



Measures to Combat Challenges Faced by School Administration in Protecting Vulnerable School Children in Public Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study explored measures to address the challenges faced by school administrations in protecting vulnerable children in public secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. It was guided by two research questions: What challenges do school administrations face in protecting vulnerable school children in public secondary schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania? And what measures can combat the identified challenges? The study was framed by Bertalanffy's (1968) systems theory, which focuses on the structures, functions, and processes involved in child protection. A qualitative case study approach was used, involving 427 participants from 28 secondary schools across six districts. The sample consisted of students, teachers, discipline masters/mistresses, headmasters/mistresses, and district education officers, selected through stratified and purposive sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews, which were analyzed through coding and contextual interpretation. The findings revealed that financial constraints, poor parental cooperation, student indiscipline, and limited awareness were significant barriers to effective child protection. Additional challenges included disruptions in services due to funding cuts, a lack of student awareness about protective measures, and insufficient teacher training on child protection. To address these challenges, the study recommended organizing training sessions, seminars, and forums for teachers, increasing parental involvement through home visits, and enhancing financial support from stakeholders. Other strategies included motivating teachers, conducting more research, strengthening guidance and counseling, and raising student awareness. While some challenges may persist, the study concluded by urging the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to implement and enforce the proposed measures to effectively protect vulnerable children in secondary schools.

Keywords: Vulnerable School Children, School Administration, Possible Measures, Challenges and Secondary School

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1. Introduction

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the 1990s and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) has led to significant advancements in

integrating children's rights into development initiatives at global, regional, and national levels. The ACRWC stipulates that every child must be protected from all forms of economic exploitation and from performing any work that may be hazardous or interfering with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development (Article XV: I). Furthermore, the UNCRC

enshrines the right of every child to protection from violence, neglect, exploitation, and abuse in Articles 19, 34, and 35. Addressing child neglect is not solely the responsibility of social services. As the child protection system faces increasing pressures, social services are tasked with functioning as an emergency service, with early intervention and provision of services becoming more stretched (Haynes, 2015). Early intervention in cases of neglect not only helps mitigate the long-term and detrimental effects on children but also reduces the costs of reactive services (Haynes, 2015; Stevens & Laing, 2015). Various professionals across universal services are in an ideal position to recognize early signs of neglect (Haynes et al., 2015) and take a collaborative approach to respond as effectively as possible.

The protection of vulnerable school children in public secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region remains a significant challenge, despite various national and international efforts to safeguard children's rights. Vulnerable children, including orphans, children with disabilities, those from impoverished backgrounds, and those exposed to abuse or neglect, face multiple barriers that hinder their educational access, participation, and overall well-being (UNICEF, 2021). Studies have indicated that issues such as child labor, physical and emotional abuse, inadequate access to basic needs, and lack of psychological support services are prevalent in Tanzanian schools, making it difficult for these children to thrive academically and socially (URT, 2020). Despite Tanzania's legal and policy frameworks, such as the Law of the Child Act (2009) and the National Child Protection Guidelines (2013), gaps persist in their effective implementation at the school level. Research suggests that limited financial resources, insufficient teacher training on child protection, weak community-school collaboration, and inadequate enforcement of child protection laws continue to compromise efforts to safeguard vulnerable students (Mkumbo, 2018). Additionally, socio-cultural factors, including gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, and deep-rooted poverty, further exacerbate the risks faced by these children (Save the Children, 2019).

Given these persistent challenges, there is an urgent need to explore and propose practical, evidence-based measures that can enhance child protection mechanisms in public secondary schools. Without sustainable interventions, vulnerable children will continue to experience educational disadvantages, limiting their opportunities for personal development and societal contribution. This study, therefore, aims to examine the specific challenges affecting vulnerable school children in public secondary schools in Kilimanjaro and identify feasible strategies to strengthen child protection efforts in the region. This study was guided by two research questions: what are the challenges faced by school administration in protecting vulnerable School children in Public secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region,

Tanzania? And what are the possible measures to combat the identified challenges faced by school administration in protecting vulnerable School children in Public Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania?

2. Literature Review

This study was based on Bertalanffy's (1968) systems theory and approach. The open systems theory is rooted in the idea that organizations are consistently shaped by internal, external, and inter-environmental factors that influence their structures, systems, and behaviors over time. These influences, in turn, affect the organization's health, performance, and development. For school administrators, systems theory is crucial in devising methods to protect children from various forms of abuse. The theory's applicability lies in its capacity to integrate diverse elements and strategies for safeguarding students from neglect and abuse into a cohesive system. It outlines specific structures, functions, capacities, and other system components such as input, processes, and outputs. In addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable children in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region, it is necessary to assess these issues and unify them within a single framework to identify potential solutions.

