

CHILD ABUSE INFLUENCE ON LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPIL'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN A RURAL SETTING IN KENYA

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Abstract: *Child abuse is an act of inflicting serious, physical injury and emotional torture on a child or person, which is intentional or unintentional and could endanger the physical, health, emotional, social, moral and educational wellness of the child. Observing the alarming endless cry of children in lower primary schools and those hurt in the process and abuse, the researcher was therefore interested in investigating child abuse and its effects on the academic achievement of pupils in lower primary in Nyandarua County. 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 sexual was associated with pupil's academic performance. Based on the findings recommendations were made on the need for the school management and the class teachers to monitor the performance of abused children and take records to relevant authorities so that corrective mechanisms can be employed.*

Keywords - academic performance, child abuse, pupils in lower primary

Research Area: Psychology

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a practice in which children are maltreated, battered or deprived of some basic needs in the home, street, religious houses or at school by the elderly (Denga & Denga, 2007). Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2011) also defined child abuse as any act or series of acts of child abuse or neglect performed by a parent or other caregiver that result in harm. This has been recognized as a violation of the rights of the child through adoption of the convention of the Rights of the child by many countries in the world. The convention recognizes the significance of liberty, equality and nurturance as essential preservation of children's integrity as individuals. These have been reflected in the constitution across the world in each nation, whether developed or developing. Despite, all these, there are still high incidences of the problem of child abuse across the globe.

In Nigeria, Chalk, Gibbons and Scaupa (2002) observed that child abuse negatively influences the child physically, psychologically and in behaviour. Physical problems associated with child abuse at home leads to destruction of a child's developing brain and thus delay in cognitive development reflected in psychological manifestations. Psychological complex affects the abused child academically and ultimately low grades. This way, child

abuse could harm children physical, emotionally, sexually or could even lead to their death. Harmful traits and activities of children's teachers, parents, peers, guardians, siblings and the society in various forms could also lead to child abuse.

Some studies pointed to negative associations between child abuse and school performance (Shoenk & Crachetti, 2001; Slade & Wissow, 2007). Children who are exposed to maltreatment or abuse receive lower grades and get suspended from school and retained in grade more frequently. This is because they are not able to compete based on engagement in academic tasks and paying attention in classroom. 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 (Tony, 2002).

The possible pitfalls that might reduce the participation and academic performance of pupils in primary schools could be poverty. In pursuit to address this issue in Kenya, the government introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 2005 which aimed at attaining the Overall Education for All (EFA) goal by 2015. This would ensure that all Kenyan children eligible for primary schooling have the chances to enroll and remain in school, to learn and acquire quality basic education and skills training. Nevertheless, reports from Olkaleu District Hospital indicate that there has been a rise in number of rape cases among pre-school as well as students in upper primary (Nyandarua Home News Magazine, June 2015) in Nyandarua West Sub County.

The sexual abuse is cause of poor performance among children since they are traumatized. Parents in the region tend to concentrate much on economic activities at the expense of attending to children emotional and psychological needs and therefore, children are neglected. Emotional abuse is also prevalent in the area due to domestic violence among the parents. Despite, the many cases of child abuse in the area and the deteriorating academic performance, no study has been carried out in the area to address these issues. While a substantial amount of research claims that child abuse leads to academic failure, little studies on the same has been done in Nyandarua West Sub-County to ascertain the presumed phenomenon. It is on this ground that the researcher finds it viable to investigate the prevalence and influence of child abuse on lower primary pupils' academic achievement in Nyandarua West Sub-county.

Statement of the Problems

Success within the academic environment is important values instilled during childhood and children who are able to gain academic success within their school years are more likely to have an overall sense of well-being throughout childhood and into adulthood. It appears that there is a continuous decrease in children's interest in school activities resulting in frequent disobedience to school rules and regulations such as truancy, absenteeism and even school drop-out. Many studies have documented that negative health outcomes related to child abuse such as neglect, hunger and all forms of maltreatment (sexual, physical and emotional) including child labour are strong predictors of poor academic achievement. Children who are exposed to abuse are less attentive in school, have higher absenteeism, lower grades, and lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school than those who are not exposed to maltreatment. Emotional and behavioural problems as a result of persistent abuse lead to cognitive impairment and greater concentration difficulties. However, no similar research has been done to investigate the effect of child abuse on lower pupil's academic achievement in Nyandarua West Sub-County, hence the focus of the study.

