

## **Domestic Violence and its Influence on Students: the Prevalent of the Various Forms of Domestic Violence in Bungoma County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to investigate the influence of domestic violence on students' classroom behaviour in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study explored this by examining the extent to which various forms of domestic violence (DV) influenced students' classroom behaviour. The research utilized the theory of behavioural psychology, which emphasizes that behaviour is acquired or learnt from the surrounding. Descriptive survey design was used. The target population comprised of 1600 individuals, from which 648 were sampled using purposeful, stratified and random sampling. The study sampled 36 principals, 36 guidance and counselling teachers and 576 students. The research tools were: questionnaires for the students, interview schedule for the principals and guidance and counselling teachers. The questionnaires were analysed quantitatively and the interviews data was analysed qualitatively. The findings reveal students are victims of DV. Secondly their personality is affected. The

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study recommends measures to be taken against the perpetrators depending on individual differences and schools to be facilitated with rehabilitation facilities for student victims.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, influence, victims, perpetrators, secondary schools

## **1. Introduction**

Globally, domestic violence (DV) and violence against women and children have become a worldwide problem (UN World Report, 2016). The report highlights that at least 35% of women worldwide had reported having encountered some form of DV from people who were their intimate partners at one point. However, the same report further state that studies reveal another fraction of women: 70% had experienced different forms of DV from intimate partners. Meier & Ross, (2014) point out that the silence and tolerance of DV cause more havoc to the children who witness it. The study further opines that children whose both parents are abusive to each other face an increased risk (more than double) of recycling the abusive behaviour. This is espoused by "Domestic Violence in Modern Russia: General Characteristics", (2018) which avers that children who witnessed DV grow up knowing that being disrespectful to others and using force are healthy components to a relationship. The establishment of the Domestic Violence Roundtable highlights that the recurring abuse experienced in the society that spill over to schools is a replay of students who either witnessed or were victims of DV. The point of convergence with the current study is that it also seeks to establish the influence of DV on the students' classroom violent behaviour.

## **The concept of domestic violence**

According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG) (2014), domestic violence is a composition of assaultive and cohesive

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patterns of behaviour an individual is subjected to. This can either be by the partner in marriage, by a relative or anybody associating with the individual. For instance, the DV could be psychological torture, sexual abuse, physical attacks or even economic coercion. CWIG argues that the description of DV varies depending on the context however whichever the form of DV the intention of the perpetrator is to gain and maintain power over the victim manipulating one's life completely: socially, mentally and economically. Cultural and historical issues led to prevalence of DV in the communities as affirmed by United Nation Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women, General Assembly Resolution (2015). The declaration stated that the way of life in the communities led to the domination of men over the woman. They reveal that the domination subjects the women to be discriminated against in all spheres of life making them vulnerable to DV. In addition, the report expos that as a result of the silence and tolerance of DV, it increased and became a global phenomenon. DV is present in every country, irrespective of culture, education, income, age and ethnicity. The question is how does this DV that is so rampant in the homes where the students are nurtured affect their classroom behaviour?

### **Forms of DV**

UN (2015) explains that forms of DV can be: sexual harassment and assault, female genital mutilation, trafficking of men, women, and children, emotionally abusive behaviours or psychological torture. Katz (2016) and Ibrahim (2019) add other forms of DV: coercion, social segregation, economic control, sexual abuse, neglect and deprivation. Abuse Project (as quoted by Pingley (2017) highlights that forms of DV also include emotional and psychological abuse, sexual and physical abuse plus financial abuse.

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## **2. Similar literature**

In a study carried out by Lavalletter and Barnett (2014) it is revealed that a survey conducted by the US Department of Justice established that out of the 3.5 million violent crimes during DV, 49% were crimes against partners (Lavallette and Barnett 2014). The study exposes that in 67% of the cases, at least one child was physically present during the murder, in 26% of the incidents, at least one other person was killed. More so in the murder cases 44% was a child. The same study further notes that childhood abuse also increases the risk of antisocial personality disorders in adults. Whilst this study of Lavalletter (2014) established that childhood abuse increased the risks of antisocial personality disorders in adulthood this current study set to establish the prevalence of domestic violence in students' lives.

