Effects of Child Abuse on Students' Education in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha District, Tanzania

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Abstract: The study aimed to investigate the effects of child abuse on students' education in public secondary schools in Arusha District. The research objectives were to identify the causes of child abuse and examine measures to mitigate these abuses. Childhood Theory and convergent design under a mixed methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods was adopted. The study targeted 835 teachers, 19,630 students and all the 150 parents. Data was collected from 81 teachers, 54 students, and 15 parents across 9 schools using questionnaires and interview guide. Validity was established through expert judgment whereas split half method was used to estimate the reliability of the quantitative tools used for data collection; for QT, r = 0.92 and QS, r=0.87. The reliability of qualitative data collection instruments was ensured through triangulation techniques. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data in the SPSS version 26.0 and results were presented in tables while qualitative data were analyzed thematically alongside the research questions and presented in narrative forms. The study found that lack of parental involvement, poverty, inadequate teacher training and cultural norms significantly contribute to child abuse. Effective measures identified included comprehensive training for school staff, clear reporting protocols, counseling services, and increased parental involvement. The study concludes that addressing the identified causes and implementing the recommended measures can significantly reduce the impact of child abuse on students' education in Arusha District.
Key words: *Child, Abuse, Students, Education, Tanzania*

1. Introduction

Child abuse in schools takes various forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect (WHO, 2019). It can have long-lasting effects on a child's physical and mental well-being. Child abuse in schools, unfortunately, occurs in different continents around the world. While the specific manifestations and prevalence rates may vary, the fundamental issue remains the same; children being subjected to various forms of abuse within educational settings.

Causes of child abuse in schools in North America may include inadequate teacher training and supervision, systemic issues such as racism and discrimination, lack of awareness and reporting mechanisms, and power imbalances between students and educators (Finkelhor et al., 2021; CDC, 2020). In South America, child abuse in schools can be influenced by factors such as

socioeconomic inequalities, gang violence, drug trafficking, and inadequate government support for education and child protection services (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020). In Europe, factors contributing to child abuse in schools may include cultural norms surrounding discipline, socioeconomic disparities, and gaps in child protection policies and practices (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020; Gromoske and Hines, 2021).

Similarly, in North America, Europe and other developed regions, child abuse in schools often receives significant attention from authorities and the public. There are established reporting mechanisms, child protection laws, and support services in place to address cases of abuse. However, despite these measures, incidents of abuse still occur, highlighting the ongoing need for vigilance and intervention (NSPCC, 2019). This shows that child abuse is common even in the developed countries and it has negative consequences on the access to education among the children, especially the ones from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Also, child abuse in schools in Asia is a complex and multifaceted issue. Here are some key points regarding this issue in the region. Child abuse in Asian schools can encompass various forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, corporal punishment, and neglect (Chan et al., 2020). These abuses can occur between students, by teachers or school staff, or even by other adults within the school community. Cultural norms and attitudes may influence how child abuse is perceived and addressed in Asian societies. In some cultures, there may be a reluctance to openly discuss or report instances of abuse due to fear of stigma, shame, or retaliation. This can result in underreporting and a lack of awareness about the prevalence and impact of abuse. In many Asian countries, corporal punishment is still widely practiced in schools despite being banned or discouraged by laws and policies. This form of discipline can escalate into physical abuse and have detrimental effects on children's physical and mental well-being (UNICEF, 2019).

Cases of sexual abuse in Asian schools have been reported, involving teachers, staff members, or students. Victims of sexual abuse may face significant barriers to reporting, including fear of not being believed, social stigma, and cultural taboos surrounding discussions of sexuality. Bullying is a prevalent issue in Asian schools, with students experiencing verbal, physical, and cyber bullying (Zolotor et al., 2019). Peer violence can have serious consequences for victims, including psychological trauma, academic decline, and social withdrawal. While many

Asian countries have child protection laws and policies in place, enforcement and implementation vary widely. Challenges such as lack of resources, inadequate training for educators, and cultural barriers may hinder efforts to prevent and address child abuse effectively.

In African countries, despite the prevalence of child abuse in Africa, community-based interventions focusing on strengthening social support networks and promoting resilience show promise in mitigating the impact of abuse on children's well-being (Doku et al., 2021). Trauma-informed care: Implementing informed approaches in schools and communities can help address the psychological and emotional needs of children affected by abuse, facilitating healing and recovery (Dawson et al., 2020).

