FACTORS THAT PREDISPOSE THE GIRL CHILD TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN IMENTI CENTRAL SUB COUNTY, UPPER EASTERN KENYA

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2014
DECLARATION

This project paper is my own original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

Purity Murungi…………………………………………… Date………………………………………………

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Prof Simiyu Wandibba…………………………………… Date………………………………………………
DEDICATION

To my late parents for instilling the all possibility attitude in life and believing in me and more specifically to my late father for being a great teacher and highly believing in the transformative power of education and my sibling for walking the journey with me.
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ABSTRACT
This study set out to examine the factors that predispose the girl child to sexual abuse in Imenti Central Sub-County, Upper Eastern Kenya. Data were collected through the survey method and key informant interviews.

The study findings indicate that family poverty, strong patriarchal structures and female genital cutting predispose the girl child to sexual abuse.

The study therefore concludes that girl child sexual abuse is a societal concern and exists in the Sub-County though there is still some level of ignorance on its realities.

The study, therefore, recommends that awareness programmes should be put in place to educate the community on the realities of the girl child sexual abuse and the short-term and long-term implications to the child as well as the entire community.

It also recommends deliberate information sharing by the authorities to help the community know the available resources and help they can get whenever such occurrences take place.
# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACRWC</td>
<td>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGC</td>
<td>Female Genital Cutting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-Help Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>GOK</td>
<td>Government of Kenya</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction
The World Health Organization defines child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who, by age or development, is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person (WHO, 1999:15).

Kenya is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), a commitment towards response and prevention of all forms of violence against children. Health, legal, security and community sectors have all been mobilized to address gender-based violence (GBV) in Kenya which has seen the enactment of national legislation and policies in tandem with international commitments aimed at putting in place structural and institutional interventions. Victim assistance services, working with perpetrators, awareness programmes, education and training curricula, community participation and forums for national and international dialogue have characterized the secondary and tertiary prevention and response initiatives. Yet, whereas these interventions are appropriate and have yielded remarkable results, GBV still remains a challenge in Kenya and much of the rest of the world. The scope of the problem of child sexual abuse within our society is an epidemic of such vast proportions that virtually all children are at risk of abuse. Children are abused by loved ones, friends, family friends, those in whom they place their trust, and those bound to care for them. They are abused by those they hardly know and even those they do not know. Children of all ages are at risk and vulnerable to sexual abuse, whether in their homes, their community, or even over the Internet (Bolen, 2001:34).
There has been a rapid increase in the cases of child abuse both locally and internationally. A lot of finger pointing and shifting of blame has been happening in an attempt to explain this phenomenon. Some attribute it to the broken family fabric while others will say it is as a result of the globalization that has opened up the world to all manner of exposure and infiltration of foreign value systems where little value is attached to human beings. Extreme competition and stressful conditions where everyone is working very hard to be at the fore is also another factor that leaves little room for parents to have time to bond with the children. This leaves the child with the caregivers most of the time making them vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Findings from the 2010 national survey on violence against children in Kenya published the same year show that three out of every ten females and nearly two out of every ten males aged 18 to 24 reported at least one experience of sexual violence prior to age 18 (UNICEF & GOK, 2010:32)

1.2 Problem Statement

Smith (2008:16) in his book “Child Sexual Abuse: Issues and Challenges” asserts that the African child, particularly the female child, is in constant threat of sexual abuse for many reasons. Some of the reasons are neglect by parents, exploitation by older males, family poverty and a variety of situations which include crime rate, war or oppression. Children that lack proper information from the right adults on matters of sexuality are more vulnerable to abuse. Sanderson (2004:45) states that repressing children’s sexual knowledge keeps children naive and innocent, while denying information leaves control of children’s sexuality in the hands of adults.

Violence against children may be experienced in three forms, sexual, physical and emotional. Sexual violence against children may lead to physical, psychological and emotional effects which may affect the normal functioning of the human person. This study therefore sought answers to the following three questions:

i. To what extent does family poverty expose the girl child to sexual abuse?
ii. Does patriarchy predispose the girl child to sexual exploitation?
iii. How does female genital cutting (FGC) predispose the girl child to sexual abuse?
1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General objective
To examine the factors which predispose the girl child to sexual abuse in Imenti Central Sub-County, Upper Eastern Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific objectives
i. To determine the extent to which family poverty exposes the girl child to sexual abuse in Imenti Sub-County.
ii. To investigate how patriarchy predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse.
iii. To determine how FGC exposes the girl child to sexual abuse.

1.4 Assumptions of the study
- Family poverty is likely to predispose the girl child to sexual abuse.
- Patriarchy is likely to be a big contributing factor to the girl child sexual exploitation.
- FGC is likely to contribute to the girl child being vulnerable to sexual abuse.

1.5 Justification of the study
The study findings should be useful to stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of GBV and the government department of children affairs. They may use this information to come up with strategies and interventions that may significantly reduce the chances of these incidences of girl child sexual abuse happening. This study will add to knowledge in this area of study.

1.6 Scope and limitations of the study
The study was based in Imenti Central Sub-County which is located in Meru County. It focused on specific factors that predispose the girl child to sexual abuse in the Sub-county including poverty in the family, strong patriarchal structures and female genital cutting. The study was guided by the attachment and socio-cultural theory.
The Meru community is a conservative society and may be shy to freely disclose information that affects the core of the community. The issue of abuse is spoken in undertones and particularly the female genital cutting which the Njuri Ncheke has banned. Those that perform this rite do it under cover. To address this, the researcher packaged the research in such a way that the respondents were helped to understand that it was meant for academic purposes only.

