

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON
SCHOOL CHILDREN IN MATUNGULU DIVISION,
MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Childhood sexual abuse is a complex life experience not a diagnosis or a disorder. An array of sexual activity is covered by the term child sexual abuse. These include intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling of genitals, exhibitionism or exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornography. This diversity alone ensures that there will be a range of outcomes. The overall purpose of the study was therefore to determine the psychological impact of child sexual abuse on school children in Matungulu Division, Machakos County. The study was based on the following objectives: to determine the extent of psychological effects resulting from child sexual abuse on school children in Matungulu Division, Machakos County; to determine the causes of child sexual abuse in schools in Matungulu Division, Machakos County; to identify the forms of child sexual abuse that take place in schools in Matungulu Division, Machakos County; and to find out the intervention practices that are put in place in prevention of sexual abuse to school children in Matungulu Division, Machakos County. The study was based on Family Systems theory by Bowen, 1960's. He emphasizes that families are systems with interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. The approach can be used for intra-familial abuse. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which is usually designed to gain information about a particular characteristic within a particular field of study. The target population for the study was 1,200 boys and 900 girls, 120 teachers; and 25 head teachers from primary schools in Matungulu Division, Machakos County. Simple random sampling method was used where 210 pupils (120 boys and 90 girls); 12 teachers; 3 head teachers and 20 parents were sampled from 3 schools. Using stratified sampling method, 70 pupils (boys and girls) were sampled from each school. Questionnaires were used as the instrument of data collection. Thematic data analysis technique was used to draw inferences from the responses of the respondents. The findings established that child sexual abuse is prevalent among school children and abuse results to diverse psychological effects. The main forms of child sexual abuse are contact and non-contact. The causes of child sexual abuse include inadequate parental guidance; peer influence; poverty; experimentation; exposure to pornographic materials; indecent dressing and exposure to pornographic materials. The study recommends the following measures to be implemented in order to eliminate and control child sexual abuse: improving the level of school guidance and counseling services; policy implementation; incorporation of child sexual abuse in school curriculum; sensitization programmes on child sexual abuse and regulation of pornographic materials in the media. The research recommends development of programmes to rehabilitate sexually abused children and severe enforcement of laws on child sexual abuse to protect children, according to Children Act.