

## **Etiology of Child Sexual Abuse among Pupils in Emesa Sub-Location in Kisii County**

**Orucho Justine Amadi**

*Post graduate Student at Maasai Mara University*

**Onyiko Kennedy Karani**

*Lecturer, Social Work, Maasai Mara University*

**Joseph Misati**

*Senior Lecturer, Cooperative University of Kenya*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is global prodigy which cuts across all status boundaries ranging from social, economic, cultural and political. This has continued to affect pupils on a daily basis. Even though the present prevalent appraisals of CSA are based on official data sources e.g., Social welfare, children office, governmental institutions and rescue centers, these appraisals only account for corroborated or reported cases leaving behind the unreported cases especially in the rural areas. Part of the antagonistic impinge of CSA are the avoidant coping stratagem like depression, attempted suicide, substance use, high sexual desires or hyposexuality. The study concentrated on the etiology of child sexual abuse among pupils in Emesa Sublocation in Kisii county. The study utilized descriptive survey design. The sample size was 100 pupils, 100 parents and 10 Key Informants. The results present the causes of child sexual abuse as walking to school, pornographic content in mobile phones and TVs, parental negligence, single parenthood, orphanage and poverty. The study recommends that in order to mitigate child sexual abuse, the key stakeholders such as parents, teachers and local administrators need to know the etiology of sexual abuse. This will guarantee their fight against the identified causes unanimously to get a solution to this vice.

**KEY WORDS:** Parental negligence, Single parenthood, Orphanage and Poverty.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Child abuse as recorded in literature in many parts of the world continues to affect the children conventionally. The abuse dates back to ancient civilizations as seen in the reports of female genital mutilation, infanticide, neglect, abandonment and child trafficking. Child abuse is a worldwide problem that occur in various forms which is profoundly entrenched in cultural, economic and social practices. It occurs in different forms which are: physical, emotional neglect and sexual abuse, (Alicia and Joaquin, 2006). Child physical abuse involves the acts of omission by caregivers, teachers, parents or a third party that intentionally causes physical harm to the child, this inhibits the physiological development of the child. Child Emotional abuse is manifested when the caregivers fail to furnish the child with appropriate and supportive environment, apprehensible in acts that have antagonistic effect on the emotional health and development of the child (Dolores Seijo, *et.al* 2020). Child neglect occurs when the parent or the caregiver has the resources and capacity to provide the basic needs of the child but deprives the child the necessities thus amounting to child abuse when the it reaches the levels where the child cannot surface, (Shirley, *et.al* 2020). Child sexual abuse is the palpable stead of adults to use the child for sexual gratification. It is not infrequent for children who have been abused to display the manifestations of infection, constipation, abdominal pain, recurrent urinary tract infection, genital injury and behavioral problems, (Mariane and Carolina, 2016).

Child sexual abuse is a global problem which cuts across all status boundaries ranging from social, economic, cultural and political (Gabriela *et.al* 2020). This has continued to affect pupils on a daily basis. Even though the present prevalent appraisals of CSA are based on official data sources (e.g., Social welfare, children office, governmental institutions, rescue centers, etc.), these appraisals only account for corroborated or reported cases leaving behind the unreported cases especially in the rural areas (Douglas & Finkelhor, 2011). As a matter of fact, according to these estimations, CSA affects 2 out of every 100 children (Douglas & Finkelhor, 2011).

Although studies have been done on the effects of sexual violence against children both the long term and short-term effects, data that explores the etiology and mitigation strategies of CSA among pupils is lacking. Moreover, how the children cope differs across cultures which risks them of developing long-term psychiatric problems in pupils who have undergone the violence, (Shapiro *et.al* 2012). Part of the antagonistic impinge of CSA are the avoidant coping stratagem like depression, attempted suicide, substance use, high sexual desires or hyposexuality. However, the manifestation of these effects during the transition period of adolescence and their variations across cultures and ethnic groups remains unknown among the pupils. In Social work practice, keen case conceptualization and correct assessment leads to fruitful treatment plan. Therefore, it's important to look at these differences from strength perspective within the cultures of the pupils who have experienced sexual violence. Consequently, taking note of the adverse effects of child sexual violence and the cultural considerations attached to it provides an insight to the mitigation strategies, symptomatic management and a mitigant of the associated long-term complications of CSA such as hypersexuality that pervades in adulthood.