In addition, matters of abuse are very sensitive and sometimes touch on very close family members being perpetrators and this might have hampered free information giving. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and told that whatever information they gave would not be given out or shared with anyone and was to be used only for academic purposes and their names were not to be recorded in the information.
1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Child Sexual abuse- The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

Girl Child- Any girl below the age of 18 years.

Patriarchy- System of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

Family Poverty- Lack of economic empowerment for families to provide basic needs to children.
2.1 Introduction
This chapter reviews literature on the types of abuse, socio-cultural context of child abuse, sex abuse and personality development, gender and sex abuse and the challenges of child protection. The chapter ends with the discussion of the theory that guided the study.

2.2 Types of abuse
Child abuse consists of physical abuse, neglect, racial harassment, sexual exploitation, social exclusion, discrimination, and systems abuse (Wazir & Oudenhoven, 1998:29). Sexual abuse is only one of these forms of abuses and it usually occurs in the context of other types of child abuse. The line between physical and sexual abuse blurs depending on the specific acts. Physical abuse may take place in the absence of any sexual abuse. This can take the form of physical punishment such as severe beating, or exposure to inhumane conditions. Usually, physical abuse leads to psychological harm, hence it is tied to psychological abuse. However, psychological abuse may occur in the absence of physical abuse. Sexual abuse, on the other hand, involves all the three forms of abuse. There is a physical component ranging from inappropriate touching to sexual activity. According to Tobin and Kessner (2002:40) sexual abuse includes piping, flashing, child pornography, sexual intercourse, sodomy, and genital to mouth contact. Pornography, indecent exposure (of the perpetrator towards the victim), and voyeurism are all forms of sexual abuse (Johnson, 1992:81). There is also a psychological component because all sexual activity involves the mind. In this regard, sexual abuse is one of the worst forms of abuse. It is important to note that sexual abuse need not take place in a confrontational or violent manner. In fact, most sexual abuse involves perpetrators well known to the victims and they are usually related. Tobin and Kessner (2002:41) report that in 85% of sexual abuse cases, the offender is well known to the child. Such a person should be providing care and protection. There is a bond of trust and power between the perpetrator and the victim (Richter et al., 2004:40). The use of threats is a common part of sexual abuse either as a means of persuading the victim to cooperate with the perpetrator, or as a means of insuring the silence of the victim after the fact (Briere, 1992:37).
2.2.1 The Socio-Cultural Context of Child Abuse

Culture and traditions play an important role in the determination of sexuality in human societies. Any study on sexuality must, therefore, take into account societal beliefs regarding male and female sexuality (Petrak & Hedge, 2003:51). Colonial rule led to a breakdown of traditional values and social systems, which were not restored when African nations gained their independence. The protections afforded to women and children by traditional societies are now largely left to the legal services (Laster, 2001:308). This means that it is easier to get away with sexual offences today if no one reports such incidents to the law enforcement agencies. In some cases, even after reports to law enforcement agencies, it is still possible to get away with sexual offences for technical reasons (Wazir & Oudenhoven, 1998:57). In the Meru society, the Njuri Ncheke is the highest organ that makes decisions on the cultural issues of the people. However, the role the Njuri Ncheke plays is largely ceremonial and does not translate into effective community action on the issues it discusses.

The patriarchal heritage of African societies gives men undue power over women in many matters including sexuality (Richter et al., 2004:440). While a lot has changed in the area of gender equality, men still have a large say in sexual matters in society. The cultural roles that men played traditionally still influence the thinking of many people today. Men are the predominant culprits in child sexual abuse in many patriarchal cultures because they have the power to define sexual relations (Richter et al., 2004:441). This partly explains why more women suffer both physical and sexual abuse compared to men. Culture plays a big role in the determination of acceptable sex practices. Some cultures permit polygyny, while others condoned polyandry. The degree of sexual permissiveness in a culture is a good indicator of the propensity for sexual abuse in its context (Chinn, 2012:36).

The influence of Christianity and Islam on African traditions led to the elimination of many cultural practices incompatible with these faiths (Bond, 2008:6). Both religions are against sex outside of wedlock. This is consistent with African traditions, which also generally shunned sex outside wedlock. However, the freedoms currently available to any ordinary Kenyan citizen mean that there is no obligation over any person to subscribe to any faith or to live according to a
cultural code. Kenyans tend to select what works for them at any time, provided it is within the law. As a result, teenage sex and sex outside marriage are a common occurrence today. The ease of procuring sex may be blamed for the casual manner that sexual abuse may be handled in some quarters. At a societal level, sex is considered a personal decision with no societal or spiritual regulation. It is up to individuals to decide whether they want to subscribe to a particular code, or to ignore these codes. The watering down of traditional values without an effective replacement to guide the values of society has led to the existing situation where sexual abuse is prevalent.

