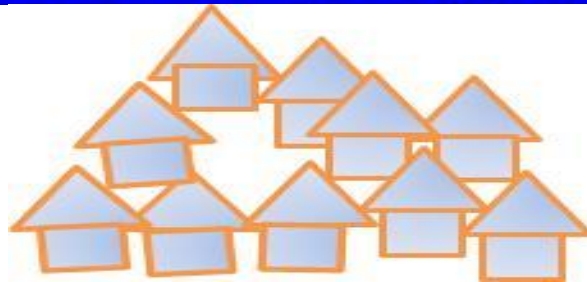
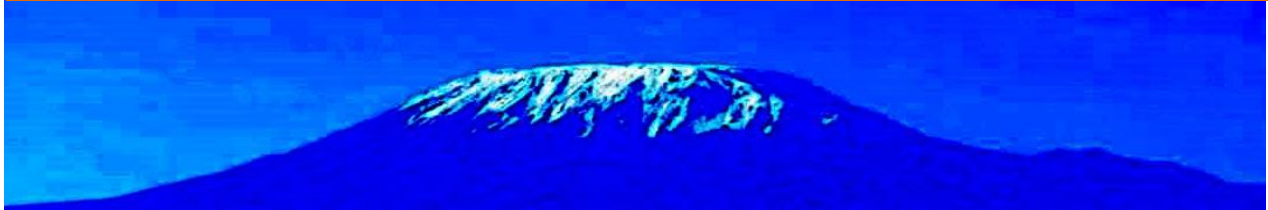


Tanzania Journal of Community Development (TAJOCODE)



Online: ISSN 2773-675X
Copyright @ TAJOCODE

The Journal that advances the profession and practice of Community Development



JOURNAL INFORMATION

The Department of Agricultural Extension and Community Development owns as well as offers its expertise and oversees the management and the review process of the journal. Even though, editorial decisions are based on the quality of submissions and appropriate peer review, rather than on any political, financial, or personal influences from the department, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), and other stakeholders. TAJOCODE follows Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines (visit www.publicationethics.org for details) to manage its peer-review process. All authors are welcome to submit complaints and appeals to the editor's decisions. Please contact the Chief Editors for any queries.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chief Editors:

- Dr. Rasel Mpuya Madaha (PhD), *Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania*,
Email: rasel.madaha@sua.ac.tz
- Dr. Regina Malima (PhD), *the Open University of Tanzania*
Email: reginamalima@out.ac.tz or regina.malima@yahoo.co.uk

Associate Editors

- Dr. Ponsian Sewando (Tengeru Institute of Community Development-TICD: ponsiansewando@gmail.com)
- Novatus Justinian Kaijage (Community Health and Social Welfare Africa, COMHESWA: kaijagecd@yahoo.com)

Other Members of the Editorial Board

- James O. Bukenya, Professor of Agricultural and Applied Economics and Director of the Office of Research Compliance at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU), P. O. Box 1042 Normal, AL 35762, P. O. Box 1042 Dawson Building Rm 316K | Alabama A&M University | Normal, AL 35762 (office) 256-372-5729 | (fax) 256-372-5906 email:james.bukenya@aamu.edu
- Krijn Peters (Associate Professor in Post-war Reconstruction, Rural Development and Transport Services, Department of Political & Cultural Studies, Swansea University, James Callaghan Building, Singleton Park, Swansea SA2 8PP, Wales, UK. Tel (44) (0)1792 295183, K.Peters@swansea.ac.uk)
- Prof. Nyankomo Marwa, Professor of Development Finance and Econometrics at the University of Stellenbosch Business School, as well as visiting Professor at University of New Brunswick and the University of Saskatchewan, Canada as well as the Mwalimu Nyerere University of Science and Technology, Tanzania, Email nyankomo@usb.ac.za and nyankomo.marwa@gmail.com
- Robin Neustaeter, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Adult Education, Program Teaching Staff, Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, 4545 Alumni Cres., P.O. Box 5000, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada, B2G 2W5: rneustae@stfx.ca)
- David James Manyerere, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at Mkwawa University College of Education (A Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam). Email: davidmanyerere@gmail.com/manyerere@muce.ac.tz
- Brianne Peters. Brianne is an expert on Asset Based and Citizenled Development (ABCD) and Program Teaching Staff at Coady International Institute St. Francis Xavier University, bpeters@stfx.ca
- Zena M. Mabeyo (PhD)Senior Lecturer, Ag.Deputy Rector, Planning Finance and Administration, Institute of Social Work, P.O.Box 3375, Dar es Salaam. East African Regional Representative - Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) Emails: mabeyo@isw.ac.tz and Zlyuwo@yahoo.com
- Solomon Mhango (Agricultural innovations and Gender, Tengeru Institute of Community Development-TICD: mhangos2004@yahoo.co.uk)
- Elimeleck Parmena Akyoo (Senior Lecturer, Tanzania Institute of Accountancy-TIA: eparmena@gmail.com)
- Respikius Martin (Senior Lecturer, Sokoine University of Agriculture-SUA: rmartin@sua.ac.tz)
- Godfrey Martin Mubyazi, Chief Research Scientist (Head), Department of Library, Medical Museums & Publications (Since April 2021), (Former Head), Department of Health Systems & Policy Research (2010 - March 2021), (Currently & Newly Appointed): Editor-In-Chief, Tanzania Journal of Health Research (TJHR), National Institute for Medical

Research (NIMR) 3 Barack Obama Drive P.O Box 9653, 11101 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, email: godfrey.mubyazi@nimr.or.tz and gmmubyazi@gmail.com

- Mirau Mbise, Lecturer in Economics at Mkwawa University College of Education (A Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam), email mirau2010@gmail.com
- Japhace Ponsian,, Senior Lecturer of Political Economy, extractive governance, and Community Engagement at Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE), Email jponcian@yahoo.co.uk
- Msaki Juda Leonard, Senior Lecturer Finance & Economic Systems Researcher/Consultant Banking & Finance | MoCU [University], minajuda@yahoo.com and jlmsaki@gmail.com
- Chakupewa Joseph Mpambije, Senior Lecturer of History, Political Science, Health systems, local government reforms, and Development Studies at Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE), Email chakjomba@yahoo.com
- Dr. Boniphace Shimba Francis, Lecturer of Political Economy and Management Science, the University of Dodoma, Email: shimbabony@gmail.com
- Amon Exavery, Statistics, Epidemiology, and economics. Senior Research & Learning Advisor at Pact/Tanzania, Plot No 1387c, Uporoto St, Dar es Salaam, email: amonexavery@gmail.com
- Gabriel K. Nzalayaimisi(Ph.D) Senior Lecturer, Sokoine University of Agriculture-ganzalayaimisi@yahoo.co.uk
- Dr. Boniphace Shimba Francis, Lecturer of Political Economy and Management Science, the University of Dodoma, Email: shimbabony@gmail.com
- Dr Lancina Doumbia, University of Sciences, Techniques and Technology of Bamako (USTTB) (Mali), ldoumbia007@gmail.com, Cell: +22376429139
- Rose Mtei (Ph.D ongoing), Tengeru Institute of Community Development-TICD: mteirose@gmail.com
- Juma Almas Mhina, (Ph.D ongoing), Tengeru Institute of Community Development-TICD: mhinaa75@gmail.com and juma@ticd.ac.tz- Ph.D. Ongoing

