

Childhood Victimization Influence on Juvenile Delinquency, A Case of Penal Institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

World over, juvenile justice involved children report higher rates of exposure to abuse than the general abuse. Studies have demonstrated that there is a link between victimization and future offending. Yet, little is known about the influence of childhood victimization on juvenile delinquency in the Kenyan juvenile justice system. This study sought to establish the influence of childhood victimization and juvenile delinquency among juveniles in correctional institutions in Kakamega County. Specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of childhood physical abuse on juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study was guided by the social learning theory and the general strain theory. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. A sample of 192 juveniles was selected from a total of 368 juveniles in Shikusa Borstal Institution and Kakamega Rehabilitation School were selected through simple random sampling. 2 institutional heads, 3 correctional officers, 5 probation officers and 5 children's officers were selected through purposive sampling as key informants. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the juveniles. An interview schedule was used to collect data from the key informants. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed. Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that childhood physical abuse and juvenile delinquency were significantly related ($r=0.531$; $P<0.05$) with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.241. From the findings, it was concluded that childhood victimization had a significant influence on juvenile delinquency. A recommendation was made that parents and caregivers should be sensitized on parenting skills that promote healthy child development. In addition, the juvenile justice system should come up with policy and practice guidelines related to childcare and programmes aimed at lessening the effects of abuse on children in conflict with the law.

Keywords: childhood victimization, childhood physical abuse, juvenile delinquency

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1.0 Background to the study

Childhood victimization refers to all possible forms of violence experienced by a child. It encompasses various forms of violence that results to a range of negative impacts on the victims. According to Chan (2019), childhood victimization includes child abuse and neglect by parents, peer bullying, child sexual abuse and exposure to neighborhood violence. Some researchers have suggested that childhood victimization should include unintentional injuries caused by road accidents, drowning, burns, falls and poisoning that results from neglect (Peden et al., 2008). In this study childhood victimization refers to physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect experienced by children under the age of 18 years.

Childhood victimization is a global phenomenon that spans continents, countries and social economic classes. Globally, it is estimated that over one billion children aged two to seventeen years' experience physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse annually (Hillis, Mercy, Amobi & Kress, 2016). National surveys conducted in the United States report that at least 20 % of the respondents have ever experienced childhood victimization, with the most prevalent forms being physical abuse and neglect. In Asian countries, studies reveal that victimization is common, statistics reveal that 19.6% of Chinese children under the age of 18 years have suffered from abuse (Jin, et al., 2022).

Highest rates of childhood victimization are reported in Africa. It is estimated that over 200 million children

are exposed to violence in annually (Hillis et al.,2016). According to UNICEF (2014) adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa experience the highest rates of physical and sexual abuse globally. In addition, countries in the region show a high level of support for corporal punishment which further complicates the issues of childhood abuse. 7 out of 10 children are disciplined in a violent manner (UNICEF,2014).

In Kenya, a Violence Against Children Survey conducted in 2019 indicated that 45.9 % of females and 56.1 % males of the sampled respondents aged 13-24 years had experienced childhood victimization. The most common forms of abuse experienced was physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. In addition, the study reported that 62.6 % of the respondents had experienced multiple incidents of abuse before the age of 18 (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kenya,2019).

Experiencing childhood victimization can result in a host of negative consequences which may have lifelong impact on the individual and the society as whole (Scrafford et al.,2022). These problems include health problems such as heart diseases, other physical health outcomes, suicide ideation and suicide attempts, conduct disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, substance use disorders, risky sexual behaviors and criminality (Scrafford et al.,2022; Afifi et al., 2014).

Childhood abuse is commonly cited as a mitigating circumstance at sentencing hearings asserting that there is a link between experiencing abuse during childhood and offending. A variety of studies have noted a strong association between victimization and juvenile delinquency with results showing that crime victims are at higher risk of future offending (Miley, et al.,2020). Watts and Iratzoqui (2018) reported that different types childhood victimization shapes different delinquent outcomes boys and girls. In their study, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect increased the likelihood of both violent and non- violent offending during middle adolescence. These findings are consistent with research by Lantos et al (2019) which reported that youth who had experienced any form of childhood victimization were more likely to engage in violent and non- violent offending.

While not every victimized child becomes delinquent, studies have shown that at least three in four youths in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to victimization (Abram et al.,2004). There are factors that determine if a victim of abuse will go on to become delinquent. These include the timing that the abuse occurs, chronicity and frequency of abuse and the relationship to the perpetrator. Thus it is important to find out the influence of the various forms of childhood victimization on juvenile delinquency.