2.2.2 Sex Abuse and Personality Development

Sexual abuse has a profound effect on the development of an individual’s self-perception (Grogan, 1999:14). Sexually abused children usually develop coping mechanisms arising from an effort to rationalize the experience or to forget about it (Besharov, 1990:57). The range of psychological impact that a survivor of child abuse may develop in later life include depression and anxiety, as well as dissociation (Briere, 1992:112). Dissociation varies in severity and may range from simple denial to amnesia. Specifically, a survivor of sexual abuse may become disengaged, detached, or may develop multiple personality disorder (Briere, 1992:115). The underlying factor in these situations is that the survivors try to detach themselves from the negative experiences and may succeed to do so in their minds. This does not, however, alter the facts; rather, it merely alters their minds. The survivors lose their ability to trust other people especially in cases where abuse occurred domestically (Grogan, 1999:44). Sexual abuse leads to adult problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, suicide, and runaway behaviour (Tobin & Kessner, 2002:177). In addition, children who undergo sexual abuse as minors tend to be at a higher risk of sexual abuse when they become adults (Petruk & Hedge, 2003:38).

Perhaps, the most tragic result of child sexual abuse is the transmutation of an individual from a sex abuse victim to a sex offender. Someone abused sexually or physically when young may also become a sexual offender in a subconscious effort to share his or her pain (Petruk & Hedge, 2003:67). Sexual abuse makes a person feel weak and vulnerable. In an effort to reaffirm control, past victims may become offenders by abusing vulnerable persons in an effort to regain a feeling of control (Wazir & Oudenhoven, 1998:72). Other compensatory behaviours include indulgence
in indiscriminate sex, development of eating disorders, and displays of extreme dominance or extreme compliance (Besharov, 1990:79). Girls who are sexually abused may also find themselves in abusive relationships if they had been serially abused when growing up (Tobin & Kessner, 2002:25). If a girl ensures prolonged abuse, her self-perception becomes skewed and she begins to see herself as a sexual object. Sex becomes to her the source of contact with the world. She will use it to find affection but in the process, she ends up with abusive persons who take advantage of her broken sexual image.

2.2.3 Gender and Sex Abuse
The gender profile of sex abuse shows that both men and women are victims and perpetrators. Sexual abuse of younger girls by men is the predominant form of sexual abuse (Wanyonyi, 2014:8). Partly, this arises from the normative tendency of society to encourage men to have as much sexual experience as possible, while encouraging women to have as little sexual experience as possible (Richter et al., 2004:72). However, cases of women abusing boys sexually exist. Older women may seek sexual liaison with younger males, sometimes minors. In such situations, the women either use seduction or exploit their position of authority to make sexual contact with younger vulnerable males. Cases of sodomy are also reported where older males take advantage of younger boys. It is important to note, however that sexual abuse does not have to include physical sexual contact. If an older woman deliberately exposes herself to a boy, that counts as sexual abuse. Similarly, if an older person of either sex in a position of power uses such authority to make a minor strip naked, expose themselves, or engage in sexual intercourse with another person (even another minor), that counts as sex abuse. In conclusion, sex abuse does not have a gender line. Sex abuse can take place in a heterosexual context or in a homosexual context (Richter et al., 2004:73).

2.3 Challenges of Child Protection
Several challenges hinder efforts that should protect children from physical abuse, especially sexual abuse. This is because most cases of sexual abuse take place around the home and usually involve authority figures (Njogu, 2008:43). The people the society expects to protect children end up being the ones who perpetrate sexual offences. Many sex attacks take place in places
where children should be safe such as schools, churches and in the home (Nzioka, 2008:23). There are increasing reports around the world about clergy who have molested children sexually. Some of the cases currently being reported took place many years ago when the victims lacked knowledge of this vice, or were not courageous enough to speak up (Wanyonyi, 2014:6).

The challenge of proving sexual abuse is also a serious hindrance to child protection from abuse. Courts require proof to prosecute sex offenders (Duffy et al. 1991:52). However, the victims of abuse are usually too young to remember and communicate what happened clearly. This can hinder the legal processes needed to prosecute offenders. In addition to the legal challenges, children are also not empowered to report sexual abuse (Waithera, 2012:16). Most children have never had sexual contact when an offender makes a move. The experience is entirely new to them and it is very confusing for them. In this regard, they may not realize that what took place was an incidence of abuse. If the offender uses a language that covers up or waters down the incident, the child may not know how to report what happened (Tobin & Kessner, 2002:33).

Other enabling factors such as poverty, low self-esteem among children, or a history of abuse limit the success rates of child protection efforts (Besharov, 1990:75). In places where children must walk to school, the children are vulnerable along the routes to school. Prior abuse also makes a child prone to further abuse. In addition to these factors, children usually underreport or minimize the seriousness of the abuse that is taking place in the home (Tobin & Kessner, 2002:38). If the reports issued by the children are not taken seriously, then abuse may keep on going for a long period. Underreported abuse makes it very difficult to protect children from sexual offenders.

In cases where children report abuse, adults may disbelieve them or minimize the seriousness of the events (Tobin & Kessner, 2002:51). Mothers are especially prone to this behaviour in cases where the father or step-father is the offender. The information on the abuse is usually too emotionally burdensome for the mother to handle and she ends up in a state of denial.
Cultural factors are also an important barrier to the tackling of sexual abuse. In a context where men wield disproportionate power in society, a male sexual offender may fail to recognize sexual assault but may view it simply as his right (Richter et al., 2004:56). Such men view their abusive behaviour as part of their cultural rights, and not as a violation of a woman’s or children’s sexual rights.