Similarly, a study by Ibrahim (2019), expose that despite the scenes of DV being traumatic the children who witness DV experience short-term and also long-term emotional imbalances. The study expose that the emotional imbalances affects their behaviour and also impact on their performance in schools negatively. In addition, the DV adversely affect their social and inter-personal relationships which result in those children becoming abusers themselves. The study argued that the children who witness DV are more vulnerable to the same behavioural and psychological problems just like the very victims of the DV (Ibrahim 2019). The same way this particular study wanted to establish if the DV witnessed by the students impacted on them in any way.

In addition, the National Domestic Violence Hotline (2018) established that 22% of the DV cases reported concerned children who had been victims of DV either directly or witnesses. The report further confirmed that such children were more vulnerable to the same physical and sexual violence in adult life. The report stated that such children developed an attitude that normalized DV as the best way of solving issues in a home. Correspondingly Jane E. M. Callaghan,<sup>1</sup> Joanne H. Alexander,<sup>1</sup> Judith Sixsmith,<sup>1</sup> and Lisa Chiara Fellin

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(2018) objected to the perception of children just as people who stayed in homes where there was DV and only got affected by it. Callaghan et al. argued that the children were the true victims of DV. The study exposed that these children lived and experienced DV directly this was established after the researchers interviewed 21 children (12 girls and 9 boys). Hence Callaghan et al. stated that the children needed to be referred to as victims of DV which would make the professionals see the need to rescue them. In the same way this study sought to establish if the Kenyan secondary students witnessed DV or were victims of DV.

### **3.Statement of the problem**

DV has been discussed intensively on local, national and global arenas with the civil societies highlighting DV as a threat to humanity and cohesion in society. Although the government of Kenya has put in place policies to protect school going children, family turbulence, sometimes characterized by violence has continued to hit the headlines every day. Many children have fallen victims of DV. In schools, cases of unrest, bullying and truancy have continued to dominate. There have been several studies which have been carried out with the intention of finding a solution to the DV menace however the problem has only escalated. Therefore, there is need for a study to establish the influence of DV on the students' classroom behaviour. To address this gap, this study was carried out to establish the influence of forms of DV on the students' classroom behaviour in Bungoma County, Kenya.

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## **Research objective**

To investigate the extent to which various forms of domestic violence influence students' classroom behaviour.

## **4. Research Design and Methodology**

Descriptive survey is a technique of gathering information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of the population (Orodho 2003). In the study, the researcher used a descriptive survey research design. The justification of selecting the design is because it entails more than just collection of data. It also involves measurement of the intensity of the problem, classification of the data collected, analysis of the facts gathered, comparisons and interpretation of the data collected in line with the research problem. Therefore, the researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data, using questionnaires and interviews respectively. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in data analysis, thus there is a mixed model research design approach to data analysis. As a survey type of design, this has facilitated the description of students' attitude, opinion and behaviour in the study.

## **5. Research finding and discussions**

The research captured the information from *the students, the principals, the guiding and counselling teachers*. The consequent data exposed four forms in which DV manifests itself. These include: sexual abuse, physical assault, psychological torture and emotional torture. Table 10 below presents the level of prevalence of each of the four forms of violence.

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**Table 1: The prevalence of forms of domestic violence**

S/ N	FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	PREVALENCE										
		Lo w	%	Mo der ate	%	Hi gh	%	Ve ry Hi gh	%	Don 't Kno w	%	To tal
1.	<b>Sexual abuse</b>	29	6	100	20	14	3	18	38	29	6	48
						2	0	0				0
2.	<b>Psychological torture</b>	54	1	57	12	12	2	13	29	104	2	48
			1			6	6	9			2	0
3.	<b>Physical Assault</b>	39	8	118	25	14	3	10	22	74	1	48
						5	0	4			5	0
4.	<b>Emotional Torture</b>	73	1	84	18	13	2	96	20	94	1	48
			5			3	8				9	0