1.2 Problem statement

Childhood is a dynamic period in development because it shapes a person's beliefs, attitudes and abilities hence the need to secure a healthy developmental process for all children. Children involved in the juvenile justice have histories of victimization with many of them exposed to multiple forms, which may account for their offending behavior. As such childhood victimization is a criminogenic need that needs to be addressed when dealing with children in conflict with the law in Kenya. The pathways into which childhood victimization leads to delinquency are not well documented in research since majority of research in Kenya is on childhood abuse concerned with measuring the prevalence rates of childhood abuse. In addition, most research on victimization-delinquency link is conducted in developing countries such as USA where situations are different from Kenya in terms of resources and culture. This means that applying these findings may not reflect the actual circumstances in Kenya. From this background it was imperative to establish the influence of childhood victimization among juveniles committed in institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.3 Study objective

To examine the effect of childhood physical abuse in relation to juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega county.

1.4 Research questions

What is the effect of childhood physical abuse in relation to juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega county?

1.5 Justification of the study

This study was instrumental in assessing the influence of childhood victimization on juvenile delinquency among children in conflict with the law. Understanding the impact of childhood victimization on juvenile delinquency is integral in combating childhood victimization particularly stopping the cycle of violence. Improved data and information on the adverse consequences of childhood victimization can inform the development and evaluation of programs and policies to interrupt offending and reducing chances of recidivism of juveniles with histories of abuse.

1.6 Literature review

This section examines existing literature on childhood physical abuse and juvenile delinquency.

1.6.1 Nature and extent of childhood physical abuse

Physical abuse is defined as physical injury caused by punching, beating, kicking, biting or otherwise harming a child. Physical abuse is the most visible form of abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Physical abuse occurs when a parent, caregiver or any other person in a custodial role commits an act that results in physical injury to a child, such as red marks, cuts, welts, bruises, muscle sprains or broken bones, even if the injury was unintentional. Ministry of Labour and social protection (2019) defined physical violence as any form of abuse that is carried out on children and it encompasses victimization by peers, physical abuse by parents, adult caregivers, other adult relatives, and adults in the community such as teachers, neighbors and community and religious leaders.

In regard to demographic characteristics, research findings by Hullenaar and Ruback (2020) reported that male adolescents are more likely to be victims of physical abuse compared to their female counterparts. These findings are similar to Finkelhor et al (2015) who found that male respondents were victimized at a higher rate than female respondents in a National Survey on Children's Exposure to violence. Further, in terms of experiencing physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 experience higher rates than the younger ages in the study. In addition, adolescents tend to be victimized by family members and peers more than anyone else (Hullenaar & Ruback, 2020). In regard to social economic factors, research indicates that family poverty, parental mental health, substance use disorders and intimate partner violence are risk factors for childhood physical abuse.

Children suffer from physical abuse in various settings including in the community in the context of community violence, in school settings through corporal punishment and peer victimization in form of bullying. Research indicates that children are rarely exposed to one type of victimization alone. Instead, children exposed to one type of maltreatment are likely to experience additional forms of maltreatment and that different types of childhood traumatic experiences tend to co-occur, overlap and interact (Debowska, Willmott, Boduszek, & Jones, 2017). Vu et al., (2016) notes that physical abuse at times co- occurs with indirect victimization, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. This concept has been referred to as polyvictimization, which refers to the experience of several distinct forms of victimization, such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, and bullying (Ford & Delker, 2018). Poly-victimization has been shown to increase deleterious outcomes to victims (Afifi et al., 2020).

1.6.2 Consequences of childhood physical abuse

Child physical abuse has both immediate and long- term consequences that have detrimental outcomes on the wellbeing on the child. The immediate consequences of child physical abuse are physical pain resulting from the injuries sustained, acute stress and potential physical injuries. Aside from the immediate impacts of physical abuse, a child's reaction to abuse may have lifelong intergenerational impacts. Child abuse can be linked to later physical, psychological and behavioral consequences as well as costs to the whole society (Child Information Gateway, 2018). These consequences may be independent of each other, but they also may be interrelated. The outcomes of physical abuse vary widely and are affected by various factors such as the child's age and developmental status when abuse occurred, the frequency and severity of the abuse.

Physical health problems associated with childhood physical abuse may occur immediately for instance brain damage while others may take longer periods to emerge or be detected. These include gastrointestinal problems, brain injuries, vision problems, back problems (Widom, Czaja, Bentley, & Johnson, 2012; Monnat & Chandler, 2015). Psychological and behavioral problems that have been found to be associated with childhood physical abuse include poor academic and intellectual outcomes, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance use, personality disorders, trouble forming and maintaining relationships, suicidality and aggression. Disrupted brain development as a result of abuse can cause impairments to the brain functions such as working memory, self-control and cognitive flexibility (Kavanaugh, Dupont-Frechette, Jerskey, & Holler, 2017).