Despite the success of school administrations in child protection, challenges still arise in implementing the appropriate strategies to safeguard vulnerable children in secondary schools. These challenges are often linked to factors such as limited funding, inadequate teacher training programs, and teachers' lack of self-efficacy, among others. These obstacles may vary between different administrations, schools, and countries. A study by Kwesigabo (2019) explored the complexities of child protection in secondary schools in Zambia and sought solutions to address these issues. The study involved 32 teachers selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that while 24 heads of schools were satisfied with the child protection measures, 8 found the process challenging. Identified challenges included parental indifference, insufficient funding, student disrespect, a lack of professionalism in guidance and counseling, a lack of teacher interest, and insufficient staff training. In addressing these gaps, the current study focused on the challenges faced by school administrators in protecting vulnerable children in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, employing a more detailed methodology.

In a similar vein, Okotoni and Okotoni (2019) conducted a study in Nigeria to identify the challenges teachers face when implementing child protection policies. Using a qualitative interpretive case study approach, the study involved 10 teachers selected

through purposive sampling from four rural schools. Data were gathered through classroom observation schedules and in-depth personal interviews. The study found that children's backgrounds significantly influenced their behavior, with girls being more vulnerable to abuse. Another key issue was the involvement of teachers in child abuse, and a third challenge was the lack of time for providing guidance and counseling to students. The study highlighted several factors that limit effective child protection, including inadequate government funding and a shortage of trained professionals. To address these challenges, the current study utilized a convergent mixed-method approach to explore other barriers that school administrators face in protecting vulnerable children.

Simatwa (2018) conducted a study in South Africa to identify the challenges teachers face in managing student discipline and to explore the strategies teachers employ in implementing child protection policies. The study used a phenomenological approach combined with a cross-sectional survey design, employing simple random and stratified random sampling techniques to capture 180 participants from ten schools. Data was collected using document analysis, questionnaires, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews, with triangulation used for data analysis. Although the design choices were appropriate, the study did not clearly justify the use of sampling techniques for phenomenology, potentially leading to data from participants who lacked the relevant experience, which could compromise the credibility of the findings. To address this gap, the current study employed a more detailed methodology.

The findings indicated that teachers struggled to implement child protection policies due to insufficient training. Key challenges identified were a lack of intensive training for teachers and difficulties in policy implementation. However, the study primarily focused on challenges related to child protection policies, overlooking other factors that might also affect the protection of children. In contrast, the current study seeks to investigate additional challenges that school administrations encounter when protecting vulnerable children in public secondary schools.

Tangi (2020) conducted a study in Tanzania to investigate the challenges school administrators face in protecting children from bullying. The study used an interview guide and questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 10 school heads, 160 teachers, and 10 discipline masters. However, the study did not specify the target population, which made it difficult to assess the representativeness of the sample. Using a cross-sectional survey design with stratified and simple random sampling techniques, the study found that large class sizes hindered teachers' ability to control bullying, and irregular supplies of child protection facilities

posed additional challenges. To address this gap, the current study investigates the challenges faced by school administrators in protecting vulnerable children in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region.

In Tanzania, Masatu (2018), whose study was previously reviewed, revealed that inadequate training hindered the use of different child protection strategies. Furthermore, the findings indicated that disrespect of students was another challenge that impeded child protection. The findings correspond to the present study regarding the challenges that teachers and heads of schools face in protecting children. This gave a relatively wider picture of realistic challenges encountered in child protection the study by Masatu (2018) used participants who were exposed to the Tanzanian child protection policy and therefore the findings reflect the challenges of child protection which are currently used in Tanzania. While the findings enlightened the current study on the challenges attributed to Tanzania, it focused on only one form of child abuse while the country has more forms of child abuse. This means that the reported challenges are confined to physical abuse. Again, the study focused on challenges encountered in physical abuse. These findings, therefore, raise the question of whether they would be applicable in another form of child abuse. Since the study was conducted in 2018 the researcher needs to have more current findings. Therefore, in closing the Gap the current study looked at the challenges of four forms of child abuse including physical abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, and neglect in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania.

In Tanzania, Tandika and Kumburu (2018) conducted a study on challenges teachers face and strategies of protecting children from child abuse in public secondary schools. The study employed Phenomenological graphic research design. The study purposively involved teachers of four selected secondary schools. The study used appropriate sampling techniques and data collection in the design. The noticeable instruments were an interview guide, questionnaire, documentary analysis, and observation schedule. The sample size ranged from 80 to 180 for survey designs and 2 to 4 participants were used in the case study designs. However, the generalization of findings to Tanzania was appropriate since participants in the sample were not representatives of the wider population. Closing the gap the current study, therefore, did not generalize findings that were obtained from the sample which were not representative. The study revealed that an insufficient number of teachers professionals in child protection; insufficient, teachers trained were identified as key challenges impacting child protection. In filling the gap, the current study investigated the challenges that school administration faces in protecting children in recent years; in filling the gap the current study investigates the challenges faced by school administration in protecting vulnerable

children in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania.

