

Assessment of Social-Cultural and Economic Factors on Child Molestation in Tanzania: A Case of Mkuranga District

Bibiana Pelagi Molenga^{1*}, Amon Chaligha², Frateline Kashaga³

^{1,2,3}Department of Postgraduate and Research, Kampala International University in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract: The study assessed the social-cultural and economic factors on child molestation in Tanzania: A case of Mkuranga district. The specific objectives of this research were; to assess how socio-cultural factors contributed to child molestation; to assess how economic factors contributed to child molestation and to find out strategies used by the local Government to prevent child molestation and how they can be improved. Mixed approaches of both Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study and this study encompassed 175 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires, focused group discussions and interviews and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 and thematic analysis. The study findings showed that 89.7% of social-cultural factors, such as the practice of traditional dances or erotic dances commonly referred as Jando, Unyago and Vigodoro, influenced the young generation to acquire undesirable behaviours, and were a contributing factor on child molestation in Mkuranga District. Also, 95.4% of the respondents agreed that economic factors contributed to child molestation in Mkuranga District. The study concluded that child molestation is still a problem in Mkuranga district due to the fact that child molestation cases reported rate increased day by day. The LGAs, NGOs and CBOs should put more efforts to increase awareness to eradicate child molestation in the community.

Keywords: Social-Cultural and Economic Factors, Child Molestation.

1. Introduction

Child molestation has been a concern of government, especially in the last quarter of 20th century. Globally, it is estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence during 2017, (Kempe, 2018). Between 100 and 140 million child and women in the world have undergone some form of child molestation. In sub-Saharan East Africa, Egypt and Sudan, 3 million girls' and women are subjected to mutilation/cutting every year. Estimates from 2012 suggest that 1.8 million child were forced into prostitution and pornography, and 1.2 million were victims of human trafficking.

Child molestation can happen at homes, institutions, schools, workplaces, in travel and within communities both in developing and developed countries (Radford, Allnock, & Hynes, 2016). Child molestation violates the fundamental right of safe childhood (Worthington, 2016). Short and long term

consequences of such violence are severe; not only for those who experience the violence, but also for families and communities, and it constitutes a critical societal concern (URT, 2019).

In Kenya, sexual violence is one of the top 10 risk factors for disease burden. National-level data show that 14% of women and 6% of men age 15-49 years have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Reported national prevalence is even higher among child and young adults, with 32% of females and 18% of males reporting having experienced some form of sexual violence before the age of 18 years. More than 90% of these survivors do not seek healthcare (Gatuguta et al. 2018).

Tanzania, has also been experiencing higher prevalence of Child abuse particularly sexual abuse due to the fact that traditional settings such as taboos and laws, do not provide room for the child to openly express their feelings. Sometimes child are forced to get married before reaching eighteen. A good example is the Law of Marriage Act of 1971 which allows girls to be married at the age of fifteen (URT, 2015).

National survey conducted by CDC and (UNICEF 2015) in Tanzania exposed that among individuals aged 13-24 years, 28% of females and 13% of males experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult before reaching 18 years of age. However, the commitments on child protection are always in contradiction with the prevailing situation in the society where child are insecure due to increasing rates of sexual abuse against child (URT, 2015).

A. Statement of the Problem

In Tanzania, as discussed earlier, child still face the challenge of violence of various kinds, including rape, prostitution, and employment in dangerous jobs, female genital mutilation, child marriage and pregnancy. According to Tanzania Police Force report, from January to December 2022, there were 12,163 incidences (Boys - 2,201 and Girls - 9,962) compared to 11,499 incidences in 2021, which is equal to an increase of 664 incidences (5.8 percent). Statistics show that violence against child affect girls more than boys. In addition, incidents of violence against child that led are; Rape 6,335 cases; child pregnancies 1,557 cases and sodomy 1,555 cases. This shows that child molestation is high than other child abuses in