### **Etiology of Sexual Abuse among Pupils**

According to Swaby (2009), etiology of CSA ranges from cultural factors in the community such as child battering, FGM, sexual exploitation and male chauvinism to family-level factors like child neglect, poverty, marital violence, Social disorganization and non-nuclear family. All these are the contributing factors to the etiology of CSA. Child-level factors such as economic position, age, disability, physical and psychological health, and gender contribute to CSA.

### **Child Neglect**

According to WHO (2006), Child neglect is any verified or suspected outrageous deed or omission by a parent, guardian or caregiver that impoverishes a child of basic age-appropriate needs and thereby results, or has reasonable potential to result, in physical or psychological harm. When the children are neglected by the parent, girls suffer more than boys from the neglect.

Child neglect involves abnegation, relinquishment, inappropriate child supervision, unsatisfying a child's emotional and psychological needs, failure to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing and education. Child neglect is mostly indicated by insufficient care that can be observed by someone close to the child. Teachers for instance, can detect the signs of neglect by observing the child's physical appearance and emotional comfort. There is a high rate of child neglect and maltreatment in the developing countries due to poverty level.

Whereas other substantiated forms of child maltreatment such as physical, psychological, verbal, economic and cultural abuse have decreased significantly in the recent past, rates of child neglect have declined. Between 2000 to 2017, the rates of reported physical abuse decreased by 42 percent and rates of justified sexual violence diminished by 62 percent, however, rates of substantiated child neglect fell by just 5 percent showing that it's still high. For that matter, social workers and community health volunteers believe that neglect merits more attention from social researchers, government legislators, and medical practitioners. Since neglect is an act of omission, it poses a big challenge in its identification.

Many parents who neglect children do not do so deliberately. Studies indicate that parenting that is neglectful may come forth from a person's early developmental experience during childhood in the environment with limited coping mechanisms and resources. Family dynamics is also a contributing factor to neglectful parenting. This study conceptualizes that child neglect leaves a child susceptible for sexual abuse from the perpetrators due to the prevailing conditions such as availability and age.

### **Poverty**

According to Edwards, (2019), the various types of child maltreatment have a close relationship with poverty. These types of maltreatment include, sexually exploiting children, using children as laborers, child neglect which comes as a result of a parent not able to provide sufficiently their children's basic needs, homelessness, Increased rates of child-on-child abuse because they are left under no supervision, and sexually exploiting children. In Kenya, according to the police reports 2019, there are approximately 10 000 reported child sexual violence each year. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kenya survey (2019) reported that its only 14 percent of the child sexual abuse cases are reported that's approximately three cases in every twenty abuses. Consequently, this implies that there is under estimation on the cases of child sexual abuse reported. The reasons for this under-reporting include: Poverty- especially in families living in poor social-economic states who depend on the abuser to give them money to buy basic necessities. This silence both the victim and the victim's family for fear of withdrawal of the support (Anderson, 2017)).

Most families in Emesa sublocation are undergoing economic hard times. The inability by these families to provide basic necessities to the pupils such as decent schools uniform, food and sanitary pads makes the pupils vulnerable to abuse. Many school going children especially girls' resort to involving themselves in

sexual activities in exchange for money to buy these basic needs. The abuse impacts the daily life of the pupil when it happens. The reaction to sexual abuse is uniquely based on every survivor. Generally, sexual abuse has both the long-term and short-term effects on the physical health and psychological development of the pupil. CSA has emotional reactions by victim that include, mortification, guilt, surprise, low self-esteem and feelings of insulation. The long-term health dangerous manifestations such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, suicidality and eating disorders are a consequence of the psychological effects of sexual abuse. The Physiological effects of child sexual abuse include, obstetric fistula later in life, early pregnancies, STIs and boy injuries. this as an economic impact such as the medical expenses on the pupil upon contracting the STIs. In the long run, sexual violence has an economic impact such as the cost required by the victim's family to treat the pupil upon contracting STIs and the time wasted on medication.

