FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN PUBLIC PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

Gichuba, W. Catherine
(Early Childhood and Development)
Mobile: +254720897759
Email: gichubakate@gmail.com
(Corresponding Author)

Dr. Mwoma, B. Teresa
Mobile: +254726392781
Email: tbitengo@yahoo.com

Dr. Mugo, W. Juliet
Mobile: +254722839001
Email: julietmugo2@gmail.com
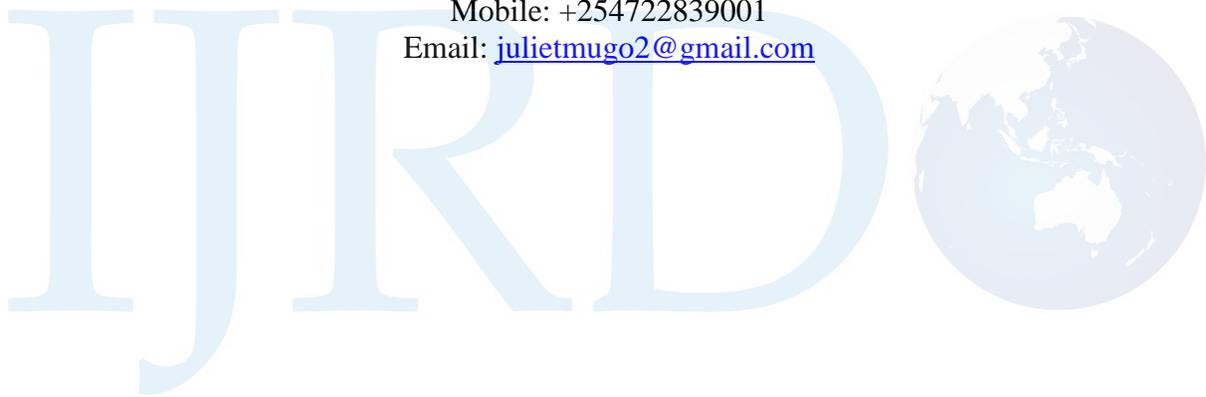
ABSTRACT

Violence against children is a common phenomenon worldwide, which may be presented in different forms that includes physical, psychological and sexual. The Kenyan government has enacted different Acts of law to provide support and direction in the process of protecting all children. However, despite the existence of the acts and efforts put in place, violence against children is still rampant and studies done have mostly focused on women and girls, yet both genders are at risk. This article, therefore presents findings of a study conducted in Nairobi City County focusing on the forms of violence against children in pre-primary schools. This study was anchored on the culture of violence theory which emphasizes on violence as a product of sub-cultures, systems and structures in the society. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Sampling technique used was multi-stage whereby purposeful and simple random sampling procedures were used and a study sample size of 168 identified that comprised of pre-school teachers, parents and children officers. Data was collected using a questionnaire. The findings showed that violence against children was in existence and occurred in different forms which included physical, psychological and sexual. Recommendations were made for different stakeholders to ensure provision and maintenance of a child friendly environment both in school and at home and also work towards ending physical and humiliating punishments to all children and the government to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation on implementation of the existing policies Further research needs to be carried out to establish the causes of violence against children in Nairobi City County and a replication of the current study in other counties to find out if similar trends exist.

Key words:Violence, Forms, Children, Pre-Primary Schools, Culture

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Violence against children is any ill treatment or an act directed to an individual child or children, which may be presented in different forms and varies across different cultures worldwide. Violence may manifest itself in different forms such as physical, psychological and sexual violence in different levels and hierarchies within the society (Oduor, Swart & Anrot, 2012). Globally, studies on violence are carried out in large scales in the United States and in Europe mostly focusing on women and girls which is the same case in Sub-Saharan Africa. A study done in the United States by Lopez, Esbensen, and Brick, (2010) revealed that bullying was more prevalent among the respondents from secondary school students. A study by Bunwaree (1999)

in Mauritius found that bullying in schools was very high among female teachers and it was most preferred than corporal punishment. According to Miske and Vanbelle-Daunity (1997), girls are most vulnerable to violence in schools, where teachers and other caregivers are more likely to take advantage over them. A study carried out by MicCoy (2012) in Asia revealed that majority of young children had been exposed to forms of violence in schools. Another study in India, by Deb and Wash (2012) reported that corporal punishment was widely used in schools. The most prevalent was psychological followed by physical and sexual form of violence being the least as reported. Elsewhere in Papua and Indonesia, a research conducted by Cahill, (2013), showed that the highly used form of discipline in schools was corporal punishment commonly administered through slapping, and hitting with objects. The study also revealed that girls were less likely to receive this form of discipline compared to boys, while majority of 14 years olds had experienced psychological or physical violence in their life time.

