

Experience of School Related Gender Based Violence by Pupils and the Culture of Silence: A Case of Primary Schools in Kasarani District, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Kenyan Constitution provide for the protection of children from all forms of harm, violence or abuse. Despite these legal provisions and efforts to reduce and eliminate violence against children, particularly girls, violence and abuse are still widespread at home, in schools, and in the community at large in Kenya. This study, therefore, examined the experience of school-related gender-based violence by primary school pupils in Kasarani District, Nairobi County, Kenya. Using both probability and non-probability techniques, 156 pupils and 8 teachers were sampled from 10 primary schools. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides and focus group discussion guides, and analyzed using qualitative techniques. The study results indicated that school-related gender-based violence is common in the schools covered by this study. About 9.6% of the respondents reported that they had been sexually assaulted at one time within the school environment. While 53% reported that they had experienced one form of psychological abuse or the other, 75% had suffered physical violence. The results further revealed a significant disparity in reporting patterns of each form of violence. For instance, reporting acts of sexual abuse was undermined by the fear of reprisals from the perpetrators. Cases of sexual abuse by teachers were also reported. The pupils who had experienced one form of violence or another reported that this had adverse effects on their learning experiences, their health and well being. This study concluded that there existed serious cases of violence in schools that went unreported or unnoticed owing to the skewed nature of the relationships between the pupils and the perpetrators. This study recommends that prompt measures need to be instituted through the Ministries of Health and Education to build the skills and confidence of the pupils to be able to report and appropriately respond to all forms of School-Based GBV perpetrated against them.

Keywords: Gender, Violence, Learners, Inequality, Physical, Sexual, Psychological, Abuse

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