

**Assessing the role of Child Protection Services in Addressing Child Abuse: A Case Study of Ngarama Sub
County Isingiro District**

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Abstract

The study assessed the role of child protection services in addressing child abuse: a case study of Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. It was guided by the following objectives; to find out the forms of child abuse, to find out services available to protect children from being abused and to establish measures to address cases of child abuse. This study employed a cross sectional research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. During the research, the study targeted the parents, children, city probation officer and social workers. The total sample for the study was 50 respondents. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used in the study. The study findings indicated that there are cases of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. These included; physical abuse, psychological abuse and social abuse. The examples of case of child abuse included; denial of food, punishments, sexual abuse, denial of education, child neglect among others. The study findings showed that there are services available to protect children from being abuse. It was concluded there are different kinds of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. That is physical abuse, psychological abuse and social abuse. Child abuse is caused by poverty, alcoholism, orphanage, food insecurity, early marriages, no family planning, marrying many wives. It was also concluded that children are given psychosocial support; abused children are given legal support, cases of child abuse are reported to probation officer; children are given all the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health care among others; there is advocacy about the control of child abuse in this community; children are brought up in good morals. It was further concluded that there is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse. victims should be made, the government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community; parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children. It was recommended that parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children. Parents should be encouraged to practice family planning so as to have the number of children they can conveniently cater for. Government should enact laws against child abuse.

Key Words: Assessing, Child Protection Services, and Child Abuse

Introduction

Globally almost 3.6 million American children received a child protection service investigation or assessment, with 28.6% of the investigations determining abuse (Bartlett et al., 2017:12). Statistics have been critiqued as under representative of the magnitude of child abuse, and there remains an opportunity to not only improve the detection of abuse, but also to initiate protective services.

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In Uganda, Clarke et al., (2016: 10) noted that most children have experienced some form of violence and abuse. More than 8 million children are considered to be vulnerable to harm. Sexual abuse is the most common form of violence, with gender as a major risk factor. Every day, around 26 girls are defiled. Devries et al., (2014:2) asserted that rape is on the increase, rising by 30 per cent from 7,360 reported cases in 2009 to 9,588 in 2013. Girls are also threatened by child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). NGOs in Uganda such as Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) deliver services to children (and their families) that are in need of protection. Community based child protection work involves promoting and strengthening both the role of traditional structures and formal supports systems to play a more pronounced and front-line role in child protection (Barr et al., 2017:1).

In Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District, Reports indicate that children have experienced physical violence in their lifetime, over half report emotional abuse and 4% of boys and 13% of girls report sexual abuse (Isingiro District Probation Officers Report, 2019 / 2020). This calls for the study to assess the role of child protection services in addressing child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.

The Ugandan government has established various services to ensure that a Ugandan child is protected from harm, danger and any form of discrimination (Christian and Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2015: 10). In addition, to ensure that rights of children are protected, the government ensures that every sub-county in Uganda and Ngarama sub county in Isingiro district inclusive has office of community development officer in charge of rights of children and every district has a police station with an office of Children and Family Protection Unit (CFPU), responsible for protecting children from being abused of their rights. Much as these services and measures are in place in Uganda and Ngarama Sub County in particular, cases of child abuse have continued to exist. Child protection services such as education and sensitization about child's rights services have been made available for people but community members have not fully utilized them (Kelly,2017). Cases of child abuse could be as result of this. A recent Ugandan national violence against children survey (2021:2) showed that one in three girls and one in six boys, suffer sexual violence during their childhood, and 70% of boys suffer physical violence. Therefore, the study aimed at assessing the role of child protection services in addressing child abuse using a case study of Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.

Problem Statement

The inadequate availability and quality of child protection services provided by both governmental and non-governmental organizations has significantly contributed to the persistent occurrence of different forms of child abuse within numerous households across the communities comprising Ngarama Sub County located in Isingiro District within the Western Region of Uganda, as evidenced by a concerning number of reported and unreported cases involving various types of maltreatment, including but not limited to physical and emotional violence, sexual exploitation and neglect, perpetrated against boys and girls under the age of 18 by their parents, relatives and other individuals responsible for their safety, care and well-being, which has undoubtedly inflicted tremendous short-term and long-term harm to the physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of these young and vulnerable

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victims, compromised their fundamental rights and overall welfare, and jeopardized their ability to grow into well-adjusted and productive citizens, thus highlighting an urgent need for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the child protection structures and programs currently in place, as well as the systemic and practical challenges hampering their proper functioning, with the overarching goal of strengthening the protection framework and multi-sectoral response mechanisms to better prevent child maltreatment from occurring, identify children at risk, promptly assist children who have experienced abuse, hold perpetrators accountable, and ultimately curb this social problem that continues to severely impact the health, education and livelihood prospects of so many innocent children in this particular community and Uganda at large.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of child protection services in addressing child abuse: a case study of Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the forms of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.
2. To find out services available to protect children from being abused in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.
3. To establish measures to address cases of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.

