

Exploring the Impact of Child Abuse on Academic Performance of Pupils in Mbarara City South of Kakoba Division, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse is one of the most predominant phenomena that has been confronting Uganda over the years. This study explores the impact of child abuse on academic performance of pupils in Mbarara City South of Kakoba Division, Uganda. The study adopted cross sectional survey design, with a sample of 224. Questionnaires were used to elicit responses from the respondents. Findings from the study show that 29% of the respondents indicated unwanted pregnancies as one of the causes of child abuse, 26% indicated substance abuse as one of the causes of child abuse, whereas 27% indicated economic distress and 18% indicated war and political violence. In this wise, the study calls for the government to provide equitable resource distribution, empowerment, training, and capacity building. Non-governmental organisations like UNICEF could improve their effectiveness and make present approaches more responsive to harmed children. Social communities, local leaders, carers, and religious centres should provide housing, clothes and other basic requirements.

Keywords: Academic performance, Child abuse, Economic distress, Impact, Substance abuse

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. The four main categories of child abuse are physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. An injury from physical assault is child abuse. This includes beating, slapping, pushing, shaking, hurling, pinching, biting, choking, hair pulling, cigarette burning, and scalding water or items [1]. Penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, and sodomy are all forms of sexual child abuse. Other examples include fondling, stroking, or kissing a child's genitals or forcing them fondle an adult's. Any behaviour or inaction that harms a kid's mental or social development is emotional child abuse. It goes from verbal abuse to severe punishment. Last but not least, neglect causes substantial mental or bodily harm to a child [2]. Child abuse occurs worldwide. Poverty and substance misuse are global issues that correlate with child abuse. Although these concerns may contribute to child abuse, cultural perceptions influence child therapy. In some nations, children are raised with a focus on gender equality. There were disputes between conventional housewives and gender equality in the Soviet Union. Some mothers felt forced to adopt a "authoritarian" parenting style, domineering and emotionally detached from their children while focusing on their

careers. Many were encouraged [3]. Overbear and overprotect their children and use harsher discipline. Child abuse is one of the nation's biggest concerns since it kills and injures young children [4]. National, state, and local child protective services (CPS) offices received four million referrals in 2015 involving 7.2 million abused or neglected children. Approximately 683,000 children perished. Some studies believe CPS data underestimates the number of abused children [5]. This shows that more children are abused than reported. Research suggests that young children are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment since they may be dependent on carers [6]. More than 25% of child abuse victims were under three, according to HHS (2017). Additionally, females are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse than boys, whereas boys are more likely to be victims of physical abuse [7]. Finally, research suggests that children with disabilities, particularly severe ones, may be more likely to be abused [8]. Some disabled children may have inadequate communication skills and struggle to understand and report abuse. Child abuse in Africa is connected to decreased cognitive functioning, academic achievement, school preparation, and problem behaviour in early children

and adolescents[3]. Romano et al.[9] compared the long-term intellectual and academic outcomes of 413 child maltreated children to 286 matched controls. After controlling for demographic characteristics like age, sex, race, and social class, children who were sexually, physically, or neglected had considerably lower IQ scores. Significant variations were also noted in reading ability. Crozier and Barth[10] studied the cognitive functioning and academic achievement of 2,368 school-age maltreated children receiving child welfare services. The study found that youngsters performed below national norms.

The Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test and Woodcock-McGrew-Werder Mini Battery of Achievement are standardized cognitive examinations. In East Africa, maltreated children are more likely to exhibit non-academic problem behaviours such violence, off-task behaviour, and poor social skills[11]. Thus, maltreated children receive more school discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions[12]. Leiter[13] found that maltreatment linked with lower school attendance and performance. Most maltreated children got special education services under various disability categories due to their low academic achievements[14]. Romano et al.[9] found that 24% of children who had experienced child maltreatment got special schooling, compared to 14% of children who had not. Given these facts, child maltreatment can have disastrous effects on children's educational performance. These negative results may affect a

