

NAYEBARE CREATORIS (2009-MO71-10004)

An Investigation of the Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Impact of Child Abuse on Academic Performance of Primary School Children: A Case Study of Kalisizo Sub-County Rakai District

This study investigated perceptions held by the stakeholders on the influence of child abuse practices on the academic performance of primary school children by taking a case study of Kalisizo sub-county Rakia district. A case study of primary schools in Kalisizo sub-county was carried out and child abuse was exemplified by the practices of physical abuse or corporal punishment, sexual abuses of rape and defilement, child deprivation of basic needs like food, health care and educational materials and child labour. Academic performance is understood in terms of class work, test scores, term examination scores and the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results. This research also sought to establish the perceived common practices of child abuse that are inflicted upon children and the influence these practices have on the academic performance of primary school children. Data were collected using questionnaires from 128 respondents. These were teachers (60), parents (60), head teachers (4) and deputy head teachers (4). Focus group discussions were held with 8 groups each made up of 10 pupils drawn from each school and the total number of pupils were 80. Interviews, documentary reviews of records and observations were also applied. Simple random sampling, purposive sampling and stratified random sampling procedures were used to select the respondents or samples for the study from the accessible population. Data were analysed using frequency tables and percentages, and then presented. The study established the perceptions held on the impact of child abuse on academic performance of children. It was discovered that stakeholders believe that child abuse in the practices of physical abuse or corporal punishment, sexual abuses of rape and defilement, child deprivation of basic needs like food, health care and educational materials and child labour are practiced in the case study area. The findings further revealed that child abuse practices are perceived to be dangerous to the general wellbeing of a child. They are perceived to have effects on the physical and intellectual wellbeing of a child, and have a negative influence on the academic performance of the child. It was revealed that those stakeholders perceive child abuse to have adverse effects like dropping out of school, unwanted pregnancies among girls and even death in cases of severe beating or abortion to solve the problem of unwanted pregnancies. The study findings also revealed that some measures have been put in place so as to abolish the practices of child abuse and these included: education and sensitisation of the public about the dangers of child abuse and its effects on children's academic performance, laws regarding the protection of children's rights, empowering children with life skills such as how to be assertive and offering them special protection from the socio-economic impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and exploitative and hazardous labour. However, the findings also revealed that the measures in place are not very effective and, therefore, child abuse is being practiced and respondents suggested more measures to reinforce what is already in place. Recommendations were made to the stakeholders intended to support them as they seek to create non-violent schools, homes and communities. The recommendations are guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and informed by the study consultations, expert inputs and respondents' views. The recommendations are designed to ensure that education methods, curricula, programmes and services uphold the norms established by the Ministry of Education and Sports, and that their design and implementation are consistent with social and cultural diversity as well as economic and practical realities.

Keywords: Child abuse, academic performance, primary schools, children, Rakai