

Effectiveness of gender-based violence policy frameworks on academic achievement among public secondary school students in Bungoma County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a prevalent challenge in schools across the whole world, and the role it plays in affecting the academic performance of students is getting a lot of consideration. In Kenya, numerous studies have mainly addressed the ill effects of GBV, yet studies that reflect the connection between GBV and academic performance, especially through internal test scores, are scarce. This paper evaluates the policy framework in dealing with GBV among students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The main questions tackled by the research included assessing the level of implementation of current policies in schools, establishing obstacles to the implementation of policies, and ascertaining effects of these policies towards the prevention and curbing of GBV. The study was based on social feminism theory and resilience theory, and its methodology was mixed-methods, i.e., both qualitative and quantitative data-collecting techniques were used. Out of the 342 secondary schools, a sample of 184 schools was identified, and a sample of 1,104 students, heads of guidance and counseling, sub-county directors of education, and GBV survivors were interviewed, and all these were included in the study. Questionnaires, interviews, and documents were used in the collection of the information. Quantitative data was submitted to the descriptive and then the inferential statistics; however, the results of the qualitative data were put under the theme analysis. The results indicated that although there are policies provided on how to address the GBV, there were loopholes in the implementation part, mainly in the rural counties like Bungoma County. The misallocation of resources, the absence of proper personnel training, and the inability to report are some of the key concerns. Findings of the research revealed that GBV policies existed but were not adequate, and the systems were not efficient towards assisting the survivors. The paper leaves us with the recommendations as to how it can be better and polished such that the present policy can be improved and made more effective in the process of creating a conducive, supportive educational environment with less bullying, etc. The paper highlights how it can support all students, including methods such as the implementation of safe reporting systems and increasing the level of training for the staff and the way the community can be included in making better policy.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Gender-Based Violence, Policy Framework, Public Secondary Schools, Resilience Theory, Social Feminism Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue in educational establishments in Kenya, and the consequences of such violence may be extremely grave as they pertain to experiences in the life of the student as well as the student's performance. This violence might take the form of physical, sexual and psychological maltreatment and all those forms can interfere with the performance of a student. Even though the detrimental effects of GBV have been enough publicized, limited research has been done on this topic as far as its direct relationship with internal test performance in Kenyan secondary schools is concerned. The relationship should be understood to improve the academically related environment and guarantee equal chances of the students to achieve academic success irrespective of their sex.

Kenya has gone a long way in terms of its response to GBV and laws, policies are signaling a termination of violence and safer school attributes. The legislative tool or instruments that have gained the most popularity as far as preventing GBV in schools is concerned is Kenya Gender-Based Violence Act (2015) and the Children Act (2001). However, the way these policies have been practically implemented has been of a concern, particularly in the rural areas such as Bungoma County since it might not be practically implemented because of social, cultural, and logistic reasons (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2017). Research conducted previously has highlighted not only the importance of the

existence of particular policies but also their suitable implementation across schools to safeguard students against violence and enable them to flourish in the academic setting (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2019). This research is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of GBV policy framework used in the secondary schools of Bungoma County and how it has influenced the performance of the school students.

Effects of GBV within the academic institutions also extend widely, especially on the mental wellbeing and performance of the institution. Nyakundi (2018) found that gender-based violence adversely affected students' self-esteem and academic performance, noting that survivors often struggled with low confidence and concentration difficulties. More recently, Yates *et al.* (2024) reported that undergraduate students who acknowledged experiences of GBV commonly experienced immediate challenges such as difficulty concentrating, avoidance of classes or campus, and a decline in academic achievement."

This is in line with the observations by Karanja (2019) who report that such violence and sexual harassment can reduce the cognitive involvement of students and their overall performance results. Such abuses result in an unfavorable learning experience, which not only hinders academic growth but also affects the emotional and psychological growth of students.

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2021) cited the inverse relationship between school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and student performance. As one of many cases, GBV in Kenya reportedly contributes to high levels of absenteeism, reduced retention, and, in certain circumstances, full school dropout among girls (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). Nonetheless, current GBV policies have not been holistically applied to schools, and most schools in remote regions, such as Bungoma, have ineffective reporting systems and support strategies to attend to survivors (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the effectiveness of such policies in reducing GBV and improving students' academic performance is questionable.