Literature Review

Malloy et al., (2011:10) revealed that approximately 10.14% of children were victims of child sexual abuse. The most recent census reports documents 762,940 confirmed cases of child abuse in 2009, 72% are cases of neglect, 16.4% physical abuse, 8.8% sexual abuse, 7.0% emotional abuse, and 11.2% other types of abuse. One in five girls and one in 10 to 20 boys will be sexually abused during their childhood. Some of the early cases of child sexual abuse that brought awareness to the magnitude of this problem in the school systems.

McGuire (2011:12) concluded that 17.6% of the children who suffered child abuse, suffered from physical abuse. In the United States, it is normative to use physical aggression on children, however physical aggression ranges from a mild spanking to harsh brutal punishment. Between 85% and 94% of American families use physical punishment, however about 5% of these punishments constitute severe parent-child physical aggression, which is considered child abuse. Children who have suffered physical abuse will often have broken bones, fractures, burns, and other unexplained injuries and are frightened.

Emotional abuse also has serious consequences and it can still be found in schools today (Bethell et al., 2014:1). The most recent census, there were 53,326 confirmed cases of childhood emotional abuse in 2009. Emotional abuse exists in all types of schools, different types of neighborhoods and within all grades. Dyches (2017:5) documented different stories of emotional abuse. A student named Jason complained about his second period teacher, who made inappropriate comments about his culture and the way he dresses.

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World Bank. (2019:14) note that UNICEF is committed to ensuring every child survivor of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) has access to quality, survivor-centered assistance and support in line with their needs, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and reintegration support. The purpose of IFRC Child Protection Policy (Policy) is to provide a framework for ensuring that children. The International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) recognizes that children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and that all children have the right to be safe and protected.

Lundy et al., (2013:13) noted that United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a paramount Child protection services of the rights of the child. That is it promotes the right of all children to survival and development, the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions relating to children. The right of all children to express their views freely and the principle of non-discrimination. Family welfare services enhance the protection of children in planning, implementation and assessment of activities and seek ways to incorporate the voices of children in shaping the relief and development programs that affect them; Abiding by key international frameworks and standards such as the Sphere standards and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection.

Alesina and Giuliano (2014:12) showed that parents in society today depend on members of the extended families and religious organizations, friends, supervisors of play dates, and schools to provide a significant amount of child care for their children. It is important for parents to be educated on the signs of child abuse to ensure they can recognize the signs of child abuse, to assess their children for abuse when they are governed by other caretakers. Abuse recognition self-efficacy is an essential component in child abuse recognition and reporting as current research indicates that education in child abuse recognition and reporting will increase specific self-efficacy of child abuse recognition.

Summary of Literature Review

Malloy et al., (2011:10) revealed that approximately 10.14% of children were victims of child sexual abuse. Kemshall and Moulden (2017:12) cited the IFRC is committed to protecting children from exploitation and abuse regardless of their nationality, culture, ethnicity, gender, religious or political beliefs, socio-economic status, family or criminal background, physical or mental health or any other factor of discrimination. Fang (2012:3) indicated that continuous research in child abuse is necessary to prevent future child abuse control from occurring and to help current child abuse victims. Whereas the above studies assessed the role of child protection services in addressing child abuse. They were carried out in context outside Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District.

Methodology

Research Design

Different scholars have defined research design as a framework of planning and conducting research (Sapsford, 2006). This study employed a cross sectional research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. This design was good for the study because it generated quick self-reports from the participants under study. Also the

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responses generated from participants in a study conducted under this type of design represented a picture that was adequately generalizable for the entire population. The design employed both quantitative (questioners) and qualitative (interviews) approaches. These approaches helped the researcher to get reliable and valid information for the study.

Target Population

According to Best & Kahn (2009) a population is a group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. Lokesh, (2008), defines a target population as a large group from which a sample population is selected. During the research, the study targeted the parents, children, city probation officer and social workers. Parents participated in the study because they were responsible for care taking children, children participated in the study because the study was about addressing child abuse therefore they had much knowledge about forms of child abuse, probation officer participated in the study because he / she was responsible for handling cases of child abuse in the city, and social workers participated in the study because they were responsible for provision of child protection services.

Sample Size and Selection

Sample size determination is the act of choosing the number of observations or replicates to include in a statistical sample (Sapsford, 2006). The total sample for the study was 50 respondents; that is; 4 children, 30 parents, 1 probation officer, 5 local leaders, 10 social workers. A population of 50 were selected and used in order to obtain reliable and valid information.

