

Evaluation of guidance and counselling services in enhancing sexually abused early childhood learners in Kinangop Sub-County, Nyandarua County, Kenya

Mary Wambui Ndegwa

Mount Kenya University
P O Box 342-01000 Thika Kenya
Tel. +254724 409529
Email: maryndegwaw@gmail.com

Dr. Paul Edabu

Mount Kenya University
PO Box 2591-301000 Eldoret, Kenya
Tel: + 254 0705927486
E-mail: pedabu@mku.ac

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the applicability of guidance and counseling services for sexually abused early childhood learners in Kinangop Sub-county, Nyandarua County, Kenya. This study was guided by The Attachment Theory which was postulated by Bowlby (1990). The study adopted mixed methods approach and a descriptive survey. Target population comprised the 53 ECDE Center managers, 146 ECDE Teachers, 106 parents' representatives, five Children's officers and 1190 ECDE Children all totaling to 1500. The researcher sampled 20% of the targeted ECDE Centers, that is, ten ECDE Centers. Similarly, based on the same proportion, 20% of the target population, that is, 300 respondents were sampled. Stratified sampling was applied to create five strata based on the number of zones in Kinangop Sub-county. From each stratum, two ECDE Center managers and nine ECDE Teachers were selected using purposive sampling. The Children's Officers were also selected using purposive sampling. Six parents' representatives and 43 ECDE children were selected using simple random sampling. Qualitative data was analyzed based on research objectives while quantitative data was analyzed using ANOVA in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 21). The study established that applicability of guidance and counseling amongst sexually abused children has not been fully realized. The study thus recommends that ECDE Centers should start guidance and counseling units within the centers for sexually abused children to help mitigate against trauma and other attendant consequences of sexual abuse. Stakeholders should be trained on different child protection measures so that they can be able to identify and prevent cases or potential instances of child sexual abuse (CSA).

Keywords: Guidance and Counseling, Sexually Abused, Early Childhood Learners

1.1 Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right which ought to be accessible to everyone, without any discrimination and all children must be able to go to school, and thereby benefit from the same opportunities to build a future (UNESCO, 2011). In his longitudinal study done in the Netherlands, Knoll (2010) indicated that sexually abused children's access to basic education is often compromised. The study asserts that child victims of rape or any form of sexual abuse cannot concentrate in class or even participate in school's academic activities.

Similar views were expressed by Gallagher (2000) in his study in Japan in which he revealed that sexually abused children lose much of their study time undergoing trauma after an ugly experience with an abuser. Beyond the question of accessibility, the right to an education also supposes that the objectives of learning will be attained. This means that all children have the right to benefit from a quality education adapted to their needs without discrimination. Moreover, teachers must be trained in techniques of teaching which combine pedagogy and play for the purpose of arousing children's interest. On a larger scale, the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA) in the United States conducted a nationwide survey of teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about child abuse and its prevention (Abrahams, Casey, & Daro, 2009). The sample consisted of 568 (34% response rate) teachers in 40 school districts across the country. The survey found two-thirds of teachers indicated that their schools are not sufficiently educating them on identifying, reporting, and preventing child abuse and neglect. Ninety percent of teachers who suspected child abuse reported the case, but only 23% reported directly to child protective services (Abrahams et al, 2009). Almost two-thirds of teachers felt that a significant obstacle to child abuse reporting was the lack of sufficient knowledge on how to detect and report cases of suspected child abuse. Other research findings, however, suggest that teachers fail to report child abuse for reasons other than lack of awareness or inadequate training.

1.2 Context and review of literature

Sexually abused children in early childhood settings have a right to basic education. Despite being more vulnerable to developmental risks, sexually abused children are often overlooked in mainstream preschool programmes and services designed to ensure child development. In a study conducted in the Netherlands, Knoll (2010) noted that sexually abused children in early childhood settings do not receive the specific supports required to meet their rights and needs. Such children and their families are confronted by barriers including inadequate legislation and policies, negative stakeholders' attitudes, inadequate instructional resources,

lack of guidance and counselling services and lack of accessible environments. Preschool children who have been sexually abused in Kinangop Sub-county are no exception where they are not provided with timely and appropriate early intervention, support and protection; suffer increased poverty and profound exclusion. Such children have been found to register low and compromised academic grades (Rodriguez, 2009). It was against this background that the study sought to evaluate the applicability of rights to education for sexually abused children in early childhood settings in Kinangop Sub-county.

