

Effects of the Domestic Violence on the Academic Performance of Pupils in Magumoni Division, Tharaka Nithi County

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Abstract

Domestic violence is increasingly becoming a menace to children and is reported to be affecting their growth and developmental patterns. The cases of domestic violence in Kenya but the effect of the violence on academic performance of students in Magumoni Division of Kenya had not to been established. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of domestic violence on academic performance of pupils in Magumoni Division of Kenya. This study was guided by Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population was the 947 pupils and 68 teachers. A sample of 6 schools was randomly selected, forming 17.6 % of the targeted schools. A sample size of 93 participants was used for the study, which comprised 83 pupils and 10 teachers. The sampling was random for pupils and purposive for the teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires for the pupils and interview schedule for the teachers. Piloting was done in two schools that were not included in the study using 20 pupils 2 teachers and sampled by the same criteria described in the section of sampling procedure. Before the actual data collection the researcher tested the reliability of the instrument using split half technique by application of Spearman Brown prophesy formula. A correlation coefficient of 0.82 was obtained and the instruments were deemed reliable. Quantitative data collected was analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 21). Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study established majority of the children were exposed to domestic violence. The study recommends that; the national and county government should work with social services offices and set up. The school administration should also set up strong counseling departments where children can confidently report the cases where of domestic violence so that they can be helped.

Keywords: Discipline, Domestic Violence, Academic Performance, Abuse

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is one of the most pervasive human rights challenges (Carlson, 1991). Several studies also reveal that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to be affected by violence as adults – either as victims or perpetrators. Children may be exposed to violence at home, in the community, and in the media (Kellog & Menard, 2003; McGee, 2000; Osofsky, 2003). This exposure can have significant effects on children as they develop and as they form their own intimate relationships throughout childhood and adulthood. Risk factors are cumulative; the risks for negative outcomes multiply, placing some children in jeopardy.

Domestic violence can be physical, sexual or psychological abuse within a family setting. Physical abuse the abuse is where physical force against the victim in a way to injure or endanger them or cause feeling of pain. Physical abuse includes Physical abuse includes hitting with a fist or with an object, slapping, punching, shaking, strangling, choking, pushing, burning, kicking or threats with a knife and other types of contact that result in physical injury to the victim. Physical abuse can also include behaviors such as denying the victim of medical care when needed, depriving the victim of sleep or other functions necessary to live a comfortable live (Osthoff, 2002).

Emotional abuse is any behavior that threatens, intimidates, undermines the victim's self-worth or self-esteem, or controls the victim's freedom. Emotional abuse can involve isolating an individual from others, excessive jealousy, control of another persons activities, verbal aggression, intimidation through destruction of property, harassment or stalking, threats of violence, Constant criticism. Threatening the victim with injury or harm, name-calling, and making statements that damage the victim's self-esteem, telling the victim that they will be killed if they ever leave the relationship or even threatening with suicide are also common forms of emotional abuse. Often perpetrators will use children to engage in emotional abuse by teaching them to harshly criticize the victim as well. Emotional abuse includes conflicting actions or statements that are designed to confuse and create insecurity in the victim. These behaviors also lead the victims to question themselves, causing them to believe that they are making up the abuse or that the abuse is their fault. Emotional abuse includes forceful efforts to isolate the victim, keeping them from other people. This is intended to eliminate those who might try to help the

victim leave the relationship and to create a lack of resources for them to rely on if they were to leave. Isolation results in damaging the victim's sense of internal strength, leaving them feeling helpless and unable to escape from the situation.

Sexual abuse is any situation in which force is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom consensual sex has occurred, is an act of aggression and violence. Sexual abuse includes Use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether the act is completed or not. Sexual abuse also involves forcing unwanted sexual acts, forcing sex in front of others and forcing sex with others. Economic abuse happens when perpetrator takes over the control and other economic resources of a person without the consent of the victim. In its extreme this involves putting the victim on a strict allowance, withholding money at will and forcing the victim to beg for the money until the abuser gives them some money (Nilkinson, 2007). It is common for the victim to receive less money as the abuse continues.

Exposing children to violent situation at home is also a form of domestic violence. Children may observe violence directly such as witnessing their father battering or threatening their mother. They may also overhear violence form another part of the home such as when parents fight in the bedroom (Kenney, 2012). Domestic violence can be experienced when a child is involved in sorting problems associated with abuse at home such as calling the police or living with the a depressed parent. Studies have shown a certain level of commonality in experiences of children exposed to domestic violence but it would be erroneous to assume that either impact or outcomes are predictably similar for all children.