Repeated exposure and exposure to multiple forms of abuse during childhood has been shown to lead to worse adverse outcomes than single experiences of abuse (Afifi et al., 2020). The study of victimization from the perspective of polyvictimization is important because of the established cumulative effects of experiencing violence in its various forms.

1.6.3 Association between childhood physical abuse and juvenile delinquency.

Various studies have showed a relationship between experiencing physical abuse and the intergeneration transmission of violence as victims of abuse later become perpetrators of violence in adult life. Exposure to violence may lead to an increased susceptibility to a violent belief system which in turn justifies violent behavior as acceptable and an appropriate method of resolving conflicts (Nofzinger & Kutz, 2007). Furthermore, repeated exposure to violence victimization teaches children to handle anger and disagreements by using violence as opposed to pro-social tactics.

Various mechanisms have been proposed to explain the link between childhood physical abuse and the risk for future violence. These include the social learning theory, the emotional regulation perspective, dissociation

and PTSD. According to social learning theory, abused children learn to be aggressive from their parent or important role models through a process of behavioral conditioning and imitation and later pass what they have learned to others (Bandura, 1973). As such, victims of physical abuse are more likely to be arrested for violent offenses at some point in their lives as compared to their counterparts who were sexually abused or neglected during childhood (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). In addition, children developing in abusive environments often develop unhealthy coping mechanisms that impact their personality later in life. One example of this is the development of cold personality styles (i.e., lack of empathy, lack of remorse and lack of care for others). All forms of childhood victimization lead to formation of cold personality traits partially due to the influence of dissociation (Bains, 2017). Particularly, physical and sexual abuse is associated with high levels of dissociation. Children who experience physical abuse alongside other forms of child victimizations such as sexual abuse and neglect are more likely to run away from home. Studies have revealed many of children who run away have suffered some form of physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse inflicted by relatives or close family. Recurrent physical abuse increases the risk of runaway behavior which in turn promotes deviant street behavior (Bryan, 2019). Runaways and homeless youth have a higher rate of involvement in the juvenile justice system and many of their arrests can be attributed to the activities they must endure to survive such survival sex, substance use, property crime and physical abuse.

In a study conducted from a sample of 2,575 delinquent youth in USA, Fox and Bouffard (2015) found that experiencing physical abuse in childhood was correlated with an increase in the odds of becoming a serious violent or chronic offender. Murray and Farrington (2010) echo the same sentiments, reporting that childhood physical abuse is one of the risk factors predicting delinquency among 10–17-year-olds. Adolescents who are abused as children are more likely to engage in delinquency, violence and substance abuse. Research on intimate partner abuse has shown that there is a link between man's childhood physical abuse history and perpetration of intimate partner violence (McKinney et al., 2009). Men with severe childhood physical abuse had a two-fold increased risk for intimate partner violence, while women exposed to childhood family violence were 1.5 times more likely to engage in reciprocal intimate partner abuse

1.7 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by the social learning theory and the general strain theory.

1.7.1 The social learning theory

The social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. According to this theory, children learn through observation, modelling and reinforcement. The basis of the theory is that people observe the behavior, attitudes and consequences of others and then use that information to form their own actions. Much of the early learning occurs through the family since it is the primary support group of the child.

As adopted in this study, the central premise of social learning theory is that parents and other significant individuals in the environment serve as important models and play a major role in teaching children antisocial or criminal behavior. According to this argument then, some children learn to do what has been done to them or what they witness. The child victim later becomes a perpetrator of violence, resulting in intergenerational transmission of violence. Children who are frequently physically abused peers, siblings, caregivers or parents grow up normalizing that violence is the only way that they can resolve conflicts or disagreements leading to adoption of a violent belief system.

However, this theory explains delinquency as a learnt behavior through observation and modelling. It only focuses on violent responses such as aggression and violent offences. Social learning theory cannot adequately explain other delinquent acts such as truancy, running away or drug and substance abuse as being learnt through observation. That is why the researcher used the general strain theory compliment the social learning theory in effort to understand the impact of experiencing childhood physical abuse on other forms of juvenile delinquency.

1.7.2 The general strain theory

The general strain theory [GST] was propounded by Robert Agnew. Agnew (1992). The general strain theory defines strain as the product of negative relationships with others. The GST identifies 3 types of strains. First strain may arise when one fails to achieved positively valued goals such as good grades in school. Second, strain may be generated by removal of a positively valued stimuli, that is the loss of something valued such a breakup or loss of a parent, separation or divorce. Finally, strain may arise from presence of negative stimuli (Agnew, 2002). This type of strain includes experiences in which the individual is exposed to undesirable circumstances or is the recipient of negative treatment by others, such as harassment and bullying from peers, abuse by parents, or criminal victimization.

