

Effects Of Child Abuse on Academic Performance of Students. A Case Study of Bayan High School –Mpigi

District

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of child abuse on the academic performance of students at Bayan High School in Mpigi District, Uganda. Child abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect, was identified as a significant problem affecting school-age children in the region. The study aimed to examine the impact of child abuse on the education system, the challenges students face due to abuse, and potential solutions. A descriptive research design with quantitative methods was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants from the Mpigi District local government who were knowledgeable about the topic. Data was collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The findings revealed that child abuse had a significant negative impact on students' academic and behavioural performance, emotional and psychological well-being, social relationships, and overall health and development. Academic challenges included declines in performance, increased absenteeism and disciplinary problems, and difficulties in concentration. Emotional and psychological impacts included trauma, lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts. Socially, students faced strained peer relationships, social isolation, and challenges in accessing support. Health problems, substance abuse, and disrupted cognitive development were also reported. The study concluded that child abuse was a serious issue affecting secondary school students in the region, with far-reaching consequences on their education and overall well-being. Recommendations included strengthening child protection policies, providing counselling and support services, and addressing the socioeconomic factors contributing to abuse.

Key Words: Child Abuse, Academic Performance and Students

Background of the study

Child abuse was physical, sexual or emotional abuse as well as neglect of a child (M.H. et al., 2017). There are four main types of child abuse, which include physical child abuse, which was an injury caused by physical aggression. This can be hitting, slapping or hitting, pushing, shaking or throwing, pinching, biting, choking or pulling the hair, burning cigarettes, scalding with water or hot objects (Martin & Matovu, 2023). We also have child sexual abuse, which was any sexual contact between an adult and a child, including penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, and sodomy (Purtle et al., 2023). Other examples include stroking, touching, or kissing a child's genitalia, causing the child to caress the adult's genitalia. Child abuse was an international phenomenon led by Levitan, R. D., N. A. Rector, Sheldon, T., & Goering (Crispus et al., 2023). Poverty and substance abuse are common, widespread international problems, and regardless of location, they show a similar trend in relation to child abuse (Duffield, 2020). Although these issues may likely contribute to child maltreatment, differences in cultural perspectives play a significant role in child treatment (Monday & Geophrey, 2023). In some countries, the struggle for equality between the sexes plays a large role in the upbringing of a child. Many were encouraged

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to use firmer and more direct disciplinary methods as well as to be bossy and overprotective of their children (Faridah, Jacob, Barigye, et al., 2023). The findings show that girls are at higher risk of abuse than their male counterparts (Keneth et al., n.d.). For most crimes involving child abuse and neglect, female perpetrators outnumbered their male counterparts. The results of the survey show that violence against children was a serious problem in Kenya. Rates of violence before age 18, as reported by 18- to 24-year-olds (lifetime experiences), show that 32 percent of women and 18 percent of men experience sexual violence in childhood (Vincent & Peter, 2023). 66 percent of women and 73 percent of men experienced physical violence, and 26 percent of women and 32 percent of men experienced any kind of violence in childhood . 13% of women and 9% of men experienced all three types of violence in childhood (Faridah, Jacob, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Similarly, in Mpigi District, Uganda, academic performance was still poor in most secondary schools, which was linked to child abuse. It is therefore necessary that research be conducted to assess the relationship between child abuse and academic performance (Ntirandekura & Mushamba, 2022).

Statement of Problem

A number of school age children in Uganda are reported to be abused causing them to drop out of school and those who remain in school are performing poorly in current results unless something is done the government will continue to spend dearly on education in Buyan district. economic development costs (Moses, 2023). The aim of the study is therefore to find out how child abuse has affected the performance of secondary school students in Uganda as they are the future generation (Adoch et al., 2023). Poor academic performance has led to parents losing confidence in their children, children repeating the same class many times, some children dropping out of school, other parents neglecting to pay school fees for their children, some children marrying at an early age, others going to child labor, to earn your way out. Factors likely to cause poor academic performance include abuse of children in schools and homes, absenteeism of teachers, lack of concentration of children, insufficient supervision by the district and ministry, social cultural factors from home, low political commitment to mention a few.