Sampling Technique

A sample is a small subset of the total population (Ayuman, 2015). Sampling is a process of identifying the individuals (respondents) who participate in the study. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select and obtain the respondents. Simple random sampling was used to select children, parents and social workers, this helped in avoiding bias while selecting respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select probation officer and local leaders because of their position. It involved sampling without replacement.

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is defined as a collection of questions based on the subject of interest to the researcher and completed by respondents. A structured self-administered questionnaire was designed and used to collect data from key respondents. The questionnaire included both closed and open ended questions. This enabled the researcher to get wide information from different people within the shortest time. The questionnaires were used because they permitted anonymity that resulted in more honest responses and they were the best instruments for this research study.

Interview Guide

An interview is a conversation with purpose and therefore data is collected easily. Interviews also had greater flexibility and opportunity to restructure questions (Kothari, 2004). This helped the participants to build on the rapport

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during the one to one discussion and to explore at a personal level. This was done to ensure that people whose views were relevant to the research questions.

Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining what has been collected in a survey and making deductions and inferences (Kothari, 2004). For Quantitative Data. The findings were grouped, summarized and classified with the help of tables. And this was arranged and entered into Microsoft Excel for data analysis. On receipt of each questionnaire, editing was done to ensure that the information given in the pre-coded questions were completed and correctly filled in. In the case of open-ended questions, all responses to questions were noted and arranged into meaningful trends. All questionnaires were numbered to make coding easier.

For qualitative Data. Findings were presented in themes and sub-themes in line with the research objectives to arrive at a rational deduction about the two variables in the topic of study. Qualitative data was collected using interview guide and mainly content analysis was used thereafter. At the end of each day, field notes were transcribed. The data was used to reinforce information got from questionnaires to draw conclusions and recommendations.

Results

Table 1: Whethe the community experience cases of child abuse

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Yes	50	50
No	-	-
Total	50	100

Findings presented in table 1 showed that all the respondents indicated that Ngarama sub county Isingiro District experiences cases of child abuse.

Table 2: Types of child abuse experienced

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Physical abuse	35	70
Social abuse	5	10
Psychological abuse	10	20
Total	50	100

Table 2 presented types of child abuse experienced in Ngarama Sub County. These included; 35 (70%) mentioned physical abuse, then 10 (20%) mentioned psychological abuse and 5 (10%) mentioned social abuse. From field noted examples of case of child abuse were revealed as; *denial of food, punishments, sexual abuse, denial of education, child neglect among others.*

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Table 3: Whether respondent knew a child who have been abused

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Yes	50	50
No	-	-
Total	50	100

From table 3, all the respondents 50 (100%) mentioned that they have seen a child who been abused in their communities. Different causes of child abuse were observed from interviews these included; *poverty, alcoholism, orphanage, food insecurity, early marriages, no family planning, marrying many wives.*

Table 4: Awareness of services available to protect children from being abused

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Yes	42	84
No	8	16
Total	50	100

Field Data, 2021

Findings presented in table 4 above indicated that most of the respondents 42 (84%) were aware of services available to protect children from being abuse.

In addition from interviews different services available to protect children's rights were revealed as follows; "*children in are given psychosocial support; abused children in this community are given legal support; cases of child abuse are always reported to probation officer; children are given all the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health care among others; there is advocacy about the control of child abuse in this community; children are brought up in good morals; the religious leaders play the role of counselling abused children.; there are works on capacity building among local leaders on how to control child abuse; child protection policies in Uganda are well implemented ; NGOs such as Uganda Human Rights provide services to children in this community.*"

Table 5: Stakeholders involved in provision of services aiming to protect children from being abused (n=50)

Stakeholders involved	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Social workers	30	60
Health workers	12	24
Local leaders	45	90
Uganda police	40	80

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NGOs	22	44
Human Rights Commission	15	30

Findings from table 5 above indicated different stakeholders involved in provision of services aiming to protect children from being abused in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. These included; 45 (90%) mentioned local leaders, 40 (80%) Uganda police, 22 (44%) NGOs, 30 (60%) social workers, 12 (24%) health workers.

Table 6: The extent to which available services have protected children from being abused

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Low	-	-
Medium	5	10
High	30	60
Very high	15	30
Total	50	100

Field Data, 2021

Findings in table 6 showed that majority of the respondents 30 (60%) mentioned that the extent to which available services have protected children from being abused is high, followed by 15 (30%) who mentioned very high and least 5 (10%) medium.

Table 7: Whether there are measures to address the cases of child abuse

Response	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Yes	50	100
No	-	-
Total	50	100

Field Data, 2021

From table 7 above, majority of the respondents 50 (100%) mentioned that there are measures to address the cases of child abuse.