Strain is viewed to be criminogenic if it is high in magnitude (severe, frequent, of long duration or involving matters of high importance to the individual), are seen unjust and associated with low social control and likely to create an incentive to commit crime (Agnew, 2002). Strains that meet these conditions include parental rejection and neglect, physical abuse by parents or caregivers, being a victim of bullying or peer abuse, criminal victimization and witnessing violence. Using GST, this study views childhood physical abuse as a strain

that can be viewed as criminogenic. In response to presentation of negative stimuli, individuals may engage in deviance/ delinquency as a means of escaping or alleviating negative emotions or exacting revenge against the source of the stimuli (Agnew, 1992).

1.8 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design that employed a mixed method of data collection. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), descriptive research design is most suitable for studies that intend to describe and interpret the current status of individuals, conditions, events or phenomenon as exists within the society. The researcher has no intentions to manipulate the variables in order to influence the outcome.

The study was carried out in Kakamega county, Kenya. Kakamega County is located in the Western region of Kenya and covers an area of 3,224.9 km² (IEBC,2010). The county is among the densely populated counties in Kenya with a population of 1,867,579 as per the 2019 population census (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

The study area was selected given the high number of juvenile delinquents committed in penal institutions compared to other similar institutions in other jurisdictions across the country (State Department of Correctional Services, 2017). There are three government institutions for juveniles in Kakamega County namely Shikusa Borstal institution, Kakamega Rehabilitation School (formerly Kakamega Approved School) and Kakamega Juvenile Remand Home.

The study population comprised all juveniles committed to Shikusa Borstal institution and Kakamega Rehabilitation School. In addition, correctional officers, probation officers and children's officers were sampled as key informants. 192 juveniles were identified as primary respondents by simple random sampling and stratified sampling. 15 key informants were identified through purposive sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the juveniles. The questionnaire is preferred especially where there are large numbers of respondents to be handled because it ensures easy and quick derivation of information within a short time (Kerlinger, 2004). The structured and unstructured items were used so as to get qualitative and quantitative data. Interview method was used to collect data from the key informants.

The data obtained from the field was organized, edited to ensure completeness, comprehensibility and consistency, classified and coded according to the study question and objective for analysis. The study data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics procedures by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 for Windows. All statistical measurements were performed within 95% confidence level.

1.9 Findings

The study targeted 192 primary respondents being children committed to Shikusa Borstal Institution and Kakamega Rehabilitation School in Kakamega County. In addition, 5 prison officers responsible for juvenile rehabilitation programmes at Shikusa Borstal Institution, 5 officers in charge of probation stations in Kakamega County, 3 officers at Kakamega Juvenile rehabilitation school and 5 children's officers were identified as key informants in the study. From the targeted sample, 179 children committed to Shikusa Borstal Institution and Kakamega Rehabilitation School, 5 prison officers, 4 officers in charge of probation stations in Kakamega County, 2 officers at Kakamega Juvenile rehabilitation school being the manager and the welfare officer and 3 children officers successfully participated in the study as respondents. This gave the study a response rate of 91.9%. According to Remler and Van Ryzin (2021), when conducting a research study, collecting data from 70% or more of the target sample is adequate for purposes of generalization of findings from the sample to the population from which such sample was drawn.

1.9.1 Age of the respondents

Table 1: Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15 – 16 years	37	20.67
17 – 18 years	112	62.57
Over 18 years	30	16.76
Total	179	100.0

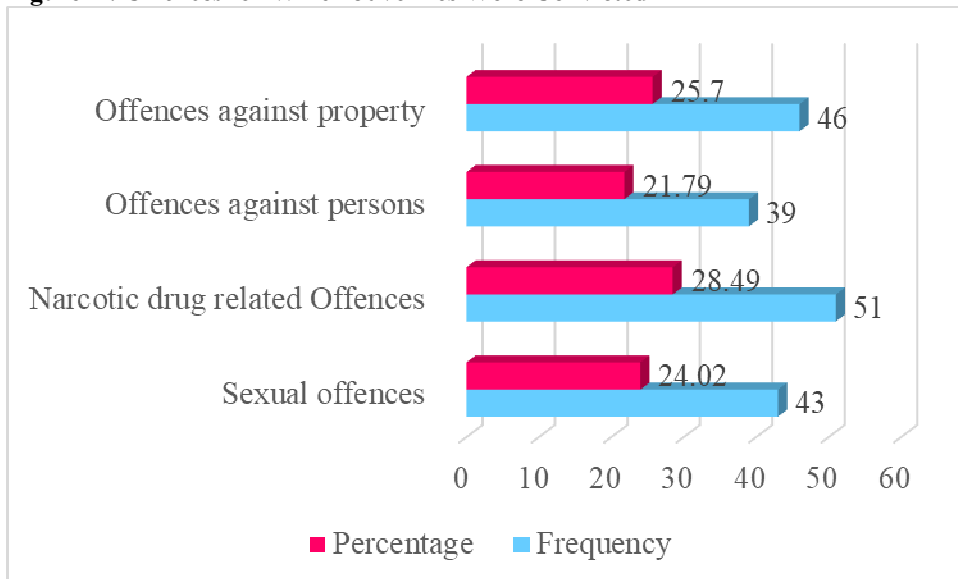
Source: Research Data, (2023)