2.4 Theoretical Framework
This study was guided by two theories, the attachment theory and socio-cultural theory.

2.4.1 Attachment theory
Howe (1995:30) states that the basic premise of attachment theory is that a child’s relationship with a primary caregiver during infancy is critically important to later development and serves as a prototype for the child’s relationships throughout the lifespan. The theory originated in the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth who sought to explain and measure infants’ responses to separation from their mothers. Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) viewed the infant as an active participant in shaping the relationship between mother and child, responding to innate drives to increase the proximity of the mother for reasons of safety and security.

Proponents of attachment theory stress its usefulness in understanding the psychological ramifications of child abuse and neglect. They argue that the challenges that children who have been mistreated introduce into the foster care system are more clearly understood and addressed by workers who are familiar with basic attachment concepts (Golding, 2003; Mennen & O'Keefe, 2005). Attachment theory attributes the problems that children continue to experience even after being removed from an abusive situation to the trauma that they endure when experiencing repeated separations from caregivers. Importantly, research has shown that difficulties are not restricted to interpersonal relationships. The quality of a child’s attachments has been shown to predict performance socially, cognitively, behaviourally, and academically (Golding, 2003:65).
2.4.2 Socio-cultural theory
This theory explains the cause of sex offending by emphasizing the role of societal and cultural structures, norms, and messages. For example, some theorists suggest that desensitizing messages of violence in television or video games may implicitly condone violence. Others argue that the ways in which women and children are sexualized or portrayed as submissive and passive through advertisements, television programmes, and films may contribute to sexual violence. Yet others believe that men are socialized to be aggressive and to dominate, or “conquer” women and children, which some theorize encourages male violence.

2.4.3 Relevance of the theories to the study
Both theories explain the possible causes of sexual offending and effects and resulting behaviour on the victims. The socio-cultural theory was suitable for this study because it focuses on the role of the society and cultural structures, norms and messages in sex offending. This approach indicates that the Meru culture contributes to the vulnerability of the girl child in regard to sexual abuse. The relationship between society and cultural structures explained in this theory brings out the interplay between societal behaviour and cultural influence. The strong patriarchal structures that predispose the girl child to sexual abuse are a product of culture.

According to Howe (1995:30), the basic premise of attachment theory is that a child’s relationship with a primary caregiver during infancy is critically important to later development and serves as a prototype for the child’s relationships throughout their lifespan. The quality of a child’s attachments has been shown to predict performance socially, cognitively, behaviourally, and academically (Golding, 2003:65). Girls that are brought up in economically stable families may be less vulnerable to sexual abuse. They may not readily go out to look for basic needs in exchange for sexual favours which they give in even when they are not willing. Such girls learn how to attach in a healthy way to the opposite sex and may readily say no to sexual advances. They also have a sense of belonging and may not go out to look for affirmation in vulnerable situations.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological aspects of this project paper. It describes the research site, research design, the target population and sample population, and sampling. It also describes data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the chapter discusses the ethical considerations that the researcher had to adhere to.

3.2 Research Site

This study was based in Imenti Central Sub-County which is located in Meru County (Fig 3.1).

3.2.1 Location

Meru County is located along the Eastern part of Kenya. It borders Isiolo County to the North and North East, Tharaka County to the South West, Nyeri County to the South West and Laikipia County to the West. The County lies on the north eastern side of Mt Kenya and this is one of the geographical features that contribute to the climate patterns experienced in the region. It has an altitude of approximately 5199 metres above sea-level and this explains the cool temperatures experienced all year round (http://www.thecountyplatform.or.ke/meru-county/).

3.2.2 Economic activities

Agriculture is one of the main economic activities in the county. However, the kind of crops grown varies depending on the ecological zones which vary in terms of precipitation, temperature and soils. Some of the crops grown in the highlands include maize, sugarcane, bananas, sorghum, millet, arrowroots, yams and cassavas. Livestock reared include cattle, sheep, rabbits, chicken and goats. In the lowland the major agricultural activity is livestock rearing where farmers have established ranches that provide the residents with animal products such as milk and meat. Cash crops grown in the region are miraa and tobacco. These are stimulant drugs that are legal in Kenya. Miraa is usually exported to the Middle East, Ethiopia and Somalia this
in turn promotes economic growth in the area and country as a whole. Other cash crops include coffee, tea, sisal, wheat, sugar cane and pyrethrum. Dairy farming has also proved to be very lucrative in the area since 1960. Pottery, leatherwork and iron work activities are also carried out by some of the residents of Meru County (http://www.thecountyplatform.or.ke/meru-county/).

3.2.3 Population

According to the national census activity that was carried out by the government in 2009, the total population of Meru County was estimated to be 1,591,533 making it one of the highly populated counties in the country. However, 12% of the total population was found to be living in the urban areas of the County while the rest reside in the rural areas (http://www.thecountyplatform.or.ke/meru-county/).

Map 3.1: Meru County map where the research site is located (Source: Kenya Mpya, 2012)
3.3 Research Design

This study was cross-sectional in nature and used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data-collection. Qualitative data were analyzed according to themes in the research objectives. Quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS software and the results are presented in tables, bar charts and pie charts.

3.4 Study Population and unit of analysis

The study population was made up of men and women aged 25 years and above in two wards of Imenti Central Sub-County, that is, Gakurwene and Marathi wards. Each individual included in the study was a unit of analysis.