Table 8: Measures to address the cases of child abuse (n=50)

Measures	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
Laws protecting rights of children should be effectively implemented	40	80
There is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse victims should be made.	30	60

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The government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community.	35	70
Parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children.	34	68
Parents should be encouraged to practice family planning so as to have the number of children they can conveniently cater for.	29	58
Government should enact laws against child abuse in the communities	20	40
The government should come up with institutions and foster homes for the abandoned children in the community	40	80
The government and other stakeholder should provide enough basic needs.	23	46
There is need to create income generating projects to parents.	20	40
There is need for imposing penalties and punishments to offenders of rights of children	31	62

From table 8, different measures to address cases of child abuse were revealed that is; 40 (80%) mentioned laws protecting rights of children should be effectively implemented, 30 (60%) there is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse victims should be made, 35 (70%) the government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community, 34 (68%) parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children, 29 (58%) parents should be encouraged to practice family planning so as to have the number of children they can conveniently cater for, 20 (40%) government should enact laws against child abuse in the communities, 40 (80%) the government should come up with institutions and foster homes for the abandoned children in the community, 23 (46%) the government and other stakeholder should provide enough basic needs, 20 (40%) there is need to create income generating projects to parents and 31 (62%) there is need for imposing penalties and punishments to offenders of rights of children.

Discussion of findings

The study finding indicated that there are cases of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. These included; physical abuse, psychological abuse and social abuse. The examples of case of child abuse included; denial of food, punishments, sexual abuse, denial of education, child neglect among others. All the respondents Different causes of child abuse were observed as; poverty, alcoholism, orphanage, food insecurity, early marriages, no family planning, marrying many wives. The above study findings are in line with Flaherty et al., (2013:2) who noted that, child abuse is most commonly defined as any form of child maltreatment including neglect. Child abuse can take many different forms, any act against a minor child that causes harm, physical, sexual, psychological or emotional. Child abuse is classified as any kind physiological or psychological harm to a minor child.

The study findings indicated that most of the respondents were aware of services available to protect children from being abuse. Different services available to protect children's rights were revealed as follows; "children in are given psychosocial support; abused children in this community are given legal support; cases of child abuse are always

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reported to probation officer; children are given all the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health care among others; there is advocacy about the control of child abuse in this community; children are brought up in good morals; the religious leaders play the role of counselling abused children.; there are works on capacity building among local leaders on how to control child abuse; child protection policies in Uganda are well implemented ; NGOs such as Uganda Human Rights provide services to children in this community. It was also revealed that stakeholders involved in provision of services aiming to protect children from being abused include; local leaders, Uganda police, NGOs, social workers and health workers. The above study findings are in line with World Bank. (2019:14) that UNICEF is committed to ensuring every child survivor of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) has access to quality, survivor-centered assistance and support in line with their needs, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and reintegration support.

The study findings indicated measures to address cases of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. These included; there is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse victims should be made, the government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community; parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children; parents should be encouraged to practice family planning so as to have the number of children they can conveniently cater for; government should enact laws against child abuse in the communities; the government should come up with institutions and foster homes for the abandoned children in the community; the government and other stakeholder should provide enough basic needs; there is need to create income generating projects to parents and there is need for imposing penalties and punishments to offenders of rights of children.

The above study findings are in line with Fang (2012:3) who indicated that continuous research in child abuse is necessary to prevent future child abuse control from occurring and to help current child abuse victims. Preventing child abuse would save the lives of the estimated five children that die each day in the United States from child abuse. Recognizing and reporting child abuse will help to increase reports of child abuse which in turn can assist prevention and recovery efforts. Child abuse education gives individuals the knowledge needed to identify and recognize child abuse, increasing their confidence and self-efficacy which leads to more reports and child abuse prevention.

Conclusions

It was concluded there are different kinds of child abuse in Ngarama Sub County Isingiro District. That is physical abuse, psychological abuse and social abuse. Child abuse is caused by poverty, alcoholism, orphanage, food insecurity, early marriages, no family planning, marrying many wives.

It was also concluded that children are given psychosocial support; abused children are given legal support, cases of child abuse are reported to probation officer; children are given all the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health care among others; there is advocacy about the control of child abuse in this community; children are brought up in good morals.

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It was further concluded that there is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse. victims should be made, the government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community; parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children.

Recommendations

Based on study findings, the researcher suggests the following recommendations;

Parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children.

Parents should be encouraged to practice family planning so as to have the number of children they can conveniently cater for.

Government should enact laws against child abuse.

The government should come up with institutions and foster homes for the abandoned children in the society

There is need for effective follow-ups of child abuse.

The government and other stakeholder should fund projects addressing cases of child abuse in the community.

Parents, guardians and educators should be interested in the moral education of the children.

The government and other stakeholder should provide enough basic needs.

There is need to create income generating projects to parents and there is need for imposing penalties and punishments to offenders of rights of children.

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