From the results in table 1 62.57% (112) of the respondents were between 17 and 18 years of age, 20.67% (37) of the respondents were between 15 and 16 years of age and 16.76% (30) were over 18 years old. In committing convicted juveniles to correctional institutions, Probation officers are required to be mindful of the age range within which such children may be admitted to the Borstal institutions and Rehabilitation Schools. The Borstal Institutions Act Chapter 92 of the laws of Kenya provides that probation Officers should only commit to the Borstal Institutions juveniles aged between 15 and 17 years, while Rehabilitation Schools admits juveniles aged between 12 and 15 years for a maximum of three years. Admitting juveniles on the borderline age of 17 for

a period of 3 years may in some instances occasion a scenario such as the one witnessed in this study where juveniles over 18 years of age serving sentences at the statutory institutions.

1.9.2 Offences for Which Juveniles Were Convicted

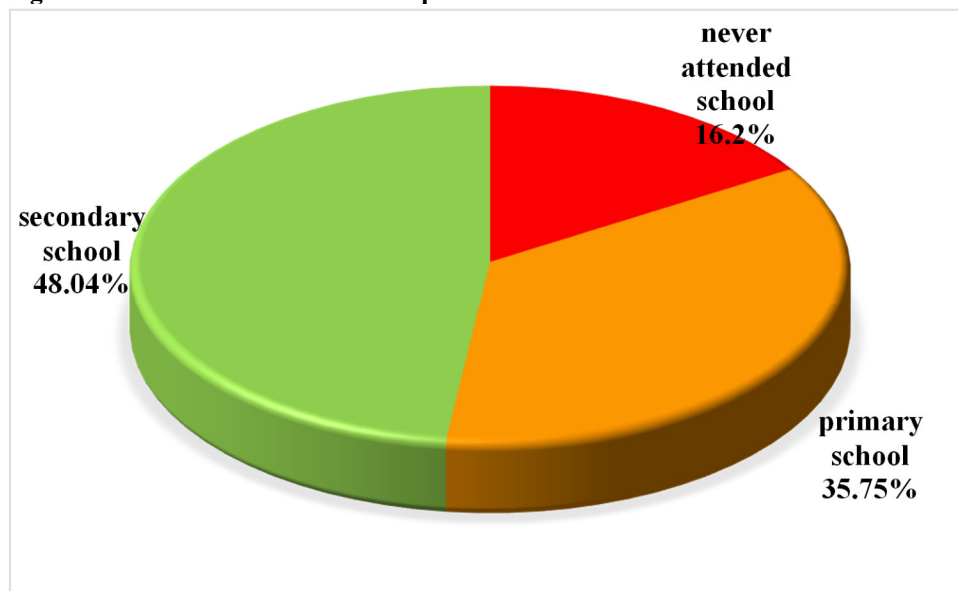
Figure 1: Offences for Which Juveniles Were Convicted



Results in figure 1 reveal that 25.49% (51) of the respondents were convicted for narcotic drugs related offences including using, selling and trafficking Narcotic drugs. The study also revealed that 25.7% (46) of the respondents were convicted for offences against property that included stealing offences and destruction and malicious damage to property. Further, 24.02% (43) of the respondents were convicted for sexual offences and 21.79% (39) were convicted for offences against persons including murder, manslaughter and assault related offences.