### **Drug and Substance Use**

According to Miller, (2017), the complexity in establishing the relationship between parental substance abuse and child sexual violence is due to the perpetrators safe facing mechanisms. Studies indicate that both male and female can be perpetrators of child sexual abuse as a result of alcohol abuse.

Olafson, (2011) found out that pupils who have an history of sexual abuse are more like to abuse drugs in adulthood as compared to those who experienced other forms of childhood maltreatment even without a family history of drug abuse. According to O'Neil, (2020), the intensity of child sexual abuse is accompanied with early substance abuse as a coping mechanism. Therefore, children abuse drugs a coping mechanism which may intern present adverse effects as a result of the abuse such as addiction and mental disorders. A study by Novak, (2020), found out that excessive drinking mediates the relationship between child sexual violence and suicidal tendencies.

Parents who abuse alcohol and other drugs are more likely to abuse their children sexual due to impaired judgement than those who do not. A child with the experience of sexual abuse during may be at a risk of alcohol abuse later during adulthood. The demonstration of this relationship is best seen in women with childhood sexual experiences. This is contributed by a number of factors that influence this relationship of sexual experiences and drug abuse such as coping skills; violation of social norms; and psychological problems, such as posttraumatic stress disorder. The emotional effects of child sexual abuse and neglect may lead drug abuse problems later in the child's life (Lalor &McElvaney, (2010). There is a significant relationship between all types of child maltreatment to high levels of drug abuse (Maniglio, 2013).

According to Testa & Smith, (2009), parental drug abuse may be associated with the physical or sexual abuse of children. The early experience of being abused during childhood increases a pupil's risk for substance abuse during old age. This is clearly shown on women who previously suffered sexual violence in childhood days.

### **Social Disorganization and Sexual Abuse**

Social disorganization is a state community which is characterized by a general breakdown of effective social norms and control resulting in a deficiency on functional integration between people, conflicting social attitudes, personal and social maladjustment.

According to Kawalerowicz& Biggs (2015), key structural factors that diminish community-level self-regulatory capacity are neighborhood poverty, residential instability, family disruption; population density and proximity to urban areas. Consequently, communities with strong informal social networks are able to monitor and regulate sexual violent behavior (Odallo,*et.al* 2018). Therefore, structural factors that increase the complexity of community social organization and undermine informal social networks enhance the range of sexual violent behaviors pursued by residents (Law et al., 2018).

Poverty deprives social institutions like the family of its resources needs for its sustainability and other organizations in the neighborhood, (Noel et al., 2012). Social disorganization theory conceptualizes that some of the destructive effects of immigration, industrialization and urbanization lead to changes in the social structure through social evils like ethnic diversity, residential instability and neighborhood poverty. Consequently, the resultant structural changes diminish the social cohesion of neighborhoods and reduce the power of the social norm and the informal social control required to regulate deviant behavior. This leads to CSA. The theory suggests that high ethnic difference gives rise to social detachment.

This in return leads to structural hindrances and cultural adjustment that downplay social organization. Kawalerowicz& Biggs (2015) also tracked social disorganization to requisite peculiar to the urban areas which leads to high population density because this was the only places where the poor could afford to live. The social network was disrupted due to this high population. Urbanization is adversely associated with the unintelligibility of the normative environment. (Browning, Dirlam, &Boettner, 2016). The increase in urbanization gives rise to an environment that facilitates high levels of sexual violent actions by creating greater anonymity with minimal risk of being know. The matriarchal non-traditional family structures households is linked to social

disorganization. According to the extramarital research conducted in Zambia, Social disorganization has received support (Roberts Miltenberger, 2017). Social disorganization will be used to understand how the breakdown of social normal leads to anarchy especially sexual abuse among pupils.