Information on submission

TAJOCODE is a peer reviewed journal. Visit journal's website for details <https://www.coa.sua.ac.tz/extension/tanzania-journal-of-community-development-tajocode>

DISCLAIMER

The Editorial Board, TAJOCODE, CODEPATA, Department of Agricultural Extension and Community Development of SUA and our publishers (referred to as the organs of the journal) make every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "content") contained in our publication. However, the mentioned organs, our agents, and our licensors make no representation or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the content. Any views and opinions expressed in this publication are the opinion and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by the organs of the journal. The accuracy of the contents should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. The organs of the journal should not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, or other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the content. Other details about the journal can be accessed at <https://www.coa.sua.ac.tz/extension/tanzania-journal-of-community-development-tajocode>

Factors Influencing the Persistence of Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania

Naomi Isanzu and Humphrey Josia¹

Article history

Received: 20/06/2024

Revised: 09/09/24

Accepted: 16/09/2024

Published online: 19/09/2024

Keywords:

Child-on-child sexual abuse, persistence, factors

This study explored factors influencing the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania. Simple random and purposive sampling procedures were utilized to select 399 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Validity and reliability were ensured by reviewing tools, using multiple methods and data sources, and pre-testing the research tools. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was analysed thematically. The study employed empirical and theoretical literature to compare the findings of other studies with this study. The findings revealed that factors that influence the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse include low cognitive abilities and education, history of sexual abuse, influence of values and beliefs, family environment, school environment, influence of peer groups and influence of media. The study recommends that education programmes be designed for parents and community members to address the problem. Likewise, the government should strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms to ensure adequate protection for children.

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, The University of Dodoma, Tanzania

Suggested citation: Isanzu, N. and Josia, H. (2024), Factors Influencing the Persistence of Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania, Tanzania Journal of Community Development 3(2): 69-85

1.0. Introduction

The term "child-on-child sexual abuse" refers to sexual activity where one child engages in sexual behaviour with another child (Yadav and Thakur, 2022). This type of abuse can have severe long-term consequences for children, including increased risk of high-risk behaviours, infectious diseases, social problems, and emotional and behavioural problems (Ensink et al., 2019), which are not different from those children who have been sexually abused by adults (Osadan & Reid, 2015). Globally, child sexual abuse is considered one of the most widespread forms of abuse against children, as 30% and 50% of all sexual abuse crimes against children are committed by children (Jensen, Smid & Bøe, 2020; Shawler et al., 2019) and that child sexual abuse has increased from the year 2000 to date indicating that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 13 boys have been sexually abused worldwide before attaining the age of eighteen (Hackett, 2020).

In the United States of America (USA), 1 in every 3 girls and 1 in every 7 boys were abused sexually during their childhood (Foster, 2017), in the United Kingdom (UK), Hackett et al. (2020) reported that 20% to 33% of all child sexual abuse incidences involved children as abusers, in Scotland, research indicate quarter of these incidences, both the victims and abusers were under the age of sixteen years (Hackett, 2020). Likewise, in Norway, it is estimated that 30% to 50% of all sexual abuse against children is committed by other children (Draugedalen, 2020).

Child-on-child sexual abuse is a prevalent but often underreported issue in African countries due to cultural taboos surrounding sex (Muhire et al., 2020). Studies from South Africa, Ghana, Togo, and Kenya indicate that other children perpetrate a significant proportion of child sexual abuse incidents. In South Africa, 42% of reported cases involved child-on-child abuse In Ghana, 66% of girls in schools experienced sexual abuse by other children. In Togo, 83% of children felt unsafe due to sexual abuse by peers and in Kenya, studies suggest that 60% of child sexual abuse perpetrators are themselves children (Oberholzer, 2021; Ruto, 2009).

Tanzania is one of the leading regions with a notable number of child-on-child sexual abuse cases in Africa. The prevalence of child sexual abuse in Tanzania is reported to be between 2.1% to 68.7% for females and 4.1% to 60% for males. Among these cases, child-on-child sexual abuse is a significant concern. (Selengia et al., 2020). The problem manifests in various forms including rape, sexual language, touching, jokes, and gang sodomy (Wazambi & Komanya, 2019; Kabunga, 2016). In response to this problem, the Tanzanian government has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1985 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRCW) of 1990. These international agreements aim to protect children from sexual abuse of all kinds (Khamis, 2019). Additionally, Tanzania's Child Act of 2019, specifically sections 95 and 96, outlines the roles of social welfare officers and police officers in safeguarding children from abuse and empowers community members to report any violations of children's rights (URT, 2019). Despite government efforts to protect children from sexual abuse, child-on-child sexual abuse remains a problem (Mbunda & Nyaki, 2024; Msangi, 2017). This study specifically examines community perceptions about the persistence of this issue, particularly in Dodoma, where it is prevalent. The intention is to understand the socio-cultural factors influencing the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. The information generated by this paper will add to the existing body of knowledge on this problem and pave the way for the government and other stakeholders to develop more effective strategies to prevent and address child-on-child sexual abuse.

1.1 Literature Review

Despite an increasing body of literature highlighting the prevalence and consequences of child-on-child sexual abuse globally, empirical studies focused specifically on the Tanzanian context, particularly in Dodoma, are notably limited. Most existing research has predominantly addressed child-on-child sexual abuse through broader lenses, emphasizing statistical

prevalence rates and correlations without sufficiently exploring nuanced social, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to the persistence of this issue. For example, studies by Hackett et al. (2020) and Oberholzer (2021) investigate child-on-child sexual abuse trends in various African nations; yet, they do not provide in-depth analyses of community perceptions or contextual factors unique to Tanzanian society. This indicates a critical gap in localized empirical knowledge, especially concerning the socio-cultural factors influencing perceptions and responses to child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania.

While some studies have recognized a correlation between a history of prior sexual abuse and the likelihood of children replicating similar behaviours (Simuforosa, 2015; Osadan & Reid, 2015), there remains a substantial lack of qualitative research unpacking the perceptions of affected communities. Literature tends to overlook how children, parents, educators, and community members perceive the cycle of abuse and the mechanisms through which it is perpetuated within specific familial and cultural contexts. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this void by providing qualitative insights into community perceptions regarding child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania. It investigates personal and collective beliefs, values, and socio-environmental factors that contribute not only to the occurrence of the abuse but also to its ongoing prevalence.