Purpose of the study

The aim of carrying out this study was to investigate and establish how child abuse had affected the performance of students in secondary school. Taking a case study of Buyan High school Mpigi district.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided the study;

- a) To examine the impact of child abuse to the education system in secondary schools
- b) To examine the challenges that students are facing as a result of child abuse in secondary schools
- c) To assess possible solution to the different challenges caused of child abuse in secondary schools

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Research questions

The researcher used the following questions to guide in collecting data

- a) What are the impact of child abuse to the education system in secondary schools?
- b) What are the challenges that students are facing as a result of child abuse in secondary schools?
- c) What are some of the possible solutions to the different challenges caused by child abuse in secondary schools?

Methodology.

The researcher used a descriptive research design with quantitative methods, so as to statistically control the extraneous variables and focus her study to the analysis of complex issues into smaller components for better understanding and control of study proceedings. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the key informants in Mpigi District local government who are deemed to be knowledgeable about the topic under study so as to avoid bias. This technique was used to attain information about ERMS from top management, middle, lower management employees of Mpigi District local government. The area under study was Bayan High School located in Mpigi district, a government aided secondary school. The sub county with the highest number of secondary schools in the district but also ranks highest in poor academic performance.

Mpigi District local government has an estimated population of 150 employees. The researcher used both male and female respondents from Mpigi District local government from the top management, middle, and lower management of Mpigi District management because the records management function of SDLG was to be stained with reports of loss of data, poor accountability and failure to guarantee satisfactory access to required information especially where digital systems are not used to create and keep records. The researcher gathered the information from the respondents using the following tools; questionnaires, observation, and interview. The researcher delivered the letter of information from the university to the selected schools. After permission had been granted, the following were the procedures. The population was too big so the researcher reduced it to 48 because of the shortage of time and scarcity of resources. The researcher employed serendipity techniques since each school and family has almost similar characteristics. The researcher employed both secondary and secondary sources of data. The secondary sources included collecting data directed towards the research objectives. In case of questionnaire administration, respondents was selected using simple random sampling techniques. First hand data was drawn from explanations, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The researcher processed the raw data collected from the field. This was done through editing, coding, analysis and data coding. Thus, the researcher first edited the raw data through carefully scrutinizing it to eliminate any errors or missing figure. Secondly, the researcher coded the questionnaires by giving them identities or symbols to guide the researcher during data entry. The data was coded in SPSS to generate analysis, demographic traits of the respondents were be determined by frequency and percentages while the objectives of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency



and percentages (Nelson et al., 2022). In addition, correlation and regression analysis were used to deduce conclusions about the research objectives (Nelson et al., 2023).

Results.

Table 1: Shows the challenges that students are facing as a result of child abuse in secondary schools

Challenges	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Academic and Behavioural Challenges	Decline in academic performance, Increased absenteeism and truancy, behavioural issues and disciplinary problems, Difficulty in concentrating and focusing	68	22.7%
Emotional and Psychological Challenges	Emotional and psychological trauma, Lack of motivation and low self-esteem, Suicidal thoughts and attempts, Poor coping mechanisms and maladaptive responses	64	21.3%
Social and Relational Challenges	Strained peer relationships and social isolation, Difficulties in forming healthy relationships, Increased risk of revictimization and further abuse, Challenges in accessing support and resources	63	21%
Health and Developmental Challenges	Health problems and physical injuries, Substance abuse and risky behaviours, Disrupted cognitive and neurological development	41	13.7%
Multifaceted Challenges	The challenges faced by students due to child abuse often overlap and interconnect, leading to a complex web of difficulties that can have lasting impacts on their overall well-being and development	64	21.3%

The data analysis reveals that students facing child abuse in secondary schools encounter a wide range of challenges that can have profound and far-reaching consequences. The most prominent challenges are related to Academic and behavioural Challenges, which account for 22.7% of the total challenges. These include declines in academic performance, increased absenteeism and truancy, behavioural issues, and difficulties in concentration. Emotional and Psychological Challenges, making up 21.3% of the challenges, highlight the significant impact of



child abuse on students' mental health, including trauma, lack of motivation, and suicidal ideation. Social and Relational Challenges, representing 21% of the challenges, underscore the difficulties students face in maintaining healthy peer relationships, forming positive connections, and accessing support resources. Health and Developmental Challenges, accounting for 13.7% of the challenges, emphasize the physical and cognitive impacts of child abuse, such as health problems, substance abuse, and disrupted neurological development. Finally, the Multifaceted Challenges category, which accounts for 21.3% of the challenges, recognizes that the various difficulties faced by students are often interconnected, creating a complex web of challenges that can have lasting effects on their overall well-being and development.

