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## **Awareness level of pupils on child sexual abuse in EMESA sub-location, Kisii county**

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### **Abstract**

Child abuse as recorded in literature in many parts of the world continues to affect the children conventionally. The abuse dates back to ancient civilizations as seen in the reports of female genital mutilation, infanticide, neglect, abandonment and child trafficking. Child abuse is a worldwide problem that occur in various forms which is profoundly entrenched in cultural, economic and social practices. It occurs in different forms which are: physical, emotional neglect and sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem which cuts across all status boundaries ranging from social, economic, cultural and political. Despite a myriad research on CSA, its awareness level has been difficulty to estimate among pupils. This study therefore concentrated on awareness level of pupils on CSA. The study used systematic sampling to select pupils, convenience sampling to select parents/guardian and purposive sampling to select key informants. The sample size was 100 pupils, 100 parents/guardians and 10 key informants. The findings of the study reveal that the knowledge of teachers, parents and other caregivers on CSA preventions directly influences the child's prevention awareness. The study recommends a dialogue among the religious institutions, policy formulators, teachers and parents the introduction of sex education both at school and societal level to equip the learners with the possible refusal technics, abuser identification, where to report in the event of abuse and the consequences of the abuse and the emphasize should not only be on girls but also boys since all can be sexually abused.

**Keywords:** child abuse, child sexual abuse, prevention awareness, female genital mutilation, sex education

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### **Introduction**

In Africa, research has demonstrated that there is a crucial foundation derived from the childhood experiences in the life of a person, (Yahaya *et al* 2013) <sup>[15]</sup>. The cultural and harmful traditional practices such as FGM, early marriages, gender typing and male dominance have continued to place girls to be more vulnerable to sexual abuse than boys, (Alabi & Bahah, 2013) <sup>[2]</sup>. In Nigeria for instance, there are many problems that face girls such as e family abuse and domestic violence, sexual abuse, rejection, neglect, FGM, forced marriages, forced prostitution, and child labour (Akinyemi, *et al* 2017) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The family is a group of people who are closely related and care for one other (Amy, *et al* 2020) <sup>[3]</sup>. According to Roberto and Kirsten (2020), a family is the genesis of the society and that as such, it plays a fundamental role in a child's socialization, survival, growth, protection, and development. UNICEF, 2002 equates the family to a sanctuary - a place where individuals seek love, care, protection, belonging, and shelter. Whereas it is morally and constitutionally expected of parents and other care givers to provide love, care, and protection to their children, this has not always been the case. Unfortunately, gone are the days when children could feel safe in their homes as they are often sexually abused within the family system. According to Jelena, *et al* (2020) <sup>[7]</sup>, most incidences of child sexual abuse occur at home, a place that is expected to protect the children. A report by Statistics South Africa (2016) reveals that 40.0 percent of child sexual violence occurred in their homes during the 2014/15 period. Literature and various reports from court cases show that children have been, and continue to be sexually abused by the

people that are supposed to provide them with safety, love and care. These people are uncles, aunts, biological fathers or mothers, stepfathers, grandfathers, brothers and sisters (Masilo, 2018) <sup>[10]</sup>.

### **The Awareness Level of Student on Sexual Abuse**

Though the contemporaneous awareness of pervasive sexual violence of children dates back only to the late 1990s, child sexual abuse is a social problem in Emesa sub-location that has been of concern in the recent times. Many surveys on CSA shows that sexual violence is a common and significant problem in the world (Landolt, *et al*, 2016) <sup>[9]</sup>. In Kenya, although there is limited large-scale national survey on sexual violence, some recent local hindsight studies based on convenience sampling of pupils reveals that the problem of CSA is not exceptional (Galindo, *et al*, 2017) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Due to the fact that sexual violence against children is so ubiquitous and blunts the health and psychosocial wellbeing of children, a number of CSA prevention programmes have been conducted in schools and at community in the USA, Canada and some other countries since 1977 to increase public awareness of the CSA problem (Finkelhor, *et al*, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Such interventions need sufficient formative research, particularly among teachers, parents and care givers who play a fundamental role in education, child growth and development. The knowledge of teachers, parents and other caregivers on CSA preventions directly influences the child's prevention awareness. Therefore, this study raised important questions on the collective role of all social

institutions on prevention of sexual violence against children. It looked at what do social institutions know about CSA prevention, when is it appropriate for teachers, parents and caregivers to talk to pupils on CSA and their attitudes towards CSA prevention education in schools. The pupils who are not aware of the various forms of sexual abuse or where to report when the vice occur are most often abused because of enticements from the perpetrators.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey. Descriptive research design is a scientific method that involves an observation and description of a behavior of a subject without manipulating it in any way (Mugenda Mugenda 2003)<sup>[11]</sup>. This study used descriptive survey design because of its many advantages. One, it enabled the research to get original information from the study population directly since it relied on their opinions, attitudes and experiences on sexual abuse to facilitate the collection of the required data. Secondly, the researcher also obtained both qualitative and quantitative data that made it possible to investigate the awareness level of pupils on child sexual abuse.