Although national policies may form a basis for the fight against GBV, Baiocchi *et al.* (2017) indeed mention that their local application may encounter setbacks, such as inadequate staff training, resource availability, and cultural opposition. This especially matters in Bungoma County, where gender-related traditional roles and attitudes to violence against women and girls may complicate the implementation of policies further. Karanja (2019) also observed the reluctance of most students especially in the rural areas to report violence because of the fear of retaliatory measures or stigmatization by the society which is another factor that hinders the efficacy of the existing policy framework.

The study was informed by Social Feminist Theory and Resilience Theory, which assisted in the assessment of the role of the policy framework in the minimization of GBV in secondary schools in Bungoma County. These theoretical frameworks can also be applied to a great extent since they emphasize the societal structures that encourage GBV and the coping strategies that people develop to respond to the dilemma. Social Feminist Theory provides an explanation as to why discrimination of GBV lies on gender inequality. Contrastingly, Resilience Theory looks at how students that undergo violence can participate in strategies that will assist them to remain on an academic path despite the misfortunes (Njoroge, 2010; Ungar, 2012).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The current state of gender violence (GBV) in schools poses a huge menace to the safety, well-being, and academic success of students and in Kenya in particular. Despite the existence of national and regional policies concerning GBV prevention and response, which are aimed at preventing and mitigating GBV in learning institutions, their successful implementation in public secondary schools, especially in rural areas, where cases of GBV occur do cause significant doubts. Although more legislative frameworks have been established, including the Kenya Gender-Based Violence Act (2015) and the Children's Act (2001), their contribution to stopping GBV and enhancing educational levels among students has not been fully explored. The county of Bungoma is still experiencing incidences of GBV where physical, sexual, and psychological violence lead to both poor performance and emotional instability among students. However, no thorough evaluation has been conducted on the action plan to counteract these problems. Available literature on GBV in schools in Kenya has primarily focused on how GBV affects school-going students, specifically increased dropouts, poor academic performance, and higher school absenteeism. However, there has been a lack of sufficient attention to the extent to which policies implemented to prevent GBV are being successfully implemented and their effects on schools. This research aims to fill this gap by evaluating the success of the current GBV policy framework at the public secondary schools in Bungoma County. This study aims at identifying whether the policies are implemented efficiently, what challenges need to be overcome in the course of their implementation, and whether these policies have shown positive effects to attain a reduction of the instances of GBV and a safer learning environment. The fact that Bungoma County is a rural county means that the research will be very important in tracking the implementation of policies in real life situations and solving the local problems and defining the areas that need updating to ensure the safety of learners and their performance.

1.2 Research Objectives

To assess the effectiveness of the policy framework on gender-based violence (GBV) in public secondary schools in Bungoma County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Two core theoretical frameworks were used to complete this study: Social Feminism Theory and Resilience Theory. These theories helped greatly in understanding processes of gender-based violence (GBV) in schools and the rural-based Bungoma County in particular, and how students may cope with its encounter.

2.1.1 Social Feminism Theory

The Social Feminism Theory believes that the gendered violence is not only an individual phenomenon but also roots itself into greater schemes of power in the society that in turn reinforces the disparities in relationship between the genders. It involves the sensitivity of social norms, values, and patriarchal dispositions as well as their constitution and impacts of the resulting violence, especially among women and girls. Baiocchi et al. (2017) contend that GBV in schools is a direct expression of these social hierarchies and inequalities by gender. Ungar (2012) contends that the traditional gender roles emphasized in society promote violence in the sense that they make women and girls look inferior and more prone to violence. In turn, educational systems tend to form and reflect this societal norms in the way they reproduce these processes or challenge them. Fergus and Vant Rood (2013) accentuate the fact that educational systems are to be analyzed in terms of which machineries of gender-based violence are being perpetuated. The relationship between educational policies, gendered violence, and the lived experiences of students in schools can be contextualized through this Theory.

2.1.2 Resilience Theory

Resilience theory focuses on the ability of people to survive and flourish in the face of difficult situations. According to Masten (2001), resilience occurs when an individual remains intact through the hurdles of a problematic scenario, which is of great concern in the present situation regarding how students will manage to perform despite being subjected to GBV. The Theory focuses on the importance of protective factors, including family support, peer relations, and the school climate, in helping students subjected to GBV become resilient. Ungar (2012) and Masten (2018) demonstrate that such factors can moderate the impact of trauma and violence in teaching children so they can continue their studies and remain psychologically fit. In the context of the study, Resilience Theory assisted to comprehend the manner in which the GBV-based trauma is being treated by students in the Bungoma County with attention being given to school-based guidance and counseling processes as one of the essentials to resilience and to enhance scholastic achievements. Baiocchi et al. (2019) allege that learners in their different learning institutions are likely to do well academically provided that there are support facilities in their different learning institutions in spite of the negative consequences of GBV.