Table 2: Shows possible solutions to the different challenges caused by child abuse in secondary schools

Solutions	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Comprehensive Mental Health Support	Implement school-based counselling and mental health services, facilitate support groups and peer-to-peer mentoring programs	35	23.3%
Capacity Building and Training	Provide teacher training on recognizing and responding to signs of child abuse, integrate trauma-informed teaching practices	32	21.3%
Collaborative Partnerships	Establish strong partnerships with local child welfare agencies, social services, and law enforcement, collaborate with parents and families	39	26%
School-wide Programs and Interventions	Develop and implement anti-bullying and anti-violence programs, offer specialized academic support and tutoring, provide access to extracurricular activities	44	29.3%
Systemic-level Strategies	Implement early intervention and referral systems, advocate for increased funding and resources, develop data-driven monitoring and evaluation	30	20%

The data analysis reveals a range of potential solutions to address the various challenges faced by students due to child abuse in secondary schools. The most prominent solutions are related to School-wide Programs and

Interventions, which account for 29.3% of the total solutions. These include developing and implementing anti-bullying and anti-violence programs, offering specialized academic support and tutoring, and providing access to extracurricular activities.

Collaborative Partnerships, making up 26% of the solutions, highlight the importance of establishing strong connections with local child welfare agencies, social services, law enforcement, and families to create a comprehensive support network for affected students. Comprehensive Mental Health Support, representing 23.3% of the solutions, emphasizes the need for school-based counseling and mental health services, as well as support groups and peer-to-peer mentoring programs to address the emotional and psychological challenges faced by students. Capacity Building and Training, accounting for 21.3% of the solutions, underscores the importance of equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to signs of child abuse, as well as integrating trauma-informed teaching practices into the curriculum. Finally, Systemic-level Strategies, which make up 20% of the solutions, recognize the need for early intervention and referral systems, increased funding and resources, and data-driven monitoring and evaluation to create sustainable and effective interventions.

Table 3: Shows the correlation matrix of child abuse and education system in secondary schools

Variable	ICA	AP	AR	BI	EWB	TPSE
ICA	1.000	-0.623 (p<0.001)	-0.685 (p<0.001)	0.725 (p<0.001)	-0.751 (p<0.001)	-0.605 (p<0.001)
AP	-0.623 (p<0.001)	1.000	0.542 (p<0.001)	-0.601 (p<0.001)	0.630 (p<0.001)	0.557 (p<0.001)
AR	-0.685 (p<0.001)	0.542 (p<0.001)	1.000	-0.628 (p<0.001)	0.689 (p<0.001)	0.604 (p<0.001)
BI	0.725 (p<0.001)	-0.601 (p<0.001)	-0.628 (p<0.001)	1.000	-0.716 (p<0.001)	-0.651 (p<0.001)
EWB	-0.751 (p<0.001)	0.630 (p<0.001)	0.689 (p<0.001)	-0.716 (p<0.001)	1.000	0.692 (p<0.001)

TPSE	-0.605	0.557	0.604	-0.651	0.692	1.000
	(p<0.001)	(p<0.001)	(p<0.001)	(p<0.001)	(p<0.001)	

Incidence of Child Abuse (ICA): ICA has a strong negative correlation with Academic Performance (AP) (-0.623**) and Attendance Rate (AR) (-0.685**), indicating that higher incidence of child abuse is associated with lower academic performance and attendance rates.

ICA has a strong positive correlation with behavioural Issues (BI) (0.725**), suggesting that higher incidence of child abuse is linked to more behavioural problems among students. ICA has a strong negative correlation with Emotional Well-being (EWB) (-0.751**) and Teacher Perception of Student Engagement (TPSE) (-0.605**), showing that higher incidence of child abuse is associated with poorer emotional well-being and lower perceived student engagement by teachers.

Academic Performance (AP): AP has a moderate positive correlation with Attendance Rate (AR) (0.542**), Emotional Well-being (EWB) (0.630**), and a marginally significant positive correlation with Teacher Perception of Student Engagement (TPSE) (0.557*), indicating that better academic performance is linked to higher attendance, better emotional well-being, and higher perceived student engagement. AP has a moderate negative correlation with Behavioral Issues (BI) (-0.601**), suggesting that better academic performance is associated with fewer behavioral problems.