Additionally, although the influence of peer groups and media exposure in promoting and normalizing abusive behaviours among children has been highlighted in prior research (Omar, 2010; Soft & Adesoji, 2018), existing literature often neglects the interplay between these factors and deeper underlying issues, such as family dynamics and communal standards. By critically engaging with literature that emphasizes these interconnected dimensions, this study underscores the necessity of a multifaceted approach to understanding child-on-child sexual abuse. It highlights how community identification of these factors can inform targeted interventions, stress the importance of localized data, and pave the way for comprehensive educational programs to reduce incidents of abuse and enhance child safety.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The study employs Symbolic Interactionism and Social Construction of Reality theories to examine the factors influencing the perceptions of child-on-child sexual abuse. On the one hand, symbolic Interactionism focuses on how individuals' shared meanings shape their behaviour through social interaction (Husin et al., 2021) hence, shared cultural meanings and beliefs shape the way people perceive and respond to child-on-child sexual abuse. These meanings can vary across different societies and cultures, influencing how abuse is defined, reported, and addressed. On the other hand, the social construction of reality theory explains how people create and maintain a shared understanding of reality through social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Therefore, the way society defines child-on-child sexual abuse can influence how it is perceived and addressed. Both theories contribute to understanding the complex factors influencing the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. However, the study acknowledges the limitations of each theory, such as Symbolic Interactionism's focus on individual interpretations and Social Constructionism's emphasis on macro-level analysis. By combining these theories, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

2.0. Methodology

2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in the Dodoma region, which was selected purposefully due to its high incidence of child-on-child sexual abuse. The data shows an increase in such cases: 239 in 2019, 309 in 2020, and 321 in 2021. Other regions with notable incidences include Tanga, which reported 216 cases in 2019, 258 in 2020, and 271 in 2021 and Kilimanjaro, with 197 cases in 2019, 233 in 2020, and 249 in 2021 (Tanzania police force 2019-2021). This study specifically focused on Dodoma City, which had the highest number of child-on-child sexual abuse cases in the Dodoma region. In 2021, Dodoma City reported 166 cases, followed by

Chamwino (114) and Bahi (72) (Regional Social Welfare Office, 2021). Within Dodoma City, three wards were selected for the study based on their higher reported incidences of child-on-child sexual abuse: Nkuhungu (40 cases), Chang'ombe (30 cases), and Dodoma-Makulu (28 cases) (Dodoma City Social Welfare Office, 2021).

2.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was employed to collect data at a single point in time. This design allowed for the simultaneous use of multiple instruments, which were analyzed separately and combined to gain comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under study.

2.3 Research Approach

A mixed research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research approaches, was employed. A mixed-method research approach yields a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than one approach, thus overcoming the weaknesses and biases of using a single approach.

2.4 Unit of Analysis, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The unit of analysis for this study was the community adults. Social Welfare Officers (SWOs), religious leaders, the Police Gender and Child desk focal person, and teachers were also selected as key informants because of their roles in protecting children against any form of sexual abuse. Yamane formula (1967) was used to obtain sample size for quantitative data. This formula is appropriate because the population under this study was known or fixed. Thus, it was quickly applied in practice, and the sample size of 398 was reasonably estimated. Below is the Yamane formula used to achieve the sample size.

$$n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$$

Where;

n= The required sample size

N = Total population

e= error limit or margin of error

1 = constant

For the case of this study, N= 68600 and e = 5% or 0.05

Therefore,

$$N = 68600 / 1 + 68600 (0.05)^2$$

n = 398 respondents

The sample for each ward was attained by multiplying the overall population in every ward and the sample size by the sum of the population within all three wards selected for the study.

Nkuhungu	$(26,088 \times 398) / 68600 =$	151
Dodoma Makulu	$(17,097 \times 398) / 68600 =$	100
Chang'ombe	$(25,415 \times 398) / 68600 =$	147

After 398 questionnaires were distributed in the respective wards, 379 were filled out and returned for a response rate of 95%. However, only 374 questionnaires were used since five incomplete questionnaires were discarded. In qualitative data, 25 key informants were involved after data appeared at saturation point during data collection when no new information was identified. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain respondents for this study. Purposive sampling was used to get information from key informants, while simple random sampling was applied to get samples of community adults.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Interviews were conducted with the parents/guardians and the key informants; the interview sessions lasted sixty minutes for each respondent. Five focus group discussions containing eight members each were conducted to compare and complement information obtained from

the interviews and surveys. Triangulating various data collection methods was crucial in comprehensively understanding the problem under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the study instruments were reviewed to see any ambiguities and to use various methods, tools, and sources to collect data. Data collection using multiple methods, tools and sources ensures validity compared to collecting data through a single method, tool and source, which can be questionable, biased and weak (Kabir, 2016). On the other hand, pre-testing of the research tools was done before going to the field to check the reliability by avoiding ambiguity and ensuring consistency and accuracy of the intended outcomes. Moreover, different questions were constructed, cutting across the information required with other data collection methods to enhance reliability.

2.7 Data Analysis

A mixed methods data analysis technique was used to analyze data, whereby quantitative data was analysed using computer SPSS software version 22, which assisted in generating descriptive data in the form of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. This kind of analysis involves the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the following six steps were followed in analyzing qualitative data: data familiarization, generating codes, themes searching, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally, producing a report. In qualitative data, direct quotations were used to present opinions on the perceptions held by the respondents.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Before and during data collection, the following ethical considerations were observed: A clearance letter from the University of Dodoma was obtained. Also, a research permit was obtained from the Dodoma Regional Administrative Secretary, who facilitated introductions to Local Government Authorities. Subsequently, the researchers received permission to collect data from the selected study areas. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Sufficient information about the study objectives and the intended use of collected data was provided to encourage their participation. Those who agreed were required to sign a consent form after a thorough explanation. Respondents were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, all information was handled with the utmost care and used solely for academic purposes. Respondents were not required to disclose their names on any data collection instruments.