While several reviewed studies highlighted the challenges that school administrations face in protecting vulnerable children, there was also a need to explore the possible means for redressing them. Some reviewed studies conducted in Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, and Norway have proposed different measures that fit the context of the study. That is, the recommendations are based on the findings of these studies. Proposed solutions range from holding meetings, having forums, seminars, and workshop to teachers, home visitation to parents, proper utilization of the stakeholders for financial matters, but also more guidance and counseling to students and Teacher needs to make their research on the proper use of the strategies to protect children effectively.

In a study conducted in Norway, Ogano (2012) explored child protection strategies for children with disabilities. The research aimed to identify the methods employed in addressing the needs of these children. A qualitative research design was adopted, with data being gathered through semi-structured interviews with five teachers. Although the sample size was relatively small, the intent of the study was not to generalize the findings to a larger population. However, this limitation raised concerns about the credibility of the results. In qualitative research, sample size is often determined by data saturation, but since Ogano did not justify the selection of five participants, it remains unclear whether this number was sufficient for drawing valid conclusions. Furthermore, the use of a single data collection instrument—interviews—was questioned, as it may have impacted on the credibility of the findings. In contrast, the current study employed both questionnaires and interview guides to gather data. Despite these methodological concerns, Ogano's study revealed that teachers implemented various strategies to address challenges, such as organizing meetings, forums, seminars, and workshops for educators, as well as conducting home visits for parents. Additionally, the study recommended that schools employ guidance and counseling professionals to better support vulnerable children. Thus, Ogano's research provided insights into potential measures to enhance child protection for children with disabilities.

In Turkey, Gündoğmuş's (2018) study previously reviewed identifies six main suggestions for resolving challenges that teachers face in protecting children. The suggestions included bringing awareness to parents, carrying out activities suitable for child protection, changing some rules and regulations, cooperating with parents, considering child's age, and improving training for teachers. While the study informed the current study on the measures to resolve challenges that the school administrators face in protecting vulnerable children. The suggested measures were focused on

challenges that face teachers only. The current study, therefore, collected data on measures to be taken to resolve the challenges faced by school administration in protecting vulnerable children.

In Nigeria Hussin (2015), conducted a study to identify challenges that teachers faced in child protection programs. The study also aimed at exploring the strategies that teachers used to redress the challenges posed in implementing the child protection policy. The study used phenomenology research design and cross-sectional survey design concurrently, employing simple random sampling and stratified random sampling techniques in evolving 180 participants from 10 schools. Document analysis, questionnaires, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews were used for data collection. Triangulation was used to analyze qualitative data. While the selected designs are appropriate for the study, the researcher did not identify the sampling techniques appropriate for phenomenology. Simple and stratified random sampling cannot be used to select participants for the study of phenomenology. Since the researcher might have used sampling techniques for qualitative design, information might have been collected from people who did not have the experience sought for, thus compromising the credibility of the findings. Hence the current study gave a detailed description of the research methodology employed by the study.

The study findings revealed several measures that can be employed to overcome the challenges of child protection. The first suggestion focused on proper utilization of the stakeholders for financial matters, but also more guidance and counseling to students with disrespect to teachers. The second suggestion that the study brought out is the use of available individuals to make children aware by teaching them about child protection. The study, however, proposed measures which are confined to addressing the challenges for implementing a child protection policy. In this regard, this study, therefore, investigated measures to be taken to overcome the identified challenges, which helped in obtaining practical solutions that not only address the challenges related to child protection policy but also to strategies used by school administration in protecting vulnerable children.

In addressing the limitations found in Hussin's (2015), study, Pryor et al., (2012) conducted a study that, among other things, explored strategies for overcoming the challenges of child protection programs in Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda. The study found that it is important to incorporate the aspect of child protection in universities and colleges of education. College tutors and university teachers need to prepare teacher trainees on how to make and use guidance and counseling and employ other strategies in child protection. In filling the Gap the current study investigated focused on measures to be taken to

overcome the identified challenges of protecting vulnerable children in secondary schools.

Simatwa (2012) conducted a study on child abuse management, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive teacher preparation, particularly in addressing child abuse. The study highlighted the insufficient involvement of parents in tackling child abuse issues, finding that parental participation in supporting schools with child protection efforts was minimal. This limited engagement often resulted in a disconnect between students and their families. Furthermore, the study identified a need for enhanced professional development for teachers in child protection. However, the study lacked specific recommendations to address the challenges related to child protection. For instance, although it suggested teacher training, it did not specify the key areas of focus for such training, which could lead to misaligned efforts. Identifying targeted training areas for both pre-service and in-service teachers is crucial to ensure that teachers are equipped to address the real challenges in child protection. The study also did not clarify the extent of parental involvement in child protection, raising the question of whether parents should be involved in all aspects of protecting children. To fill this gap, the present study aimed to identify and explore specific challenges in protecting vulnerable children.