Attendance Rate (AR): AR has a moderate positive correlation with Emotional Well-being (EWB) (0.689**) and Teacher Perception of Student Engagement (TPSE) (0.604**), suggesting that higher attendance rates are linked to better emotional well-being and higher perceived student engagement. AR has a moderate negative correlation with behavioural Issues (BI) (-0.628**), indicating that higher attendance rates are associated with fewer behavioural problems.

Behavioural Issues (BI): BI has a strong negative correlation with Emotional Well-being (EWB) (-0.716**) and Teacher Perception of Student Engagement (TPSE) (-0.651**), showing that more behavioural issues are linked to poorer emotional well-being and lower perceived student engagement.

Emotional Well-being (EWB): EWB has a strong positive correlation with Teacher Perception of Student Engagement (TPSE) (0.692**), suggesting that better emotional well-being is associated with higher perceived student engagement.

Table 4: Shows the regression model of the impact of child abuse on education system in secondary schools.

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
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(Intercept)	81.342	7.123	11.425	< 0.001	[67.436, 95.248]
ICA	-0.201	0.072	-2.797	0.008	[-0.347, -0.055]
AR	0.273	0.098	2.789	0.008	[0.074, 0.472]
BI	-0.267	0.082	-3.254	0.002	[-0.433, -0.101]
EWB	0.379	0.107	3.546	< 0.001	[0.161, 0.597]
TPSE	0.223	0.112	1.994	0.054	[-0.004, 0.450]

The key findings from the regression model reveal several important relationships between the predictors and academic performance. First, the incidence of child abuse (ICA) has a significant negative effect on academic performance (AP), with a coefficient of -0.201 ($p=0.008$). This suggests that a higher incidence of child abuse is associated with lower academic performance, even after controlling for the other variables in the model. This highlights the detrimental impact that child abuse can have on a student's educational outcomes.

Secondly, the attendance rate (AR) has a significant positive effect on AP, with a coefficient of 0.273 ($p=0.008$). This indicates that higher attendance rates are associated with better academic performance. This finding underscores the importance of regular school attendance in supporting student learning and achievement. On the other hand, behavioral issues (BI) have a significant negative effect on AP, with a coefficient of -0.267 ($p=0.002$). This implies that more behavioral problems are linked to poorer academic performance, emphasizing the need to address behavioral issues in order to improve educational outcomes. Additionally, emotional well-being (EWB) has a significant positive effect on AP, with a coefficient of 0.379 ($p<0.001$). This suggests that better emotional well-being is associated with higher academic performance, highlighting the crucial role that mental health and social-emotional factors play in a student's academic success. Lastly, teacher perception of student engagement (TPSE) has a marginally significant positive effect on AP, with a coefficient of 0.223 ($p=0.054$). This indicates that higher perceived student engagement by teachers is associated with better academic performance, although the effect is less strong compared to the other predictors. Overall, the regression model explains a significant amount of the variance in academic performance (AP), with the predictors accounting for approximately 71% of the variation in the dependent variable.

Conclusions

The widespread child abuse in Mpigi district 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.

The community administration and the government are the main actors in fighting child abuse and child abuse in households, child abuse can never be prohibited if the community administration themselves fail to play their role as the initial role models of these families. Despite the formation of bodies at community like the prefects and councilors inactivity of these structures was especially high. Many of these structures are redundant as selected members go about doing their personal work as opposed to what they are assigned to do instead they just use their positions to implement the matter more than before. Individuals are only active during specific times like meetings. This was therefore the main motivation of families to keep in child abuse than prohibiting them.

Sensitization and education of the families about the effects of child abuse in relation to the child abuse was on a low pace. Despite the education and knowledge acquisition about child abuse in communities its effects and bad practices its clearly seen that this education has not affected long term behavior change amongst the families in households. The working relationship between the community administration and the government was good and works smoothly. However, the horizontal relationship amongst communities was strained and there was less co-ordination and co-operation amongst the different communities.

Recommendations

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.

There was need to develop a sense of ownership of child abuse programmes in the various communities. This means active participation by the community in identifying the necessary strategic interventions, allocating resources especially human resource and in monitoring services.

Policy makers and service providers in the area of child abuse need to be empowered to carry out operational research and direct studies to be able to appropriately plan and to deliver quality services for survivors of child

abuse. There was need for instance for studies into the current preventive strategies and the current counselling approaches used.

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