Furthermore, in Tanzania, child abuse in schools includes physical punishment, sexual abuse, bullying and corporal punishment (UNICEF Tanzania, 2020). Uwezo found that 1 in 5 children in schools in Tanzania reported experiencing physical violence from teachers or school staff (Uwezo, 2019). A report from Tanzania Daily News (2021), showed statistics in the year 2020 a whopping 3,949 people, mostly women and children were subjected to harsh acts such as physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, child marriage and early pregnancies. Thus, there is a need for more investigation on this crucial issue on child abuse in schools as it affects the future generations in the communities and therefore, there is need to address them.

Child abuse in schools in Arusha, like in many other places, is a serious concern. It can manifest in various forms such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Efforts to address this issue typically involve implementing strict policies, conducting training for educators and staff, promoting awareness among students, parents, and the community. A National Survey on Violence Against Children, revealed that almost a third of females aged 13 to 24 experiences at least one incidence of sexual violence before the age of 18. The same survey showed that 72 percent of girls have experienced some form of physical violence (UNICEF, 2022). Despite the reported cases of child abuse in Arusha, the practice has continued among teachers, non-teaching staff and older students. It is from this background that the current study was conducted to assess the effects of child abuse on students' education.

1.1 Research Questions

The study was conducted to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the causes of child abuse in public secondary schools in Arusha District?

2. What measures should be taken on the acts which lead to child abuse that affect students' education in public secondary schools in Arusha District?

2. Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical literature was reviewed with reference to research objectives. The study was based on Childhood Theory as postulated by John Locke (1632-1704).

2.1 Childhood Theory

The theory of childhood recognizes childhood as socially constructed concept which varies according to historical and socio- cultural perception of the child, the socio-economic and political context within children's lives are situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theoretical stances of the childhood theory include but not limited to the rights of the child for education and health services, protection against risks and vulnerabilities including being exposed to street risks.

2.1.1 Strengths of Childhood Theory

Childhood Theory provides a developmental framework for understanding child abuse, recognizing that experiences during childhood shape individuals' cognitive, emotional, and social development. Childhood Theory integrates attachment theory, emphasizing the importance of secure caregiver-child relationships in promoting healthy development and buffering against the effects of abuse (Bowlby, 1982). Childhood Theory informs trauma-informed approaches to intervention and treatment, recognizing the impact of abuse on children's psychological well-being and emphasizing the need for sensitive, supportive responses (Ford et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Application of the Theory in this Study

The theory helps the current study to understand and ascertain the extent to which child poor performance occurs in the global trend. Regarding good childhood, in the sense of availing basic needs such as access to and full participation in basic education, the theory helps the study to understanding of how factors such as poverty, inadequate social support, and discrimination contribute to vulnerability and risk among children. Childhood Theory acknowledges the capacity for resilience in children, highlighting protective factors such as supportive relationships, positive coping strategies, and access to resources that can mitigate the negative effects of abuse (Masten and Barnes, 2018).

2.2 Empirical Review

This section presents the empirical studies with respect to research themes derived from research questions.

2.2.1 Causes of Child Abuse in Public Secondary Schools

Wang (2022) investigated the longitudinal relationship between child abuse and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) among Chinese rural-to-urban migrant adolescents, focusing on the moderating role of beliefs about adversity and family socioeconomic status (SES). Utilizing a two-wave survey, the study involved 308 adolescents aged 10–14, who completed self-reported questionnaires on child abuse, NSSI, beliefs about adversity, and family SES. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between child abuse and NSSI one year later. Additionally, the interaction of child abuse, beliefs about adversity, and family SES was found to be significant, with positive beliefs about adversity playing a protective role for adolescents with low SES but showing vulnerability for those with high SES.

Maguire-Jack and Sattler (2022) conducted a study on the relationships between neighborhood poverty, family monetary well-being, and child maltreatment in 20 large U.S. cities. The study used a longitudinal birth-cohort design, utilizing data from three waves of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, encompassing a sample of 4,898 children. Structural equation modeling was employed to examine mediational effects. The study found that neighborhood poverty had a lasting impact on child neglect, mediated fully by family monetary well-being, but no significant longitudinal relationship was found between neighborhood poverty and physical or psychological abuse.