In Africa, a study carried out by Leach and Machakanja (2000) in Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Malawi revealed that violence in secondary school is a reality. Sexual aggression among boys was very high than in girls. Other studies on HIV and AIDS in Botswana and Malawi by Bennell, Hyde and Swainsnson (2002) and in Uganda by Mirembe and Davies (2001) reported on exposure of adolescent to sexual violence. Another study done in Swaziland and Zimbabwe by Mitchell and Mothobi-Tapela (2005) revealed that school toilets were danger zones for young children since rape, defilement, harassment, and assaults usually took place in those zones. In South Africa, a study done by Burton (2005) revealed that more boys reported having experienced violence than girls. Other studies in Zimbabwe by Gordon (1995) and in Botswana and Ghana by Leach, Slade, and Dunne,(2013) uncovered violence while investigating

underachievement. These studies indicated that corporal punishment was highly used in schools even where it had been banned.

In Tanzania, a study by Kuleana (1999) revealed that corporal punishment administered was considered as part of socialization. Although, schools have a key responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence, children are still exposed to violence (ACPF, 2014) since corporal punishment is widely practiced in schools. Specifically in Ethiopia 30% of children, have been affected, 55%, in Senegal, 71% in Ghana and 60% in Kenya. In addition a study by International Rescue Committee (IRC) in 2014, reported that the most frequent form of violence was physical, psychological and sexual violence. It also revealed that cases of violence were on the increase and not just in numbers but also in other different varieties. KDHS (2010) reported that there was an increase in rape, defilement and incest cases. This indicated that children are vulnerable and at risk even with their family members. Abuya, Onsomu, Moore, and Piper, (2012) conducted a study on association between education and domestic violence among women who had been offered HIV testing. The study reported that physical violence was common among women and children and had a negative effect to children education.

A study by Osero (2012), on health effects of violence revealed that 67% of the victims had experienced psychological violence, 35% physical and 18% sexual form of violence. According to Mirembe and Davis (2001) their study showed that young age increased the risk of physical and sexual violence. According to UNICEF, (2014) violence is typically experienced by children in secret and more often than not goes unreported. As a result there is inadequate information on nature and extent of influence of various forms of violence. Yet such efforts are hindered by weak evidence base and lack of hard data of violence and its magnitude. Further, in Asia Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise and Watts, (2006) previewed studies andpresents a scenario

indicating the predominance of physical and sexual forms of violence in schools, thus lacking adequate literature and statistical data on forms of violence and especially among young children. Locally, however, there were hardly relevant studies conducted on forms of violence. The only study identified was by Ongeti, Ongeng'o, Were, Gakara, and Pulei, (2013) on patterns of violence in Nairobi County which concluded that the only major form of violence of was physical among women and girls. Therefore, there was need to identify forms of violence among young children to be able to understand and identify intervention measures and programmes to support children who are at risk.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess forms of violence against children in public pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviewed literature indicates that violence– "encompassing physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, and maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse"– is prevalent in all societies (UN CRC, 1989; Krug, 2002; Pinheiro, 2006; McCann& Kerns, 2007). Violence against children can have profound and damaging consequences in childhood, adolescence and throughout adulthood. Lifelong adverse health, social, and economic consequences exist for those affected by violence, including mental and physical health conditions; increased health and other risk behaviours; exposure to further violence; disability from physical injury; reduced health-related quality of life; lower educational attainment; and lower levels of adult economic well-being (Gilbert, Wisdom, Browne, Fergusson, Web, & Jason, 2009).

Violence against children involving physical, sexual and psychological abuse, exploitation and neglect, has been shown through the WHO World Report on Violence and Health (2002), to be widely prevalent in all societies. Despite these estimates, one of the greatest obstacles to the protection of children from maltreatment worldwide, including the East Asia and Pacific region, has been the scarcity of data on the prevalence of the forms and consequences of child maltreatment. The design and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and systems to effectively address child maltreatment must be based on scientific evidence; thus, the dearth of valid data in all countries in the region has been a considerable constraint for governments, INGOs, civil society organizations and UN agencies, including UNICEF, who are working to protect children from such violations of their rights(WHO, 2002).