*Corresponding author: molengab@gmail.com

Tanzania. Regions which have high incidence of child molestation include; Arusha 728 cases; Mbeya 710 cases; Kinondoni 681 cases; Tanga 607 and Mwanza 595 cases. (Tanzania Annual Police Force Report, 2022). Like other regions in Tanzania, child molestation is high in Coast Region where as child rape, sodomy, early sex, early marriage and child pregnancies are common incidence within the region. In the year 2021 and 2022 child molestation were 388 and 421 consecutively. Equal to an increase of 33 cases. (RSWO, 2022)

In Mkuranga District, child molestation includes sodomy rape, early sex, and early marriage and child pregnancies. According to the Social Welfare department report, for the year 2022/2023, there were 140 cases of child molestation compared to 119 cases in 2021/2022 which is equal to an increase of 21 cases (4.2 percent). Furthermore, research shows lack of public awareness and concern on the rise of child molestation in the Coastal region, Mkuranga district in particular (URT, 2021). Despite efforts by Government authorities and CBOs, many cases go unreported due to cultural and socio-economic factors.

However, there is a scant literature and very little is known about the influence of socio cultural and economic factors on increase of child molestation. Despite the existence of policies and law against child abuse, the increased number of child molestation cases in Mkuranga has prompted this study to assess how Social-Cultural and Economic factors have contributed to Child Molestation in Mkuranga District;

B. Research Objectives

1. To assess how socio-cultural factors contributed to child molestation in Mkuranga District.
2. To examine how economic factors contributed to child molestation in Mkuranga District.

2. Literature Review

According to Ligiero et al (2019), sexual violence against child is complex, can take many forms, and is influenced by various factors. It can be perpetrated by both adults and peers, those known and previously unknown to the child, by individuals working alone or in groups and gangs, and in diverse settings inside and outside the home, school, and the wider community. Childhood sexual violence differs from other forms of violence, such as physical or psychological violence, as child development and the capacity to consent influence its recognition as a crime.

According to Massawe, (2016), many perpetrators of sexual violence against child are adults, child and adolescents under the age of 18 also perpetrate sexual violence against child/other child. Child and adolescent perpetrators are typically viewed as fundamentally different from adult perpetrators, and research in neuroscience and developmental criminology reinforces the understanding that there are profound differences among adults, child, and adolescents in terms of their capacity to regulate emotions, control their behavior, and weigh the costs and benefits of decisions.

Basile et al (2016), also suggests that boys and girls have different risk factors for and experiences of sexual violence and can also experience different short- and long-term impacts. The

nature of sexual violence and its impact can also be dependent on the context (e.g., in marital and non-marital or dating relationships, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and/or cutting, or child, early, and forced marriage). Gender is complex and culturally constructed, with vast implications for the prevention of sexual violence. For example, gender inequality can influence access to resources, mobility, and agency in relationships, and gender norms that condone violence can help perpetuate impunity. Most research on preventing sexual violence against child does not examine the nuances associated with gender roles or gender identity. Poverty, moral degradation, violence, inadequate education, poor parental care, and substance abuse all emerged as factors that influence the child molestation.

According the Ligiero et al (2019), Sexual violence against child and adolescents does not occur in isolation. It often intersects with other forms of gender-based violence and violence against child. Further, different forms of violence against child share common drivers and risk factors. Thus, holistic approaches that target all forms of violence are important to address these intersections, consider poly victimization, and maximize the use of scarce resources. At the same time, the nuanced experiences of sexual violence also require focused interventions during specific points in the life course.

Research done by Tharp, Simon, & Saul (2012), of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) has a focus on preventing interpersonal violence against child and youth. Prevention of violence against child and youth involves fostering healthy relationships and building healthy environments in which young people can flourish. A review NCIPC's work over the past 20 years has contributed to this goal by highlighting surveillance systems that identify the magnitude of violence, etiological research that identifies risk and protective factors that are associated with violence, evaluation research that has expanded the evidence base of what works to prevent violence, and comprehensive, broad-based programs that engage and empower communities to prevent violence. NCIPC's work demonstrates that violence is preventable and the Center is working to move the promise of effective prevention into practice. These efforts all work toward protecting the health and well-being of child and youth and set the stage for NCIPC's future work.