Gün et al. (2022) aimed to evaluate the effects of child neglect and abuse training on the knowledge and awareness of medical vocational schoolteachers in Kayseri, Turkey. The study was conducted using a sample of teachers who received specialized training on child neglect and abuse. Data collection involved a survey form and the Scale for Identifying the Symptoms and Risks of Child Abuse and Neglect, with analysis performed using SPSS Version.20.0 software. The study found that 87.4% of the teachers reported the training as sufficient, and there was a significant increase in their knowledge and willingness to report cases of neglect and abuse. The findings suggest that training can significantly enhance teachers' ability to recognize and respond to child abuse, which is pertinent to the current study's focus on the effectiveness of school boards in managing child abuse issues.

Kibirige (2023) conducted a cross-sectional study to examine the prevalence of Child Sexual Violence (CSV) and its correlation with parental care and learners' characteristics among secondary school students in the Wakiso District of Uganda. The study sample consisted of 274 students from rural, semi-urban, and urban schools. Utilizing a 4-Likert questionnaire, data on parental care, learners' characteristics, and CSV were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests such as Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed a high prevalence of CSV, particularly among students with low parental care and personal characteristics, with sexual harassment, defilement, and rape being the most common forms.

Lucas (2024) conducted a study to investigate the patterns of child abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as experienced by university students in Tanzania during their childhood. The study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the various types of perpetrators involved in perpetrating abuse within the family and broader community context. Utilizing qualitative methods, the study collected data through interviews and focus group discussions with university students, exploring their childhood experiences of abuse. The findings highlighted the pervasive nature of child abuse in Tanzania, deeply rooted in cultural, educational, and social practices, often intertwined with disciplinary measures.

2.2.2 Measures Taken to Prevent Child Abuse in Public Secondary Schools

Solehat et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive review on child sexual abuse (CSA) in Asian countries, focusing on prevalence rates, impact, victims' age of first exposure, and types of CSA, perpetrators, and places of CSA offense. Their study involved searching various databases and manual search methods for articles published between January 2011 and November 2020 related to CSA in Asia. The results of their review revealed a wide range of prevalence rates for CSA, with most victims experiencing non-contact abuse, and the majority of victims were exposed to CSA during preteen years. Bubbles (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of school-based child abuse prevention programs, focusing on their impact on children's knowledge and self-protection skills. By conducting two three-level meta-analyses, the study evaluated 34 studies on child abuse knowledge and 22 studies on self-protection skills, comprising a total sample of 11,798 participants. The findings indicated a significant overall effect of school-based programs on both knowledge ($d = 0.572$) and self-protection skills ($d = 0.528$).

Muhire et al. (2021) conducted a study in Rwanda to identify the attitudes and practices of pediatricians and pediatric residents regarding the reporting of child abuse. Using a cross-sectional survey, the study sampled 61 Rwandan physicians, including 46 pediatric residents and 15 pediatricians. The study found that while most physicians had received training in recognizing and reporting child abuse, 31% perceived the training as inadequate. Despite this training, only 16% of physicians reported a case of child abuse in the previous 12 months, with 38% suspecting child abuse at some point but deciding not to report it, mainly due to fear of unpleasant consequences. In a study conducted by Cui et al. (2020) examining the impact of maltreatment on adolescent socio-emotional and behavioral development, it was found that maltreated youth exhibited increased delinquent behaviors and reduced self-esteem compared to non-maltreated peers. The study, utilizing a longitudinal sample of 1354 participants, demonstrated the significant predictive power of future orientation in fostering social competence and mitigating the negative effects of maltreatment on delinquency and substance use.

Reuben et al. (2021) investigated strategies for preventing and responding to sexual violence against children in Rombo district, Tanzania. Conducted as a mixed methods study, involving 158 members of Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs), the research utilized questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The study found that awareness raising, provision of advice, communication, identification of children, referral of abused children, mapping, and monitoring had positive effects on combating SVAC, ultimately improving the child protection environment in the district.

