
**SEXUAL ABUSE AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UGANDA. A
CASE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WAKISO DISTRICT.**

1 Ssekikome Martin, 2 Kirwisa Matovu

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

ABSTRACT

This research report study aimed to investigate the “The impact of sexual abuse on the girl child education in secondary schools in Uganda; a case of Secondary Schools in Wakiso district”. Questionnaires were used to collect data under a case study research design. Qualitative and quantitative means were used to analyze the data. The objectives of the study used were; to assess the causes of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools, Wakiso District, to determine the effects of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools and to assess the relationship between child sexual abuse and academic performance in Secondary Schools. To achieve this objective, the study sampled 80 respondents because it is large enough compared to the study population in Secondary Schools that is teachers, health workers, chair persons, parents, plus students in particular were selected, the respondents were selected using random sampling method, it was important because it gave the researcher freedom to select certain respondents with in-depth knowledge regarding the issue under investigation. The findings indicated that there is a strong negative relationship between child abuse and academic performance at regression (r)= -0.702 and at level of significance 0.05, this implies that the higher the cases of child abuse, the higher poor levels academic performance. The community authorities should also consider their needs and put them in consideration, they will have more leverage to push for their demands and have their opinions taken into consideration. As their demands are prioritized, implementing authorities like the government can then be conscious of constructing serious auditing companies to check the issue of funds provided by the government they completely reach the needs of the families.

Key words: sexual abuse, girl child education and secondary schools

Background of the study

Child sexual abuse is tantamount to loss it is accompanied by anguish and disruption (Bezuidenhout, 2002). Sexually abused child experiences many kinds of loss; a loss of trust in other people, the loss of childhood innocence, a loss of personal safety, a loss of the right to make decisions and the loss of the truth. Often the child is compelled to keep the abuse a secret and not to tell anyone (Stecy & Keneth, 2023). Lies therefore often become an integral part of life from childhood into

adulthood. Lies are used as a means of survival, and of covering up what has happened. Coping mechanisms, such as lies, often find the child in trouble with non-offending adults (Vincent & Peter, 2023). Sexual abuse is a global phenomenon that is regarded as one of the greatest social problems of the 21st century. It has a devastating, lifelong effect on the victims, because sexual abuse generates great anguish and disruption in the lives of these children (Ninsiima et al., 2023). As a

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result of such abuse, many victims live through feelings of confusion, guilt, anger, mistrust, sadness, and emotional deprivation (Lawrence & Janse van Rensburg, 2006). They experience first-hand the shocking truth that the very people, who should protect them from harm, are the people who betray their trust by violating and robbing them of their innocence. In Uganda the incidence of sexual violence against children is exceptionally high (Aisha et al., 2023). It is estimated that approximately one quarter of all children have, or will have been sexually abused prior to reaching the age of eighteen years. Very often, the perpetrator is someone familiar to the child. Someone who would normally protect the child, such as the father, brother, or another family member (Victor et al., 2023). Many incidences of sexual assault have been reported in Uganda ranging from people holding high profile positions, to be precise church clergy to the slum dwellers. In recent years, concern has been expressed about the rising incidence of reported crimes targeting school going girls and boys. Police records in Uganda documented 1,987 cases of rape in 2001 compared with 2,908 reported cases in 2004 (Shamim et al., 2023). This represented a 46.4% increase. The actual figure is thought to be higher considering that not all violations are reported. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 36-62% of all sexual assault victims are aged below 15 years. Complementary data from Nairobi Women's hospital indicate that 55% of those violated are girls aged 0-15 years (Oromo et al., 2023). Learning institutions in Uganda have gradually

gained notoriety as venues of sexual assault. Since the infamous St. Kizito incident where 70 girls were raped while 19 others lost their lives when their male peers descended on them during what was supposed to be a school strike, several other group sexual violations have occurred (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). The findings from the survey conducted by (UNICEF, 2010) indicate that violence against children is a serious problem in Uganda. Levels of sexual violence prior to the age of 18 as reported indicate that during childhood: 32% of females and 18% of males experience sexual violence; 66% of females and 73% of males experienced physical violence; 26% of females and 32% of males experience any violence as a child; and 13% of females and 9% of males experienced all three types of violence during childhood (Joventa et al., 2023).

The most common perpetrators of sexual violence for females and males were found to be boyfriends/girlfriends/ romantic partners comprising 47% and 43% respectively followed by neighbours, 27% and 21% respectively. Mothers and fathers were the most common perpetrator of physical violence by family members. For males, teachers followed by Police were the most common perpetrators of physical violence by an authority figure (Musaibah et al., 2023). Emotional violence for both females and males was most often inflicted by parents. Child sexual abuse is not a recent phenomenon, but one of the oldest forms of child abuse in the history of mankind (Richter & Higson-Smith, 2007). In all cultures and ethnic backgrounds

and in all its different forms, child abuse has existed and flourished throughout the ages.