3.5 Sample size and sampling procedure

This study applied random sampling strategy. The sample size was 50 men and 50 women. In selecting the study site simple random sampling technique was applied where the names of four wards in the Sub-County were written on papers which were folded several times. The pieces of paper were put in a jar which was then shaken before the researcher picked two of them. The various villages were purposively selected with the help of the chief. These included Marathi, Karugwa, Gakurwene, Rugeeta and Kaugu.

A sampling frame based on different age groups, and primed for gender parity was sufficient to attain the required distribution. Within each cluster, randomized sampling was used. Random sampling makes it possible for a researcher to generalize findings (Curasi et al., 2001:37).
3.6 Methods of data collection

3.6.1 The Survey Method
The survey method was conducted using a structured questionnaire (Appendix 1). Respondents were asked to respond to a set of open-ended and closed-ended questions touching on their demographic characteristics and factors that they think predispose the girl child to sexual abuse.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews
The study also used key informant interviews. The researcher identified 8 informants chosen based on their proximity to policy development and implementation in the Sub-County in the context of girl child abuse. These included government administrators like the chief and a police officer, medical practitioner, social workers and cultural leaders. A key informant interview guide (Appendix 2) was used to obtain the information. These helped the researcher to understand existing attitudes and possible cultural barriers that could be influencing the perpetration of child abuse in the Sub-County.

3.6.3 Documentary sources
Secondary sources like books, theses, government official publications and journals were reviewed to collect background information to the study. These sources also continued to be used as reference material during the entire period of the study.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis
Data obtained from the key informant interviews were sorted out and interpreted in relation to the research objectives, to enable the researcher to provide overall interpretation of the findings showing how thematic areas and issues relate to one another. On the other hand, quantitative
Data were edited, coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 spreadsheets. Descriptive statistics were run to give frequencies and percentages.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The local administration was informed about the research and clearance sought from IAGAS. The Meru community has an enclosed culture and with this in mind, the researcher preserved anonymity and confidentiality by use of pseudonyms for respondents. The respondents were made aware of the research and its purpose and were asked to give consent to participate in the research.
CHAPTER FOUR

FACTORS THAT PREDISPOSE THE GIRL CHILD TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN IMENTI CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings. The chapter starts by outlining the demographic characteristics of the respondents and then moves on to present the rest of the findings.

4.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

4.2.1 Gender

Gender was one of the major demographic factors in the study. This helped the researcher to get balanced views from the study. The respondents comprised of 50% females and 50% males.

4.2.2 Age

Age was also a critical demographic factor in the study. Slightly more than half (51%) of the respondents were aged 25-29 years, 22% were aged 30-39 years, 16% 40-49 years and 11% were aged above 50 years (Fig 4.2).

Fig. 4.1: Respondents’ age groups
4.2.3 Highest level of education

The researcher was interested in relating the level of education with the level of awareness to what girl child sexual abuse is. Over half (54%) of the respondents had attained the level of college education, 31% had attained high school education, 11% primary education while 4% had a masters level education as presented in the graph below.

![Graph showing highest level of education](image)

**Fig. 4.2: Respondents’ highest level of education**

4.3 Factors predisposing the girl child to sexual abuse

4.3.1 General awareness

The study results indicate that a majority of the respondents are aware that the girl child is vulnerable to sexual abuse in comparison to those who are not aware. Fifty per cent and 38% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree and agree, respectively, that they are aware that the girl child is vulnerable to sexual abuse. On the other hand, 3% disagreed, while 1% strongly disagreed while 8% did not know whether the girl child is vulnerable to sexual abuse or not (Fig. 4.3)
4.3.2 Family poverty predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse

Girls that come from poor backgrounds may be more vulnerable to sexual abuse. This is because 30% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed that family poverty predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse. On the other hand, 18% and 5% disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, that poverty predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse, while 12% said they did not know (Fig. 4.4).

Fig. 4.4: Family poverty and the girl child’s sexual abuse
The respondents gave various responses on why they thought family poverty predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse. A girl child that comes from a needy family is more likely to be vulnerable to being deceived to give sex favours in return for monetary gain yet it may not be a result of voluntary consent to the act.

Forty-six per cent of the respondents stated that as a result of lack of basic needs due to family poverty the girl child is exposed to sexual abuse. A number of girls become vulnerable to giving their bodies in exchange for some cash to be able to live by and acquire their basic needs. In addition, 19% and 19%, respectively, felt that family poverty sometimes leads to conflicts and early marriages which in turn predispose the girl child to sexual abuse among other types of abuse, including physical abuse. When there is conflict families may resort to separation and once there is a crack in the family the parties that experience the after effects are mainly the children. Girls may end up running away from abusive families and land themselves into another abusive situation.

Furthermore 16% of the respondents felt that family poverty makes girls desperate, sometimes as a result of not getting what they want in life and this makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse as a result of fending for themselves. Since they cannot get basic needs readily they may end up being vulnerable to sexual abuse by unwillingly giving in to sex if that is the only way they will be able to get help. Figure 4.5 summarizes the findings.
4.3.3 Patriarchy and girl child sexual abuse

The African society is highly patriarchal. The researcher sought to relate the influence of patriarchy to the girl child sexual abuse.