1.9.3 Respondents' level of education

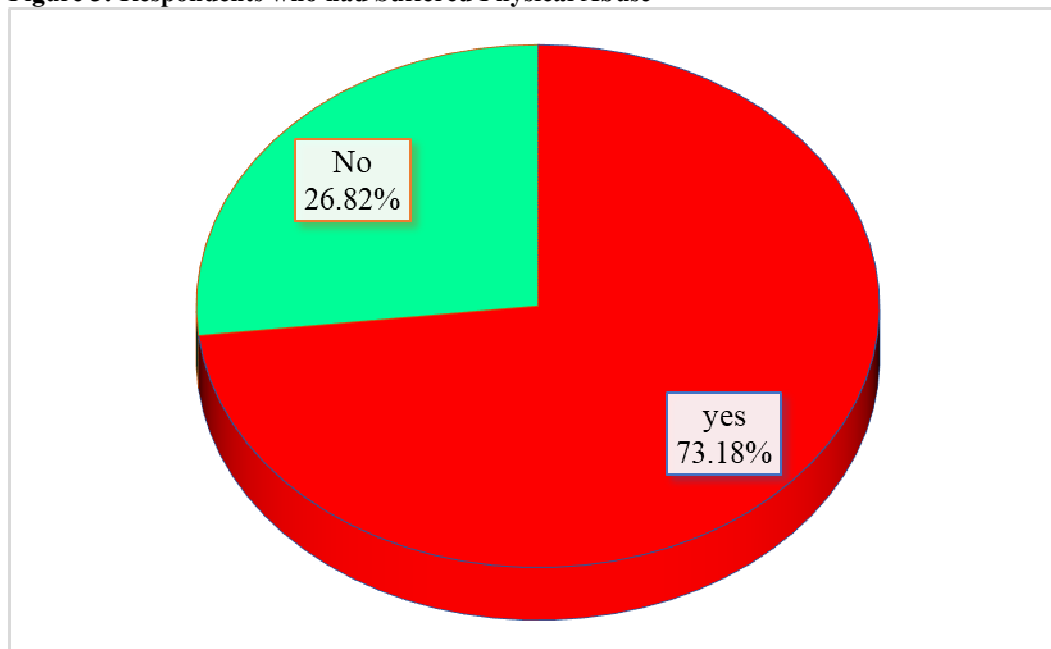
Figure 2: Level of Education for Respondents



Results in figure 2 show that 48.04% (86) of the respondents were secondary school students, 35.75% (64) were primary school pupils and 16.2% (29) had never attended school. The high number of secondary school students in the institutions is a reflection of the trends in education system in Kenya where most students aged 15 to 17 years, which is also the admission age into Borstal institutions, are in secondary schools. This is also the age when teenagers are struggling with adolescence and are quick to anger, hence may easily find themselves in conflict with the law.

1.9.4 Respondents who had suffered abuse

Figure 3: Respondents who had Suffered Physical Abuse



Results in figure 3 show that 131 respondents (73.18%) had suffered physical abuse while 48 (26.82%) indicated that they had not suffered physical abuse. This implies that majority of the children involved in the juvenile justice system have been victims of childhood physical abuse. Though not every physically abused child goes on to engage in delinquency, studies by (Wilkinson et al, 2019) shows that majority of juvenile’s report maltreatment experiences such as physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. As suggested by empirical evidence, physical abuse significantly influences rebellion, truancy, drug abuse, general indiscipline and withdrawal among teenagers (Murray & Farrington, 2010). Having such a high number of juveniles having suffered physical abuse could explain why they committed the offences for which they were convicted.