*Source: Research data, 2019.*

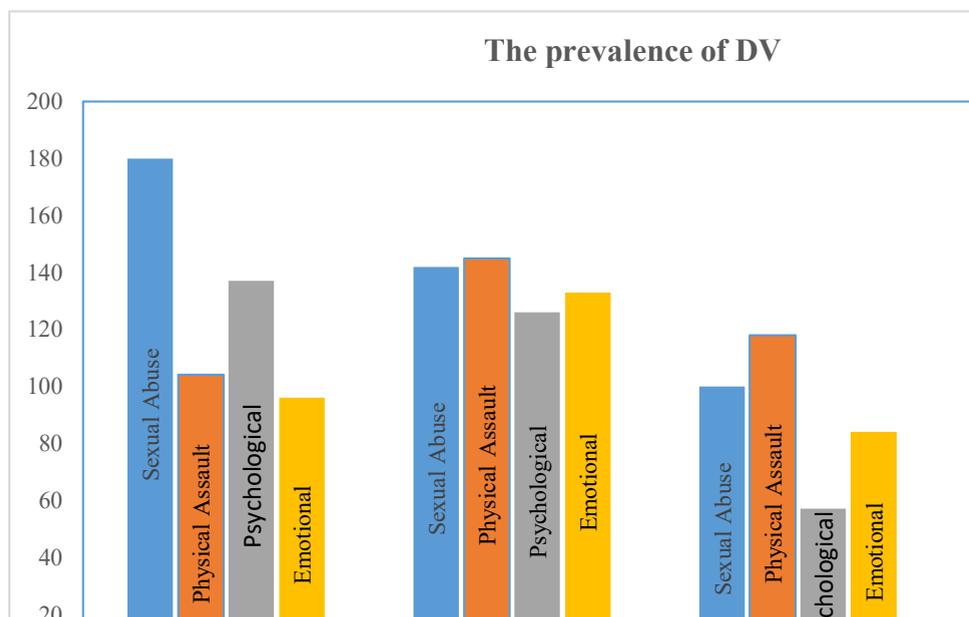
Table 1 above, displays the four forms of domestic violence whose prevalence seems to vary according to the different circumstances families find themselves. The majority of the students identified sexual abuse as the leading form of DV occurring with the highest prevalence of 37.5%. In this order, the next form of DV is Psychological torture with 29% prevalence. Physical assault comes in

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the third position with the prevalence of 28.5% while emotional torture is considered to be the least prevalent with 20%. This order gives priority to the students’ responses for ‘high prevalence’ as a basis of concern on domestic violence. This is better captured in the comparative view presented in Figure 1 below. The other forms of DV scored differently when considered under different prevalence targets. These are also deemed to explain the different circumstances in which the different families find themselves.

**Figure 1: Students’ Response on the prevalence of Domestic violence**



*Source:* Research data, 2019

### **Sexual abuse**

From the data presented by the students, a three-fold pattern emerged that is worth attention. Firstly, sexual violence attracted the attention of all students with highest (37%) prevalence over and above

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the other forms of violence. It scored higher in the three positive prevalence categories: 20% in the 'moderate,' 29% in the 'High,' category and 37% in the 'Very High,' category. On the contrary, it conspicuously scored lowest (6%) in the 'Low' prevalence target. Thus, from the view of student respondents, sexual abuse featured as the most prevalent form of domestic violence in the family set ups at least in the region under focus.

On the same issue of the prevalence of forms of DV, the researcher interviewed 28 principals of the targeted schools. 71% agreed that the mentioned forms of DV were the major ones. 90% agreed that sexual abuse is the highest form of DV prevalent in the families. Interestingly, the principals opined that the DV forms differ from one home to another. 50% of the principals argued that this pattern was due to the fact that the perpetrators change their style of attack depending on the steps their victims take after the first case of DV. Coincidentally, this opinion largely explains the irregular pattern of the remaining three prevalence targets in the data presented by the students. From Figure 3 above, the 'High' and the 'Moderate' categories shift the priority particularly towards physical assault with 30% and 25 % respectively. While the 'Low' category gives priority to emotional torture as the most common form of violence at 73% comparatively. Nevertheless, still other 50% of the principals observed that some perpetrators remain rude and arrogant and never care to change their technique of attack irrespective of the repercussions. In this manner sexual abuse prevails as highest form of domestic violence no matter the prevailing circumstance.

When it came to the G&C teachers' responses on the prevalent of forms of DV mentioned, out of the 30 G&C teachers interviewed, a frequency of 24 which constituted 80% agreed to the statement that the forms of DV mentioned were mainly the ones experienced in many families.

In their assessment 75% agreed that sexual abuse is more prevalent in comparison to the other forms of DV mentioned.