Radford, Allnock, & Hynes, (2015), are also of the opinion that legal protection from sexual abuse and exploitation needs to take into consideration the situations where a child is unable to consent freely to sex. These situations should include threats of violence, grooming, power imbalances, intoxication, and being under the influence of drugs. Historically, sexual violence from males towards females, especially in intimate partner or dating relationships, has typically been the most difficult to get recognized and prosecuted as criminal behavior, Ochuodho (2013), also found that despite the teachers and pupils being knowledgeable on child rights there were cases of child abuse within and outside the school compound. Among the school-based factors that influenced the implementation of child education in the public primary was administrative were

factors, coordination between the school administration and financial resources. High teacher - pupil ratio in public primary schools have contributed negatively to the implementation of child right education. Inadequacy of school facilities had further aggravated the situation with many cases of child abuse occurring within the school compound as result of this inadequacy. Furthermore, inadequate toilet facilities were breeding ground for verbal abuses while the school's fields provided a fertile ground for physical and verbal abuse.

3. Methodology

This study used descriptive research design because it enabled the researcher to collect information about respondent's opinions, attitudes and strategies (cooper and Shindler, 2003). Hence, the major purpose of using this of descriptive survey as a method of collecting information by administering a questionnaire to a sample individual and employed quantitative research approach (Kothari 2004). The target population consisted of the registered 318 respondents and researcher selected wards are Mwandege and Vikindu wards and they were selected because many cases of child molestation are reported within these wards. The researcher used Morgan table to obtaining sample size of 175, pupils from standard five and standard six, teachers and parents, Community Development Officers and Social Welfare Officers, Police Gender Desk Officers. The researcher used Purposive sampling and simple random sampling in order to give equal chances to all the respondents to participate. In order to collect the data needed, the researcher used interview guide and questionnaire for collecting primary data and the questionnaire was closed ended that was developed objectives.

4. Research Findings

A. General Profile of the Respondents

In this section the researcher aimed at finding out characteristics of the population under study and their livelihood to contribute to the theme of the study. Therefore, the section includes; gender, age and level of education.

Table 1
Respondents' socio-economic characteristics

| | | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Gender | Male | 71 | 40.6 |
| | Female | 104 | 59.4 |
| Total | | 175 | 100 |
| Age | 11-15 years | 134 | 76.6 |
| | 20-30 years | 16 | 9.1 |
| | 31-40 years | 11 | 6.3 |
| | 41-50 years | 7 | 4.0 |
| | 51-60 years | 7 | 4.0 |
| Total | | 175 | 100 |
| Education level | Primary Education | 139 | 79.4 |
| | Certificate | 8 | 4.6 |
| | Diploma | 11 | 6.3 |
| | Bachelor | 14 | 8.0 |
| | Postgraduate | 3 | 1.7 |
| Total | | 175 | 100% |

Source: Field Data, 2024

Findings from Table 1 indicate that out of 175 respondents

involved in the study 104(59.4%) of respondents were female and 71(40.6%) of respondents were males, majority 134(76.6%) were aged between 11-14 years, 16(9.1%) were aged between 20-30 Year's, 11(6.3%) were aged between 31-40 Year's, 7(4.0%) were aged between 41-50 Year's and 7(4%) were aged between 51-60 Year's. the majority of the respondents 139(79.4%) were Primary Education level, 14(8.0%) Bachelor, 11(6.3%) Diploma, 8(4.6%) Certificate and 3(1.7%) Postgraduate.

B. How Socio-Cultural Factors, Contribute to Child Molestation in Mkuranga District

Table 2 shows the results of objective one that was to assess how socio-cultural factors, contribute to child molestation in Mkuranga District. Results are presented in table 2.