Purpose of the Study

This main purpose of the study was to evaluate the effect of child abuse on lower pupil's academic achievement in Nyandarua West Sub-County, hence the focus of the study.

Objective of the Study

To establish the influence of child abuse on academic achievement of lower primary pupils in Nyandarua West Sub-county

Research Question

To what extent does child abuse influence lower primary pupils' academic achievement in Nyandarua West Sub-county?

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the ecological systems theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner 1986. The theory holds that the environment comprises of four layers of systems that interact in complex ways and which in return can affect or be affected by the person's development..

Microsystems of a child which is the immediate environment include the child's peers, family members, teachers, and even the larger community in which the child lives.

Mesosystem is made up of linkages between microsystems. It is the bi-directional influence between the different structures of the microsystem. A good example here is the parental expectations regarding a child's performance in school. Where the child does not meet the high parental expectations, tension and fear develop within the child leading to emotional abuse.

Exosystem represents a large social system and it encompasses events, contingencies, decisions, and even policies over which the developing person has no influence. Examples of these are local disasters, state regulations, and local economy.

Macro system is embedded in social, cultural, political, and economic and climate of the local community and that of the nation as a whole. It represents the society's expectations of an individual in terms of values, life style, opportunities, beliefs, customs, and even resources.

A child involved in abuse may disconnect himself from family but be involved with his peers and even love school. In yet a different family, a child involved in sexual abuse may disconnect himself from peers and even from his family. For there to be effectiveness in addressing child abuse, more so if it is as a result of a variety of factors, programs that address each factor and system need to be put in place. This study is anchored on this theory since a child can be abused physically, emotionally or sexually in his microsystem, mesosystem, Exosystem and macro system which in return can affect the academic achievement of the child.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is termed as a network or a plane of associated models that demonstrates a procedure of theorization for building associations based on grounded theory. The conceptual framework of this study is given as,

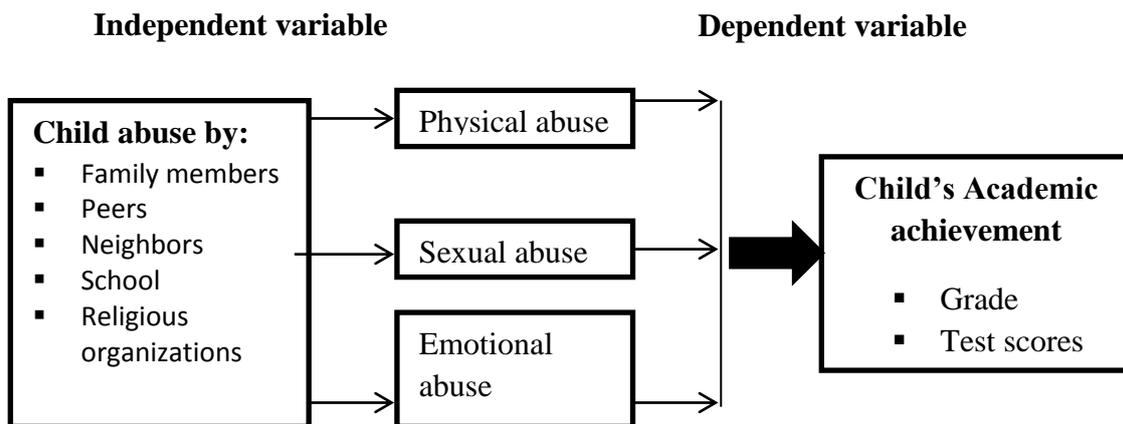


Fig: Conceptual Framework of the Study

2. RELATED LITERATURE

Learning is essential activity which every human being takes part in. for children to perform in class they must learn otherwise teaching will be an effort in futility. Shink and Cicchetti (2005, cited in Sambo & Isa, 2016) revealed that child abuse generally delays students' progress academically since there is always lack of trust in people because they have been disappointed and abused by those that should be sources of joy, trust, defense and security to them. Hence they believe nowhere is safe and nobody is to be trusted.