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## **Psychological torture**

According to the student responses, psychological torture is considered the second most prevalent form of domestic violence. In the category of 'Very High' prevalence it scored 29% while it still featured higher in the 'High' category, scoring 26% after the 30% mark share between sexual abuse and physical assault. Three factors stand out worth closer attention. First, is the very fact of coming second and still closer to both sexual abuse and physical assault. This analysis construes this pattern to represent the crucial correlation between psychological torture, sexual abuse and physical assault. The victim of the last two DV forms necessary suffer closely from psychological torture. No sexual abuse or physical assault passes without inflicting grave psychological impact on a victim. Secondly, the category of the respondents who acknowledged 'Low' and 'not knowing' the level of prevalence of the forms of DV was disproportionately highest in this category. This analysis considers this pattern to be consequent to either ignorance on the meaning of psychological torture or confusion resulting from possible relationship of psychological and emotional torture. Although these two are often closely related, this observation begs clarification. To this effect, psychological torture in this analysis represents every unseen reaction to a stimulus of pain in consequence to violence meted on the individual. Psychological torture is often generic, representing a cross section of non-visible reactions to violence such as inability to talk, sulking, depression or stress. On the other hand, emotional torture is expressed through visible gestures such as inordinate, sometimes endless crying, trembling under the fit of anger or yelling outrageously at a person or a situation deemed unacceptable. Thirdly, it is clearer from Table 10 and Figure 3 presentations above that there is closer proximity between psychological and emotional torture. The student respondents generally considered these two highly but in the negative categories of 'Low' and 'not known.' Over and above the possibility of confusing the two, this analysis confirms the elusiveness of these two categories in quantifying DV. Owing to their invisible

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nature, psychological and emotional torture can indeed be elusive and misleading.

## **Physical assault**

The student respondents rated physical assault as the third form of DV. On the 'Very High' category, 22% of the students agreed that physical assault follows sexual and psychological forms of DV. However, in the Categories of 'High' and 'Moderate' prevalence, physical assault is rated highest, being 30% and 25% respectively. At this rate, physical assault prevails over all other forms as a form of violence that is both moderately and highly prevalent in the families. This position is a further testimony to the physical visibility of this form. While sexual abuse and psychological torture often remain hidden from the public eye, physical assault commands a conspicuous visibility. Nevertheless, its third rating endorses the gravity of the first two forms as much as it confirms its unavoidable prevalence.

Analysis of the principals' responses in regard to their rating concerning occurrence of physical assault was in agreement with the statement. Out of the 28 principals the majority (64%) affirmed that physical assault is among the major DV forms in the society.

## **Emotional torture**

Emotional torture was rated fourth in prevalence overall, scoring 20% in the 'Very High' category and 28% in the 'high' category. The conspicuous image however, is that it scores least in prevalence as compared with the other forms of DV. This observation then highlights the interesting position it occupies in relation to the psychological form of violence. In other words, the two score highly in both the 'Low' and 'Don't know' categories owing to their invisibility. Whether this position is necessitated by the students' ignorance on what actually constituted emotional violence, this analysis clarifies its position. Emotional torture manifests in specific disproportionate overt reactions often directed to an innocent victim.

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Like psychological torture, emotional torture is often deemed to accompany sexual abuse or any physical assault. Nevertheless, the data availed in Table 10 and Figure 3 shows that emotional violence generates its own independent impact rather independently. But this occurrence is comparatively lesser than the other forms of DV.

The interview with the experts: the principals and the G&C teachers, revealed that most (90%) of the student victims of DV suffered emotionally. The experts affirmed this could be deduced from the students' reactions in class activities and peer relationships.

Essentially the analysis in Table 10 indicates that there are forms of DV that exist in the lives of the students. More so the prevalence of these forms of DV played a certain key role in determining their classroom behaviour.

This finding agree with Katz (2016) in a study that was done in England, Terra (2017) in a research that was done in USA St. Paul Minnesota and Ibrahim (2019) in a study in Nigeria in which the researchers opine that sexual violence is one of the major forms of DV. The study affirms that sexual abuse is not only harmful to the victim but to the children who witness it. Therefore, from this current study it is revealed that there are forms of DV which are prevalent; sexual abuse, physical assault, psychological and emotional torture. This findings further expose that this forms of DV affect the students' classroom behaviour.