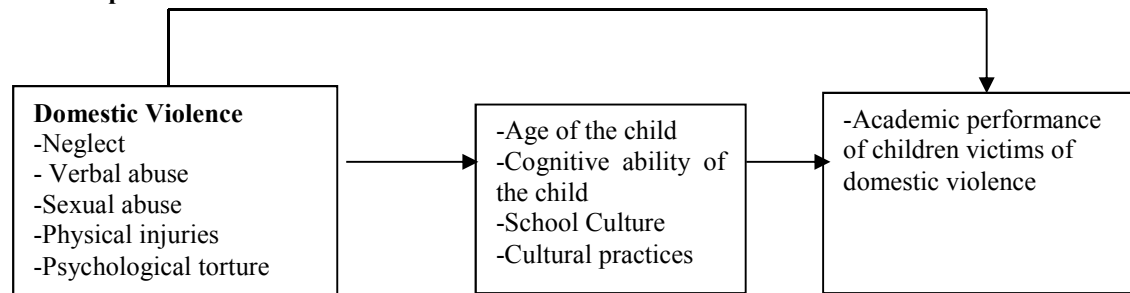
Domestic violence leads to serious consequences on the psychological, social, academic, behavioral and emotional development of children. Children who witness domestic violence are at a risk of emotional, physical and academic harm. Research suggests that children who are exposed to adults or teenagers physically fighting in the home are less likely to have positive or effective interactions with their parents and have lower levels of social competence than other children (Hague, 2012). They are also more likely to be living in households with high parental depression, and to experience depression, anxiety, health problems and stress-related disorders themselves.

Effects of domestic violence on children can be varied. Research has shown that health development of children below the age of ten are affected by domestic violence. These children cry more frequently than those not affected, have eating problems and significant weight loss is observed in babies (Buzawa, Buzawa, Stark & Buzawa, 2012). Cefrey (2009) also reports incidences of pre-school children wetting their beds, having stomachaches and headaches as a result of domestic violence. These children may later develop negative attitude towards schooling, and this in turn could affect their concentration in class, and hence poor academic performance. Domestic violence can also lead to Brain dysfunction that manifest as emotional and behavioral problems, ineffective executive functioning, deregulation of basic physiological functions, and uncontrolled impulsivity that are coupled with physical injuries, health concerns, eating disorders, truancy, inconsistent or poor academic performance or thoughts of suicide to name but a few (Appel and Holden, 1998).

Domestic violence in many ways affects the child's social, academic, psychological and moral development. As a result, the child may fails to perform well academically. At times, the behavior of the children who are victims of domestic violence becomes intolerable, as a result of low discipline levels. The children try to emulate the behaviors portrayed at home, and this may lead to discipline issues. These children are often psychologically disturbed, and at times, traumatized by these violence acts. As a result, concentration in class goes down and their academic performance declines drastically.

In Magumoni division, the cases of domestic violence are rampant, and especially among the families with alcoholic, or drug-abusing members. The magnitude of this violence differs from family-to-family, domestic violence has become an ordeal to some of the children since they think there is nothing much they can do about it. They suffer in silence hence domestic violence end up affecting their growth and development. The teachers have to contend with of teaching psychologically disturbed children, who manifest their disturbances in different ways in schools. Domestic violence may be one of the causes of the falling standards of academic performance in Magumoni division but this had not been proved. This study therefore intended to establish the effect of domestic violence on academic performance of students in Magumoni Division of Tharaka Nithi County in Kenya.

2. Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Intervening Variables

Dependent Variables

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework showing influence of domestic violence on learner's academic performance

The conceptual framework shown in figure 1 demonstrates the relationship of the variables for the study. In this case, the independent variables are the proponents of domestic violence, which include; Neglect, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical injuries, and psychological torture. The intervening variables include; the age of the child, cognitive ability of the child and school culture and cultural practices. The dependent variables in this study are the academic performance of children victims of domestic violence.

3. Research Design

The design for this study was descriptive survey design. This type of design usually seeks to find answers to the questions generated from the statement of the problem. Using this design the researcher attempted to find answers to questions by analyzing how domestic violence and affected the academic performance of the learners in the primary schools in Magumoni Division.

4. Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Magumoni Division of Tharaka Nithi County in Kenya. There are 34 primary schools in Magumoni Division.

5. Population of the Study

The population for this study was 947 pupils in class 7 in the 34 primary schools that in Magumoni Division of Tharaka Nithi County. The population also comprised all the 68 teachers in primary schools in Magumoni division. These included the teachers in charge of guidance and counselling and the class seven class teachers.

6. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size.