3.0. Results and Discussions

This section presents the socio-cultural factors influencing the persistence of child-on-child. These factors are indicated in Table below:

Table 1: Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing the Persistence of Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse

Socio-Cultural Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Chi-Squared	P-Value
Low Cognitive Abilities and Education	44	76	93	74	87	32.875	0.001
History of Prior Sexual Abuse	29	54	84	104	103	6.732	0.015
Values and Beliefs	94	99	73	61	47	29.123	0.002
Family Environment	75	81	48	77	95	13.456	0.032
School Environment	66	74	85	64	85	8.789	0.065
Peer Groups	83	81	73	65	72	17.547	0.021
Mass Media	80	64	64	75	71	27.659	0.003

3.1. Low Cognitive Abilities and Education

Respondents were asked for their opinions on the influence of child cognitive abilities and education on the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse, as shown in Table 1. Perceptions of cognitive abilities and education of a child were shown to be strongly and statistically significantly correlated with child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 32.875$, $p = 0.001$). This demonstrates the community's belief in the relationship between cognitive abilities and education and child-on-child sexual abuse and emphasizes the significance of inclusive educational initiatives and services for children with low cognitive abilities and education. The findings further revealed that, low cognitive abilities and education could put children at risk for becoming perpetrators or victims of child-on-child sexual abuse. This was affirmed by the key informants, who explained that children with low cognitive abilities and education were easily influenced and became involved in child-on-child sexual abuse without realizing the extent of their behaviour. A primary school teacher and a social welfare officer were quoted in the following excerpts.

"Limited understanding of sexual matters can make children more vulnerable to abuse. Older children who have a better understanding about sexual matters may abuse younger children who are less knowledgeable" (IDI, Female Primary School Teacher –Nkuhungu Ward)

"...I think cognitive abilities have a big influence because young children with low cognitive abilities can be influenced easily by older children, especially those with more understanding of sexual issues" (IDI, Social Welfare Officer- Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital).

The above findings suggest that a lack of cognitive skills may make children more vulnerable to sexual abuse due to a lack of understanding of what is happening or what is appropriate. These findings are similar to those of Tomaszewski et al. (2021), who also found that children with physical or mental disabilities are at higher risk of sexual abuse than other children. A study conducted by Oberholzer (2021) in South Africa also found that a lack of cognitive ability can make a child more likely to be a target for sexual abuse by other children due to a lack of understanding of what is appropriate or what is going on. Therefore, education is crucial in preventing child-on-child sexual abuse, especially for children who have cognitive difficulties. In order to eradicate child-on-child sexual abuse effectively, it is important to design educational programmes to meet the requirements of children with cognitive problems.

Additionally, the study found a statistically significant correlation between low cognitive abilities, education, and the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 32.875$, $p = 0.001$). This finding aligns with literature that highlights the vulnerability of children with lower cognitive capacity in situations of abuse (Tomaszewski et al., 2021). However, while previous studies have acknowledged this relationship, the current study adds specificity by emphasizing the community's perception and the nuanced understanding of how educational systems can exacerbate these vulnerabilities. It foregrounds the necessity for targeted educational interventions tailored for children with low cognitive abilities, filling the literature gap that often treats education broadly rather than addressing individual cognitive variances.

3.2. History of Prior Sexual Abuse or Victim to Offender Cycle

The study discovered a statistically significant association between perceptions of a history of prior sexual abuse and child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 6.732$, $p = 0.015$), suggesting that the community is aware of the existing link. The above finding shows that most children who sexually abuse other children were themselves victims of child sexual abuse. Respondents explained this factor during interviews.

"...Children are engaging in sexual abuse with each other, and often, it turns out to be a cycle. A child may disclose being taught by an adult and then pass on this knowledge to other children" (IDI, Female Social Welfare Officer –Dodoma City Office).

This comment is further supported by a teacher who explained his experience in the following scenario:

"The boy who was in form three sodomized his younger brother, who was in form one. The younger brother then went on to do the same with his younger sibling, who was in primary school. Subsequently, the primary school child began to sodomize other children in the neighbourhood. If you follow this issue, you will find that there is a cycle of children sexually abusing other children" [IDI, Female Secondary School Teacher – Nkuhungu Ward]

These findings are supported by a study carried out by Simuforosa (2015), which revealed that child sexual abuse victims sometimes become sexual abuse perpetrators. Some children who have been abused develop negative feelings about themselves and others. This is also consistent with a study by Osadan & Reid (2015), which made clear that providing children with sexual abuse experiences puts children at risk of growing up to commit such abuses themselves. This implies that victims of child sexual abuse who are not provided with appropriate care and measures will be involved in future sexual abuse. Thus, a history of sexual abuse or victim-to-offender cycle is among the influencing factors in the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse in homes, schools and street settings. Trauma-informed care and support for children with such histories are essential if child-on-child sexual abuse is to be addressed effectively.

Moreover, this study reveals a strong community awareness of the cycle where victims of prior sexual abuse may become perpetrators ($\chi^2 = 6.732$, $p = 0.015$). Previous research has suggested this correlation (Simuforosa, 2015; Osadan & Reid, 2015); however, these studies often lacked qualitative narratives to elucidate this cycle in a localized context. By narratively illustrating this cycle through community experiences, the current study underscores the necessity of trauma-informed support strategies within communities to address the complexities of this cycle. This critical engagement with existing literature exemplifies the relevance of community narratives, bridging a gap in understanding the local dynamics of abuse perpetration and victimization.

3.3. Influence of Values and Beliefs

Survey respondents were asked about their opinion on values and beliefs being an influencing factor in the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse, as illustrated in Table 1, child-on-child sexual abuse was significantly correlated with respondents' responses of cultural values and beliefs ($\chi^2 = 29.123$, $p = 0.002$). This emphasizes how important it is to address negative cultural norms, values and beliefs regarding child sexual behaviour in order to prevent child-on-child sexual abuse. Findings reveal that respondents believe that the values and beliefs of parents or guardians influence the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. It was further explained that if the caregiver has a substantial value and belief system that shapes their attitudes towards sexuality, it could influence the child's behaviour; that is, if caregivers engage in sexual behaviour in front of their children, this will create a belief in the child that such behaviour is acceptable. The following explanation from the key informants highlights this point:

"There are some members of the community who believe that it is acceptable to show certain sexual behaviours to children, such as having sex in a less private environment, kissing, wearing too short clothes or talking about sexual issues. However, others believe these things are private and should not be done in front of children. Therefore,

morals and beliefs greatly influence the occurrence or non-occurrence of sexual abuse against children" (IDI, Social Welfare Officer –Chang'ombe Ward).

Another participant explained the following:

"In one case, a mother who was involved in prostitution lived in a room with her two teenage sons, aged 15. When the mother received a client, the children would leave the room. However, one of the sons would sometimes seek out other children for sexual activities (FGD, Male Parent- Nkuhungu Ward).

This finding implies that it is important to recognize the impact of cultural values and beliefs on child-on-child sexual abuse. This factor is also highlighted by Vosmer, Hackett, and Callanan (2009), whose research confirmed that respondents identified that their own values influenced their views on sexual behaviours. Similarly, in his study, Omar (2010) suggested that religious beliefs influence both sexual behaviour and views about sexuality. Therefore, this confirms that values and beliefs may play an important role in perpetuating child-on-child sexual abuse.