### **Research Design**

The study used a descriptive survey. Descriptive research design is a scientific method that involves an observation and description of a behavior of a subject without manipulating it in any way (Mugenda Mugenda 2003). This study used descriptive survey design because of its many advantages. One, it enabled the research to get original information from the study population directly since it relied on their opinions, attitudes and experiences on sexual abuse to facilitate the collection of the required data. Secondly, the researcher also obtained both qualitative and quantitative data that made it possible to investigate the etiology of child sexual abuse among pupils.

### **Area of Study**

According to the Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children report in 2019 and the report from the Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey in Kisii County in 2017, child sexual abuse has been on an increase in Kisii county particularly in Emesa Sub-location with teachers and close relatives reported to be the main perpetrators. This necessitated the choice of the study area to investigate the cause of CSA and possible preventive measures to this unpropitious deed. The study was conducted in Emesa Sub-location in Kisii County. The sub-location has three primary schools which include: Emesa, Nyabisase and Kabonyo Primary schools. The schools are located 32, 30, 31, kilometers from Kisii town centre respectively. Gesonso primary school in the neighboring Nyakemebene sub-location was used to conduct the pilot study. Emesa Sub-location was selected because of its rampant cases of child sexual abuse.

### **Target Population**

The research targeted 700 pupils of grade 5-8 from three different schools in Emesa Sub-Location, this included 280 pupils from Emesa Primary school, 200 pupils from Kabonyo primary school and 220 pupils from Nyabisase Primary school. The need to have respondents that can comfortably respond to the questions in the questionnaire guided the choice of this group. Respondents were of age bracket 10 to 17 years. This group of pupils had an understanding on how to fill in a questionnaire therefore yielded the required information for the research. The pupils who were unable to fill the questionnaire were guided by the research. The study also targeted 100 parents, 1 assistant chief, 6 village elders and 3 headteachers.

### **Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

There are three primary schools namely Emesa, Kabonyo and Nyabisase primary school respectively in Emesa Sub - Location. The research selected all the three primary schools. Therefore, the sample sizes for this study were three primary schools. In each of the schools, three categories of respondents participated in this study, namely: pupils, head teachers and parents. The research used systematic sampling to select the pupils that participated in this study from the registers of pupils obtainable from the respective schools. For each of the pupil selected, their parent/guardian also participated in the study. This is based on the assumption that each child has a parent/guardian.

Therefore, the research used convenience sampling to select the parents/guardians to participate in the study. The sample size for primary school pupils were 100 pupils. This was equivalent to 100 parents conveniently sampled as well. This is a 14 percent of the population and is in line with (Yilmaz, 2013) who pointed out that a sample size of between 10 – 30 percent is representative in descriptive studies. The research also used purposive sampling to select the village elders, headteachers and the assistant chief who were key informants for this study. The village elders were 6 representing all the six clans in Emesa sub-location, the headteachers were 3 and 1 assistant chief

### **Data presentation**

The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods to present data since both approaches were useful. For quantitative data, bar graphs, tables and percentages were used. To analyze qualitative data, the researcher recorded in descriptive manner all the responses provided by respondents and key informants. T-test was used to show the relationship between etiology, prevalence, awareness, mitigation and sexual abuse for only quantitative data. The results of the study were presented in pie charts, tables and descriptive statistics. Qualitative was presented under descriptive analysis in prose.

**Table1: Response Rate**

Category	Questionnaires distributed	Return rate
Pupils	100	100%
Parents	100	100%
Key informants	10	100%

Source: (Author 2020)

According to the information provided in the table above, it shows that the questionnaires distributed out to the entire respondents were returned accordingly hence attaining 100% response rate. This implies that the researchers accordingly trained the respondents appropriately on the proper way of filling in the instrument.