Barrett-Kruse, Martinez & Carll (2008) posit that counseling is especially important when a child is betrayed by a person close to him/her, is struggling with the effects of the sexual abuse and/or when she/he is not supported by the family when she/he discloses the abuse. School counselors are not only responsible for reporting suspected child abuse; they also provide counseling services to children and their parents or guardians, coordinate resources in the community, and design prevention programs (Kenny & McEachern, 2002).

In a longitudinal study conducted in the United States, Commonwealth of Virginia (2007) indicated that, in order for school counselors to be effective helpers for children, it is essential that they know how to recognize and prevent child sexual abuse and neglect. Commonwealth of Virginia (2007) further indicated that sexually abused children who have undergone counseling registered impressive academic grades. Children don't usually like to sit around and talk for long. In fact, they might not like to talk at all. These findings affirm the fact that a skilled counselor can encourage children to express their thoughts, feelings and responses through such things as play, drawing or letter writing.

Children often believe that because they've been abused, they are different. This may make them feel isolated and thus does not progress in their education (Bryant & Milsom, 2005). In this case the counsellor may want the child to be in a group with other children who have been through similar experiences. In Brazil, Eckenrode, Laird & Dorris (2003) indicated that group counseling allows sexually abused children to help one another just as adults do when they work in a group. Because of the abuse, the child may feel 'weird' or 'not normal'. The counsellor tries to help your child change those feelings by showing a genuine interest in your child's everyday activities such as sports, hobbies, computer games and time spent with friends. The counsellor should also emphasize from time to time that the abuser was the one responsible for the abuse. Most children need to be reminded of this often, because of their feelings of guilt and shame (Eckenrode et al, 2003). The counselor probably wants to spend a

lot of time with you as well, especially if the sexually abused child is quite young. In other words, school counselors have an important responsibility in preventing child sexual abuse and neglect. Establishing a school wide prevention program may also be effective in the prevention of child abuse and neglect (James & Burch, 1999).

In most schools in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, in collaboration with teachers, principals, and community agencies, school counselors better assist the most vulnerable children and those in need of assistance (Cole, 2005). Teachers and school counselors have the best opportunities for impacting the lives of neglected and sexually abused children, increasing students' knowledge of abuse (Ko & Cosden, 2001). By collaborating with teachers, school counselors can incorporate life skills training into the classroom guidance curriculum. By working together, they implement classroom activities aimed at improving self-esteem and interpersonal skills (Barrett-Kruse, Martinez & Carll, 2008). In a longitudinal study conducted in South Africa, Lambie (2005) asserted that, in efforts to reduce the potential of sexual abuse, school counselors can offer resources to assist families and parents. Information regarding prenatal care, discipline techniques, developmental needs of children, and stress management skills can be offered to reduce the anxiety of becoming a new parent (Lambie, 2005).

Parental support groups can be effective in providing support and information to strengthen parenting skills and the parent-child relationship (Lambie, 2005). Consistent with these assertions, Einbender & Friedrich (2009), in a study conducted in Morocco, indicated that school personnel should be familiar with the symptoms of physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Training opportunities include school-based workshops, online training, coursework, videos, and child sexual abuse publications. Einbender & Friedrich (2009) also indicated that school counselors can also assist in the prevention of child sexual abuse by knowing child protective services workers in their area, maintaining accurate school counseling records in a confidential file, purchasing materials specific to child sexual abuse to facilitate discussion of feelings and trauma and having available resources about testifying in court.