1.9.5 Frequency of abuse

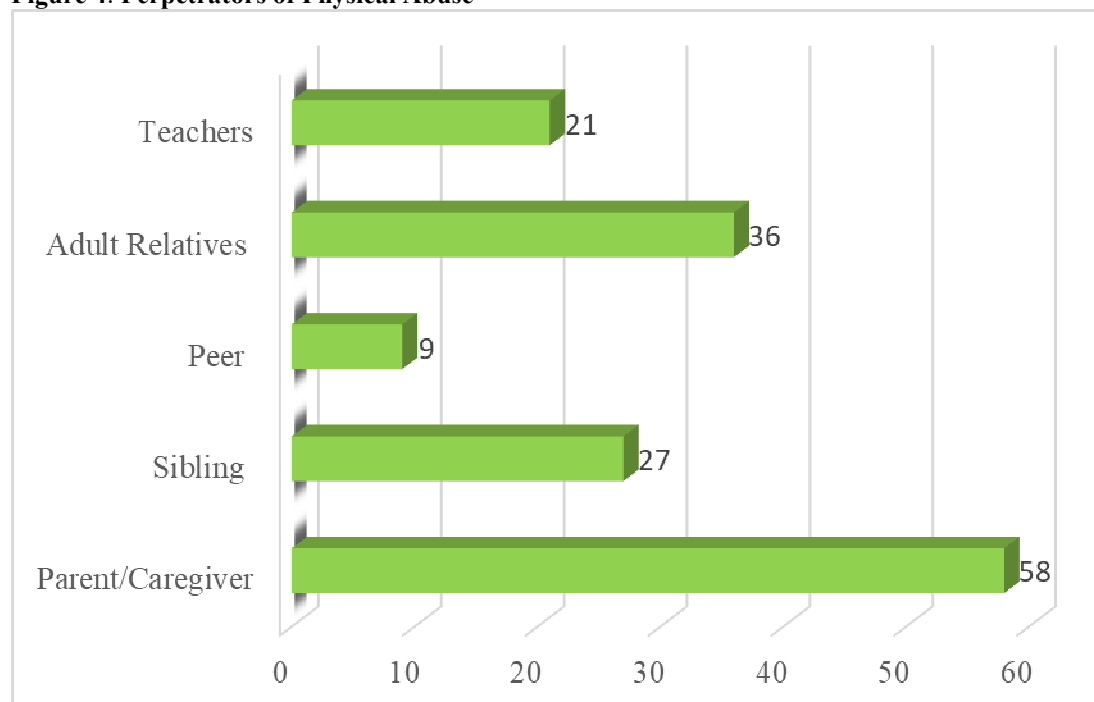
Table 1: Frequency of Physical Abuse

Number of times physically abused	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – 2 times	24	18.32
3 – 5 times	33	25.19
6 – 9 times	29	22.14
10 or more times	45	34.35
Total	131	100.0

Results in table 4 show that among respondents who had suffered physical abuse, 43.35% (45) had been physically abused 10 or more times, 25.19% (33) had been physically abused 3 to 5 times, 22.14% (29) had been physically abused 6 to 9 times and 18.32% (24) had been physically abused 1 or 2 times. This shows that majority of the respondents were victims of multiple incidents of physical abuse. This could mean that once a child is victimized, the risk of future victimization doubles and that childhood physical abuse is not a one-time occurrence. Experiencing repeated physical abuse exacerbates the effects of previous incidents, placing the abuse child at further risks of serious long term negative effects of physical abuse. Recurrent incidents of childhood physical abuse have been linked by previous studies to worse outcomes than isolated incidents of abuse (Johnson- Reid, Kohl & Brett, 2012).

1.9.6 Perpetrators of childhood physical abuse

Figure 4: Perpetrators of Physical Abuse



Findings in figure 4 reveal that parents and caregivers were the leading perpetrators of physical abuse with 58 respondents mentioning them. From the findings, it was also established that 36 respondents mentioned adult relatives, 27 respondents mentioned siblings, 21 mentioned teachers and 9 mentioned peers and perpetrators of physical abuse. This implies that vast majority of the juveniles were abused by someone known to them, at home and by persons under a custodial role. Being abused by a family member especially one who is supposed to nurture and protect can lead to worse impacts on a child's well-being compared to being abused by a stranger.

1.9.7 Age at first incidence of physical abuse

Table 2: Age at First incidence of physical Abuse

Age at first physical abuse	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10 years and below	25	19.08
11 – 13 years	49	37.4
14 – 16 years	42	32.06
More than 16 years	15	11.45
Total	131	100.0

Results in table 5 reveal that 37.4% (49) of the respondents were first physically abused at the age of 11 to 13 years, 32.06% (42) were first physical abused at the age of 14 to 16 years, 19.08% (25) were first physically abused while at the age of 10 years or below while 11.45% (15) were first physically abused while over 16 years of age. According to this finding, children are more likely to be physically abused during adolescence, which ranges from ages 10 to 19. Adolescence is a dynamic period in human development. It is a period where a children experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. Any adverse experiences during this period may have an impact on their overall health including being engaged in delinquency.

These findings resonate with Hullenaar and Ruback (2020) which found that adolescents between 12 and 17 years tend to be abused by someone they know. Studies have shown that the timing that abuse occurs is important in determining if a child will become delinquent or not. Young people whose abuse persists from childhood into adolescence or that starts from adolescence are much more likely to be involved in crime and the juvenile justice system than those whose victimization is limited to the childhood (Wilkinson, et al.,2019).

When asked to state how the experience of physical abuse affected them, majority of the respondents were traumatized, physically injured, scared and felt unwanted. This is what a juvenile from Kakamega Rehabilitation school had to say

My father always beats me up when I do something wrong. There was a time he hit me with a big cane and broke my hand. i always feel like my father does not love me. I am always scared of him and I fear for my life. I ran away from home because I did something wrong because I knew that I will be beaten badly. (Juvenile offender1, 2023)

Juveniles committed in the Kakamega Rehabilitation School reported to have sustained severe injuries because of being physically abused by their parents and caregivers.