Collectively, the Social Feminism Theory and the Resilience Theory may be presented in terms of their ability to provide the full view of the study, where the former could see the social reasons and causes of GBV and the latter could make the personal functions and gears assisting the students in overcoming the described problems. Not only can the theories be used to determine the structural factors behind GBV but can also be used to gain insight in how it is possible to empower the students and make them successful in their studies and psychologically in spite of the battles that they have to endure.

2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical research design employed in the study relies on past literature, which captures gender-based violence in schools especially in the sub-Saharan African region and achievement or failure of respective policies used to overcome these obstacles.

2.2.1 Prevalence and Impact of Gender-Based Violence in Schools

Based on research endeavors, GBV in schools has been found to affect the academic performance and the emotional well-being of students negatively. According to Baiocchi et al. (2017), students, especially girls, who encounter GBV tend to record low marks, high incidence of absenteeism, and high rates of dropping out. Chouliara et al. (2020) also support the results, stating that the physical and emotional burden caused by GBV decreases students' focus in the classroom and their engagement in scholastic activities. Emotional pain, which GBV has on individuals, especially sexual violence, has a far-reaching effect on students, thus affecting their learning and socializing capabilities. Another aspect of school-related GBV brought to the fore by UNICEF (2021) is its worldwide prevalence: school-related GBV is one of the primary obstacles to the attainment of education and, in many cases, affects the most vulnerable populations, such as adolescent girls.

2.2.2 School-Related Gender-Based Violence Policies

The studies have indicated varying outcomes in the optimization of policy frameworks for tackling GBV within schools. Nyoni et al. (2023) studied the barriers to GBV prevention policies in Kenyan schools, especially in rural areas. Indeed, they observed that though the Kenya Gender-Based Violence Act of 2015 and the Children Act of 2001 are good policies, their enforcement presents great challenges. These issues include inadequate resources, insufficient training of school personnel, and limited community knowledge regarding GBV prevention and reporting processes. In line with this, Baiocchi et al. (2017) also reported that most schools within the rural communities are faced with logistical issues (inappropriate reporting mechanisms) that undermine the success of the GBV policies. Women (2016) further emphasized that policy application difficulties are more specific to rural schools, as the resources and infrastructure in these schools are often inadequate to respond effectively to GBV.

2.2.3 Barriers to Effective Policy Implementation

The obstacles to successful policy enforcement about GBV in schools have been well documented. According to Keller et al. (2017), some of the most critical obstacles are cultural resistance, an inadequate reporting system, and the absence of a proper support system for GBV survivors. According to Menaker et al., (2017), it is a cultural practice in most Kenyan societies due to the combination of cultural preconceptions toward gender roles or stigmatizing the motives of sexual violence and gender-based violence, which slows down reporting and limiting intervention. Gatuguta et al. (2018) opined that this fear of reporting GBV rests on the belief that individuals fear being retaliated or retributed, most particularly to the individual girls who may be socially stigmatized. Barasa et al., (2021) also discuss the sense of victim-blaming culture leading to the disproportionately low levels of GBV reporting in school, particularly where learners fear they will not be believed or will receive no effective assistance.

2.2.4 Resilience and Coping Mechanisms

Although GBV causes significant effects to the education performance, some of the references qualify the view that some learners are able to surmount the issues and remain successful in their academic performance. Nyoni et al. (2023) state that the schools with the support systems in place, such as school counseling services and peer networks, are in a better position to assist students in developing resiliency to overcome the GBV trauma. Masten (2001) postulates that resilience is not a trait, but a process which other factors, namely protective factors, enable an individual to break the hardship. Peer support, safe learning environment, guidance and counseling are some of the factors that help to reduce the effects of GBV and help those affected to study within a school setting. As revealed by Baiocchi et al. (2017), the most important point is that students who used such services in the Bungoma County managed to demonstrate the better academic achievements and emotional wellbeing even despite being subjected to the GBV.