On the other hand, the examination of cultural values and beliefs as influencing factors ($\chi^2 = 29.123$, $p = 0.002$) provides a critical addition to the literature. Previous studies have emphasized the effects of cultural norms in various contexts (Vosmer et al., 2009; Omar, 2010), but this study specifically articulates how these beliefs manifest in local Tanzanian communities and impact child behaviour. Furthermore, it elucidates the interplay between familial attitudes towards sexuality and child behaviour, thereby contributing qualitative insights often missing from broader analyses of cultural impacts on sexual abuse dynamics. By doing so, this study not only fills a gap but also highlights the urgent need for cultural sensitivity in educational and intervention programs addressing child-on-child abuse.

3.4. The Family Environment

From the survey, respondents were asked about their views on how family environment influences the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between respondents' opinions of the child's family environment and the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 13.456$, $p = 0.032$). Thus, the findings suggest that a child's family environment plays a role in influencing the persistence of the problem. During the study, respondents mentioned various reasons for child sexual abuse, including lack of guardians leading to lack of supervision, domestic abuse, marital problems, single parenthood, and inadequate education about child care. These family interactions influence children's development, demonstrating the importance of the parent-child relationship. For instance, if caregivers are absent, children are left unsupervised, and it provides room for them to be exposed to illegal sexual materials or activities. A participant in a focus group discussion was quoted saying:

"My husband and I used to leave early to work from Monday to Friday, leaving our children at home with a house girl. One day, I came home from work suddenly before the normal time and was shocked to see my children and house girl watching a sex video on a smartphone. They were all naked, learning from and copying what they were watching" (FGD, female parent – Chang'ombe ward).

Moreover, study participants suggested that marital problems and abuse between family members can contribute to the prevalence of child-on-child sexual abuse in society. Such family dynamics can negatively impact children's psychological well-being and disrupt their physical health. This factor is also indicated in other studies, for example Okonya, (2018) and Wahid et al., (2021) which also suggests that marital problems and abuse within families can contribute to child-on-child sexual abuse rates. The findings further revealed that marital conflicts can lead to parental separation and leave children without proper care. In such

situations, some children are taken care of by relatives or become street children, where they can be exposed to various forms of mistreatment, including sexual abuse. Additionally, respondents pointed out that in separations, most children are left with single parents or step-parents, which are considered incomplete families with a lack of complete parental control. The following quotation clarifies this further:

I believe that child-on-child sexual abuse often begins within families. Many families today are headed by single mothers due to absent fathers who may have abandoned their partners during pregnancy or after falling for someone else. This can lead to children growing up without a strong male role model. When combined with the practice of single parents watching sexually suggestive content with their children, it can create an environment where children are more likely to engage in sexual behavior with each other. " (IDI, Female Social Welfare Officer –Dodoma City).

In addition, participants believed that inadequate education on child care within families contributes to the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. An FGD participant commented on the following:

"The problem of child-on-child sexual abuse is significantly influenced by poor parenting at the family level. Parents are key influencers, but many are unaware of their children's behaviour. Even when they receive information from others, they often react instead of engaging in open communication with their children" (IDI, Male Secondary School Educational Officer –Dodoma City)

Furthermore, the type of family structure was mentioned as a factor influencing the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse at the family level. For example, in extended families, children might be raised by grandparents who may not be as involved in modern societal changes, leading to a lack of important parental guidance. Additionally, respondents noted that many parents today prioritize financial activities and delegate child-care responsibilities to house girls, often lacking the necessary parental qualities. This was noted in the following quote:

"In many families, a child may not see a parent for a week. Parents go out to work from Monday to Friday in the morning while the child is asleep. They return at night while the child is asleep. On Saturdays and Sundays, the father goes to the bar and comes back drunk, and the mother goes to VICOBA. Now you find that the child is being raised by a house girl, phone and television" (IDI, Female Police Gender and Children Desk Focal Person- Dodoma City).

In line with the findings, the study conducted by Seme (2020) revealed that there were risks for sexual abuse at the family level, particularly families with characteristics such as large families, exposure to domestic abuse, poor parenting, unavailable caregivers, single parents and step-parents; and parental drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, respondents mentioned unfinished small houses with one or very few rooms and without doors and windows as among the reasons for the lack of privacy. Hence, respondents viewed that lack of privacy in the home environment would cause children to witness parents or adults engaging in sexual intercourse, which could be considered among the factors influencing the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse.

"Some parents sleep with their children in the same room, and when having sexual intercourse during the night, they think that the children are asleep, but in reality, they see everything and later they try to do the same with other children" (IDI, Secondary School Educational Officer)

This result is similar to Artz et al. (2016) on the sexual abuse of children and adolescents in South Africa. The study revealed that various issues which could affect children in a home

environment include lack of privacy, where children could inappropriately witness sexual acts like sexual abuse or prostitution and see their parents having sex. In the same vein, Said and Costa, (2019) and Amy, Yackel, and Adams (2024) also noted that the type of family structure could influence the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse at the family level as it can either favour protective or non-protective environments for the children or create a safe space or contribute to an environment where abuse can occur.

Generally, the findings demonstrate a clear link between the family environment and child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 13.456$, $p = 0.032$). While previous studies (Seme, 2020; Okonya, 2018) have rightly emphasized the familial context, they often stop short of delineating specific family dynamics that contribute to child sexual abuse. This research deepens the understanding of how poor parenting practices, domestic abuse, and family structure contribute to the persistence of such abuse, expanding existing literature by detailing the mechanisms through which family dynamics perpetuate cycles of abuse.

3.5. School Environment

Children spend more of their childhood as pupils or students; due to this fact, it was crucial to get respondents' opinions on how the school environment influences the persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse. The findings of this study were not shown to be statistically significantly associated ($\chi^2 = 8.789$, $p = 0.065$). However, other interviewed respondents explained that the school environment could influence child-on-child sexual abuse in various ways, including lack of enough supervision in schools and insufficient sex abuse education in schools. This is clarified further in the quotation below:

"Children engage in sexual abuse incidents at school simply due to poor management in some schools, which can lead to some of them getting pregnant" (IDI, Female Social Welfare Officer –Chang'ombe Ward)

A teacher also explained the following during an interview:

"School is a good place for children to discuss dirty sexual issues they see at home and on the street" (Female Primary School Teacher - Dodoma Makulu Ward).

A study conducted by Philander (2018) revealed that teachers reported observing children engaging in child-on-child sexual abuse, including self and peer masturbation. Also, Seme (2020) pointed out that access to the internet through mobile phones in schools helped children to access a lot of sexual materials like text, images, and videos through social networking sites, video games, and YouTube. Through the internet, they watch sexual movies, download pornographic material and often send and receive sexually suggestive messages, which influence children to abuse other children in school settings. Thus, lack of enough supervision and insufficient sex abuse education in schools influences children to abuse other children sexually.