According to Pinheiro (2006), a meta-analyses of estimates done across regions show that violence against children is widespread, with 17-35% prevalence for both boys and girls in low and lower middle income countries and lower prevalence rates (1-13%) in upper middle and high-income countries. Fairly consistent findings across the region highlight that nearly three out of every four children experience violent discipline. The prevalence of child sexual abuse ranges from 11-22% for girls and 3-16.5% for boys across countries. In addition, child sexual abuse is more prevalent for girls than boys in all areas except in low-income countries in the region, which show a slightly higher prevalence for boys than for girls (16.5% vs. 13% respectively. However, it is important to build on these studies and to try and disentangle if and why the prevalence and outcomes may be different for boys while still addressing the highly prevalent state of violence against girls in the region. Moreover, prevalence estimates for witnessing parental violence are very similar for both boys and girls with 12% to 32%, respectively,

reporting that they witnessed violence between their parents or caregivers at some point in their childhood (Pinheiro, 2006).

The prevalence estimates for psychological violence range from 18-41.6%, showing a wide range across countries in the region but very similar estimates for both boys and girls in lower middle and upper middle-income countries. The highest prevalence estimates for psychological violence are for girls in high-income countries in the region. Neglect is one area that is under researched in the East Asia and Pacific, with prevalence estimates range from 22-32% for both males and females across the region. Recent research in China has started to explore and measure the neglect of younger children. Child exploitation is also prevalent in the region. Nearly 1 in 10 children are involved in child labour with some countries having lower rates. Approximately a quarter of children are married by the age of 18 and nearly 1 in 10 children in some countries are married by the age of 15 (Gilbert et al., 2009).

All forms of violence are linked to mental health problems and depression. A larger percentage of self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts are attributable to both boys and girls having experienced psychological violence than to any other type of violence against children. Neglect is also largely attributable for suicide attempts in East Asia and the Pacific for both boys and girls across the region(UNICEF, 2014). Approximately one-third to one-half of early smoking initiation in the region is attributable to having experienced child physical abuse. Problem of drinking and illicit drug use as outcomes are linked to all types of violence against children. Though there are very few studies that exist in the region focusing on measuring physical health consequences of violence against children, the few studies show that specific outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections, are attributable to violence, whereas exposure to or perpetration of further violence is an outcome associated with experiences of violence during childhood and

lifetime physical violence and victimization is attributable in part to experiences of child sexual abuse for both males and females in the region.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey research approach which involved public pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, whereby respondents were requested to identify and give their opinions on questions raised by the researcher on various forms of violence in the County. Ten percent (10%) of parents of children in pre-primary schools, preschool teachers, and children officers were sampled as the respondents of the study. This ensured a representation of all groups in the sample which was proportional to the size of the group and as a result 168 respondents was the sample.Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data. Permit letters from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation were used to access the schools. The drop and pick later method was used given the tight schedule of school head teachers, pre-school teachers, parents and children officers to allow them have adequate time and effectively respond to the raised research questions. The responses were coded where they were assigned numerical labels and were fed to the computer Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0) for analysis. Frequency tables, percentages and bar graphs were used to present the findings.

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings and discussion on forms of violence against children.

5.1 Forms of Violence Shared by Children according to Caregivers

Caregivers who were the study respondents were required to indicate forms of violence shared by children, which included physical (hitting, pushing, and slapping), Psychological (insults,

threats, and intimidation) and Sexual (rape, defilement, harassment where touching of body parts). Results are presented in figure 1.
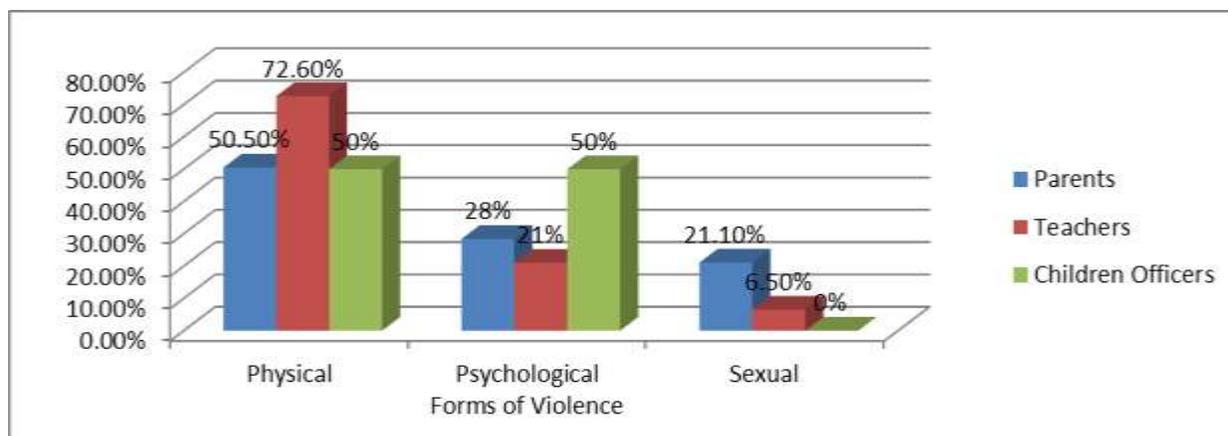