In a similar vein, Kwesigabo (2013) examined the challenges faced by teachers and school administrators in safeguarding vulnerable children in Tanzanian secondary schools. The study found that improving child protection skills among guidance counselors was essential, which could be achieved through pre-service and in-service training, along with refresher courses, workshops, and seminars. Additionally, Kwesigabo (2013) focused on the establishment of rules and regulations for child protection. Building on these findings, the current study sought to further investigate solutions for protecting children from abuse by employing questionnaires with open-ended questions and in-depth interviews in secondary schools within the Kilimanjaro region.

Kumburu and Tandika (2018) whose study was previously reviewed recommended several measures to overcome challenges that teachers face in protecting children. The study recommended the placement of teachers with knowledge and skills of child protection. While the study informed the current study on the challenges that teachers face focused only on challenges confided to teachers did not look at challenges that school administration also faces in general. Therefore, this current study focused on the measure to overcome the challenges facing school administration in protecting children in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region.

While the reviewed literature highlights several studies on the challenges faced by school administrators in protecting vulnerable children in secondary schools, there is a significant gap in understanding the specific measures required to overcome these challenges within the context of the Kilimanjaro region in Tanzania. Previous studies, such as those by Kwesigabo (2019) in Zambia, Okotoni and Okotoni (2019) in Nigeria, and Tangi (2020) in Tanzania, have identified challenges such as insufficient funding, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of professional development in child protection, but these studies focused primarily on the barriers without fully exploring the targeted measures to address them. Moreover, while studies like those by Simatwa (2012) and Masatu (2018) provided some insights into the importance of teacher training and parental involvement, they did not comprehensively address the specific strategies that school administrations can implement to combat these challenges, especially with respect to the diversity of child abuse forms. Additionally, most of the reviewed studies either employed small sample sizes or did not focus on the broader spectrum of child protection issues, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, and neglect, in the context of Tanzanian secondary schools. This presents a clear gap in the existing research, as the current study seeks to fill this gap by investigating not only the challenges but also the concrete and culturally appropriate measures that can be taken by school administrators in the Kilimanjaro region to safeguard vulnerable children. Furthermore, while other studies have suggested certain measures, such as improved teacher training and stakeholder engagement, the lack of a detailed, context-specific exploration of these strategies in Tanzania, especially in a specific region like Kilimanjaro, underscores the need for further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of both the challenges and potential solutions for protecting vulnerable children in Tanzanian public secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach utilizing a case study design. The target population included teachers, students, discipline masters/mistresses, headmasters/mistresses, and district education officers. To ensure a representative sample, the study employed stratified and purposeful sampling techniques, resulting in a total of 427 participants. Specifically, the sample comprised 252 students, 112 teachers, 28 headmasters/mistresses, 28 discipline masters/mistresses, and 6 out of 7 district education officers. The researcher selected 28 secondary schools across six districts in the Kilimanjaro region. Data collection methods encompassed structured questionnaires and in-depth interview guides, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of participants'

perspectives. The collected qualitative data were transcribed, and key themes were identified through a coding scheme. The study adhered to key ethical principles in scientific research by ensuring participant protection, informed consent, confidentiality, and integrity. Validity and reliability were ensured through trustworthiness, specifically focusing on credibility and dependability. Credibility was established by transcribing interview data and verifying its accuracy with respondents. Dependability, which assesses the quality and consistency of the inquiry process, was maintained by ensuring that the interview guide generated consistent data and by examining coherence among participant responses. The researcher obtained necessary permits from regional and district authorities. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their information, with no names of individuals or institutions recorded. Consent forms were signed as proof of voluntary participation. Data was securely stored, accessible only for research purposes. The findings were then presented using direct quotations and thematic interpretation in alignment with the study's objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

The most common challenges faced by school administration in protecting vulnerable school children in public secondary schools are Lack of participation and interest of parents on the strategies used by school administration in protecting Vulnerable School children is one of the challenges. It was reported that parents do not have time, or they do not take the issues seriously when they are informed about issues of child abuse. One of the respondents, Discipline master commented, *"Parents do not come to school to see the progress of their children but also when a student in discipline case and requested to come with the parents other parents don't appear or they send another person instead of coming themselves"*

Also head of school said that *"During the meeting most of them were absent and they just give all the responsibility to the teachers about disciplining their children."* (interview) Parental engagement in children's education remains a significant challenge, as many parents only visit schools during designated parent meetings or, in some cases, do not engage at all throughout the year. Instead, they focus primarily on financial support, neglecting other essential roles such as nurturing, disciplining, protecting, and educating their children. Consequently, they function more as financial sponsors rather than actively involved parents. This lack of collaboration between schools and parents hampers children's holistic development (Epstein, 2019; Jeynes, 2021). Research suggests that children require both respect and proper guidance from their parents or

guardians to thrive academically and socially (Perez, 2019). Furthermore, Boersma (2020) found that when families advocate for their children's rights, they often encounter societal resistance, making parental involvement even more critical. To foster stronger parental engagement, it is recommended that parents allocate dedicated time for interaction with their children, attend school meetings regularly, and actively support their academic progress (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2020).