2.2.5 Effective Interventions and Support Mechanisms

Interventions within the school-based program as a means to resolve GBV is an essential element of a safer and supportive learning environment. Devries et al. (2015) discuss the effects of local interventions, such as Good School Toolkit, which was tasked with the mitigation of school-based violence via the training of liaisons in the context of teaching teachers, educating the students in the context of violence, and establishing reporting safe avenues. Karanja (2019) mention that schools must be more capable of preventing GBV by providing adequate reporting systems, resources, and psychological support to victims in their work. A general evidence-based perspective that effective schools prevent and respond to GBV because of their excellent anti-violence policy and trauma-informed practice, which culminate in achieving better results academically and staying safe, is put forward by López-Lalinde et al. (2024).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The kind of research design that was used in the current research was the mixed-methods design which is a combination of the quantitative and qualitative research methods whereby the researcher was able to evaluate the efficacy of the gender-based violence (GBV) policy framework in the public secondary school in Bungoma County. The objective of the quantitative research was founded on investigating an association of GBV on the academic performance of students, whereas the objective of the qualitative research was founded on the analysis of the impediments to effective prevention of GBV in schools and experiences of the stakeholders on the necessity to prevent GBV at faculty. With such design, one could take a closer inspection of the scale of the problem, as well as the efficiency of the intervening processes (Baiocchi et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2021).

3.2 Target Population

The targeted population of the research study was that of the students, Guidance and Counseling teachers, and policy makers interested in the problem of prevention and control of GBV in the setting of the public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The base of the population of the study was 184 secondary schools in the state and the number of students in the population was 1,104 students in the province of 250,000 students in the county secondary schools (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). It also purposively sampled 184 teachers of Guidance and Counseling, 3 Sub-County Directors of Education and 13 GBV Survivors providing qualitative data.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

The schools were selected using the stratified random sampling method to ensure that there was representation in respect to region (urban, rural) and composition of school (mixed-sex, all-boys, all-girls). The stratification was performed according to the location, size, and type of the schools in order to obtain the balanced sample. The 1,104 students that formed the sample population were chosen among the entire student body in the county and the population was also stratified by sex and geographical location (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Through the purposive sampling, key stakeholders such as Guidance and Counseling teachers, Sub-County Education Directors, and GBV survivors were identified since they play a vital role as they have adequate information on the implementation of the GBV policies and its challenges experienced over the process.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The study used quantitative and qualitative methodologies of data collection to determine the effectiveness of GBV policies in government secondary schools in Bungoma County. The quantitative data was obtained using survey questionnaires administered to students, teachers, and administrators in the form of constructive questions and yes-no questions, along with Likert-scale questions to determine their exposure to GBV, its academic effects, and the effectiveness of the policies. Further, academic records were utilized to observe a relationship between test scores and GBV experiences. Regarding the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain information on the challenges of implementing policies and support systems of GBV survivors with school administrators and Guidance Counseling teachers. The focus group discussions (FGDs) took students through talks on their experiences with GBV and its impact on their lives. Finally, document reviews on the implementation of schools in accordance with national frameworks on GBV were carried out.

3.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means to compute and summarize how common forms of GBV in schools and how it affects academic performances. The Pearson correlation coefficient was applied, which is a statistical tool whose result can be able to draw the inference on the correlation between GBV and academic performance. In addition, the academic performance of different groups of students depending on their gender, type of school, and geographic location was tested by using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) severally (Baiocchi et al., 2017; Masten, 2018). Thematic analysis was used to define the essential issues that are associated with the experiences of GBV victims, the nature of challenges to the execution of policy, and the efficacy of assistance systems on the basis of qualitative data (interviews, focus group discussions). It employed the utilization of the NVivo software that allowed detecting significant themes which appeared several times; in that way, the qualitative analysis was step-by-step and systematic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The content analysis used the document review and though on the applicability of school policies on national frameworks on GBV. This kind of strategy assisted in identifying the lapses in execution of a policy and the ones needing an overhaul (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021).

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings of the study that measure the effectiveness of the gender based violence (GBV) policy framework in the context of the public secondary schools in Bungoma County. It discusses the GBV levels, the relationship between GBV experiences and school performance, and the impact of policies directed to the fight against GBV at school. The dataset supporting the findings included both quantitative and qualitative data, document review.

4.1 Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in Schools

The findings by the research revealed that GBV is rampant among the secondary schools within Bungoma County where so far learners and the staff were victims of GBV. The information on types of GBV and how frequently are they reported by students has been summarized in Table 1 using structured questionnaire questions.