Findings from the table above shows that 157(89.7%) respondents strongly agreed, 18(10.3%) respondents disagreed. This implies that majority of respondents strongly agreed that socio-Cultural factors such as polygamy, divorce, erotic dances (Unyago and vigodoro} led to child molestation. This is due to the fact that, children who attends traditional and erotic dances like vigodoro performances may be exposed to early sex which results to teenage pregnancies and school dropout. This implies that majority of respondents strongly agreed that Cultural factors such as Unyago and vigodoro led to child molestation. This is due to the fact that, Children who attends traditional and erotic dances like vigodoro performances may be exposed to early sex which results to teenage pregnancies and school dropout. This exposure can potentially influence their understanding of appropriate boundaries and contribute to the normalization of sexual behavior. Also, Unyago is a traditional initiation ceremony for young girls in some tribes of Tanzania such as Zaramo, Makonde and Ndengereko which intended to teach them about womanhood, marriage, and sexual responsibilities. This tribes are also found in Mkuranga District. However, there are concerns that certain aspects of Unyago may contribute to child molestation. This finding concurs with those of (Abeid et al., 2014) that, traditional dances practices such as "Chagulaga mayu" which means, "choose one among us", are not uncommon. Chagulaga mayu is practiced among the biggest ethnic group in Tanzania, the 'Sukuma' from the Mwanza region, around harvest time where festivities accompanied by traditional dances mark the occasion. Unmarried women who attend the dances are chased around by men until the men choose those with whom they will have intercourse at the end of the ceremony. Sometimes these casual sexual incidences culminate in marriages.

The researcher did an interview to find out cultural factors such as traditional dances and erotic dances (unyago and vigodoro) led to child molestation. The interview was conducted to pupils from Mwandege and Kisemvule primary schools.

Pupils from Mwandege primary schools said:

"I attended many times traditional dances especially jando, unyago and vigodoro because it was so funny and also it is a part and parcel of our tradition"

Pupils from Kisemvule primary school said:

Table 2
Socio-Cultural Factors, contribute to child molestation

| Socio-Cultural Factors | Strongly agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| Use of drugs and alcohol led to child molestation | 121(69.1%) | 33(18.9%) | 5(2.9%) | 9(5.1%) | 7 (4%) |
| Cultural factors such as erotic dances {unyago and kigodoro} contribute to child molestation | 157(89.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 18 (10.3%) | 0(0%) |
| Norms of the people contribute to child molestation | 157(89.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 18 (10.3%) | 0(0%) |
| Divorce factor contribute to child molestation | 155(88.6%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 20(11.4%) |

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 3
Economic factors contribute to child molestation

| Economic factors | Strongly agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Family status such as poverty led to child molestation | 121(69.1%) | 33(18.9%) | 5(2.9%) | 9(5.1%) | 7 (4%) |
| Low education level of the people within the community led to child molestation | 167(95.4%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 8(4.6%) |
| Living environment led to child molestation | 167(95.4%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 8(4.6%) | 0(0%) |
| Children Prostitution of the people led to child molestation | 167(95.4%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 8(4.6%) |
| Total | 155(88.5%) | 8(4.6%) | 1(0.7%) | 5(2.4%) | 6(3.4%) |

Source: Field Data, 2024

“Most of the traditional dances have been practiced in our areas frequently, although there are laws and regulations that prohibit children to attend in those dances, but there is no enforcement of those laws and regulations and also some parents do not prohibit their children to attend in those dances”.

The above findings from pupils of Kisemvule primary schools and Mwandege primary schools implies that majority of the pupils prefer much to attend into various traditional dances because it was much practiced around their environment and it is a part of their traditions. Local Government Authorities should formulate the rules and regulations that govern children and young generation to attend in traditional dances that influence child molestation. These findings contradicts with the findings highlighted by (Abeid, et al., 2014) that, some old traditions, such as ‘unyago’ (young women’s initiation) were still embraced unyago, when conducted by women of strong moral repute, was perceived as conveying family traditions and customs, and contributing to a good future family life. It was lamented that unyago has drastically diminished and now is increasingly being replaced by what is now known as ‘kitchen parties’ which are perceived to be an urban practice in which the bride-to be receives teachings on sexuality and how to become a noble wife prior to wedding ceremonies.