3. Methodology

A convergent design under a mixed methods approach was adopted, involving both qualitative and quantitative data collection from 81 teachers, 54 students, and 15 parents across 9 schools. The study adopted a mixed methods approach whereby there was a combination of the features of qualitative and quantitative research. The advantage of this approach is that the weaknesses of one approach were supplemented with the strengths of the other approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher used simple random sampling to select 9 out of the 39 public secondary schools found in Arusha district. For the case of teachers, convenience sampling was used to select 9 teachers from each of the sampled school. Convenience sampling enabled the researcher to administer questionnaires to only the teachers who were accessible during the time of data collection. A combination of criterion purposive and simple random sampling techniques was used to obtain the sample of 54 students. First the researcher established the selection criteria whereby the one to be selected was to be a leader (either prefect or class monitor). Then from the group of these leaders, simple random sampling was conducted to select 6 students who participated in the

study. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the parents who participated in the study. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to include the parents who live near the schools and were accessible during the time of data collection.

The study used questionnaires and interview guides as tools for data collection. The questionnaires were used to collect data from the students and teachers while the parents were interviewed. The validity of instruments was measured using content validity of instruments. This was determined by expert judgment and compilation of the items regarded as relevant. Split half method was used to estimate the reliability of the tools used for data collection. The results of the reliability testing showed that the questionnaire for teachers (QT), with 30 items, had a reliability coefficient of 0.92, and the questionnaire for students (QS), also with 30 items, had a reliability coefficient of 0.87. According to Dudovskiy (2022), a reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above indicates acceptable reliability, meaning the instruments are consistent in measuring what they are intended to measure. Descriptive statistics were used for analyzing quantitative data while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. The researcher ensured confidentiality during data analysis by using pseudonyms instead of real names and safeguarded the respondents' rights, ensuring no physical, emotional, spiritual or mental harm. To prevent plagiarism, all sources were properly cited and listed in the reference section using APA 7th edition style.

4. Results and Discussions

The findings were discussed according to themes derived from research questions.

4.1 Causes of Child Abuse in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha District

The research question aimed at finding out the causes of child abuse in public secondary schools in Arusha district. To address this research question, data were collected from teachers, students and parents. For the case of teachers, a 5-point Likert scale with ten items was used whereby the respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements concerning causes of child abuse. Their responses were quantified to generate percentages of those who agreed (strongly agree plus Agree), those who disagreed (strongly disagree plus disagree) and those who indicated neutrality. Their percentage responses are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' (n = 81) and students' (54) responses on the causes of child abuse

Statements	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	TR%	SR%	TR%	SR%	TR%	SR%
Lack of parental involvement and support contributes to child abuse incidents.	76.60	68.60	12.30	0.00	11.10	31.50
Poverty and socio-economic factors increase the risk of child abuse among students.	74.10	68.60	9.90	11.10	16.00	20.40
Inadequate training and awareness among teachers and school staff contribute to the perpetuation of child abuse.	39.50	59.20	22.20	14.80	38.20	26.00
Cultural norms and attitudes towards discipline play a role in the occurrence of child abuse in schools.	55.50	44.40	21.00	16.70	23.40	38.90
Students' exposure to violence in their communities contributes to instances of child abuse in schools.	55.60	37.10	19.80	29.60	24.70	33.30
High student-to-teacher ratios and overcrowded classrooms exacerbate the risk of child abuse.	48.20	35.20	17.30	20.40	34.50	44.40
Ineffective disciplinary policies and procedures within schools contribute to the prevalence of child abuse.	60.50	44.50	18.50	24.10	20.90	31.50
Mental health issues among students or teachers may contribute to incidents of child abuse.	48.20	35.20	12.30	14.80	39.50	50.00
Lack of accountability and consequences for perpetrators of child abuse perpetuates its occurrence.	54.30	59.30	25.90	16.70	19.80	24.10
Poor communication and collaboration between schools, parents, and the community contribute to the prevalence of child abuse.	72.90	79.70	8.60	0.00	18.50	20.40

Source: Field data (2024) Key; TR = teachers' responses; SR = students responses

Data in table 1 show that teachers and students indicated diverse levels of agreement and disagreement on the statements with regard to the causes of child abuse in public secondary schools in Arusha district. Concerning the lack of parental involvement and support, the data show that 76.60% of teachers agreed, while 68.60% of students concurred. Meanwhile, 11.10% of teachers and 31.50% of students disagreed. The percentage of neutral responses was 12.30% among teachers and 0.00% among students. The data suggest that most teachers and students agreed about the significant impact of parental involvement and support on child abuse incidents. This implies that the absence of parental support was highly regarded as a contributing factor to child abuse. Such a condition may contribute to child abuse by leaving children vulnerable to neglect or exploitation outside the home environment.