The finding agrees with UNICEF (2016) report. The UNICEF established there was need for action concerning DV. The UNICEF report (2016), called for action against the alarming rise in cases of sexual abuse on children in Kenya. The report was based on the survey in Kenya that was done in 2010 under the title 'Violence against Children Study' (VACs). The VACs was the first national survey that was conducted to establish violence against children in Kenya on both female and male. The assessment covered 1,306 females and 1,622 males who were between the ages of 13 to 24 years. The survey set to establish the children who had experienced physical, emotional and sexual violence. The UNICEF report exposed that there were children who had experienced all the forms of DV in

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their childhood; these were 26% female and 23% male. Then there were 32% female and 18% of male who had encountered sexual violence. Those who had experienced physical violence were 66% female and 73% male. The report further found out that the most common perpetrators were friends, neighbours and the victim's parents.

In addition, the finding in the current study support another study by UNICEF (2017) done in Kenya and the Indian Ocean Region. The study reported the alarming cases of abuse subjected to children. It observed that many children were victims of sexual violence and yet nobody wanted to talk about it. Similarly, the report lamented that homesteads were the first avenues through which children are introduced to violence in society. Statistically, close to 300 million children aged between 2 to 4 years globally are subjected to violent discipline while one in four children under 5 years stayed with mothers who have been victims of DV. The UNICEF called upon the victims to break the silence so that they could be directed on how to get help.

This finding further confirms a study by Callaghan *et al.*, (2018) which disputed the general use of DV alone to also express the suffering of the children involved. The study state that the children should instead be referred to as the victims of DV so as to make the professionals see the need to rescue them. Accordingly, the affected students in our context were actually victims of DV that prevailed in their family environment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the new knowledge established by this current study to add on the existing one is that the children victims of DV and those who witness recycle DV. In addition, this discussion underscores caution with regard to the otherwise popular remedy of punishment. Effort to remedy DV could easily lead to bigger problem never envisaged. It highlights the need of keen attention to the individual recovery and re-integration into a healthy society. This also

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implies making effort to reform and make society a healthy place for all. Consequently, continuous information to the public through open public forums coupled with specialised awareness drive targeting the victims, the perpetrators and groups emerge as the way to go. However, the actors in this endeavour may need to learn something from religious leaders or, in fact, work in partnership with religious institutions to advance war against DV. The law and legal recourse may therefore serve as a long term measure to entrench and defend good practice. Generally, the evil of DV calls for a holistic but cautious approach that takes due regard of cultural, social, religious and political wellbeing of the individual. It implies social readjustments that will curb the evil rather comprehensively. Globally we need to establish strategies that transcend borders, space and history encompassing recognition of the ways in which some communities have tied individuals to ideologies of the past. A communication network should be set in a manner that logistical barriers do not hinder the curb of DV. There is need for everyone to realize DV is a global problem that we must fight collectively.

### **Recommendations**

The research findings recommend the following: Awareness should be created in every village through seminars to make the public be aware of the dangers posed by DV to the students and the whole community at large. In addition, such workshops will ensure people are educated on where to run to in case of an abrupt eruption of DV. After which the County governments should work with various social services and organizations to establish a free workable hotline number for the DV victims and children to call on in case of any signs of DV at home.

The study further recommends review on the policy pertaining to the punishment for the perpetrators of DV. In addition, the policy approaches must recognize the widespread nature of DV reinforce resistance, and recognize DV as based on gender inequality. These policies if well-articulated can eliminate DV in many ways including a

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clause inconsideration for children from homes where DV is prevalent. In addition, the policies should clearly state the actions to be taken against the perpetrators including effective legal measures against those who object to the process, penal sanctions and compensatory provisions for the victims.

Similarly, the study recommends further reinforcement cultural structures in order to build a strong supportive cultural system that oversees the family life of the people.

Likewise, for the schools the study recommends setting up of helpful relation-mechanisms to coordinate with the G&C teachers. The two parties should work together to handle cases of students who show signs of abuse-related symptoms and those who report having DV at home. This will help in promptly highlighting the foundation of DV in regards to causes and also, areas of prominence. The school administration should as well sensitize parents through parent meetings. The results indicate the importance of increasing the neighbours' role in preventing DV by addressing gender responsibility norms and their force on the justification of violence. The study complements the existing literature by presenting new evidence of the barriers that put a stop to the neighbours' intervention in DV episodes. A clearer understanding of all these barriers will assist to develop strategies that aspire to prevent DV in the future.

Recommendation for further researcher is hereby recommended basing on the fact that many students have suffered as DV victims. There is need for a good workable restorative program that can heal the student victims so that we avoid the circle of abuse.

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