In Kenya, sexually abused children suffer psychological, emotional, or physical harm as a result of the abuse, with long and short-term consequences. Some of these consequences include decreased academic performance, aggressive or violent behavior, decreased self-esteem, and mental health problems including depression, suicidality, eating disorders, sleep

disruption, substance abuse, and sexual problems (James, 2009). A report by the Ministry of Education (2013) indicates that school counselors are not only responsible for reporting suspected child abuse; they also provide counseling services to children and their parents or guardians, coordinate resources in the community, and design prevention programs. In order for school counselors to be effective helpers for children, it is essential that they know how to recognize and prevent child sexual abuse and neglect.

In Kinangop Sub-county, the scenario is the same with the process of reporting sexual abuse being challenging, traumatic, and at times, overwhelming despite the fact that, in order for school counselors to be effective helpers for children, it is essential that they know how to recognize and prevent child abuse and neglect. Though, the empirical studies have not indicated that net effect of such reporting and prevention on quality of education offered to the sexually abused. There is no clear link between guidance of a sexually abused child and his or her academic performance; research and knowledge gaps which this study sought to fill.

1.3 Research Methodology

Mixed methods approach was applied, that is, both quantitative and qualitative methods. This study employed a descriptive survey design. Kothari (2005) noted that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators. The research study was carried out in Kinangop Sub-county in Nyandarua County. The researcher applied stratified sampling to create five strata based on the number of zones in Kinangop Sub-county. Purposive sampling was appropriate due to the fact that the sampled respondents hold positions which make them responsible as implementers of policies. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to realize a sample of 10 ECDE Center managers, 44 ECDE Teachers, 2 Children's Officers, 32 parents' representatives and 212 ECDE Children. Qualitative data was analyzed based on themes whereas quantitative data was analyzed inferentially using One-Way ANOVA in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 21).

1.4 Findings

As per research question one, the study sought to establish how guidance and counseling enhance education of sexually abused children. Data was collected from ECDE Center

Managers and ECDE Teachers, organized and summarized and results were as indicated in Table 1;

Table 1: ECDE Center Managers' and ECDE Teachers' Views on Guidance and Counseling and Education of Sexually Abused Children

Test Items	REP	Ratings				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
		%	%	%	%	%
Availability of school counselors for sexually abused children enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance	ECDECM	72.9	10.4	1.3	10.9	4.5
	ECDET	81.7	7.4	2.7	5.1	3.1
Counseling sexually abused children against trauma enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance	ECDECM	59.3	16.7	3.9	11.4	8.7
	ECDET	71.7	17.1	1.2	6.1	3.9
Career guidance for sexually abused children enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance	ECDECM	79.2	13.8	2.6	3.1	1.3
	ECDET	73.5	12.8	2.8	3.7	7.2
Counseling sexually abused children on behavior change enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance	ECDECM	70.3	10.4	3.7	9.1	6.5
	ECDET	63.9	10.3	3.4	13.7	8.7

Key: ECDECM-ECDE Center Managers; ECDET-Early Childhood Development and Education Teachers

Table 1 above reveals that majority (72.9%ECDECM; 81.7%ECDET) of the sampled ECDE Center Managers and ECDE teachers strongly agreed with the view that availability of school counselors for sexually abused children enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance as did 10.4%ECDECM and 7.4%ECDET who agreed.

However, only a paltry 1.3% of the sampled ECDE Center Managers as well as 2.7% of ECDE teachers were undecided, 10.9% of ECDE Center Managers as did 5.1% of the ECDE teachers disagreed whereas 4.5% of ECDE Center Managers and 3.1% of the ECDE teachers strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the assertions of Bryant & Milsom (2005) that children often believe that because they've been abused, they are different and a counsellor should be available to make them not to feel isolated and thus does progress in their education. In this case the counsellor may want the child to be in a group with other children who have been through similar experiences.