Statement of the problem.

This study was focusing promptly by the abuse of girl child education. Many children are subjected to child abuse each year (World Health Organization, 2001). By now this figure has almost doubled. Many of these young victims are subjected specifically to sexual abuses which are either as a result of Intra-familial abuse like Father-son, Mother-son or Father-daughter to Extra-familial abuse as sodomy, incest, rape and statutory rape (Ntirandekura, 2022). This is a critical problem that has serious short-term, as well as long-term consequences for these children (Dale, 2003). The educator is often unaware that the learner is experiencing such horrific emotional, psychological and physical pain. Educators expect of each learner that they deliver the best that they can in terms of academic effort (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). They often label children who behave differently within the classroom with generalized terminology, such as 'lazy, withdrawn, very quiet, bossy, aggressive or a bully'. These behaviours may be, but are not always, manifestations of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is not easily noticed however, because of the intimate, concealed, and covert nature of the offence (Anthony, Kazaara, &

Kazaara, 2023). Therefore, it is frequently only on the basis of a noticeable change in the behavioural patterns of the child, loss of interest in school work, and a drop in their academic performance and achievement, that suspicion is aroused (Scheepers, 2006). Many children are therefore suffering in private of this vice unnoticed, with their performance continuously deteriorating due to the effect of trauma. Sexual abuse is the product of a disturbed society, which is characterized by factors such as changes in family dynamics, isolation of children, physical neglect and substitute care (Brighton et al., 2023). It has led to the development of an anti-child culture that dominates contemporary society and has resulted in an inadequacy to protect the most vulnerable of groups, being babies, toddlers and children (Le Roux & Smit, 1994). There are numerous factors that contribute to the sexual victimization of children, Little has been done to curb this menace and save the minority from this vice, there are numerous literature on the child sexual abuses in Uganda, many cases are reported to the police but little is being done this has created a gap and triggered the mind of the researcher to therefore conduct a study on the effects of child sexual abuse on academic performance of a girl child in Kawuku Secondary School-Wakiso District.

Objectives

1. To assess the causes of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools in Wakiso District
2. To determine the effects of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools in Wakiso district
3. To assess the relationship between child sexual abuse and academic performance in Secondary Schools in Wakiso District

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools in Wakiso District?
2. What are the effects of child sexual abuse in Secondary Schools in Wakiso district?
3. What is the relationship between child sexual abuse and academic performance in Secondary Schools in Wakiso District?

Methodology

Research design

Descriptive research design was used in order to ascertain and be able to describe various characteristics of variable in the study. This study was analytical and the case study, the study constituted quantitative technique and it was based on self-administered questionnaires. Cross-section research design was used in the study; this is because it helped to gather the data needed from the residents of Secondary Schools-Wakiso District and perhaps over a period of days, weeks or even a month in order to answer the research questions.

Study population

The study population was 100 respondents and these comprised of selected students from the community, teachers, health workers, village chair persons, and parents in Secondary Schools-Wakiso District

Sample size

The study used a sample size of 80 respondents who were selected from teachers, health workers, chair persons, parents, plus students in particular were selected. The sample size was arrived at using the predetermined table for determining sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as cited in Amin (2005).

Data Collection methods

Questionnaires

This technique helped to collect primary data through a number of questions, which was given to a cross section of respondents. The questions were close ended with the questionnaire mainly based on predetermined and standardized questions. They focused on the effect of sexual abuse on girl child academic performance in Secondary Schools-Wakiso District.

Instruments of data collection

Two instruments of data collection were used by the researcher in the field. Structured Questionnaire and Interview guide

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Data analysis

Collected data from the field was tabulated and analyzed in percentages using SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). The researcher used tables because it is easy to observe, construct and make findings. Calculations were included for proper understanding of various categories of people. The data was analyzed both manually and electronically by the use of computers.

RESULTS**Causes of child abuse*****Table 1: Reasons that influence child abuse***

	Reasons that influence	Frequency (n)	Percentage (percent)
1	Inadequate protection	15	24
2	poverty	5	6
3	Family Separation	10	12.5
4	Alcohol and drug abuse	20	25
5	Ignorance of the international, national laws and government policies	30	37.5
	TOTAL (N)	80	100

Source: primary data 2022

From the table above, 15(24percent) of the respondents reported inadequate protection as the leading cause of child abuse in in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District. According to respondents, the protection needs of Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District, regardless of whether they remain at home, are on the move, or relocate, remain an urgent concern. The current justice system in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District

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particularly in ensuring the protection of children against human rights abuses is grossly inadequate (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023).