Meanwhile findings indicated that 155(88.5%) of respondents strongly agreed and 8(4.6%) of respondents agreed, 1(0.7%) of respondents undecided, 5(2.4%) respondents disagreed and 6(3.4%) respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to economic factors such as the family status, poverty, living environment led to child molestation, because families living in poverty may have limited access to essential resources such as healthcare, mental health services, and parenting support programs. The lack of these resources can make it more challenging for parents to address their own mental health issues or seek help for their children, potentially increasing the risk of child molestation. Also, prostitution of the people led to child molestation due to economic problems, such as poverty and unemployment, can push families into desperate

situations where they may resort to prostitution as a means of survival. This can lead to a lack of stability and support within the family, making children more vulnerable to exploitation and molestation. This finding concurs with those of (Qayyum, at el., 2013) that, voluntarily includes women who get start as prostitute willingly because of poverty, hunger, economic crisis, family pressure, illness and also Majority of women in sex work are illiterates, 95(54.28%) females strongly agreed and 72(41.14%) males of respondents agreed and 5(2.86%) female disagreed and 3(1.71%) males strongly disagreed. belong to lower castes and are from poor economic backgrounds.

Student from Mwandege primary schools said:

“Sometimes I ate two meals per day and other day one meal per day because I have a single parent only mother who was a street venders she spent a lot of time in street to purchase her products so as to get money for food and payment of house rent which led to shortage of time for staying at and cooking foods for me”.

Student from Kisemvule primary schools said:

“My parents wake up early in the morning and return back too late night although they left some meals at home but we don’t have clear supervision instead of my brother who take care of us even also he form two students”.

The above findings from pupils of Kisemvule primary schools and Mwandege primary schools implies that 82.6% of the parents and caregivers were too much busy for economic struggles for survival which leads some children to lack serious supervision and parental care. These findings contradicts with the findings highlighted by (Vrolijk-Bosschaart, et al., 2018) that, most situations, even though they might concern parents, the sexual behaviors in young children do not require child protective services intervention. In these cases, the pediatrician may provide the education, guidance in supervision, and monitoring of their behavior.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Summary

Findings indicated that 89.7% of socio-cultural factors,

contribute to child molestation. Study, findings also indicated that use of drugs and alcohol, peer groups, cultural factors such as erotic dances such as Unyago and kigodoro led to child molestation. Furthermore, norms of the people within the community also led to child molestation. Indeed, all of these practices contributed positively towards the child molestation in Mkuranga District.

The economic factors also contribute to child molestation. The findings indicated that, 95.4% of economic disadvantage, such as poverty, can create stressors and challenges within families. Financial strain may lead to inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, and insufficient resources for child care and supervision. These circumstances can contribute to an increased risk of child molestation as families struggle to meet basic needs and may have less capacity to provide a safe and protective environment for children. Also, economic disparities can create power imbalances within relationships and communities. Individuals in positions of economic advantage may exploit their power and resources to engage in abusive behaviors, including child molestation.

B. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the rate of child molestation cases and its practice was still a big problem in our societies. This is because of a number of factors like peer groups that children they have, globalization and lack of parental care to the children which influence child molestation. Other victim's cases were not being reported to the specific authorities like police gender desk and social welfare offices instead they end them within the family levels and other cases that faced poor family they being paid some amount of money to end the case before reach to the legal authorities. Local Government authority should not be corrupted when these cases are have reported to their offices. Furthermore, local governments should be very strict in their rules and regulations that they formulated so as to reduce the number of child molestation incidence and at the end of the day child molestation will become the historical in our communities.

C. Recommendation

1. Children should be stricted being involved in erotic dances and provision of awareness programs in schools and also educating communities including parents and care givers on effects of child molestation in Tanzania.
2. Provision of employment opportunities and financial support to local communities so as to reduce poverty rate.
3. The Local Government should demonstrate strictly, integrated and realistic laws and policies which will give strong punishment to the actors of child molestation. Also, Collaboration can be established to develop and promote effective reporting mechanisms for suspected child molestation cases.

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