These findings are in agreement with Show (2023) who reported on the various manifestations of lack of parental support, indicating its significance in shaping children's experiences. School children are now exposed to sexual abuse as a result of poor parental care since they are ignorant of the impending hazards in the surroundings, such as unmonitored peers activities that expose children to abuse. Children who are living with parents who are alcoholic and drug- addicted are far more prone to child abuse in the society. Most parents are very busy, have no time with their children at home. As a result children are left with no adequate help, they can engage in some activities which leave them exposed to child abuse.

Lack of parental care and support was also highlighted to be one of the factors contributing to child abuse by the parents whereby the parents noted improper parenting to be common in Arusha district and associating it with the high rates of child abuse in the district. This was made evident as one of the parentsreported that;

> *Isolation and lack of support from family members and the broader community can*

contribute to parenting challenges. Factors such as financial pressure, lack of parental skills, and issues like drug or alcohol abuse can exacerbate stress within families. Furthermore, unrealistic expectations due to misunderstandings about child development and behavior can strain parent-child relationships and hinder healthy upbringing practices. (P3, Personal Interview, 16th May, 2024).

The responses from these parents imply that lack of parental involvement and support contribute to child abuse. This perspective is corroborated by the quantitative data whereby a large proportion of teachers and students agreed on the impact of parental engagement on reducing abuse. This alignment suggests that children in Arusha district are more vulnerable to abuse due to insufficient parental attention and support. The absence of this crucial involvement can lead to neglect and expose children to harmful influences such as unsupervised activities and peer pressure which increase their risk of abuse. Arusha is a tourist hub whereby people are busy and thus parents may use too little time talking and responding to the needs of their children. This increases the chances of children to be abused.

Regarding poverty and socio-economic factors, 74.10% of teachers and 68.60% of students agreed, while 16.00% of teachers and 20.40% of students disagreed. None of the students expressed a neutral stance on this issue, while 9.90% of teachers did. The data suggest a consensus among teachers and students on the role of poverty in increasing the risk of child abuse. This implies that poverty is considered as one of the contributing factors to child abuse incidents. Such economic hardships may lead to stressors that compromise parenting abilities or force children into vulnerable situations. When the parents fail to provide the required needs for their children, these children may be forced or deceived to engage in other activities that leave them vulnerable to child abuse. For example, students may miss schools and roam in the streets of Arusha searching for food and other requirements. As a result, such exposure leaves them vulnerable to child abuse.

These findings are in agreement with Maguire-Jack and Sattler (2022), who highlighted the heightened risk of child abuse in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Money is the root of all evils, but poverty is far worse. Many incidences of child abuse in current societies are heavily impacted by poverty. Owing to poverty, children share a bedroom with adult brother or uncle or with housemaids where cases of child abuse occur in this scenario. Also, a child comes to school hungrily as time goes on he/she fall in a trap of being sexually abused in order to fill the empty stomach. Thus, poverty is seen as one of the factors

that contribute to child abuse among students not only in Arusha district but also across the globe.

During interviews with parents, the issue of poverty as a source was also pointed out. Parents identified poverty as one of the reasons for family separation that leaves children helpless and thus increasing their victimization to child abuse. This was further elaborated by one of the parents who reported:

Poverty often results in food insecurity within families, prompting children to seek employment to support themselves. Concurrently, family conflicts can diminish parental care, leaving children vulnerable to becoming street children as they search for stability and support outside the home. (P6, Personal Interview on 17th May, 2024).

The response from the parent suggests that poverty and socio-economic challenges contribute to child abuse, reflecting the views of teachers and students. This agreement implies that economic hardships in Arusha district increase the risk of abuse by creating conditions that strain parenting abilities and expose children to vulnerable situations. High living costs in the district can lead to stress and inadequate supervision, forcing children into risky circumstances, such as seeking unsafe work or encountering exploitation. This linkage emphasizes how the economic environment in Arusha exacerbates the challenges families face, making children more susceptible to abuse due to compromised care and increased vulnerability.