Herrenkohl et al.[17] state that adults who were abused as children and not addressed acquire bad psychological effects include drugs, promia, depression, becoming abusers, low self-esteem, and anxiety. Many adults who were physically or sexually abused as children have long-term problems. Nightmares, flashbacks, and freezing occur amid high stress[18]. Children who have experienced physical and psychological neglect are

The Causes of Child Abuse

Unwanted pregnancies: Guteman [20] says unplanned babies are more likely to be abused or neglected. Over 78% of child abuse cases are neglect. Additionally, unwanted pregnancies are more likely to be linked to abusive relationships and physical abuse during pregnancy. They also worsen maternal mental health and mother-child relationships. Limited evidence suggests children. Children with moderate or severe disabilities are more likely to be abused. A study examined child maltreatment among children with impairments, its prevalence, and its causes.

Substance abuse: Murphy et al.[21] say substance abuse can lead to child abuse. The U.S. study found that parents with proven alcohol, cocaine, and heroin

child's academic and career prospects[8]. Uganda's government has created programmes like UPE and USE to help vulnerable and poor children access affordable education and other welfare needs, which can help resolve child abuse cases. This has greatly supported school-aged children, leading to social, political, and economic development. The programme addresses poverty eradication, income production, economic empowerment, and reproductive and health rights violence against women to benefit all groups, including children[15]. Child abuse in Mbarara city is one part of discriminatory practices where family welfare requirements have become a severe concern, leading to child abuse among schoolchildren. At least half of Mbarara youngsters are abused by family members. Police figures show that more than 2800 incidences of denying children food and education were reported in 2004, up nearly 500 from the previous year. Despite Uganda's government and stakeholders' efforts, parents/guardians continue to mistreat children, especially school-aged ones, by depriving them basic education, medication, housing, food, and clothes. Uganda's government has created programmes like UPE and USE to help Ugandans access education and solve issues like poverty, child abuse, and ignorance[16]. However, little is known about how different forms of child maltreatment affect education. In Mbarara City South primary schools, the researcher wants to determine how child abuse affects academic achievement.

Child Abuse

at high risk for developing psychological or psychiatric issues, disorganized attachments, anxiety, depression, and acting out. According to Mill[19], 80% of abused and maltreated children have disorganized relationships. Abused children often express suicidal impulses. Most mistreated youngsters cope with distress by cutting themselves or tearing out their hair.

usage were more likely to mistreat their children and reject court-ordered assistance and treatments. Parental substance misuse was observed in over two-thirds of child maltreatment instances. This study discovered links between alcohol and physical abuse and cocaine and sexual abuse[22]. Although the abuse survivor may not realise the abuse is wrong, emotional turmoil can cause havoc. Child abuse can cause chronic illnesses, high-risk health behaviours, reduced lifespan, adult mental health, and internalising disorders including anxiety and sadness. Adults who have been mistreated as children, whether sexually, physically, or neglected, are more likely to develop depression[18]. Child maltreatment can also affect neurodevelopment.

Abused children often have language, mood, behaviour, and social/emotional issues, according to research. These risks increase when child abuse, trauma, and alcohol are present. Childhood abuse victims develop many physical health issues as adults. Some experience chronic head, stomach, pelvic, or muscular discomfort without a cause[23]. Even though most childhood abuse victims believe their abuse caused their adult health problems, most were not directly linked to those problems, indicating that they were most likely diagnosed with other causes.

Economic distress: Many abusive parents in Makindye division and throughout the world are stressed by unemployment, low income, family illness, and medical bills. Poor parenting, drug misuse to cope with Child abuse can result from stress, specific needs, social isolation, violent marriage, single parenting, and stepparents. Human Rights Watch[24] says civil war causes child maltreatment. Soldiers, labourers, and sexual slaves abuse the children abroad. In Northern Uganda, LRA-abducted children are beaten and forced to attack, burn houses, beat and kill civilians, abduct other children, carry heavy loads over long

Relationship Between Child Abuse and Academic Performance of Pupils

Children required respect and safety from adults who took them seriously, loved them, and honestly helped them learn about the world. Children who were harmed, neglected, and used by adults or other children were unaware of the abuse. Child abuse meant different things to different children and happened once or many times. The first six years of a child's life shape their personality, emotional stamina, social skills, and problem-solving abilities[28]. The child's early years determined these and other traits. Children who were loved, cuddled, sung to, and played with toys had early

distances, and work long hours as virtual slaves.