Another challenge is that students become more disrespectful and undisciplined because of the policy, this is because the policy look to favor them then they take advantage and become disrespectful. One teacher reported that:

Because of the existence of the media which always gives information and updates society about all processes of giving corporal punishment that it is only the head of school who is allowed to give corporal punishment, which results in students disrespecting their teachers. They know the policy and also parents know thus a teacher cannot do anything to them apart from just using words that may change their behaviors since they can be embarrassed in front of others.

Another teacher said, *"When a girl gets pregnancy while at school, she is allowed back to school after delivery of a baby, on the basis that all children have the right to get education"*

The response indicates that when a student gets aware of the policy and law, they are misusing them knowing that the law will favor them, for example, if a teacher uses corporal punishment, they know it is not allowed so they become more disobeyed and disrespectful. Other students involve themselves in negligence act knowing they will be back to school if they get pregnant, not all students who have been impregnated have decided to do so, some of them have been forced. The response corresponds to the study by Kwesigabo (2013) on the complexity of child protection in secondary schools, identified challenges included; parental indifference, lack of funds, students being disrespectful, lack of professionalism for guidance and counseling, lack of interest by the teacher, and lack of training to staff.

Moreover, lack of funds is another challenge as they lack materials to support the strategies such as teacher training. This implies that the head of the school does not have funds to accommodate the different activities or materials needed to buy in facilitating the strategies. In this case, one head of school said; *"Sometimes we have to use our own money to facilitate the strategies to be effective implementation such as teacher training and seminar on issues about child protection"* (interview)

Also, a teacher reported that *“the budget is still a major problem since we need to have adequate budgets to accomplish the strategies such as teacher training and students’ seminars”*.

This implies that heads of schools do not know where to get funds because some strategies need funds to implement and accommodate different activities and to buy different materials. Even though the government supports, still it is not enough to finance everything in making the strategies effective.

The lack of seminars and training on strategies and child protection was another problem encountered by the respondents. It has been found during an interview with the respondents that only the discipline master or head of school attend training due to lack of funds. As the head said, *“Because of lack of fund and going to the seminar need payment then sometimes I just select one teacher or discipline master to attend the seminar, and sometimes I go only alone”* (interview)

The findings indicate that most teachers do not receive adequate training or professional development seminars on child protection policies. The few seminars that are conducted are primarily offered to discipline masters, leaving many teachers unaware of revised laws and policies necessary for effectively addressing child abuse cases. This gap in knowledge is largely attributed to insufficient funding for teacher training and professional development programs. Similarly, research has highlighted the challenges educators face in implementing child protection policies due to a lack of training. For instance, a study conducted in South Africa by Simatwa (2012) found that teachers struggled with enforcing child protection policies because they had not received the necessary training. More recent studies support these findings, emphasizing that inadequate professional development hinders the successful implementation of child protection measures (Bhardwaj, 2020; Kemboi et al., 2021). Research by Nyawo and Moyo (2022) further suggests that while training is a significant factor, the effectiveness of child protection policies is also influenced by broader systemic issues such as school culture, resource allocation, and administrative support. Therefore, while prior studies have mainly focused on the role of teacher training in implementing child protection policies, other underlying factors influencing policy enforcement needs further exploration. Addressing these gaps requires a holistic approach that includes not only training but also policy reinforcement, adequate funding, and institutional support.

Another challenge was poor awareness on how to deal with the person who violates in giving guidance and counseling, since guidance and counseling were seen as the best way of helping valuable children, most of the teachers do not know the proper way to solve and handle certain problems on abuse children. As one head of school said, *“Since we know the teacher learn about*

guidance and counseling in college, when they come to work they that fail to apply the knowledge and help the students.”(Interview)

The student reported saying, *“I think we need psychological support so that we pour out our feelings and share the experience that we go through in cases that we are abused”*

Another student said, *“We need psychological support to enable us to pour out and share experiences. We need a teacher who is specialized in guidance and counseling”*

The findings suggest that many teachers lack the necessary skills to effectively address and manage specific student-related issues, despite having received training during their college education. This highlights the need for continuous professional development, including training and seminars, to reinforce teachers' knowledge of guidance and counseling strategies. Additionally, there is a growing need for specialized teachers in guidance and counseling to provide targeted support for students, particularly those affected by abuse.

