish the main prevalent forms of child abuse in Gatimu zone, Nyandarua County. Respondents were asked to state whether there were any child in their schools who had suffered from child abuse as displayed in Figure 1

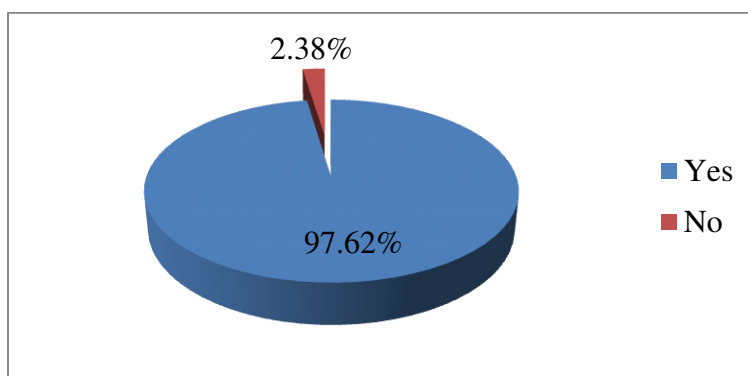


Figure 1 Cases of Child Abuse as Reported by Teachers

As it can be seen in Figure 1, majority (97.62%) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of children who had suffered abuse in their schools while only 2.38% said she did not have information of child abuse. The researcher further learned that the teacher who reported not to have experienced such cases was new in the school hence information on child abuse might have been news to her. Basically, the findings imply that cases of child abuse among primary schools in Gatimu zone were rife and well known by teachers.

Respondents were further asked to rate the prevalence of the following commonly cited forms of child abuse. Responses were placed in scale where: 1-most commonly, 2- commonly, and 3- rarely, 4-very rarely. Table 1 presents the findings.

Table 1: Rate of forms of child abuse

Form of child abuse	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Physical abuse	42	2.55	.633
Emotional abuse	42	2.00	.796

Sexual abuse	42	3.17	.794
Child neglect	42	1.50	.707
Average	42	2.305	0.7325

Physical abuse ($m=2.55$) was rated as rare, emotional abuse was rated as common ($m=2.0$), sexual abuse was rated as rare while child neglect was generally rated as very common ($m=1.5$). On average, child abuse was rated as common ($m=2.305$). The standard deviations was also low; on average ($SD=0.7325$), which shows that majority of the respondents had similar opinions.

Respondents were further asked to state the frequency to which specific forms of child abuse cases were being reported to relevant authorities. Their responses are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of Reported Child Abuse

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequency of reported sexual abuse	32	3.41	1.012
Frequency of reported physical abuse	32	3.06	1.045
Frequency of reported emotional abuse	32	3.06	1.134
Frequency of reported neglect abuse	33	2.58	1.251
Average	32	3.0275	1.1105

Generally, all forms of child abuse had few cases being reported to authorities ($mean=3.0275$). However, from the dispersion statistics ($ds=1.1105$), it can be explained that respondents expressed much varied opinions, an implication that some were not sure of what they were saying. It is clear that sexual abuse scored the highest mean in both cases of teachers and head teachers' feedback during the study. The study findings further showed that physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglects were common. The findings concur with Pereda et al. (2009) who noted that sexual abuse highest rate of prevalence is in Africa at 34.4%, Europe at 9.2% showing the lowest rate of prevalence and Asia shows a rate between 10.1% and 23.9%. Children who experience maltreatment often experience nervousness, hopelessness, violent behavior, and difficulties with affection. They also tend to develop behaviours that are regressive in nature.

The findings also agrees with International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010), which argues that about 10 million children less than 15 years in Africa are formally employed, working long hours under hazardous conditions and being poorly paid. Child labour exposes children to long hours of work, being poorly paid as well as being expected to work like adults while being emotionally tortured. In this study, child neglect, emotional abuse and physical abuse have been found to be major forms of child abuse in Gatimu zone.

A survey carried out by Falaye (2013) in Ethiopia found that an estimated 150,000 children live on streets and it is estimated that about one million young ones are estimated to be on the streets of Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt (Falaye, 2013). In Rwanda, the study revealed that 35% of women were less than ten years and were sexually lively with 63% of the males acknowledging to have enticed a girl to have sex with them and 93% of females reported to have been raped (Khatiri, 2004).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that emotional abuse and physical abuse were the main forms of child abuse and that such cases were fairly reported to relevant authorities. These children are exposed to physical, sexual and psychological types of child abuse because they belong to the defenseless and disadvantaged group of the society. The study concluded that child abuse consequently affects children's attention span in class; and that a child's active involvement in other activities at home rather than studies negatively affects his/her attitude to classwork. It would be a good thing if the effects of child abuse on children's classroom behaviour and later academic performance could receive attention in education policy forums.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the following recommendations have been made:

- The ministry of education should define different forms of child abuse and initiate punitive mechanisms to parents, caregivers, teachers and other people who perpetuate various forms of child abuse.
- Government should recognize child abuse as a social problem which has a negative effect on the economy, and the full wrath of the law should be meted out on those who violate these young ones through speedy hearings in the courts or special tribunals as justice delayed is justice denied.
- Counselors, in conjunction with parents, caregivers, government and entire society should adopt good parental care, love and concern for their children, and mention good societal values, morals and norms, which should be subject to change. The cry of school dropout, gangsterism, unemployment should be redress and jobs created for youth to enable the young ones achieved their goals focus and dreams of a better tomorrow.
- The researcher suggests further study to be conducted on the effectiveness of primary school management in fighting various forms of child abuse.

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