Unrest, famine, and drought result from war and political brutality: UNICEF[25] predicts 12-14 million refugees. Some countries have 75% displaced people, mostly women and children. War abuses children because they suffer for causes beyond their control. They watch the world helplessly, suffering from slain parents, shattered houses, starvation, and instability. Abuse also results from stress. Parents of disabled, special-needs, or misbehaving children may experience stress. Conforming to a culture of violence makes it seem normal, but it doesn't erase a helpless child's heartache at the hands of a cruel adult[26]. Child maltreatment is also encouraged by cultural norms, such as marrying six-year-olds to sixties-aged men in Kilif, Kenya. Money, not age, determines the man. Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation [27] reports that female genital mutilation is another prominent child maltreatment. Most communities consider boy children safe and undercared for. Many parents and carers don't realise guys are at risk and only consider girls vulnerable.

cognitive stimulation and were more likely to succeed as adults. Early stress irreversibly damaged a child's brain, learning, and memory. Thus, parents' inability to "relate" to their young children was a major oversight. In 300BC, Plato noted that the initial step was always important, especially when dealing with young and fragile people[29]. Sigmund Freud also believed that a child's early years shaped their future. Malnutrition and recurrent illness cause 40% of Kenyan children to not reach their full genetic potential. Mental development was often irreversibly affected due to delayed physical growth.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Due to the variables, the study used a descriptive research approach to produce data for quantitative analysis and to simultaneously describe perspectives, perceptions, and beliefs at each given time. This descriptive research design addresses complex social issues. It seeks to understand the many personal,

political, social, cultural, and contextual factors beyond 'just acquiring the facts'. Descriptive survey research involved informed and desirable people. The strategy was selected to identify target population's salient and unique traits to a high degree.

Target population

The population for this study consisted of teachers, students, and head teachers from Mbarara Municipal

School, Bishop Stuart Demonstration, Uganda Martyr's, and Children Mission.

Area of study

The study was conducted in Kakoba Division Mbarara city south. The division covers most of the central business district and is located on the east and south east of the central business. It borders with Kamukuzi Division in the west, Kakiika Division in

the East and North, Nyamitanga Division and Masha of Isingiro District in the south. Emphasis was put on four schools namely; Mbarara Municipal School, Uganda Martyrs Primary School, Kakoba Moslem Primary School, and Kakoba Demonstration School.

Sampling techniques

This study used purposive sampling. Parents and youth were purposefully sampled. These should have

accurate study data. Religious and local leaders were also sampled randomly.

Noor, Tajik and Golzar[30] states that simple random sampling is employed when each respondent has an equal probability of being chosen for the study. This involves choosing a sample of

participants from a larger population for investigation. It reduced sample selection biases and gave everyone an equal chance to participate in the study.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents' responses on whether children are abused

Responses	Frequency	Percent %
Yes	222	99
No	02	01
Total	224	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 1, findings presented that children were abused. This implies that respondents were informed about the abuse of children.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on major causes of child abuse

Responses	Frequency	Percent %
Unwanted pregnancies	65	29
Substance abuse	59	26
Economic distress	60	27
War and political violence	40	18
Total	224	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 2 above, 29% of the respondents indicated unwanted pregnancies, 26% indicated Substance abuse whereas 27% indicated Economic distress and 18% indicated War and political violence. This implies that street children Marjory experienced physical child abuse.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on whether there are effects of child abuse on academic performance.