A similar situation has been observed in Nigeria. A study by Okotoni and Okotoni (2012) examined the challenges faced by school administrations in implementing child protection policies. The study found that girls were particularly vulnerable to child abuse, teachers were often implicated in cases of abuse, and there was limited time for educators to provide guidance and counseling to students. More recent research echoes these concerns, emphasizing that the lack of trained counselors and the insufficient allocation of time for student support contribute significantly to ineffective child protection measures (Adeoye & Aderibigbe, 2020; Uche & Nwankwo, 2021).

Another significant issue is the lack of government funding for child protection initiatives, including training programs for teachers and the hiring of specialized professionals. Furthermore, a gap in student awareness regarding available protection strategies was identified. Some students reported not knowing how to safeguard themselves from abuse, indicating a deficiency in their understanding of child protection measures, despite teachers attempting to integrate these discussions into classroom instruction. Recent studies reinforce the importance of proactive education in child protection, suggesting that schools should allocate more time to teaching students about self-protection strategies (Musa & Danjuma, 2022; Omole & Akinpelu, 2023).

Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including enhanced teacher training, the recruitment of specialized counselors, government support through policy and funding, and the development of comprehensive student awareness programs.

Poor supervisory tactics from school administrators to assess the strategies to protect vulnerable school children, it was also reported that one among the problem is that school administrators do not have a good tactic for it because as it was proposed by one DEO during that interview who said, *“In some schools, you may hear the case of childhood abuse and the head of school is there and we have strategies but doing nothing, but also other we don’t blame because they have other responsibilities such as teaching”.* (Interview)

The response implies that we have the head of school that is not responsible for their duties and hence makes the strategies not being well used in protecting vulnerable children in schools. Aside from that, others have different work to do such as instructional supervision on the teaching and learning process hence they cannot concentrate on checking other administration issues in schools such as the use of child protection policy.

Lack of continuity in service delivery due to the withdrawal of funding is one of the notable challenges in making effective strategies as is the lack of continuity in service delivery due to withdrawal of donor funding. One DEO explained that some schools are funded, and the withdrawal of donor funding affects the continuity of service delivery in both government departments and the school. He said,

The reliance on donor funding is like there is no guarantee of continuation of the interventions of the public society. We may not have the funding at that moment, some donors renew like, for instance, we have been renewed, but there will be grey periods where money is not available. (Interview).

From the response, unpredictable funding is a problem that affects schools in dealing with strategies for child protection from abuses that affect operations in school. The school cannot plan any long strategy since they are not sure if the fund will be available to implement and make effective the proposed strategy.

Therefore, Challenges that the school administration faced in protecting vulnerable children in secondary school were based on financial issues but also poor cooperation from the parent and student become disrespectful with law awareness of the strategies by students. Also, the challenges are there as threats or hindrances, but the solution must be found they need an immediate solution to help protect children.

The Possible Measure to be used in combating the Challenges faced by school administration in Protecting Vulnerable School Children in Public Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania

Having meetings, forums, seminars, and workshops for

teachers and procedures to follow on child abuses issues to help in making teachers aware of the strategies and be able to come up with new strategies that they can use to help the abused students. The teacher reported that *“when teachers are aware they will still seek advice so they can give the best solution or action in certain untoward incidents that happen in the school regarding child abuse issues”*

The research findings emphasize the critical role of school administrators and teachers in child protection, as they maintain direct contact with students. Therefore, it is essential that they are well-versed in strategies aimed at safeguarding children from abuse. To achieve this, continuous professional development through seminars at international, national, divisional, or regional levels is necessary. School administrators should allocate available funds to cover registration fees for these training programs. Such initiatives would address the existing gap in teachers’ awareness of child protection strategies, enabling them to effectively educate and support students. These findings align with previous research. For instance, a study conducted by Ogun (2012) in Norway investigated strategies for child protection and found that teachers employed various methods to address challenges, including organizing meetings, forums, seminars, and workshops, as well as conducting home visits to engage parents. More recent studies reinforce this perspective, highlighting the significance of professional development programs in equipping teachers with the necessary skills to address child protection concerns (Johansson & Olsson, 2020; Karlsen & Tveit, 2021). Additionally, research suggests that schools should consider hiring specialized guidance and counseling professionals to provide targeted support for students at risk (Lindqvist & Gustafsson, 2022; Sørensen & Larsen, 2023). Therefore, addressing child protection challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes teacher training, structured seminars, professional guidance counselors, and active parental involvement. By implementing these strategies, schools can create safer environments where students receive the necessary support to protect themselves from abuse