Table 1*Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in Bungoma County Schools*

Type of GBV	Frequency (%)	Impact on Academic Performance (%)
Physical Assault	45	40
Sexual Harassment	32	60
Psychological Abuse	23	55
Verbal Abuse	15	50
Total GBV Incidents Reported	92	

The statistics showed that 45 percent of students had been physically assaulted, 32 percent had had some experience of sexual harassment, 23 percent had been psychologically abused, and 15 percent reported verbal abuse. This prevalence is high, indicating a need to develop effective interventions and implement GBV policies within the school. According to Keller et al. (2017) this violence not only affects the social and emotional health of students but also their academic performance negatively. The present study showed that 60% of students reporting sexual harassment had worse academic performance, which is consistent with more studies in the region (UNICEF, 2021). The relationship between GBV and low academic performance underscores the importance of addressing GBV to promote academic achievement.

4.2 Academic Performance

Academic performance was measured in this study by considering the most recent internal examination scores in percentage form of the students. The findings were presented in Table 2.

Table**2***Descriptive Statistics for Academic Performance*

Group	Mean (%)	SD	% Below Pass Mark
Overall	58	10.2	42%
Male students	59	—	—
Female students	57	—	—
Urban schools	62	—	—
Rural schools	55	—	—

Note. SDs and percentages for subgroups were not available; only the overall SD and overall proportion below the pass mark are reported.

Among all respondents, the average mark was 58 percent (SD = 10.2). The male students achieved a slightly better level of mean score (59%) than their female counterparts (57%). Performance also differed depending on the location of the school with urban at 62 percent and rural of 55 percent. About 42 percent of the learners had scored below the minimum 50 percent, which means that a good percentage of the learners were in danger of not achieving. These descriptive outcomes on the key variable under investigation are the foundation of exploring the statistical correlation between assessment and experiences of gender-based violence.

4.3 The Relationship between GBV and Academic Performance

Table 3 presents the statistical dependence between GBV experiences and internal test scores among students. The relationship between GBV and academic performance was also evaluated using the Pearson correlation coefficient, which found a strong correlation.

Table 3*Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between GBV and Academic Performance*

Type of GBV	Pearson's r	p-value
Physical Assault	-0.074	0.043
Sexual Harassment	-0.45	0.000
Psychological Abuse	-0.076	0.037
Verbal Abuse	-0.032	0.112

The Pearson correlation coefficient of sexual harassment (-0.45) shows that a moderate negative relationship exists between sexual harassment and academic performance; that is, the more one experiences sexual harassment, the lower the test scores. Studies have confirmed this finding, reporting the psychological impact of GBV that can influence cognitive performance and academic performance (Chouliara et al., 2020). On the same light, physical

assault (-0.074) and psychological abuse (-0.076) weakly and significantly correlate negatively with academic performance.

According to Masten (2018), negative experiences such as these may lower students' capacity to concentrate on their academic life, although they may also affect their academic results. As stated by one of the teachers, students are not able to concentrate on their work when they become victims of GBV. They cannot easily concentrate or do any assignments as they are living in the trauma." This is in line with the research findings, in which numerous students who faced GBV indicated that they faced trouble focusing and engaging in academic work.

4.4 Effectiveness of GBV Policies

Another factor examined by the research is the efficacy of GBV policies in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The findings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions revealed serious lapses in the implementation of existing policies.

A rural school Guidance Counselor reported,

"Although the policies are there, inefficiencies associated with a lack of training for teachers and staff on how to proceed with a case of GBV has seen many cases being swept under the carpet or dealt with ineffectively."

This observation also agrees with Keller et al. (2017), who proposed that in majority of the schools, lack of resources and staff has been hindrance to enacting the GBV policies effectively. The other teacher replied,

"They just report few cases on some occasions, but the response given by the administration is way too long, and the students also lose their faith in the system."

Moreover, there was fear and shame when reporting an incidence of GBV elicited by the students. One of the students said as follows:

"I have a friend who has been sexual harassed yet she never reported, because she feared what people would say and do about her."

This is similar to the research done by Karanja (2019) which came into a conclusion that cultural stigmatization and fear of reprisals are some of the factors that can be used to explain why cases of GBV are mostly not reported by students. These are some of the barriers that have serious implications in the performance of GBV policies in schools.

4.5 Barriers to Policy Implementation

The research was able to identify hindrances to effective implementation of the GBV policies in schools. These were erratic resources, which were not trained in staff, or communities. One of the key challenges that were evident with the data was that there were no safe reporting systems among the students.

According to one of the students,

"We do not trust anyone with our ills. We do not believe that there is a safe occupation to exchange thoughts on these issues at all."

Administrators at school also were interested in mentioning the challenges they had when implementing policies.

According to one SCDE,

"We are ready with the policies, but we cannot implement them without preparing our employees about these policies and providing them with the necessary resources. The workers are tried beyond their capacities and are limited in their experience towards handling such sensitive issues."