Sampling is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of characteristics found in the entire group (Orodho, 2009). Kombo and Tromp (2006) assert that with relatively small, clearly defined population, a sample size of at least 10% of the target population would be representative hence a target population of 95 students was required. Initially the study had sampled randomly sampled 95 class seven pupils to participate in the study but only 83 students returned that the questionnaires. Two teachers, one in charge of guidance and counselling, and the class seven-class teacher from each sampled school hence 23 teachers were purposively sampled to participate in the study. However, only 10 teachers were available for the interviewees. Thus, the total sample for the study was 93 respondents.

7. Research Instruments

The study utilized a set of questionnaires and an interview schedule to collect the required information. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students while interview guides were used to collect data from teachers.

8. Piloting

The instruments were piloted in two schools that were not included in the study. 20 pupils and 4 teachers participate in the pilot study. Data obtained during the piloting was used in establishing the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Five experts in Education and counseling checked for content and face validity of the instrument before piloting. The pilot study assisted in identifying the problems that participants might encounter in the process of answering the questions put to them. The anomalies that were discovered during the pilot study such as ambiguous items were modified. To test for reliability, Spearman Brown prophecy formula of split half technique was applied. Data collected from the questionnaires in the pilot study was split

into an analyzed. A coefficient of 0.82 was obtained and the instruments were therefore considered reliable. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) a correlation coefficient of at least 0.7 and above is considered adequate to judge the reliability of the instrument.

9. Procedure for Data Collection

A research permit was obtained from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI) in Kenya. The permit was presented to the County Education Officer to be allowed to conduct the study. The researcher then informed the head teachers of the respective schools of the intention to collect data and booked appointments. The researcher then visited the respective schools and personally administered the questionnaires and interviewed the respondents.

10. Data Analysis and Presentation

This research yielded data that requires both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the quantitative data obtained. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) assisted in analysing the data that included frequencies, means and percentages. Martin and Acuna (2002) observes that SPSS is able to handle large amount of data, and given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposefully designed for social sciences, The qualitative data obtained in this study was analyzed by organizing them into similar themes and tallying the number of similar responses. Data was then consolidated into items for discussion.

11. Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

The respondents to the study included 83 pupils and 10 teachers.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Category of Respondent	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Pupils	45	54.2	38	45.8
Teachers	4	40	6	60
Total	49		43	

Table 1 indicates Majority of the pupils 54.2% (45) were male, as compared to 45.2% (38) of the respondents who were female. The study further established that the majority of the teachers 60% (6) were female, while 40% (4) of the teachers were males. The study established that the majority (51%) of the pupils were aged 13 years, while 24% were aged 14 years while 12% were aged 15 years. This information implies that the pupils who took part in this study were of the average age of 13 years.

60% of the teachers were aged between 31-35 years while 30% of the teachers were aged between 36 and 40 years. 10% of the teachers were above 40 years. This means majority of the teachers were parents because in Kenya most people get children from the age of 25 years.

12. Common Forms of Domestic Violence Experienced by Children

The study sought to establish the most common forms of domestic violence experienced by pupils in Magumoni division. The pupils were required to give their responses on a 5 – point likert scale, and the findings obtained are presented on the Table 2.

Table 2: Common Forms of Domestic Violence Experienced by Children

Forms of Domestic Violence	% of the respondents				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
1 Child Neglect	11.8	43.8	9.2	21.1	14.1
3 Wife beating and assault	12.5	41.1	8.6	22.0	15.8
4 Sexual abuse	22.4	52.0	8.9	9.5	7.2
5 Domestic quarrels by parents	25.0	45.4	9.5	10.9	9.2
6 Physical assaults	15.7	39.5	20.4	15.8	8.6
7 Psychological torture	11.5	52.6	6.7	14.1	15.1
8 Parent-parent violence	21	50.5	15.7	7.9	4.9
9 Parent – child violence	12.8	32.9	19.1	16.8	18.4
10 Child – child violence	15.1	36.2	25.0	12.2	11.5

Legend: S A (Strongly agree), A (Agree), UN (Undecided), DA (Disagree), and SDA (Strongly Disagree)

There is child neglect in families as agreed by 60.1% of the pupils who responded to the questionnaires. The majority (53.6%) of the pupils agreed that they had witnessed their women being beaten and assaulted at homes compared to 37.8 who disagreed. Sexual abuse was also one of the forms of violence experienced by pupils in Magumon Division, as majority (74.4%) of the respondents agreed that they had experienced sexual abuse. The study further established that domestic quarrels between the parents were also witnessed by children,

as was revealed by 70.4% of the respondents who agreed and strongly agreed that there were domestic quarrels. The study established that pupils had experienced physical assaults as 55.2 % of the pupils agreed that they had had been physically assaulted. Pupils in Magumoni Division, as reported by 64.1% of the respondents, were experiencing psychological torture. 71.5% of the pupils agreed that they had observed parent – parent conflict, 45.7% had experienced parent to child violence while 51.3 % agreed they had experienced child- child violence.