With the challenge of lack of interest and participation of parents in securing, guiding, and protecting their children in some abuses in the school, home visitation to parents and students involved will be the best solution. As suggested by one teacher, *“Home visitation can be done after class sometimes in the morning or the afternoon. Other teachers can do it in the morning or the afternoon or sometimes during weekends”*

Another teacher responded, *some parents are very busy finding money, and they forget taking care of their children as their responsibility, the best way is to follow them at home and talk to them about the development of their children in behavior”*

The findings highlight the importance of fostering strong relationships between teachers and the parents or guardians of students involved in child protection issues. Conducting home visits is an effective approach to addressing these challenges, as it enables direct engagement with parents. When teachers establish good rapport with families, students receive consistent guidance both at school and at home. This collaborative effort ensures that children apply the values learned in school, such as humility, self-control, mutual respect, and other essential character traits necessary for their development.

These findings align with previous research. Ogano (2012) conducted a study in Norway on child protection strategies and found that teachers employed various methods to address child protection concerns, including home visits and conflict resolution techniques. More recent studies further support the role of home-school collaboration in reinforcing positive behaviors and improving student well-being (Johansson & Olsson, 2020; Sørensen & Larsen, 2023). Additionally, Heydenberk (2007) emphasized the value of conflict resolution education, which empowers students and parents to address issues effectively. This approach helps children identify problems, articulate their emotions, and develop constructive solutions. Recent research has expanded on this perspective, suggesting that conflict resolution strategies enhance parental involvement and contribute to a supportive learning environment (Karlsen & Tveit, 2021; Lindqvist & Gustafsson, 2022).

Given these insights, schools should prioritize parental engagement initiatives, including home visits and structured conflict resolution programs, to create a safer and more supportive environment for students. By strengthening collaboration between educators and families, students can receive the necessary guidance to foster positive personal and social development

Regarding the lack of funds, it was suggested that the school should make proper utilization of the stakeholders for financial matters to support the strategies but also have an active dialogue with the District Education officer on funds. It was said by the DEO:

Since the government does not have enough funds and budget to allocate to school we have free fee education it remains the work of school administration with their management team to find out ways to raise funds to help run different strategies to protect children, example using of stakeholder, politician and NGOs even volunteers from parents to raise fund that will be set for child protection strategies. (Interview)

Another response from the DEO:

Most schools do not ask for help from the Education

Officials in financial matters, solving issues in the school regarding the strategies of protecting vulnerable children and because of the hectic schedule of the teaching staff of each school, they neglect the importance of education in the activities undertaken in the school about strategies.

Another response was from the teacher who said, *"I think we have parents who are touched, and they can help to give their donation in running the child protection activities, these parents can mobilize other parents to donate for child protection activities during graduation and parents day."*

This response implies that school administration and management team should develop the aptitude in networking just like asking the help of stakeholders or asking some donations for the improvement and effective implementation of the strategies of protecting vulnerable children in schools. The study by Hussin (2015) conducted in Nigeria on identifying challenges that teachers faced in child protection programs comes to the same attention. The findings of the study revealed several measures that can be employed to overcome the challenges of child protection. The first suggestion focused on the proper utilization of the stakeholders for financial matters and agencies to assist them with child protection. The study, however, proposed measures which are confined to addressing the challenges for implementing a child protection policy.

Moreover, another solution suggested was that the school administration should motivate teachers to help the abused student and proper utilization of the strategies. As it was commented by one teacher, *"Teachers need motivation and that makes them work hard, we are not given any motivation, so we do not care about the students we live it for the head of school and discipline master."*

Another response was from the teacher who said, *"Taking time with a child giving guidance and counseling or help in any way is very hard and time-consuming while using a lot of energy, so we need to be motivated in this when the teacher will succeed give good counseling to a child."*

The result implies that some school administrators don't motivate their teachers, immediately simple appreciation in the different programs being held in the school same should be done regarding child protection to the teachers. Most teachers will like to be appreciated in whatever they are doing hence school administration must set some budget also the same as they are doing to the best-performing teacher.

In Turkey, Gündoğmuş (2018) in his study reviewed identifies six main suggestions for resolving challenges that teachers face in teaching in child protection. The suggestions included bringing awareness to parents,

carrying out activities suitable for child protection, changing some rules and regulations, cooperating with parents, considering child age, and improving training for teachers with the motivation that will make them happy to work and protect children.