**Pupils opinion on Etiology of Sexual Abuse**

**Table2: Pupils Opinion on Etiology of Sexual Abuse**

	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Walking to school risks me to sexual abuse	12	16.7%	12	11.8%	26	25.5%	14.7%	32	31.4%
A mobile phone exposes me to sexual abuse	11	10.8%	6	5.9%	18	17.6%	17.6%	49	48.0%
Most of the TV programs and videos that I watch exposes me to sexual abuse	11	10.8%	12	11.8%	18	17.6%	8.8%	47	46.1%
Poverty in our family makes me vulnerable to sexual abuse	13	12.7%	8	7.8%	23	22.5%	11.8%	46	45.1%
Single parenthood has exposed me to sexual abuse.	15	15.6%	7	6.9%	41	40.2%	8.8%	25	24.5%
Alcohol and drug abuse make me susceptible to sexual abuse	15	15.6%	16	15.7%	21	20.6%	13.7%	30	29.4%
Social disorganization in our clan is a major cause of sexual abuse.	13	12.7%	14	13.7%	13	12.7%	13.7%	48	47.1%
Parental negligence is a major cause of sexual abuse in my clan	10	9.8%	22	21.6%	20	19.6%	8.8%	41	40.2%

Source: (Author 2020)

The study findings reveal that 46.1 % of the pupils were of the opinion that walking to school exposes them to sexual abuse while 65.6 % of the respondents cited that the gadgets, they use especially the phone as a source of sexual abuse. Thus, the parents need to monitor their sons and daughters on the use of those gadgets. Also, most of the TV programs and videos they watch were cited as possible etiologies for sexual abuse at 54.9 %. Poverty in most families is also an etiology to as attested by 56.9% of the pupils that participated in this study. The study also reveals that parental negligence is a major cause of sexual abuse in the clan while 43.3 % attributed social disorganization of the clans is a major cause of sexual abuse. Finally, 60.8 % said that alcohol and drug abuse also make them susceptible to sexual abuse.

Parental Opinions on the Etiology of Sexual Abuse

Table 3: Parental Opinions on the Etiology of Sexual Abuse

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
	Count	RowN %	Count	RowN %	Count	RowN %	Count	RowN %	Count	RowN %
Walking to school risks a child to sexual abuse.	8	7.6%	1	1.0%	11	10.5%	33	31.4 %	52	49.5%
A mobile phone exposes a child to sexual abuse	13	12.4%	2	1.9%	6	5.7%	34	32.4 %	50	47.6%
Most of the TV programmes and videos that a child watch exposes him to sexual abuse	23	21.9%	5	4.8%	13	12.4%	18	17.1 %	46	43.8%
Poverty in a family makes a child vulnerable to sexual abuse	4	3.8%	3	2.9%	2	1.9%	28	26.7 %	68	64.8%
Single parenthood has exposed me to sexual abuse	6	5.7%	10	9.5%	31	29.5%	18	17.1 %	40	38.1%
Alcohol and drug abuse make a child susceptible to sexual abuse	7	6.7%	1	1.0%	8	7.6%	35	33.3 %	54	51.4%
Social disorganization in our clan is a major cause of sexual abuse.	17	16.2%	15	14.3%	29	27.6%	16	15.2 %	28	26.7%
Parental negligence is a major cause of sexual abuse in my clan	3	2.9%	5	4.8%	8	7.6%	19	18.1 %	70	66.7%

Source: (Author 2020)

The study findings reveal that 80.9% of the parents said that walking to school put their children at a risk of sexual abuse. 80% lamented that the gadgets their children use especially the phone exposes them to sexual abuse thus a key role for them to monitor their sons and daughters on the use of those gadgets. Also, 60.9% of the parents alluded that TV programs and videos that the pupils watch as an etiology of sexual abuse. 91.5% and 84.8% of the parents agreed that poverty and parental negligence exposed pupils to sexual abuse. 43.9% of the parents attributed sexual abuse social disorganization of the clans and 84.7% blamed it on alcohol and drug abuse, while 55.5% said that being a single parent actually may encourage the etiology of sexual abuse to their kids.