Teachers were interviewed to establish the common forms of domestic violence that the children experienced while at home. The study established the major forms of violence were; physical abuse that included assaults by parents, parent to parent violence, and family neglect. Teachers were asked if the students ever complained of the assaults. The teachers indicated that most of the children were shy and did not want to implicate their parents in domestic violence cases and therefore went silent about the issue so students rarely complained of being assaulted while at home. However, the teachers reported that using their own psychological evaluations they were able to identify victims of domestic violence and assist them where possible.

The findings of this study corroborate with other studies that domestic violence, is widespread in Kenya. In its annual, Amnesty International published a report in 2005 indicated that in Kenya, women and girls were also subjected to domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, including of young children, incest, forced marriages and female genital mutilation. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), conducted nationwide in 2003, revealed that nearly half of the women in Kenya between the ages of 15 and 49 were victims of violence, and that one out of four women had been victims of violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (Country Reports, 2004).

13. Effects of the Domestic Violence on the Academic Performance

The researcher further sought to establish the effects of the domestic violence on the Academic Performance. The findings are then presented on the Table 3.

Table 3: Effects of the Domestic Violence on the Academic Performance

		5	4	3	2	1
		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Children victims of domestic violence always perform well in class	13.2	10.4.0	14.8	4.7	55.0
2	Concentration of the children victims of domestic violence is usually low	18.4	48.6	7.8	4.8	17.4
3	Children victims of domestic violence are usually psychologically disturbed	5.9	52.8	5.9	16.1	13.5
4	Performance levels of children victims of domestic violence goes on downwards trend	11.2	53.2	10.1	9.1	13.5
5	Domestic violence does not really affect the academic performance	9.2	9.9	10.1	9.1	58.8
6	Cognitive development of children victims of domestic violence is usually below the other children	19.4	57.0	7.2	10.5	3.8

Legend: S A (Strongly agree-scored 5), A (Agree-scored 4), UN (Undecided-scored 3), DA (Disagree-scored 2), and SDA (Strongly Disagree)

According to the students report, children victims of domestic violence do not always perform well in class, as was revealed by the majority (59.7%) of the respondents. The inability to perform well in class may be due to poor concentration in class as reported by 57% of the respondents who agreed that the concentration in class of children victims of domestic violence is usually low. The decrease in concentration may most likely be due to psychological disturbances. This study established that children victims of domestic violence psychologically disturbed, as majority 58.7% of the respondents agreed that children victims of domestic violence are usually disturbed.

The study further established that performance levels of children exposed to domestic violence was deteriorating, as indicated by 64.4 % of the respondents. The study established that that domestic violence directly affected the academic performance, as indicated by 67.9 % of the respondents who disagreed with the statement that Domestic violence does not really affect the academic performance. Respondents agreed that that domestic violence negatively affected cognitive development of children with majority 76.4% of the agreeing that cognitive development of children victims of domestic violence is usually below other children.

The teachers were asked to give their opinion on effects of domestic violence on pupil's academic performance. The respondents indicated that pupils who were victims of domestic violence did perform poorly in their academics, as compared to those that were not victims. Teachers reported that most children victims of domestic violence are not attentive in classes and fail to attend school regularly as a result of domestic squabbles. Teachers also reported that children who are victims of domestic violence usually engage in frequent quarrels

and fights in class all which affect their academic performance.

The findings of this study agreed with Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, Eye and Levendosky (2009) who reported that children exposed to violence are more likely to report stressful life events than those who are not exposed to violence. Children who witness domestic violence are at risk of emotional and physical harm. Research suggests that children who are exposed to adults or teenagers physically fighting in the home are less likely to have positive or effective interactions with their parents, and have lower levels of social competence than other children (Hague, 2012). The findings of this study also agreed with Silverstein, Augustyn, Cabral and Zuckerman (2006) who reported children who experience higher levels of violence have lower abilities in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge.

14. Conclusion

Most of the children in Magumoni experienced some form of domestic violence that were that included, sexual abuse, psychological torture, parent-parent violence and physical assaults. Domestic violence had a negative effect on academic performance of primary schools pupils in Magumoni Division of Tharaka Nithi County of Kenya.

15. Recommendations

This study recommends that schools in Magumoni Division of Tharaka Nithi County should strengthen the guidance and counseling programs, and equip the guidance and counseling teachers with training; magazines and other resources to enable them help children affected by domestic violence. Once the guidance and counseling programs are in place, the school will be able to sensitize parents through seminars and general meetings on the negative effects of domestic violence of academic performance of pupils in school.

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