Furthermore, 5(6%) of the respondents reported Poverty. According to them, Economic pressures and poverty have increased child abuse in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District. Interviews with the religious leaders confirmed that forced and early child marriages have largely been motivated by lack of economic resources and have led to the increased vulnerability of the girl-child to child abuse (Mark et al., 2023).

In addition, 12.5 % of the respondents reported Family Separation. The most common cause of child abuse reported in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District was family separation due to the death of parents. An interview with the sub county elder observed that: orphaned children whose parents died of HIV/AIDS found life more difficult in the in the district. He noted that many orphaned children rely on themselves to struggle for survival (Rashid et al., 2023).

Are you aware of your rights as a child?

Table 2: shows respondents own view on whether they know children's rights on children

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Yes	59	74
No	21	26
Total	80	100

Source: primary data 2022

Out of the 80 respondents 59(74%) reported being aware of the children's rights in their community while 21(26%) did not know. This therefore implies that majority of respondents in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District know the children's rights as this was witnessed by majority of the total respondents.

Effects of child abuse on academic performance of pupils

In an interview, a sub county social worker noted that the effects of sexual abuse, rape, defilement and forced early marriages were severe health consequences such as severe abdominal pain, STDs, premature delivery, miscarriage, abortion, social breakdown, increased number of child mothers and are also at high risk of

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contracting HIV/AIDS infection. She observed that this is a common phenomenon in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District most men have several sexual partners (Aisha et al., 2023). This makes pupils dropout of school.

During the group discussions, the LCS themselves noted that the child brides usually have lower levels of education than girls who get married at an older age. Their education is terminated upon marriage and with repeated pregnancies and a lot of time spent on household chores, they lose the opportunity to go back to school and cannot make personal decisions about their life. As a result, the safety and dignity of such a child is eroded, traumatized and rendered helpless (Jac & Kazaara, 2023).

The district official examined that the effects of physical abuse were: disability and fractures in some limbs of children's bodies due to severe beatings by some teachers, parents and guardians (Seth & Ntirandekura, 2022). Children therefore feel both physical and emotional pain and become sad, withdrawn, behave aggressively, fear the abusers, lag in physical development and suffer from psychological trauma. If children have been repeatedly beaten by the parents or guardians, they can run away to towns or stay with some relatives elsewhere. Another district official noted that the abused children in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District experience psychological trauma and are paralyzed by terror from the abusers. They experience denial and deep depression leading to chronic mental disorders and suicide. He noted that psychologically abused children in Kawuku Secondary School, Wakiso District resent and retaliate instead of loving, trusting and listening.

In addition, children who have been neglected in their homes are aggressive, uncooperative and rude because they feel unworthy to talk with their fellow youth or the community.

Community property is greatly destroyed as communities face a problem of buying new property, things like chairs and tables, beds are all broken and sometimes put on fire, buildings are all destroyed this lives the community authority in suspense as it can become very expensive to put back everything. Many families end up being expelled from community hence disorganizing their education career, as others especially the young ones lose their lives, this also affects innocent families as the community can close for some time hence staying at home or looking for alternatives which can be very expensive for their parents

Findings on the Relationship between child abuse and academic performance

In Order to establish the strength of the relationship between child abuse and the performance of pupils, the researcher used findings in 4.5 as shown in the Table below.

Table 3: Showing Pearson Correlation between child abuse and academic performance

Correlations

	Child abuse	Academic performance
Child abuse Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.000
N	-60	-60
Girl child education Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		1.000
N	.000	-60

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 indicates that there is a strong negative relationship between child abuse and academic performance at regression (r)= -0.702 and at level of significance 0.05 (Nelson et al., 2023), this implies that the higher the cases of child abuse, the higher poor levels academic performance (Micheal et al., 2023).

Conclusions

The widespread child abuses in Buremba Sub County reveals that the role of the stakeholders and police to protect the children was a major gap. Negative police attitudes, inadequate protection of victims of child abuse and non-achievement of justice are debilitating. These acts therefore discourage, frustrate and create fear in the victims from reporting cases of child abuse to the police. Therefore, the victims will not guarantee that police will take their cases seriously instead they will remain traumatized, confused and unable to understand the role of the police in assisting them in these matters.

Recommendations

In order to tackle the issue of child abuse in relation to domestic violence, the minority group the families should handle with strong penalties and punishments so that they are able to learn and completely have fear of breaking marriage vows. The community authorities should also consider their needs and put them in consideration, they will have more leverage to push for their demands and have their opinions taken into consideration. As their demands are prioritized, implementing authorities like the government can then be conscious of constructing serious auditing companies to check the issue of funds provided by the government they completely reach the needs of the families.

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