Figure 11: Forms of Violence Shared byChildren according to Caregivers

Figure 1, shows that majority of the parents 48(50.50%) indicated the form of violence children shared was physical followed by 27(28.4%) of the parents who stated psychological form of violence, whereas 20(21.1%) of them indicated that children had shared sexual form of violence. The results showed that the highly shared form of violence was physical, followed by psychological and the least was sexual. Further the figure, shows 4(6.5%) of the teachers shared sexual forms of violence with the parents, thirteen of the teachers (21.0%) shared psychological forms while, 45(72.6%) shared physical form. In addition children officers also noted that physical and psychological form of violence was mostly shared. This implies that physical form was rampant followed by psychological form of violence whereas sexual form was the least shared. However, the study findings revealed that children do not open up to share all experiences they have on violence. This may be as a result of underlying factors hindering sharing between children and their caregivers.

5.2 Other Forms of Violence Shared by Children according to Caregivers

Caregivers were asked to indicate any other form of violence that was shared by children apart from the listed ones. The findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Other Forms of Violence Shared by Children according to Caregivers

Other forms of Violence	No of Parents	%	No of Teachers	%	No of children Officers	%
Corporal punishment	4	4.2	1	1.61	0	-
Bullying	2	2.1	3	4.84	0	-
Incest	2	2.1	8	12.90	1	50.0
Sodomy	2	2.1	6	2.1	1	50.0
Child labour	1	1.1	18	29.03	0	-
Total	**95**	**100.0**	**62**	**100.0**	**2**	**100.0**

Table 1,show that other forms of violence were in existence as indicated by the parents where corporal punishment was indicated by 4(4.2%) of the parents, bullying was indicated by 2(2.1%) of the parents, child labour; 1(1.1%) of the parents, incest by 2(2.1%) and sodomy by 1(1.1%). It was noted that majority 84(88.42%) of the parents left a blank space and they did not indicate any other form of violence against children, which may be due to their beliefs and cultural practices within the society. Further, the table shows that other forms noted by teachers shared included; Corporal punishment that was noted by 1(1.61%) of the teachers, bullying was indicated by 3(4.84%) of the teachers, child labour; 18(29.03%) of the teachers, incest by 8(12.90%) and sodomy by 6(2.1%). In addition Children Officers noted that incest and sodomy were shared. This indicates that apart from physical, psychological and sexual form of violence

children were also exposed to other different forms of violence as they were brought up in the society.

5.3 Forms of Violence against children Experienced by Children according to Caregivers

Caregivers were asked to indicate forms of violence children had experienced. The findings are presented in table 2;

Table 2: Forms of Violence against Children experienced by Children according to Caregivers

Forms of Violence experienced	No of Parents	%	No of Teachers	%	No of children Officers	%
Physical	46	48.4	36	58.1	1	50.0
Psychological	23	24.2	12	19.4	1	50.0
Sexual	26	27.4	14	22.6	0	-
Total	**95**	**100.0**	**62**	**100.0**	**2**	**100.0**

Table 2, the study established that 46(48.4%) of the parents indicated physical form of violence, twenty six (27.4%) of the parents indicated sexual form of violence, while 23(24.2%) of them were of the opinion that their children had experienced psychological violence. The findings show that physical form of violence was rampant as the majority of parents indicated that children had experienced it compared with other forms. The table further show that 36(58.1%) of the teachers stated physical violence, 14(22.6%) of them indicated sexual form of violence, while 12(19.4%) of the teachers indicated psychological violence. In addition, 1(50%) of the children Officers stated physical violence, while 1(50%) indicated psychological violence. This implied that psychological form of violence was the least reported as experienced by children compared with the other forms.