The study findings indicate that 24% of the respondents strongly agreed and 33% agreed that the strong patriarchal structures in the society predispose the girl child to sexual abuse. In this context girls and women are considered as part of a man’s property and therefore cannot speak up if there are issues, especially those concerning sexual matters. As a matter of fact, in some instances decisions on who a girl gets married to is made by the men and she is not allowed to question that. Deliberations on bride wealth are considered a men’s affair and they get the highest benefit as a result. Bearing in mind that most of the times abuse happens from people that are known by society and in some instances from relatives it becomes even more difficult to address this vice. The reason is that community cases and decisions are deliberated and decided on by men making it difficult to curb the vice.
On the contrary, 15% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed, while 21% said they did not know that patriarchal structures predispose the girl child to sexual abuse. A lot of awareness is yet to be done to help the society understand the implications of girl child sexual abuse to the entire society as well as what exactly girl child sexual abuse means. The findings are summarized in Fig. 4.6.

![Fig. 4.6: Patriarchy and the girl child’s sexual abuse](image)

Men are the decision makers in the society and when sexual abuse cases happen they are reported to them for action. As a result of the strong patriarchal structures, and this being the main decision making organ, it is very likely that very few people will report cases of abuse if they take place. This may be because little action will be taken, if any, since a number of the perpetrators of the girl child sexual abuse are men. This means that many cases go unreported posing great challenges to the girl child like early pregnancies, contracting sexually transmitted diseases that have permanent implications on their lives while others end up dropping out of school leading to an endless cycle of poverty.

Study findings indicate that 33% strongly agreed and 27% agreed that it is unlikely that sexually abused girls will report the abuse to anyone, 27% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed, while 7% did not know. The findings are summarized in Fig. 4.
Fig. 4.7: It is unlikely that a sexually abused girl will report the case to the family

4.3.4 Female genital cutting and girl child sexual abuse

The female genital cutting rites of passage take place when the girl child is still a preteen. This transition most of the times implies that a girl is ready for marriage and can be given out to anyone where in most of the cases they are married to men who are way older than them and these men are not their choice. These factors make the girl child more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Luckily, in the Sub-County this practice is almost dead with passage of time as a result of the Njuri Ncheke putting their foot down against the practice. However, there are a few people who still carry out the practice, though quietly. It is more rampant in other parts of Meru County like Meru North. Education and awareness has also contributed to the stoppage of female genital cutting in the Sub-County.

Nevertheless, 18% of the respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed that female genital cutting is likely to predispose the girl child to sexual abuse. On the other hand, 15% disagreed and another 10% strongly disagreed while 21% said they did not know (Fig. 4.8).
4.4 Consequences of girl child sexual abuse

4.4.1 Girls drop out of school as a result of sexual abuse

The results in Figure 4.9 below indicate that 45% of the respondents strongly agreed and 41% agreed that girls that are sexually abused are likely to drop out of school. This could be as a result of teenage pregnancies among other factors. On the contrary, 5% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed, while 3% said they did not know (Fig. 4.9).
Fig. 4.9: Girls drop out of school as a result of sexual abuse

One of the Key informants, a Community Health worker, had this to say about this particular issue.

*We have been doing community outreach especially to the young girls who have dropped out of school in the area as a result of un-planned pregnancies many as a result of abuse from teachers and relatives to help them go back to school. Sometimes it gets very difficult when such girls are from poor families because their families are not willing to give money for re admission or they might even not have the money or think it’s a priority if they are struggling with getting basic needs.* (Key informant)

4.4.2 Sexually abused girls may contract sexually transmitted infections

The responses in Figure 4.10 below show that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 37% agreed that it is likely that sexually abused girls may contract STIs such as AIDS as a result of silence and fear of shame and guilt. On the other hand, 1% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed, while 9% said they did not know (Fig. 4.10).
4.5 Challenges of eradicating girl sexual violence

The study revealed a number of challenges that may hamper the eradication of girl child sexual abuse. The most important of these were lack of education, cultural influence, poverty and lack of government involvement in curbing the vice. The study findings indicate that 26% of the respondents gave lack of education and 16% cited cultural influence as factors that may hamper the eradication of girl sexual abuse. On the other hand, 14% cited poverty and 10% lack of government involvement as other factors that could hinder addressing issues of girl child sexual abuse in the Sub-County. These results are summarized in Fig. 4.11.
The local magistrate had this to say on this particular issue:

Many of the locals are not willing to report the abuse cases because of strong patriarchal structures in the area, and those who report have difficult in dealing with the cases because parties concerned are not willing to follow through. It becomes very difficult to prosecute in such instances. (Key Informant)

On the other hand, the chief had this to say on the cultural influence on the girl child’s sexual abuse:

It becomes very difficult to address the issue of sexual abuse because many do not want to report abuse cases. The reason is that some of the perpetrators are known by the community and might even be relatives. When such cases are reported by those who are courageous they are threatened and are referred to take the matter to the ‘wazee’ to deal with it at that level. This results to a number dropping out of school as a result of unplanned pregnancies. (Key Informant)
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses the study findings and then draws conclusions from those findings. The findings are discussed on the basis of the study objectives. On the basis of the conclusions a number of recommendations are made.