The issue of overcrowded classrooms was also noted by the parents during the interviews whereas parents were also concerned about the poor learning environments in the public secondary schools.

This was made evident as one of the parents noted;

Most of our schools have limited facilities with high numbers of students; thus, it may be difficult for teachers to provide the required assistance to the children. This may lead to poor performance as well as negatively affecting the physical development of the children. (P7. Personal Interview, on May 20th, 2024).

The response from the parent shows that high student-to-teacher ratio and overcrowded classrooms are common in public secondary schools and such aspects contribute to child abuse in these schools. The insights from the parents are in agreement to what was indicated by the teachers and the students who also indicated this to be a contributing factor. Overcrowded classrooms in Arusha district strain resources and limit individual attention, potentially creating environments where abusive behavior can occur unnoticed or unaddressed.

4.2 Measures to Be Taken to Prevent Child Abuse in Secondary Schools in Arusha District

The second research question aimed at addressing measures to be taken on the acts which lead to child abuse that affect students' education in public secondary schools in Arusha District. To address this research question, data were collected from teachers, students and parents. For the case of teachers, a 5-point Likert scale with ten items was used whereby the respondents were requested to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements concerning solutions to child abuse. Their responses were quantified to generate percentages of those who agreed (strongly agree and agree), those who disagreed (strongly disagree and disagree) and those who indicated neutrality. Their percentage responses are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' (n = 81) and Students' (54) Responses on Measures to Prevent Child Abuse in Public Secondary Schools

Statements	Agree		Disagree		Neutral	
	TR%	SR%	TR%	SR%	TR%	SR%
Implementing comprehensive training programmes for teachers and school staff on identifying and reporting child abuse.	82.72	85.19	11.11	14.81	6.17	0.00
Establishing clear protocols and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected cases of child abuse.	76.54	85.19	18.52	12.96	4.94	1.85
Providing counseling and support services for victims of abuse and their families.	80.25	79.63	14.81	18.52	4.94	1.85
Enhancing parental involvement and education on recognizing and preventing child abuse.	83.95	81.48	13.58	14.81	2.47	3.70
Implementing stricter disciplinary measures and consequences for perpetrators of child abuse.	74.07	62.96	12.35	22.22	13.58	14.81
Increasing awareness campaigns and community outreach efforts to address the root causes of child abuse.	72.84	81.48	18.52	12.96	8.64	5.56
Providing resources and support for students who have experienced abuse to ensure their academic success.	74.07	79.63	17.28	16.67	8.64	3.70
Collaborating with local authorities and child protection agencies to investigate and address cases of child abuse.	82.72	79.63	13.58	18.52	3.70	1.85
Promoting a culture of openness and transparency within schools to encourage reporting of child abuse.	76.54	61.11	12.35	29.63	11.11	9.26
Regularly evaluating and updating policies and procedures related to child protection in schools.	81.48	75.93	12.35	14.81	6.17	9.26

Source: Field data (2024) Key; TR = teachers' responses; SR = students responses

Regarding implementing comprehensive training programmes for teachers and school staff, the data show that 82.72% of teachers agreed and 85.19% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 11.11% of the teachers and 14.81% of students disagreed respectively. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 6.17% and 0.00% in that order. The data suggest that most of the students and teachers agreed on the effectiveness of training programmes. When teachers are provided with seminars and workshops on child maltreatment issues, the mechanism will be more helpful in mitigating the prevailing problem in our community at large. This implies that such training is regarded as an effective measure to address child abuse. Implementing comprehensive training programmes helps educators identify and report child abuse thereby mitigating its negative effects. These findings are in agreement with Benson et al. (2022), who reported that educators are crucial for early detection of

maltreatment. Thus, comprehensive training for school staff is essential for protecting students from abuse.

Considering the establishment of clear protocols and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected cases of child abuse, the data show that 76.54% of the teachers agreed while 85.19% of the students agreed. On the other hand, 18.52% of the teachers and 12.96% of the students disagreed. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 4.94% and 1.85% respectively. The data suggests that most of the students and teachers agreed on the importance of clear protocols. The analyzed protocols from school wise to the community wise will enable the easiest reporting mechanisms of the abused child. This implies that clear protocols are considered an effective measure for addressing child abuse. Establishing such protocols ensures that cases are reported and responded to efficiently, preventing further harm. These findings agree with Mathews (2022), who noted that mandatory reporting laws helpto identify severe maltreatment. Thus, clear reporting protocols are vital for addressing child abuse effectively.