5.4 Other Forms of violence Experienced by Children According to Caregivers

Respondents of the study were asked to indicate if there were other forms of violence apart from

the ones listed that children had experienced. The findings are presented in figure 4.2
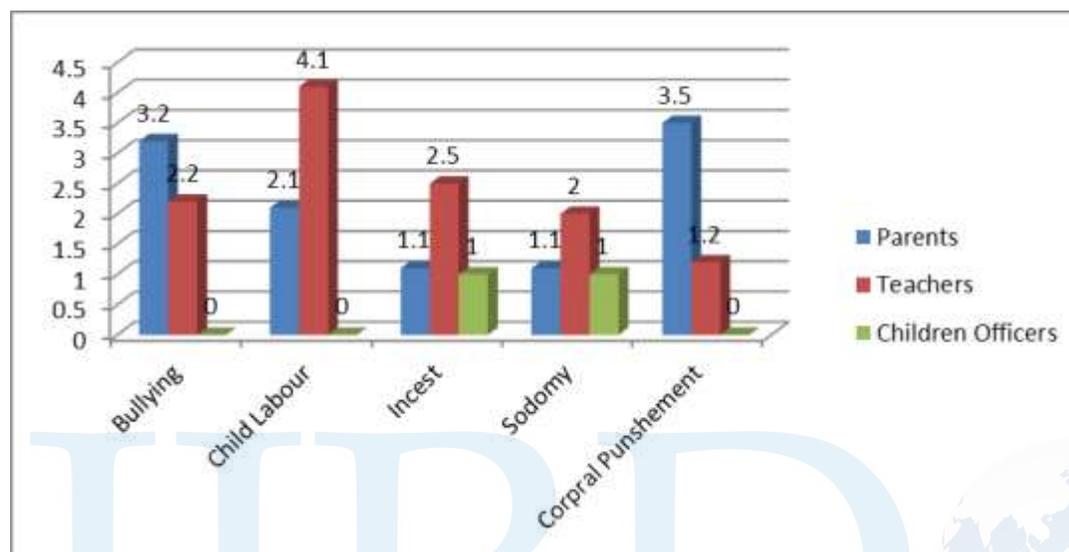

Figure 2: Other Forms of Violence Experienced by Children According to Caregivers

Figure 2, shows that other forms of violence parents indicated included; Bullying which was

noted by 3(3.2%) of the parents, child labour by 2(2.1%), incest by 1(1.1%) and sodomy by

1(1.1%) and corporal punishment by 3(3.5%). It was also noted that bullying and corporal

punishment was very high compared with the other forms of violence as indicated by the parents.

Further figure2, shows that other forms of violence that teachers indicated were; Bullying which

was noted by 2(2.2%) of the teachers, child labour by 4(4.1%), incest by 2(2.5%) sodomy by

2(2.0%) and corporal punishment by 1(1.2%). It was noted that child labour and incest was the

highest compared with other forms of violence. According to Children Officers, incest and

sodomy was rampant compared with other forms. The implication is that children are vulnerable

and may be exposed to different forms of violence at any time within the environment that they

live in.

The major findings showed that there were varied forms of violence in Nairobi City County. These forms ranged from physical, psychological and sexual which were in existence. Further, the study findings showed that majority of the respondents noted that physical form was mostly experienced, followed by sexual and psychological forms. Other forms also experienced by children included bullying, corporal punishment, child labour, incest, and sodomy. The findings also revealed that children do not open up to share all the experiences they have on violence with their caregivers. It was also noted that majority of the study participants shared physical forms followed by psychological form and the least being sexual form of violence. This implied that there were other factors that could have made sharing of cases of violence a challenge, which would be as a result of culture, set norms, beliefs and systems in the society.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of the study was to assess the forms of violence against children which include physical, psychological and sexual forms. The study thus concludes that physical, psychological and sexual forms were in existence and sexual form of violence was more reported than shared compared with other forms of violence. In addition there were other forms of violence that caregivers raised which include corporal punishment, bullying, incest, sodomy and child labour that were rampant.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicated that violence against children was in different forms. This study recommends that;

1. There is need for the County Government and National Government through the Ministry of Education to ensure effective and efficient implementation of existing policies such as Domestic Violence Act (2015), Sexual Offensive Act (2006) while ensuring close supervision and monitoring to reduce violence which is rampant in schools and at home. This can be achieved by ensuring availability of adequate officers who are trained and have the right qualifications to oversee the implementation of all policies and coordinate programmes in the communities to promote child friendly environment.

2. While evidence is beginning to emerge in Kenya on the impact of the studied forms of violence against children on health and wellbeing, constructive studies evaluating the effect of such violence against children on education and educational outcomes as well as on child's life opportunities is largely missing and more related studies should therefore be done in other counties.

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