These findings were also consistent with the assertions of Eckenrode, Laird & Dorris (2003) who indicated that, in Brazil, group counseling allows sexually abused children to help one another just as adults do when they work in a group. Because of the abuse, the child may feel 'weird' or 'not normal'. The counsellor tries to help your child change those feelings by showing a genuine interest in your child's everyday activities such as sports, hobbies, computer games and time spent with friends. In other words, the counsellor should also emphasize from time to time that the abuser was the one responsible for the abuse. On the same breath, majority of the respondents (59.3% ECDECM and 71.7% ECDET) strongly agreed with the view that counseling sexually abused children against trauma enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance. At the same time, 16.7% of the ECDE Center Managers as did 17.1% of the sampled ECDE teachers agreed. However, 3.9% of ECDE Center Managers and 1.2% of the ECDE teachers were undecided, 11.4% of ECDE Center Managers and 6.1% of the ECDE teachers disagreed whereas 8.7% of the sampled preschool ECDE Center Managers as did 3.9% of the ECDE teachers strongly disagreed.

These findings lend credence to the views expressed by Einbender & Friedrich (2009) who indicated that school counselors can also assist in the prevention of child sexual abuse by knowing child protective services workers in their area, maintaining accurate school counseling records in a confidential file, purchasing materials specific to child sexual abuse to facilitate discussion of feelings and trauma and having available resources about testifying in court. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents (79.2% ECDECM and 73.5% ECDET) strongly agreed with the view that career guidance for sexually abused children enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance. On the same breath, 13.8% of the ECDE Center Managers as did 12.8% of the sampled ECDE teachers agreed. However, 2.6% of ECDE Center Managers and 2.8% of the ECDE

teachers were undecided, 3.1% of ECDE Center Managers and 3.7% of the ECDE teachers disagreed whereas 1.3% of the sampled ECDE Center Managers as did 7.2% of the ECDE teachers strongly disagreed.

These findings corroborate the assertions of Commonwealth of Virginia (2007) which further indicated that sexually abused children who have undergone counseling registered impressive academic grades. These findings affirm the fact that a skilled counselor can encourage children to express their thoughts, feelings and responses through such things as play, drawing or letter writing. Majority of the sampled respondents (70.3%ECDECM and 63.9%ECDET) strongly agreed with the view that counseling sexually abused children on behavior change enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance. A paltry 10.4% of the sampled ECDE Center Managers and 10.3% of the sampled ECDE teachers agreed. At the same time, 3.7% of the sampled ECDE Center Managers and 3.4% of ECDE teachers were undecided, 9.1% of ECDE Center Managers and 13.7% of the ECDE teachers disagreed whereas 6.5% of the sampled ECDE Center Managers as did 8.7% of the ECDE teachers strongly disagreed.

These findings were consistent with the assertions of Camblin & Prout (2003) that there is need to prevent sexual abuse by teachers, other school staff and those who hold positions of trust in education, it is important to gain a better understanding of what grooming behavior look in the context of those working in schools, academies and colleges. Camblin & Prout (2003) posit that it is of critical importance that those involved in education have a greater understanding how these adults groom and entrap their pupils. These findings too lend credence to another study conducted in Australia in which Finlayson & Koocher (2001) asserted that this understanding assist schools to develop and enforce effective safeguarding policies and engage in safe practices to prevent abusive behavior from occurring and deal more appropriately with concerning behaviors when they are identified so as to enhance education of the sexually abused children. To verify the possible difference between guidance and counseling and education of sexually abused children, the researcher collected data on the number of sexually abused children accessing education, enrollment and academic performance and the results were as indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Results of the Applicability of Guidance and Counseling on Education of the Sexually Abused Children

Aspects of Guidance and Counseling	Education of Sexually Abused Children
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	Accessing Education	Enrollment	Academic Performance
Those who have undergone counseling against trauma	11	23	53
Those who have undergone career guidance	19	39	41
Those who have undergone behavior change	37	60	76

The results in Table 2 indicate that sexually abused children who have undergone any kind of guidance and counseling such as against trauma, career guidance and behavior change access education, are enrolled and register impressive academic grades. However, it is evident that at the time of enrolment, the number is high though goes down after sexually abuse. These results were subjected to ANOVA and results were as indicated in Table 3:

Table 3: ANOVA Analysis of Difference between Guidance and Counseling and Accessibility to Education, Enrollment and Academic Performance of Sexually Abused Children

	Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	1446.222	2	723.111		
Between	1770.889	2	885.444	15.414	.013
Within Items					
People Residual	229.778	4	57.444		
Total	2000.667	6	333.444		
Total	3446.889	8	430.861		

Grand Mean = 39.89

From the ANOVA statistics in Table 3, the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of 0.013 which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value of 0.013) is less than 5%, that is, $p\text{-value}=0.013 < 0.05$. It also indicates that the results were statistically significant and that guidance and counseling enhances education of the sexually abused children, that is, accessibility, enrollment and academic performance. Thus, the null

hypothesis, H_{o1} , is rejected. These results were consistent with the findings of a study conducted in Kenya by James (2009) which generated a p-value of $0.021 < 0.05$.

These findings affirm the fact that school counselors are not only responsible for reporting suspected child abuse; they also provide counseling services to children and their parents or guardians, coordinate resources in the community, and design prevention programs. In order for school counselors to be effective helpers for children, it is essential that they know how to recognize and prevent child sexual abuse and neglect in order to enhance their accessibility to education, improve enrolment and enhance academic performance.

1.5 Discussions

The study established that guidance and counseling enhance education of sexually abused children. Availability of school counselors for sexually abused children enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance. These findings attest to the fact that children do believe that because they've been abused, they are different and a counsellor should be available to make them not to feel isolated and thus does progress in their education. In such instances, counsellors need to have the sexually abused child in a group with other children who have been through similar experiences.

Besides, group counseling allows sexually abused children to help one another just as adults do when they work in a group. That is, the counsellor should try to help the child change such negative feelings by showing a genuine interest in your child's everyday activities such as sports, hobbies, computer games and time spent with friends. In other words, the counsellor should also emphasize from time to time that the abuser was the one responsible for the abuse. Counseling sexually abused children against trauma enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance and thus affirms the fact that school counselors can also assist in the prevention of child sexual abuse by knowing child protective services workers in their area, maintaining accurate school counseling records in a confidential file, purchasing materials specific to child sexual abuse to facilitate discussion of feelings and trauma and having available resources about testifying in court.

In the same vein, career guidance for sexually abused children too enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance which support the fact that sexually abused children who have undergone counseling registered impressive academic grades. These findings affirm the fact that a skilled counselor can encourage children to

express their thoughts, feelings and responses through such things as play, drawing or letter writing. Similar assertions were expressed for counseling sexually abused children on behavior change enhances their accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance. These findings are consistent with the fact that there is need to prevent sexual abuse by teachers, other school staff and those who hold positions of trust in education, it is important to gain a better understanding of what grooming behavior look in the context of those working in schools, academies and colleges.

It is of critical importance that those involved in education have a greater understanding how these adults groom and entrap their pupils which lend credence to the fact such an understanding assist schools to develop and enforce effective safeguarding policies and engage in safe practices to prevent abusive behavior from occurring and deal more appropriately with concerning behaviors when they are identified so as to enhance education of the sexually abused children.

1.6 Conclusions

From the research findings, guidance and counseling, child protection, provision of instructional resources and stakeholders' attitudes serve to enhance applicability of rights to education of sexually abused children. Such dynamics enhance sexually abused children's accessibility to education, improve enrollment rates and enhance their scholastic and academic performance. Group counseling, counseling sexually abused children against trauma and counseling on behavior change allow sexually abused children to help one another just as adults do when they work in a group. Provision of safe learning conditions and adherence to child protection regulations in ECDE Centers guarantee sexually abused children accessibility to education, enrolment rates and academic performance.

1.7 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study makes the following recommendations: ECDE Centers should start guidance and counseling units within the centers for sexually abused children to help mitigate against trauma and other attendant consequences of sexual abuse.

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