While the correlation between the school environment and child-on-child sexual abuse was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 8.789$, $p = 0.065$), the qualitative insights illustrate that insufficient supervision and inadequate sex education create vulnerabilities. This echoes findings from Philander (2018) and Seme (2020) but bridges the literature gap by including local factors, such as specific behaviors observed in schools, that contribute to a permissive culture surrounding child sexual abuse. Thus, this study calls attention to the need for robust school-based interventions that specifically address identified gaps in educational practices

3.6. Influence of Peer Groups

Study respondents were asked about their opinion of the influence of children's friendship groups and the roles these groups play in children abusing others sexually. Peer groups were statistically associated with child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 17.547$, $p = 0.021$), as shown in

Table 1. This implies that the community is aware of how peer relationships influence child-on-child sexual abuse, highlighting the need for educational initiatives that encourage positive peer relationships and instruct children about respect and boundaries. Peer pressure rose when one or more children had experienced sexual abuse either as perpetrators or victims and encouraged other children to be involved too. The following narratives from key informants indicate that peer pressure is experienced when one or more children are involved in sexual abuse and influence other children to do the same.

"One day, we decided to question students in grades 3 through 6 about their involvement in sodomy incidents. The children described engaging in the act by instructing each other on the positions. We were shocked to learn that children of such young age were teaching each other about sexual acts" (IDI, Female Primary School Teacher –Chang'ombe Ward).

These findings are supported by literature; for example, studies conducted by Omar (2010) and Artz et al. (2016) in South Africa found that peer groups influence children to engage in child-on-child sexual abuse by acting out on one another sexually. Likewise, Hakielimu (2020), observes that peer relationships influences the perpetration of child-on-child sexual abuse in Tanzania. Consequently, this implies that peer groups are viewed as a significant source of information and support when children learn about sexuality and intimate relationships. Thus, this influence is based on the fact that peer groups encourage children to engage in child-on-child sexual abuse incidents.

The significant association between peer interactions and child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 17.547$, $p = 0.021$) aligns with previous findings in various contexts. However, this current study adds depth by revealing how peer pressures may exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. Furthermore, it highlights the failure of existing social structures to intervene when abusive behaviours are normalized among peers, emphasizing a gap in preventive strategies within peer dynamics that need to be addressed.

3.7. The Influence of Mass Media

The findings of this study have indicated the influence of media on child-on-child sexual abuse as perceptions of mass media and child-on-child sexual abuse were strongly and statistically significantly associated ($\chi^2 = 27.659$, $p = 0.003$), as shown in Table 1. Respondents explained that children learn various harmful sexual behaviours through the internet, mass media, and social media platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp and Facebook. Access to the internet is identified as a means to access pornography sites or websites. Also, respondents pointed out that children would access pornography materials stored in computers, flash, CDs, and phones either intentionally or by a careless mistake.

"Globalization influences child-on-child sexual abuse through the mass media where children learn sexually harmful things. For example, there are cartoons on television and on various internet sites which teach sexual issues like homosexuality, how to kiss, how to seduce, how to love, how to hug and others" (IDI, Female Social Welfare Officer-Chang'ombe Ward).

The above narrations indicate that children who accessed various media sources without the guidance of parents or caregivers may cause them to access inappropriate sexual materials and result in the sexual abuse of other children. Supporting this argument, a social welfare officer commented that:

"Some parents unknowingly contribute to the problem of child-on-child sexual abuse by abusing their own children. For instance, some parents own smartphones containing pornographic materials. When they give these phones to their children, the children may accidentally come across the pornographic content and start watching it

while trying to use the device” (IDI, Female Social Welfare Officer –Dodoma City Office).

Another participant narrated the following during an interview:

“ In recent times, it is common to encounter explicit music played on public buses, along with performers dressed half naked, which both adults and children can view. This is completely inappropriate and morally unacceptable. The bus owners should filter the contents as such content can contribute to influencing children toward sexually abusive behaviours” (IDI, Female Religion Leader- Chang’ombe Ward).

In line with the above findings, Oberholzer (2021) discovered that the rise in access to media and sharing information through various platforms resulted in children's access to abusive and illegal sexual materials. Likewise, Agarwal and Dhanasekaran (2012), in their study, revealed that more time spent by children watching television without parental control was associated with an increased risk of sexual behaviours. Moreover, most parents do not know how to handle social media, block these abusive media platforms, or restrict access by their children (Oberholzer (2021). The above findings are further supported by a study conducted by Sofian et al. (2019), who revealed that childhood exposure to pornography is among the factors that contribute to children abusing other children sexually; hence, limiting children's access to pornography or sexually abusive materials is crucial for their well-being.

The study clarifies the detrimental role of mass media as a factor influencing child-on-child sexual abuse ($\chi^2 = 27.659$, $p = 0.003$). While existing literature emphasizes the influence of media on children's behaviours (Oberholzer, 2021; Sofian et al., 2019), this research uniquely contextualizes these influences within the Tanzanian environment and highlights the ways local media consumption patterns may be leading to normalized sexual behaviours among children. This emphasizes the necessity for stricter content regulation and guided media literacy programs.

4.0. Conclusion

The persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania, signals a complex interplay of socio-cultural dynamics, educational deficits, and systemic failures that demand urgent attention and intervention. This study has illuminated several critical factors that contribute to this troubling phenomenon, emphasizing that children's vulnerability as both victims and perpetrators is deeply intertwined with their social environments. A pivotal realization is that parental neglect, particularly through inadequate supervision, forms a permissive environment for abuse, allowing harmful behaviours to proliferate in the absence of oversight. Moreover, the unchecked influence of mass media and the internet exposes children to distorted sexual norms and harmful content, exacerbating their involvement in abusive behaviours.

Thus, addressing child-on-child sexual abuse requires a multi-faceted approach that engages parents, educators, and the community at large. Prominent in this discourse is the necessity for comprehensive education programs tailored not only to equip children with the knowledge and resources to protect themselves but also to instil in them a clear understanding of healthy sexual boundaries. For children with low cognitive abilities, specialized educational initiatives must be integrated into schools and community settings that consider their unique vulnerabilities and learning needs.

Furthermore, the study posits that the conventional conceptualization of abuse must be expanded to include the influence of values and beliefs propagated within families and communities. This insight underscores the critical importance of culturally

sensitive interventions that challenge existing norms and promote healthier familial interactions. By fostering an environment of open communication about sexuality, the stigma surrounding these discussions can be reduced, allowing for proactive parental engagement in their children's lives.

In recognizing that child-on-child sexual abuse is often a cycle perpetuated by historical trauma and prior experiences of abuse, this research advocates for trauma-informed care and psychosocial support services for both victims and perpetrators. This care system should aim to break the cycle of abuse and provide individuals with the tools to heal and build healthier relationships going forward.