With reference to the provision of counseling and support services for victims of abuse and their families, the data show that 80.25% of teachers agreed and 79.63% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 14.81% of teachers and 18.52% of students disagreed. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 4.94% and 1.85% respectively. The data suggest that most of the students and teachers agreed on the necessity of counseling services. The scheduled and effective guidance and counseling support in schools is to be on track by the concerned partners. This implies that such services are regarded as an effective measure to address child abuse. Providing counseling helps victims and their families cope with the trauma and aids in their recovery. These findings are in agreement with Zakaria et al. (2022), who discussed the challenges survivors face and the importance of support. Thus, counseling services are crucial for supporting abuse victims. The issue of administering punishment in schools should be adhered to as one of the means to combat child abuse in the communities. This was supported by one of the parents during the interview.

> *Proper implementation of punishment, guidance and counseling sessions, and community education on child abuse are crucial. They play an important role in raising awareness, providing support, and preventing instances of abuse. These measures not only address immediate concerns but also foster a safer environment where children can thrive and grow without the fear of abuse.* (P4 Personal Interview, 15thMay, 2024).

The response from the parent indicates a strong belief in the importance of counseling and support services for victims of child abuse. This aligns with the quantitative findings, where most teachers and students also recognized the necessity of such services. The consistency between the parent's view and the data suggests that incorporating counseling into school strategies is a practical approach to help mitigate child abuse in secondary schools in Arusha district. The emphasis on these services reflects their effectiveness in providing emotional support and aiding the recovery of abused victims, reinforcing their role in creating a safer school environment.

With respect to enhancing parental involvement and education, the data shows that 83.95% of teachers agreed and 81.48% of students agreed. On the other side, 13.58% of the teachers and 14.81% of the students disagreed. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 2.47% and 3.70% respectively. The data suggest that most of the students and teachers agreed on the importance of parental involvement. For instance, the provision of education to parents will bring awareness to their children in the process of upbringing with the consideration of child safety. This implies that educating parents is considered an effective measure to prevent child abuse. Enhancing parental involvement helps parents recognize signs of abuse and take preventive actions. These findings agree with Guastaferroet al. (2022), who emphasized the need for parents to be knowledgeable about child development. Thus, parental education is a key to preventing child abuse. Parents' awareness on the importance of education to their children is a weapon to address the problem of child abuse because he/she may easily guide the child in a good conduct as one of the parents commented:

> *Parental care can significantly reduce stress for children. Allowing group discussions at school on social matters and appreciating students' ideas fosters a supportive environment. Understanding the developmental stages and behaviors of our students enables us to provide appropriate support and guidance, promoting their overall well-being and academic success* (P7. Personal Interview, 18th May 2024).

The parent's response highlights the critical role of educating parents and involving them in their children's lives to enhance child safety. This perspective aligns with the data, where most teachers and students agreed on the importance of parental involvement and education. This agreement underscores that educating parents is seen as an effective strategy for preventing child abuse. By increasing parents' awareness and understanding of child development, they are better equipped to recognize and

address potential signs of abuse, thereby fostering a supportive and protective environment for their children. This approach suggests that parent-focused educational programmes should be integrated into school initiatives to effectively combat child abuse in secondary schools in Arusha district.

Considering transparency, the data show that 76.54% of the teachers agreed and 61.11% of the students agreed. On the other side, 12.35% of the teachers and 29.63% of the students disagreed. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 11.11% and 9.26% respectively. The data suggest that most teachers agreed, while student opinion was more mixed on the effectiveness of promoting openness. This implies that fostering transparency is regarded as somewhat effective in encouraging reporting acts of abuse. Promoting a culture of openness ensures that abuse cases are reported and addressed promptly. These findings agree with Hindt and Leon (2022), who recommended standards for child-safe organizations. Thus, fostering transparency is essential for reporting child abuse. The role of mass media in our society is very crucial as it is responsible for educating and making people aware of the evils done to the children as during the interview one of the parents' view was:

> The public through mass media and integrating lessons about the societal impacts of child abuse into school curricula are essential. Religious and non-governmental institutions are also instrumental in raising awareness and educating communities about the profound effects of child abuse. (P4. Personal Interview, 17th May, 2024)

The parent's response highlights the value of fostering transparency and open communication to combat child abuse effectively. This perspective is in line with the data, showing that most teachers support the promotion of openness, though student opinions are more divided. This alignment suggests that encouraging transparency is somewhat effective in facilitating abuse reporting. Creating a culture of openness in schools ensures that abuse cases are reported and addressed in a timely manner, thus improving child protection. Therefore, implementing strategies that promote transparency and openness should be a key component of efforts to mitigate child abuse in secondary schools in the Arusha district.

Regarding the regular evaluation and updating of child protection policies, the data show that 81.48% of teachers agreed and 75.93% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 12.35% of teachers and 14.81% of students disagreed. The percentage of students and teachers who were neutral was 6.17% and 9.26% respectively. The data suggests that most

students and teachers agreed on the importance of regular policy evaluation. Some policies might lose some important issues for addressing the problem of abuse due to changes in technology. This implies that updating policies is regarded as an effective measure to ensure child protection. Regular evaluation keeps child protection measures current and effective. These findings are in agreement with Walsh et al. (2022), who discussed the necessity of training interventions for reporting abuse. Thus, regularly updating policies is crucial for effective child protection in schools. Laws and policies amendment is more important because some are outdated, that's why making some reforms will help in addressing the problem of child abuse as remarked by one of the parents during the interview:

> Laws reforms, in-service training, forming clubs at schools, strengthening religious sessions, conducting regular parent-teacher meetings, and motivating teachers are effective strategies to reduce stress in the workplace. These initiatives promote a supportive environment that enhances teacher well-being and improves educational outcomes for students. (P.12 Personal Interview 16th May 2024).

The parent's response underscores the importance of regularly evaluating and updating child protection policies to maintain their relevance and effectiveness. This view aligns with the data, where the majority of teachers and students recognize the necessity of regular policy reviews. Such agreement implies that updating policies is seen as a crucial measure for ensuring child safety, especially as technological changes may render some policies outdated. Regular evaluations help to keep protection measures effective and relevant, suggesting that continual updates and revisions of child protection policies should be integrated into school strategies in Arusha district to enhance the effectiveness of child abuse prevention.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions were drawn:
The study concluded that child abuse in secondary schools in Arusha district is primarily caused by lack of parental involvement, poverty and socio-economic challenges, inadequate training and awareness among teachers, and cultural attitudes toward discipline. This is because most teachers and students indicated that insufficient parental support leaves children vulnerable to neglect and exploitation, while economic hardships create stressful

environments that strain parenting abilities and expose children to abuse. Additionally, lack of proper training for teachers and school staff result in insufficient intervention and response to cases of abuse. Cultural norms that view harsh discipline as acceptable further contribute to abusive behaviors. These factors collectively compromise the safety and well-being of students, leading to adverse effects on their general wellbeing and education.

It was also concluded that effective measures to prevent child abuse in secondary schools in Arusha District include implementing comprehensive training programmes for school staff, establishing clear protocols for reporting and responding to abuse, and providing counseling and support services for victims. Enhancing parental involvement and education was viewed as crucial in preventing abuse. Stricter disciplinary measures for perpetrators received mixed reactions, with majority support among teachers but more divided opinions among students. Awareness campaigns and community outreach were widely supported, as was the provision of resources and support for abused students. Collaboration with local authorities and fostering a culture of openness in reporting abuse were recognized as essential, though students had varied opinions on these measures. Regular evaluation and updating of child protection policies were also seen as vital to ensure their continued effectiveness in safeguarding children.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study conclusions, the following recommendations were made:
1. Educational authorities should implement comprehensive training programmes for teachers and school staff to equip them with the skills necessary to identify and respond effectively to child abuse.
2. Parents should actively participate in educational workshops and community initiatives to strengthen their role in supporting and protecting their children from abuse.
3. School administrators should establish clear reporting protocols for child abuse and ensure that counseling services are available to provide necessary psychological support to victims.

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