The United States Department of Education (2005) observed that abused children perform less than their mates academically in school because they feel distracted and withdrawn from other students, teachers and then from their studies. For instance, a sexually abused female student may have a great hatred for her male teachers and this consequently affects her learning process and personal relationship with teachers. This also happens to younger males who are abused by the opposite sex in school. In most cases, children's lives are greatly influenced by teachers and a poor relationship that may result from abuse may lead to low academic performance. Similarly, physically abused children encounter academic problems at home, school and among their mates.

In a study by Alokun and Olatuni (2014) on how child abuse affects primary and secondary school children in classroom and the academic performance in Nigeria, a sample of 200 teachers was used. The study found that child abuse and children's concentration in class is positively related. This means that abused children do not concentrate in class hence do not take their studies serious.

Slade and Wissow (2007) found that more intense childhood maltreatment is associated with greater probability of having low GPA ($P=0.001$) and problems completing homework assignment ($P=0.007$). In the same vein, students who are neglect by their parents tend to be independent, lack moral values, rude to teachers and develop behavioural disorders. As a result, these children may have low self-esteem, psychologically affected and might not be able to face challenges or solve high tasking work in school. They eventually tend to have lower grades and high rate of class repetitions than their mates who are not exposed to any abuse at home.

However, the discussion of the current state of research underscored that there continues to be a lack of understanding around certain thematic areas with respect to the forms of children maltreatment and their impacts on educational achievement. Carrying a study in Nyandarua would ensure reporting standards for relationship research between academic achievement and child abuse as many studies in the literature missed this information. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of child abuse on academic achievement of lower primary pupils in Nyandarua West Sub-county.

3. METHODOLOGY

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.

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 had 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.

Research Instruments

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

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.

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. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Effect of Child abuse on Academic Performance

The effect of abuse was demonstrated by cross tabulating between absenteeism against performance under a specified type of abuse. The findings were discussed using mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Absenteeism and Academic Performance against Physical Abuse

Form of abuse		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sexual Abuse	Absenteeism	40	3.02	1.143
	Performance	40	1.38	0.586
Physical Abuse	Absenteeism	40	2.575	.7808
	Performance	41	1.76	.624
Emotional Abuse	Absenteeism	41	2.51	.952
	Performance	42	1.36	.618
Neglect Abuse	Absenteeism	42	1.67	.816
	Performance	42	1.21	.520

It is important to note is that not all respondents answered all the parts of this particular question. Absenteeism due to sexual abuse was reported to be low ($m=3.02$), due to physical abuse was also reported to be somehow low ($m=2.575$) which was also similar to absenteeism due to emotional abuse. However, absenteeism due to neglect abuse was found to be high ($m=1.67$). In general, absenteeism due to child abuse was found to be high ($m=2.44375$). Low standard deviations ($SD=0.92295$) imply that majority of the respondents gave similar responses. On average, 40 respondents answered this particular question while 2 left it blank. From the findings, it can be depicted that academic performance was deemed to be generally poor for a child affected by sexual abuse, sexual abuse was attributed to fair performance ($m=1.76$). Both emotional abuse ($m=1.36$) and neglect ($m=1.21$) were also attributed to poor academic performance. In general, child abuse was associated with poor academic performance ($m=1.4275$). The low dispersion ($SD=0.587$) imply that majority of the respondents opined in congruent. The current findings concur with that of Gilbert. Wisdon, Browne, Webb and Janson (2009), in comparing their academic achievements; research indicates that abused children tend to have poor performance as compared to their counterparts who are not maltreated.

These research findings also in line with Muema (2012) who found that deaf student were more likely to be emotionally abused than their counterparts in other school due to their disability to hear and respond to issues accordingly. Inability to express their feelings through the word of mouth makes them to suffer in silence since they have no one to open up to. Consequently, their academic performance drops.

Respondents were further asked to state the extent to which child abuse had affected academic performance in their school as displayed in Figure 2.