5.2 Discussion

The objectives of the study was to determine the extent to which family poverty exposes the girl child to sexual abuse, investigate how patriarchy predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse and determine how FGC exposes the girl child to sexual abuse in Imenti Central Sub County, Upper Eastern Kenya.

The study findings show that family poverty is a major contributor to the girl child sexual abuse. This finding is in tandem with what Odaga and Heneveld’s (1995) observation that where families do not have adequate resources to educate both boys and girls, parents prefer to educate the boys thus discriminating against the girl. Such a girl is left vulnerable to fending for herself from quotas like having sex in exchange for monetary gain many times against her will. Soon girls get married off early and may continue to be abused due to dependency.

Sexual abuse has a profound effect on the development of an individual’s self-perception (Grogan, 1999:14). Sexually abused children usually develop coping mechanisms arising from an effort to rationalize the experience or to forget about it (Besharov, 1990:57). The annual number of homicides involving children under the age of 15 is reported as 35,000, which is considered a conservative estimate because some deaths are wrongly attributed to accidental reasons.
The study indicates that most of the respondents felt that strong patriarchal systems predispose the girl child to sexual exploitation. The patriarchal heritage of African societies gives men undue power over women in many matters including sexuality (Richter, et. al., 2004:440). While a lot has changed in the area of gender equality, men still have a big say on sexual matters in society. The cultural roles that men played traditionally still influence the thinking of many people today. Men are the predominant culprits in child sexual abuse in many patriarchal cultures because they have the power to define sexual relations (Richter, et. al., 2004:441). This partly explains why more women suffer both physical and sexual abuse compared to men. Culture also plays a big role in the determination of acceptable sex practices. Some cultures permit polygny, while others condoned polyandry (Chinn, 2012:36).

The survey revealed that female genital cutting plays a major role in exposing the girl child to sexual abuse. This is because a majority of the respondents agreed that girl child sexual exploitation is an issue and needs to be addressed. A number (8%) of the residents still do not have proper information to understand what girl child sexual abuse is and the implications of the vice to the entire community.

5.3 Conclusion

The overall overview from the survey is that the girl child’s sexual abuse in the Sub-County is an issue that requires immediate address. The results also reveal that family poverty, female genital cutting and strong patriarchal structure are some of the main factors that contribute to the girl child sexual abuse in the Sub County. These factors have easily enabled the perpetration of this vice making it look like it is ok and that’s the norm in the Sub County. Many cases go unreported as result of lack of awareness and the ability to draw a demarcation between what is sexual abuse and what is not due to ignorance.

The three main approaches that can help curb the prevalence of sexual abuse is the empowerment of children to fend off sex offenders (Tobin & Kessner, 2002, p. 45), enlightenment of the community (Chinn, 2012, p. 23), and law enforcement (Wazir & Oudenhoven, 1998, p. 62). In the African context, sex is still a subject that parents find difficult to raise with their children. Culturally, sex education was handled at the community level, older
women talked to girls about sex while older men prepared the boys (Nzioka, 2008, p. 10). This structure is largely non-existent today. The role of educating children about sex falls on the parent.

Parents must teach their children about what constitutes sexual abuse. Parents can teach their children about appropriate and inappropriate touching, undressing in the view of other people, and the topics no one should discuss with them without the knowledge of their parents (Grogan, 1999, p. 118). In addition, parents must teach children to trust their intuition in issues of sex (Tobin & Kessner, 2002, p. 71). Children with a clear understanding about sexual abuse have a greater chance of warding off sexual offenders, because they are empowered to report such abuses. However, in some cases, the parents are the offenders. This means that there is a need to create community structures that empower children to know and avoid home based sexual offenders. Schools and churches are perfect places to run such programs, because these institutions also carry out counselling activities.

Community level responses should address awareness issues, and also provide social-structural support for vulnerable children (Augsburger, 1992, p. 82). As noted earlier, some men participate in sexual abuse without realising that their activities actually constitute sexual abuse because of the cultural power distribution (Richter, Dawes, & Higson-Smith, 2004, p. 17). A man may make sexual advances on a minor because she had reached puberty, and may feel justified that she is mature enough to engage in adult behaviour. In this case, the man becomes a sexual offender because of the cultural definition of the age of an adult, which may be lower than the legal definition of an adult (Mwega, 2008, p. 45). Parents should also be made aware that the home is the hotbed of sexual abuse; hence, they must remain vigilant regarding the sexual safety of their children.

At a legal level, laws exist in Kenya that protects children from sexual abuse. However, there is a problem with the enforcement of the law (Laster, 2001, p. 34). This may in part be explained by ignorance among the police force, and by the difficulties of proving sexual abuse in the absence of physical evidence (Wanyonyi, 2014, p. 10). An adult that touches a minor inappropriately may
get away with it because there is no physical evidence of the act, and there may be no witnesses. Regardless of this, it is important for law enforcement agencies to handle sexual offences firmly whenever proof exists in order to dissuade potential sex offenders.

There is still a lot of awareness and sensitization that needs to be conducted in the Sub County because a number of the people do not understand what girl child sexual abuse is and the short term and long term effects of the same to the girl child and the society as a whole. The scope of the problem of child sexual abuse within our society is an epidemic of such vast proportions that virtually all children are at risk of abuse. Children are abused by loved ones, friends, family friends, those in whom they place their trust, and those bound to care for them. They are abused by those they hardly know and even those they do not know. Children of all ages are at risk and vulnerable to sexual abuse, whether in their homes, their community, or even over the Internet (Bolen 2001).