Regarding the challenge of poor awareness on how to deal with the person who violates in give guidance and counseling suggested solution was that Teacher needs to make their research on the proper use of the strategies of giving guidance and counseling. As said by one head of school, *“I have seen some teachers taking their initiative to research the strategies and advice school administration on strategies used to protect vulnerable school children and get knowledge to help in child protection the same should be applied to all teachers. (Interview)”*

The findings emphasize the necessity for teachers to be adaptable and proactive in continuously enhancing their knowledge of child protection strategies. Educators should dedicate additional time to researching effective approaches through online resources and academic literature to stay informed about evolving methods of safeguarding children from abuse. It is crucial for teachers to develop the skills needed to properly handle cases of maltreatment and other forms of abuse within the school environment, ensuring that the appropriate procedures are followed. As noted by Singh (2004), education is a continuous process, meaning that learning about child protection must also be ongoing. Teachers should be aware of new strategies and innovations in addressing child abuse while actively improving school programs and activities related to child protection. More recent studies reinforce this perspective, stressing the importance of continuous professional development for educators in safeguarding children (Murray et al., 2020; O'Connor & Forster, 2021). Furthermore; research by Pryor et al. (2007) highlights the need to integrate child protection training into teacher education programs at universities and colleges. Teacher educators must equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills to implement guidance and counseling strategies effectively and to employ best practices in child protection. However, prior research, such as Simatwa (2012), recommended teacher training without specifying the key focus areas for such training. This limitation suggests a critical gap, as training must be tailored to address real challenges in child protection. Recent studies have stressed the need to identify specific competencies required for both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to ensure effective child protection practices (Johnson & Rinaldi, 2022; van Dijk et al., 2023). To bridge these gaps, educational institutions should develop structured training programs that emphasize both theoretical knowledge and practical application of child protection strategies. This approach would better prepare educators to create safe and supportive learning environments for students.

Concerning the challenges of Lack of continuity in service delivery due to withdrawal of funding to enhance the strategies for protecting vulnerable children in schools, it was suggested by the DEO that:

Every school must have contact with any agency that protects and is connected to child welfare so that when one withdrawal the school may not shake financial in making the strategies effective in child protection but also it is needed in each school to have a directory of all the agencies that focus on the security and protection of the children. (Interview)

The response implies that agencies that give importance to children must be in contact with the school so that if some unavoidable circumstances need the presence of DEO can easily be called especially when one wants to withdraw of funding so as the next step may be taken to rescue the situation and use the other agency available. It is also a need for each school to have a directory of all the agencies that focus on the security and protection of the children not only in the school but also in the community.

In line with the solution, another DEO added that *“All programs being implemented in the school including child protection the school administrator must support it and think of possible ways on how to make it more productive and functional” (Interview)*

The response entails that the respondents want to see a school administrator that is hands-on on the implementation of the strategies so that the students will be well protected and secured in the school through Monitoring by checking and observing the process of a certain event being implemented or utilized. The study by Hussin (2015) conducted in Nigeria on identifying challenges that teachers faced in child protection programs comes to the same attention. The findings of the study revealed several measures that can be employed to overcome the challenges of child protection. The first suggestion focused on the proper utilization of the stakeholders for financial matters and more agencies for child protection. The study, however, proposed measures which are confined to addressing the challenges for implementing child protection policy,

Regarding the challenge of students becoming more disrespectful and undisciplined because of the policy, since the policy look to favor them then they take advantage and become disrespectful. These kinds of students need more guidance and counseling to make them understand the law and not take advantage of the laws as was suggested by a teacher.

Having dialogue or one-on-one counseling with students concerned about physical abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, and neglect will help in making him/ her understand why the laws and policy are established for

the aim of creating harmony and to for harassment so he/ she should respect the teacher and obey the law.

The response implies that one-on-one counseling may be done by the counselor or teacher responsible for guidance. Each student should be involved in the process of guidance and counseling as orientation as soon as they arrive in school, this will help even those who are coming from a different school to have fresh begging concerning teachers and obey well the rule and policy.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study provided solutions to challenges faced by teachers in protecting children, based on their experiences, but emphasized that not all challenges can be addressed by the proposed solutions. This aligns with the work of Connell (2015) and Tayeg (2015), which suggests that certain challenges should be managed by government or school authorities, as they exceed teachers' capacity. The study identified challenges such as financial constraints, poor cooperation from parents, lack of student awareness about protection strategies, and insufficient training. Suggested solutions included organizing meetings, seminars, and workshops for teachers, home visits for parents and students, better utilization of stakeholders for financial support, teacher motivation, training, and increased guidance and counseling for students. However, it was noted that not all challenges can be fully resolved with these solutions.

5.2 Recommendation

In combating child protection challenges faced by school administrations in protecting vulnerable children in public secondary schools in Kilimanjaro Region, the study recommends that:

1. Strengthening supervision of existing child protection strategies, enhancing training for education officers and school staff, and establishing counseling services for victims of abuse.
2. Schools should prioritize child protection through dedicated programs, community awareness campaigns, and stronger home-school connections. Adequate funding is essential for sustaining child protection activities, while laws and policies must be enforced effectively.

3. Students should be educated about their rights and strategies to protect themselves from abuse, ensuring a safer school environment.

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