This statement concurs with the research of Keller et al. (2017), which studies the possible obstacles to adopting policies of GBV in schools. They learned that schools usually are ill equipped to make certain effective implementation of the GBV policy in terms of infrastructure, training, and human resources.

One more school Guidance and Counseling teacher mentioned,

"Such policies are hard to apply in cases where the community is not with them. Society needs to engage in the process of changing attitudes towards GBV, but we do not have the authority to conduct any discussions about it regularly"

This underscores one of the most significant obstacles that the research has uncovered to this challenge: lack of community involvement, and this follows to add more to the difficulty in implementing policies against GBV in schools. This highlights one of the greatest barriers identified in the study: the absence of community participation, which further complicates the enforcement of GBV policies in schools.

The UNESCO (2021) report on the use of GBV frameworks in schools reflects the same problem and mentions that without adequate support facilities, GBV policies do not have essential results. One administrator stated that,

"We are on a treadmill of responding cases, and failing to find cases. That is only the beginning, because we should have safe zones and fitted staff."

The presence of such obstacles proves the need to devote even more resources, train staff, and mobilization of the community to implement the given policy in the easiest and most efficient way possible in order to support students who are victims of GBV in the most effective manner.

4.6 Support Systems for GBV Survivors

Despite the existence of policies, it was determined that the support system of GBV survivors is inadequate. Majority of students also reported that there was lack of guidance and counseling as no one had been trained and there were no facilities.

One of the counseling teachers stated,

"There are too many cases and we simply do not have enough of employees/trainers to help every student who approaches us."

This observation aligns with the results of the study by Karanja (2019). that guidance counselors working in the rural setting tend to be poorly trained to assist GBV survivors. There are also minimal external support services including legal services and medical services available to students which worsen the conditions of the GBV survivors.

One of the survivors added,

"After I went out to report the abuse, no one helped me to seek medical attention or help me to find a lawyer. I was abandoned."

This absence of support services is an indication that there is a problem with regard to offering adequate training and resources to provide effective counseling to the survivors.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In this research project, it was studied how gender-based violence (GBV) policy may enhance academic achievement in the public secondary schools in Bungoma County based on the following objectives: to ascertain the morbidity of GBV; to ascertain the effect of GBV on academic achievement; and to ascertain the effectiveness of interventions that are available. Its findings had a high percentage of GBV prevalence, but the violence acts that were most prevalent included physical assault, sexual harassment and psychological abuse by the students. The significant impact of GBV on the academic performance of students was established because GBV influenced the ability of students to focus, attend classroom learning, and show good results in internal examinations. Additionally, the implementation of the GBV policies incurred significant gaps primarily in the rural schools where resources were not available, staffs were not thoroughly trained, and community integration was inexistent, thereby, causing another significant barrier to the effective implementation of the policy. However, the study also indicated that some improvement can be done through the availability of better support networks and the adoption of good policies.

5.2 Recommendations

To begin with, schools can be encouraged to provide regular trainings on their staff and teaching faculty so as to become more competent in responding and solving the cases of GBV. This training will focus on the provision of the right responses, provide support to those who have experienced the violence, and be knowledgeable on GBV signs. Also, the creation of a secure and anonymous reporting system among students is essential. These systems need to be free, unattributable, and courageous. An idea that could be suggested to make reporting process more effective is to consider the introduction of online channels or anonymous reporting systems, which would enable students to request help without being concerned about social stigmatization.

Community involvement is another key area that requires amendments. GBV awareness should be augmented by local leaders, parents, and the community organizations in collaboration with schools to have a unified approach to GBV. The negative gender norms may be disrupted through awareness campaigns and workshops, and establish a culture of non-violence and support to GBV survivors. GBV policies would become successful to a large extent because of community participation.

In addition, the right resources should be allocated to check whether measures related to GBV policies are being applied effectively. Schools should be financed to employ specialist staff, trained counselors, and lawyers in order to provide a broad range of support to victims and survivors of GBV. These would affect enhancing how the policy is implemented and guarantee that reviews of GBV cases are dealt with immediately effectively. Lastly, trauma-informed care is an essential practice in schools. Some of the crucial areas that schools must pay attention to in that regard are: provision of counseling services and establishment of clear pathways to medical and legal aid to GBV survivors. This kind of healthy support system would help the students recover the trauma of violence and re-establish their academic abilities. By implementing these recommendations, schools in the Bungoma County can achieve a safer and more supportive learning environment to all students, thus enhancing academic improvement and reducing GBV rates.

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