Moreover, enforcing stronger legal frameworks to protect children is non-negotiable. The government must prioritize not only the ratification of international agreements concerning child rights but also ensure that local laws are effectively implemented and violators are held accountable. Awareness campaigns targeting communities are essential for shifting the narrative around child-on-child sexual abuse, promoting a culture of reporting and vigilance that holds all members accountable for the well-being of children.

Generally, the insights derived from this study offer a critical framework for rethinking the strategies deployed to combat child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania. By recognizing and addressing the intricate factors—educational deficits, cultural beliefs, family dynamics, and systemic neglect—stakeholders can formulate impactful policies and interventions that not only address the symptoms of this pervasive issue but also its root causes. This comprehensive approach is vital in ensuring a safer and more nurturing environment for all children, ultimately facilitating a societal shift towards safeguarding their fundamental rights and emotional well-being. Thus, as we collectively reconsider the 'so what' of this issue, let it resonate that the protection of our children is not merely a legal obligation, but a moral imperative incumbent upon all facets of society.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- **Education Programs:**
To address the root causes of child-on-child sexual abuse, it is important to implement comprehensive education programs which will focus on teaching children about how to report abuse cases. Additionally, schools and communities should create awareness to children about the appropriate use of mass media to help children understand the risks of online illicit content and protect themselves. For children with low cognitive abilities, specialized educational programs can address their specific needs and reduce their vulnerability.
- **Prevention Initiatives:**
Families, the community and the school, should put in place prevention measures which encourage a safe and nurturing environment which aims to prevent children from sexual abuse.
- **Support Services:**
It is also necessary to establish accessible and confidential support services such as counselling and medical care for victims of child-on-child sexual abuse.
- **Legal Reforms:**
Strengthening and enforcing laws for perpetrators is crucial to ensure adequate protection for children
- **Community Awareness:**

Public awareness campaigns can help educate the community about the consequences of the problem and the importance of reporting incidents whenever they occur.

References

- Agarwal, R., & Dhanasekaran, R. (2012). The impact of television on children's sexual behavior: A study among Indian children. *Journal of Sex Research, 49*(2), 147-155.
- Amy, A., Yackel, Adams. (2024). Family characteristics, responses, and dynamics associated with sibling sexual abuse: A scoping review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106795
- Artz, S., et al. (2016). The impact of peer groups on child sexual abuse: A study among South African children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 57*(2), 147-163.
- Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). (2017). The prevalence of child sexual abuse in Ghana schools. Beaverton, ATSA
- Berger, P. L. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Draugedalen, O., & Osler, A. (2022). Child-on-child sexual abuse: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 63*(5), 543-553. 1`2
- Ensink, K., Borelli, J., Normandin, L., Target, M., & Fonagy, P. (2019). The effects of child-on-child sexual abuse on children's mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 60*(5), 541-552.
- Foster, J. (2017). Child sexual abuse: A review of the literature. *Journal of Family Violence, 32*(1), 13-23.
- Hackett, S., (2020). Child-on-child sexual abuse: An analysis of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 61*(1), 29-38.
- Hakielimu, P. (2020). The role of peer relationships in the perpetration of child-on-child sexual abuse: A study among Tanzanian children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 29*(2), 147-163.
- Husin, S. S., Ab Rahman, A. A., & Mukhtar, D. (2021). The Symbolic Interactionism Theory: A Systematic Literature Review of Current Research. *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences, 4*(17), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijmtss.417010>
- Jensen, S. F., Smid, G. E., & Bøe, T. (2020). Child-on-child sexual abuse: An analysis of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 61*(4), 441-452.
- Kabir, M. (2016). The importance of triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Social Sciences, 52*(1), 1-5.
- Kabunga, C. K. (2016). *An Assessment of Child Juvenile Detainees' Access to Legal Aid in Tanzania* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zimbabwe).
- Khamis, K. (2019). Protecting children from sexual abuse: A review of the laws and policies in Tanzania. *Journal of Child Protection, 17*(1), 1-10.
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A step-by-step guide. *International Journal of Research in Education, 12*(1), 1-14.
- Mbunda, K.A. and Nyaki, J.R. (2024), "Community Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Practices: Experience from Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania", *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 2252–2258, doi: 10.55248/gengpi.5.0124.0248.
- Mkhize, N. (2009). The impact of child sexual abuse on mental health: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 50*(3), 247-256.
- Msangi, M. (2017). The law enforcement weakness and its impact on child sexual abuse: A study in Tanzania. *Journal of Law Enforcement and Public Policy, 21*(2), 147-163.
- Muhire, E., et al. (2020). Child-on-child sexual abuse in Africa: A review of the literature. *Journal of Family Violence, 35*(2), 131-141.

- Oberholzer, C. J. (2021). Child-on-child sexual abuse in South Africa: An analysis of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 62(1), 21-30.
- Okonya, R. N. (2018). *The Role of Family Structure In The Abuse of Children* (Doctoral dissertation). Walden University. Retrieved from [Walden University Library](#).
- Omar, R. (2010). Child-on-child sexual abuse: A study of the prevalence and characteristics of perpetrators in South Africa. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19(2), 145-158.
- Osadan, J., & Reid, G. (2015). Child-on-child sexual abuse: An examination of the literature. *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(2), 147-155.
- Philander, E. (2018). The persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 27(2), 147-163.
- Ruto, S.J. (2009). Sexual Abuse of School age going Children: Evidence from Kenya. CICE Hiroshima University, *Journal Oo International Co-Operation In Education*. Vol.12 No.1(2009) Pp.177-192
- Said, A.P. and Costa, L.F. (2019), "Family Dynamics of Boys Victims of Sexual Abuse 1 Dinâmicas Familiares de Meninos Vítimas de Abuso Sexual Las Dinámicas Familiares de Chicos Víctimas de Abuso Sexual", *Paidéia*, Vol. 29, pp. 1–9.
- Selengia, V., Thuy, H.N.T. and Mushi, D. (2020), "Prevalence and Patterns of Child Sexual Abuse in Selected Countries of Asia and Africa: A Review of Literature", *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 08 No. 09, pp. 146–160, doi: 10.4236/jss.2020.89010.
- Seme, S. (2020). The prevalence and characteristics of child-on-child sexual abuse in Tanzania: A study among school children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(2), 147-163.
- Shawler, M., et al. (2019). The effects of child-on-child sexual abuse on children's mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 60(3), 334-343.
- Simuforosa, M. (2015). Children who sexually abuse other children: A study of their cognitive and social development. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 44(2), 241-254.
- Sofian, S., et al. (2019). The role of childhood exposure to pornography in child-on-child sexual abuse. *Journal of Sex Research*, 56(2), 147-155.
- Tanzania Police Force (2020) *Crimes Statistics and Road Safety January to December 2019*. Ministry on Home Affairs. Dodoma
- Tanzania Police Force (2021) *Crimes Statistics and Road Safety January to December 2020*. Ministry on Home Affairs. Dodoma
- Tanzania Police Force (2022) *Crimes Statistics and Road Safety January to December 2021*. Ministry on Home Affairs. Dodoma
- Tomaszewski, K., et al. (2021). Child sexual abuse: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 30(1), 1-15.
- URT (United Republic of Tanzania). (2019). Child Act of 2019. Retrieved from <<https://www.urt.go.tz/uploads/2019/07/Child-Act-2019.pdf>>
- Vosmer, J., Hackett, S., & Callanan, V. (2009). The effects of child sexual abuse on mental health: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 50(3), 247-256.
- Wahid, A., Norhayati, N., Sulaiman, Z., Othman, A., Yaacob, L. and Hazlina, N. (2021), "Predisposing factors and impact of child victimization: A qualitative study", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 18 No. 17, doi: 10.3390/ijerph18179373.
- Wazambi, M., & Komanya, K. (2019). The prevalence and characteristics of child-on-child sexual abuse in Tanzania: A study among school children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(2), 147-163.
- Yadav, D.V.P. and Thakur, A. (2022), "Analytical review of child sexual abuse", *International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 356–360, doi: 10.33545/27068919.2022.v4.i1e.745.
- Yamane, T. (1967). New formula for determining the sample size for the Yamane formula. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 4(2), 123-125.