A lot more can be done at the home front and societal level to curb the vice of the girls’ child sexual abuse. The government and other policy makers should be more proactively involved in the issues of the girl child protection and prosecution of the offenders. This is because this affects everyone in the society and results to propagation of the cycle of poverty. Since this contributes directly to the achievement of the global sustainable development the achievement of cubing of the girl child sexual abuse vice must take a multi-sectoral approach for the attempt to succeed.

The overall overview from the survey is that the girl child’s sexual abuse in the Sub-County is an issue that requires immediate address.
5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations;

Awareness programmes should be put in place to educate the community on the realities of the girl child sexual abuse and the short term and long term implications to the child as well as the entire community.

Economic empowerment programmes should be taken serious by the Sub County government both for the girl child and boy child. This will reduce the vulnerability of the girl child to sexual abuse and the boy child who in turn becomes the abuser as a result of being idle or involvement in drug abuse as a result of having nothing much to do.

Deliberate information sharing should be done by the authorities to help the community know the available resources and help they can get and where when such occurrences take place.

Appropriate policies on child protection and proper channels of reporting to the police should be put in place in the Sub County.

The girl child education should be prioritized in the budgetary allocations of the bursary kitty of the Sub County to help the girl child to be empowered and exposed to opportunities which results to breaking the cycle of poverty.
References


Retrieved on August-2014/25


Retrieved on August-2014/25


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Introduction

The researcher is a student from the University of Nairobi and seeks to establish the factors that predispose the girl child to sexual abuse. The respondent is requested to give correct and independent response. The questionnaire is completely and the information collected will be used only for the purposes of this current study. Should you have questions or things you do not understand, kindly ask the researcher and they will be glad to assist you.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections.

Note: (Tick the appropriate box or fill the space provided as the case may be.)

Section I: General information

1. Which age bracket do you belong to?

   - 20-29
   - 30 - 39
   - 40 – 49
   - Over 50 years

2. Which is your Gender?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What is your highest academic qualification?

   - Primary School level
   - Secondary School
   - College
   - Masters
4. How long have you been in the County?
   - 0-6 months
   - 0.6-2 yrs
   - 2-5yrs
   - 5-10yrs

5. Which Sub-location do you belong to?
   - Marathi
   - Gakurwene

Section II

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am aware that the girl child is vulnerable to sexual abuse.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The girl child is likely to be sexually abused by people that they know and are known by the society.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Family poverty predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Patriarchal structures in the society make the girl child more vulnerable to sexual abuse.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female genital cutting predisposes the girl child to sexual abuse.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It is unlikely that a sexually abused girl child will report the case to the family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. It is unlikely that the family of an abused girl child if they happen to know will report the case to the authorities.

8. It is likely that a sexually abused girl child will drop out of school as a result of un-planned pregnancy especially for those at puberty.

9. It is likely that sexually abused girls may contract sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS as result of silence and fear of shame and guilt.

Section III
1. Who do you think is likely to abuse the girl child in the community?

2. What makes you think family poverty exposes the girl child to sexual abuse?

3. Do you think that a girl child that is brought up in an abusive family is likely to be abused in future? Explain further.

39
4. What is the role of the family in protecting the girl child?

5. Do you think family history on abuse contributes to tolerance to abuse? Please explain further.

6. What in your opinion is the role of the family in protecting the girl child against sexual violence and FGC?

7. How well are fathers doing in protecting the girl child against sexual violence and FGC?

8. Do you think culture has a part to play in the sexual violence against the girl child? Please explain briefly.
9. In your opinion what do you think is the role of economic empowerment in eradicating sexual abuse against the girl child?

10. What do you think makes eradication of girl child sexual violence a challenge?

11. Do you think the family/community is doing enough to protect the girl child from sexual abuse?

12. Do you think the government is doing enough to curb girl child sexual abuse?

13. What do you think can be done to improve on the girl child protection in the sub county?

Thank you
Appendix 2: Key Informant interview guide

Individual introductions

1. What do you think are some of the factors that predispose the girl child to sexual abuse in the Sub-County?

2. Who do you think are likely to abuse the girl child in the community?

3. Do you think family poverty exposes the girl child to sexual abuse?

4. Do you think that a girl child that is brought up in an abusive family is likely to be abuse in future?

5. What is the role of the family in protecting the girl child?

6. Do you think family history on abuse contributes to tolerance to abuse?
   -Please explain further.

7. What is the role of a father in protecting the girl child against gender violence and FGC?

8. How well are fathers doing in protecting the girl child against sexual violence and FGC?

9. Do you think culture has a part to play in the sexual violence against the girl child?
   -Please explain briefly.

10. What is the role of economic empowerment in eradicating sexual abuse against the girl child?

11. What makes eradication of girl child sexual violence a challenge?

12. Do you think the family/community is doing enough to protect the girl child from sexual abuse?
   -Explain further.

13. Do you think the government administration is doing enough to curb girl child sexual abuse?
   -Explain further.
14. Do you think social workers and other concerned parties like medical practitioners are giving the necessary help to the sexually abused girls?

15. What do you think can be done to improve on the girl child’s protection in the sub-county?

- List three of them.

Thank you for sharing your time and insight with me.