My mother is always violent when she is drunk. Every time she beats me up with a big stick if she finds that I have not done. One day she said that I stole her money in the house. She started slapping me and beating me with a jembe on the head, saying that she was going to kill me. My head was injured and I started bleeding and was stitched in the hospital. (juvenile offender 4, 2023)

1.9.8 Physical abuse and juvenile delinquency

Table 3: Physical Abuse led to Juvenile Delinquency

Whether physical abuse led to juvenile delinquency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I Strongly Agree	35	19.55
I Agree	61	34.08
Neutral	14	7.82
I Disagree	47	26.26
I Strongly Disagree	22	12.29
Total	179	100.0

From the findings in table 6, 34.08% (61) of the respondents agreed that physical abuse led to juvenile delinquency, 19.55% (35) strongly agreed that physical abuse led to juvenile delinquency while 7.82% (14) of the respondents were neutral. Further still, 26.26% (47) of the respondents disagreed with the question whether physical abuse led to delinquency and to the same question 12.29% (22) strongly disagreed. This shows that majority of the respondents were of the view that physical abuse led to their involvement in crime. This finding corroborates findings from empirical studies on physical abuse and juvenile delinquency. For instance, Child Information Gateway (2018) reports that aside from the immediate impacts of physical abuse, a child's reaction to abuse may have lifelong intergenerational impacts. Victims of childhood physical abuse may normalize use of violence as appropriate means of conflict resolution. Thus, a child who has been a victim of physical abuse becomes a perpetrator of abuse.

When asked how the experience of physical abuse led to their juvenile offending, majority of the respondents were of the view that the pain resulting from physical abuse was unbearable and somehow pushed them out of their homes to seek refuge on the streets or with peers who negatively influenced their behaviour.

I used to get beaten by my parents a lot. They also used to fight and my father would beat and chase us away with my mother and brothers. He says that I am not his child. I decided to run away from all this pain. I went to the streets where I had to do crime to survive. (juvenile offender, 2023).

Another respondent had this to say;

I always feel stressed and depressed because of being abused. My friends told me if I take bhang that I will no longer be stressed. And that is how I started using bhang (juvenile offender, 2023).

From the above findings it is evident that escaping physical abuse perpetrated by parents, caregivers and adult relatives, running away from home may place children in a position where they become involved in delinquency as a means for survival. When run-aways are living on the streets, they have little opportunity for self-support, which leads to a heavy reliance on deviant strategies for survival. This corroborates a study from Bryan (2019) which revealed that many runaway children had suffered some form of physical abuse inflicted by close relatives and family friends. Further, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2019) reported that runaway and homeless youths have higher rates of being involved with the juvenile justice system. Many of the arrests can be attributed to the activities they must endure to survive such as property crime, substance use and physical abuse.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for Physical Abuse and Juvenile Delinquency (n=179)

		Physical Abuse	Delinquency
Physical Abuse	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	179	
Delinquency	Pearson Correlation	.531*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	179	179

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the results in table 7, there was a significant positive relationship between physical abuse and juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega County ($r=0.531$; $p<0.05$). Positive correlation between physical abuse and juvenile delinquency implies that an increase in physical abuse led to an increase in juvenile delinquency. The study findings show that a majority of the respondents had experienced multiple

incidents of physical abuse. In addition, most respondents indicated that the experience of physical abuse led to their involvement in delinquency. Findings from this study are in line with findings from other studies on the relationship between physical abuse and juvenile delinquency. A study conducted by Fox and Bouffard (2015) found that experiencing physical abuse in childhood was correlated with an increase in the odds of becoming a serious violent or chronic offender.

A linear regression analysis was undertaken to determine how much change in juvenile delinquency resulted being a victim of physical abuse. The findings are presented in table 8

Table 8: Linear regression model for physical abuse and juvenile delinquency (n=179)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.351 ^a	.241	.237	.51743	1.651

a. Predictor: (Constant) Physical Abuse

b. Dependent Variable: Juvenile Delinquency

Research findings in Table 8 for linear regression between physical abuse and juvenile delinquency revealed a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.241 implying that 24.1% of the variance witnessed in juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega County was a result of physical abuse. This means that experiencing physical abuse can lead to engagement in juvenile delinquency. As reported by the United States Department of Justice (2017), victims of child physical abuse often exhibit behavioral difficulties that include future juvenile offending and criminal behavior. The same report also alludes to the fact that children who experience maltreatment in the form of physical abuse are more likely to develop antisocial behaviors and form relationships with antisocial peers and that association with antisocial peers were found to increase the chances of one engaging in delinquent and criminal behaviors.

2.0 Conclusions of the study

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusion was made;

The study revealed a significant and positive relationship between childhood physical abuse and juvenile delinquency among juveniles in penal institutions in Kakamega county. It is therefore concluded that childhood victimization influences juvenile delinquency.

2.1 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- I. Childhood physical abuse is perpetrated by parents, caregivers and adult relatives who are entrusted with care and protection of the children. There is need for conducting public engagements with parents and caregivers or any other person with a custodial role in the community with the aim of enhancing parenting skills, changing social norms to support positive parenting and improving the quality of child care
- II. There is need the juvenile justice system to come up with interventions that are geared at lessening the harms of abuse suffered by children in conflict with the law to ensure that they are effectively rehabilitated.

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