Policy Brief Addressing Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania

Introduction

Child-on-child sexual abuse is a prevalent yet often overlooked issue that poses significant risks to children's well-being in many communities, including Dodoma, Tanzania. Recent research has indicated the alarming persistence of this form of abuse, driven by a combination of sociocultural factors such as low cognitive abilities, family environments, peer influences, and media exposure. The following policy brief synthesizes critical lessons learned from this research and recommends targeted strategies for policymakers and practitioners engaged in community development.

Lessons Learned

The study revealed a strong correlation between children's cognitive abilities, educational levels, and their vulnerability to child-on-child sexual abuse. It became evident that children with limited understanding or knowledge of sexual matters were easily influenced by their peers, which often led to abusive behaviours. This finding underscores the importance of implementing tailored educational programs that specifically enhance children's comprehension of appropriate sexual behaviour. By equipping children with the knowledge they need to recognize and resist abusive situations, these programs can play a crucial role in prevention efforts.

The findings also suggest a concerning cycle of abuse, wherein children who have previously experienced sexual abuse frequently become perpetrators themselves. Acknowledging this victim-to-offender cycle is vital for developing interventions aimed at breaking this cycle and providing trauma-informed care. Interventions should incorporate strategies that support victims' healing while educating them about healthy relationships and boundaries. By addressing the root causes of such behaviour, stakeholders can foster healthier futures for both victims and potential offenders.

Cultural perceptions surrounding sexuality significantly influence children's behaviour and the community's response to abuse. The study indicated that values instilled by caregivers could normalize inappropriate behaviours, creating an environment where abuse is more likely to occur. This highlights the necessity for community-wide initiatives that challenge harmful cultural norms while promoting healthier attitudes toward sexuality. Such initiatives should focus on educating caregivers and community members about the importance of discussing sexual health openly and fostering a safe environment for children.

The family environment emerged as a critical factor in the prevalence of child-on-child sexual abuse. Issues such as family neglect, domestic violence, and inadequate supervision were identified as contributing elements to this problem. These findings emphasize the urgent need for family-focused interventions and support mechanisms to strengthen familial relationships and provide parents or guardians with the tools to protect their children better. Programs aimed at parenting education and family counselling can be instrumental in creating safer home environments.

Additionally, peer relationships were found to act as powerful influencers in shaping children's sexual behaviours. The study noted that abuse often manifests within peer contexts, further complicated by increased access to media that can normalize harmful behaviours. Unregulated media exposure presents significant risks, as children may inadvertently consume inappropriate content that impacts their understanding of sexual norms. This points to a critical need for comprehensive media literacy programs designed for both children and parents, emphasizing the importance of guiding youth in navigating media consumption and understanding its potential implications on their behaviour. By fostering responsible media habits, stakeholders can mitigate the risks associated with media influence on child-on-child sexual abuse.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

To address the issue of child-on-child sexual abuse effectively, it is crucial to develop comprehensive educational programs targeting both children and parents or guardians. These programs should enhance awareness about the prevalence of child-on-child sexual abuse, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures. Special attention must be given to inclusivity, particularly for children with cognitive difficulties, ensuring that the content is age-appropriate and directly addresses their specific vulnerabilities. By providing children and their caregivers with thorough knowledge, these educational initiatives can empower families and communities to recognize and address the signs of abuse, fostering a safer environment for all children.

In conjunction with educational efforts, there is a pressing need to strengthen support systems for victims and potential abusers. Accessible support services should include counselling and medical assistance tailored to the unique needs of children. These services must prioritize confidentiality and adopt a child-friendly approach to healing and rehabilitation. By ensuring that support systems are empathetic and responsive, communities can facilitate a more effective recovery process for victims and help prevent potential offenders from perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Community-based prevention initiatives should be an integral part of combating child-on-child sexual abuse. Engaging community members through workshops, dialogues, and information sessions can promote safe family environments and encourage healthy peer interactions. Introducing parenting programs is vital, as these initiatives can educate caregivers on the significance of supervision and the necessity of nurturing communication about sexuality and consent. By equipping parents with the skills to engage openly with their children, communities can foster a culture of safety and awareness that actively discourages abusive behaviours. Legal and institutional reforms are crucial in creating a protective framework for children. Policymakers should focus on strengthening existing laws related to child-on-child sexual abuse and ensuring that they are effectively enforced. Penalties for perpetrators must be defined and applied rigorously to deter potential offenders. Moreover, it is essential to promote awareness of these laws within communities, ensuring that local populations understand their rights and their protections. This legal awareness can empower communities to advocate for their children more effectively.

Finally, launching comprehensive public awareness campaigns is essential for destigmatizing discussions surrounding child-on-child sexual abuse. Campaigns should encourage community members to report incidents promptly and provide a platform for open conversations. Utilizing local media and influencers can significantly amplify these messages, reaching a broad audience and facilitating discussions about child safety, reporting abuse, and dismantling harmful cultural beliefs. By normalizing conversations about such issues, communities can better protect their children and foster an environment that actively challenges and changes the attitudes facilitating child-on-child sexual abuse.

Conclusion

The persistence of child-on-child sexual abuse in Dodoma, Tanzania, demands a multifaceted approach involving education, support systems, community engagement, and legal reforms. Implementing the above recommendations is crucial for creating a safer environment for children and ensuring that victims and potential perpetrators have access to the help they need. Collective efforts among policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners are essential in addressing this deeply rooted issue and fostering a community ethos that promotes the safety and well-being of all children.