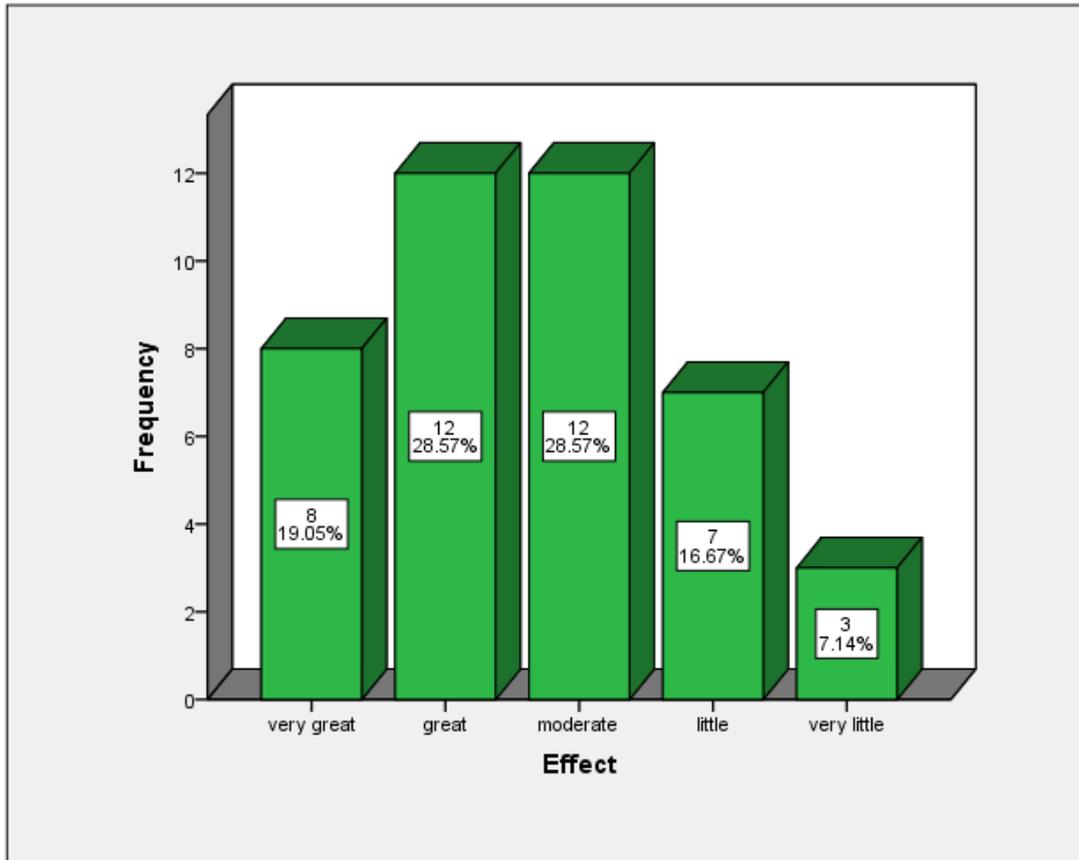


FIGURE 2: EFFECT OF CHILD ABUSE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Majority of the respondents admitted that child abuse had affected academic performance to great extent (28.57%) while the same proportion said it had moderate effect. Only 7.14% said child abuse had affected academic performance to a little extent. The findings of the current study harmonize with Gathenya (2012) who established that sexual abuse is the worst form of child abuse since its effects takes long to heal and the affected students' exhibits psychological and emotional problems. She further asserts that students in secondary schools are easy target due to the biological changes taking place in their body which makes them want to experiment new things. The perpetrators of sex abuse are individual known to the children who lure them into having sex and makes threats to kill them if their report the ordeal making students to suffer in silence. The suffering makes it hard for the students to concentrate in their studies resulting to poor academic performance. According to Gilbert et.al (2009), abusing and neglecting a child in early years of life can adversely affect the child's developmental capacities in especially important areas such as those of language and speech.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that child abuse greatly affected academic performance of affected pupils with neglected children performing the poorest. However, it is very difficult for the abusers to realize whether they abuse the children or not. Ignorance on the part of these abusers contributes a lot because many of the abuser does not know when the children are abused. The implication of these to the schools, families government, society are numerous and of great effect. There should be a good foundation laid for the child at home so that there could be proper transition from home to school.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The school management and the class teachers should monitor the performance of abused children and take records to relevant authorities so that corrective mechanisms can be employed to address the vice.
- Collaborations should be formed between the school management, the Ministry of Education, parents and other non-governmental organizations with the view of actualizing life skill training, public awareness and self-protection strategies of reducing cases of child abuse in Nyandarua County and the country as a whole.
- Voluntary organizations, women organizations, and social clubs are encouraged to join hands in the campaigns and crusade of total war against child abuse.

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