In an interview with the assistant chief on the causes of child sexual abuse in her office, her opinion was in agreement with those of other 6 clan elders that walking to school, mobile phones, TV programmes, parental negligence, single parenthood, orphanage and poverty are the main causes of child sexual abuse in Emesa Sub-location. As stated by the excerpt below;

“We have had a big problem in Emesa Sub-Location concerning child sexual abuse. Most of the reported CSA case have close similarities among the clans here. For instance, last week a case was reported from Riangubo village where a class 8 pupil was sexually abused on her way to school in the morning at around 5:30 am as she was rushing to attend the morning preps... Some months ago, the clan elder of Bobare also reported to me that a *bodaboda* rider has been taking advantage of the economic hard times of children in one family that lost their parents in accident to abuse them sexually in exchange for money to buy the basic needs... I also think that mobile phones and TV programs especially the ones that show pornographic content expose the children to sexual abuse... Lastly, parents that are always absent for their children makes them susceptible to abuse by the perpetrators” (Assistant Chief 2020)

The researcher also sought to investigate the commonly abused drugs by the abusers in Emesa Sub-location, one of the clan elders from Bosinange stated that the local beer commonly known as *changaa* was the mostly abused drug which cultivated the perpetrators to abuse the children sexually. Khat and Bhang were also reported to be the commonly abused drugs by the abusers. This is stated in the excerpt below;

“Changaa is one of the widely abused drugs here... Most unemployed youths spent a good part of the day in the changaa brewing homes. Once drunk, they wait for pupils in the evening in dark places or narrow paths and abuse them sexually with threats to kill them if they report it to anyone. Bhang smoking and chewing of Miraa is also a problem when it comes to child sexual abuse.”(Clan Elder 2020)

## **II. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Etiology of child sexual abuse**

According to Swaby (2009), etiology of CSA ranges from cultural factors in the community such as child battering, FGM, sexual exploitation and male chauvinism to family-level factors like child neglect, poverty, marital violence, Social disorganization and non-nuclear family. Etiology of child sexual abuse was one of the top most objectives in this study. This exploratory objective provided a strong support for the existence child sexual abuse among pupils. Even though the study used copious sample on etiology of sexual abuse, it has been noted that there is a close relationship between the experience of sexual abuse and the social attribute such as poverty(Edwards, 2019). From the study, it was depicted that 46.1% of the pupils advocated that the walk to school endangers their life at a peril of sexual abuse. Child-level factors such as age of the child, disability, physical and psychological health, and gender contributed to CSA.

According to Carol Bower, (2003), the various types of child maltreatment have a close relationship with poverty. These types of maltreatment include, sexually exploiting children, using children as laborers, child neglect which comes as a result of a parent not able to provide sufficiently their children’s basic needs, homelessness, Increased rates of child-on-child abuse because they are left under no supervision, and sexually exploiting children. The study found out that there is a close relationship between poverty and child sexual abuse. Most abusers were seen to take advantage of the pupils that had economic hard time to sexually exploitation them in exchange for money to buy the basic needs.

Social disorganization was reported as a motivating factor that lead to sexual abuse thus the society needs to be restructured and social norms be put in place that guide the conduct all member. The religious institutions should not only be concerned on the spiritual nourishment of their members but also their moral growth.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that the main causes of child sexual abuse are walking to school, pornographic content in mobile phones and TVs , parental negligence, single parenthood, orphanage and poverty. There is a significant relationship between the etiology and child sexual abuse since most of the parents said that walking to school put their children at a risk of sexual abuse. Parents lamented that the gadgets their children use especially the phone exposes them to sexual abuse. They also alluded that TV programs and videos that the pupils watch as an etiology of sexual abuse. Poverty and parental negligence exposed pupils to sexual abuse.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

In order to mitigate child sexual abuse, the key stakeholders such as parents, teachers and local administrators need to know the etiology of sexual abuse. This will guarantee their fight against the identified causes unanimously to get a solution to this vice. Secondly, the government needs to flatten the poverty curve in since most perpetrators take advantage of the economic hard times that most children are undergoing to abuse them sexually in exchange for money to buy basic needs otherwise known as transactional sex. Lastly, Children need to have limited access to technology only for academic purposes since its oftenly abused.

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