Responses	Frequency	Percent %
Yes	224	100
No	00	00
Total	224	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 3, findings presented that there are effects of child abuse among primary school pupils on academic performance in Mbarara city. This implies that respondents were informed about the effects of abuse of street kids.

Table 4: Respondents' responses on the effects of child abuse on academic performance

Reponses	Frequency	Percent %
Increased absenteeism	60	27
Higher rates of school drop out	67	30
Difficulty in paying attention as well as learning	35	16
Low grades	38	17
Increased disciplinary problems	24	11
Total	224	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 4 above, 27% of the respondents indicated increased absenteeism, 30% higher rates of schooldropout, 26% respondents indicated difficulty in paying attention as well as learning, 17% respondents indicated low grades and 08% respondents indicated increased disciplinary problems. This implies that child abuse create increased cases of poor academic performance among pupils.

Table 5: Respondents' responses on measures to reduce child abuse among pupils in primary schools

Reponses	Frequency	Percent %
Building protective factors for victims	58	26
Rehabilitation and community-based facilities	54	24
Charity approaches	52	23
Interventions from both the government and non-governmental organizations	30	13
Child care	30	13
Total	224	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 5, 26% of the respondents indicated interventions from both the government and non-governmental organizations, 24% respondents indicated a measure charity approaches, 23% respondents indicated building protective factors for victims 13% respondents indicated child care and

such as sexual abuse or other psychosocial and 13% respondents indicated rehabilitation and community-based facilities. This implies that child abuse can be minimized mainly by interventions from both the government and non-governmental organizations.

DISCUSSION

The study found that unplanned pregnancies cause child abuse. Unintended babies are more likely to be abused or neglected. Over 78% of child abuse cases are neglect. Additionally, unwanted pregnancies are more likely to be linked to abusive relationships and physical abuse during pregnancy. This finding is in line with the findings of Kohl et al.[31] who found that child abuse reduced maternal mental health and mother-child relationships. Limited research suggests that moderately or severely handicapped children are more likely to be abused. Substance abuse was also found to cause child abuse. Child abuse can be caused by substance misuse. Parents

who used alcohol, cocaine, or heroin were more likely to mistreat their children and refuse court-ordered services. Goldberg and Blaauw[32] observed that parental substance usage was involved in almost two-thirds of child maltreatment instances. This study discovered links between alcohol and physical abuse and cocaine and sexual abuse. Although the abuse survivor may not realise the abuse is wrong, emotional turmoil can cause havoc. Child abuse can result from stress, specific needs, social isolation, violent marriage, single parenting, and stepparents. According to Human Rights Watch[24], civil war causes child maltreatment.

Soldiers, labourers, and sexual slaves abuse the children abroad. In Northern Uganda, LRA-abducted children are beaten and forced to attack, burn houses, beat and kill civilians, abduct other children, carry heavy loads over long distances, and work long hours as virtual slaves. The study found that absenteeism contributes to child abuse. Maltreated children have trouble making new friends and adapting to social norms, which can affect their ability to learn and succeed in school. While a lot of research claims that child maltreatment leads to academic failure, another body of literature claims that it depends on the individual

The survey found that child abuse among street children in Mbarara municipality is indifferent and increasing due to a lot of circumstances, although certain actions are being taken to minimise the negative impact. In this wise, the study calls for the government to provide equitable resource distribution, empowerment, training, and capacity

and the type of maltreatment. Potter^[33] found unfavourable connections between child abuse and school performance. Maltreated children have poorer grades, more suspensions, and higher-grade retention. According to Evans, Garner and Honig^[34], government, non-governmental organisations, community-based facilities, and child care services have attempted to combat street child abuse. According Purcell^[35], such interventions promote skills, personal characteristics, knowledge, relationships, and opportunities that offset risk factors and improve well-being and long-term outcomes.

CONCLUSION

building. Non-governmental organisations like UNICEF could improve their effectiveness and make present approaches more responsive to harmed children. Social communities, local leaders, carers, and religious centres should provide housing, clothes, and other basic requirements.

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