### Area of Study

According to the Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children report in 2019 and the report from the Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey in Kisii County in 2017, child sexual abuse has been on an increase in Kisii county particularly in Emesa Sub-location with teachers and close relatives reported to be the main perpetrators. This necessitated the choice of the study area to investigate the cause of CSA and possible preventive measures to this unpropitious deed. The study was conducted in Emesa Sub-location in Kisii County. The sub-location has three primary schools which include: Emesa, Nyabisase and Kabonyo Primary schools. The schools are located 32, 30, 31, kilometers from Kisii town centre respectively. Gesonso primary school in the neighboring Nyakemebene sub-location was used to conduct the pilot study. Emesa Sub-location was selected because of its rampant cases of child sexual abuse.

### Target Population

The research targeted 700 pupils of grade 5-8 from three different schools in Emesa Sub-Location, this included 280 pupils from Emesa Primary school, 200 pupils from Kabonyo primary school and 220 pupils from Nyabisase Primary school. The need to have respondents that can comfortably respond to the questions in the questionnaire guided the choice of this group. Respondents were of age bracket 10 to 17 years. This group of pupils had an understanding on how to fill in a questionnaire therefore yielded the required information for the research. The pupils who were unable to fill the questionnaire were guided by the research. The study also targeted 100 parents, 1 assistant chief, 6 village elders and 3 headteachers.

### Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

There are three primary schools namely Emesa, Kabonyo and Nyabisase primary school respectively in Emesa Sub - Location. The research selected all the three primary schools. Therefore, the sample sizes for this study were three primary schools. In each of the schools, three categories of respondents participated in this study, namely: pupils, head teachers and parents. The research

used systematic sampling to select the pupils that participated in this study from the registers of pupils obtainable from the respective schools. For each of the pupil selected, their parent/guardian also participated in the study. This is based on the assumption that each child has a parent/guardian.

Therefore, the research used convenience sampling to select the parents/guardians to participate in the study. The sample size for primary school pupils were 100 pupils. This was equivalent to 100 parents conveniently sampled as well. This is a 14 percent of the population and is in line with (Yilmaz, 2013)<sup>[16]</sup> who pointed out that a sample size of between 10 – 30 percent is representative in descriptive studies. The research also used purposive sampling to select the village elders, headteachers and the assistant chief who were key informants for this study. The village elders were 6 representing all the six clans in Emesa sub-location, the head teachers were 3 and 1 assistant chief

**Table 1:** Sample Size

Population category	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage (percent)
Emesa primary	280	40	40
Kabonyo primary	200	29	29
Nyabisase primary	220	31	31
Total	700	100	100

Source: Ministry of Education, Kisii County (2020)

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### Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics using SPSS version 21.0 computer software data base and presented through percentages, means, standard deviations and frequencies.

Qualitative data was analyzed using textual analysis, where data was categorized into related themes and patterns. Here, the

researcher related ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, incidences and terminologies were identified and organized into coherent categories and summarized into meaningful texts. Related responses were then summarized and presented in prose form with relevant excerpts.

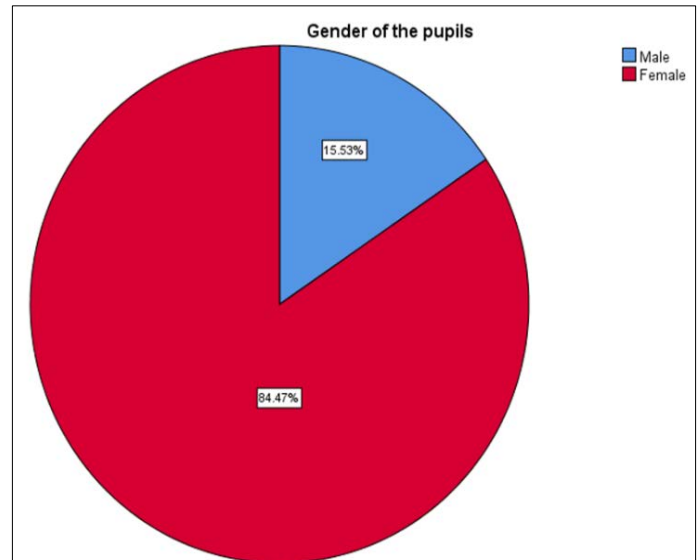
**Findings**

**Table 2: Age of the Pupils**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 10 years old	2	1.9	1.9	1.9
	10-17 years	98	98.1	98.1	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: (Author 2020)

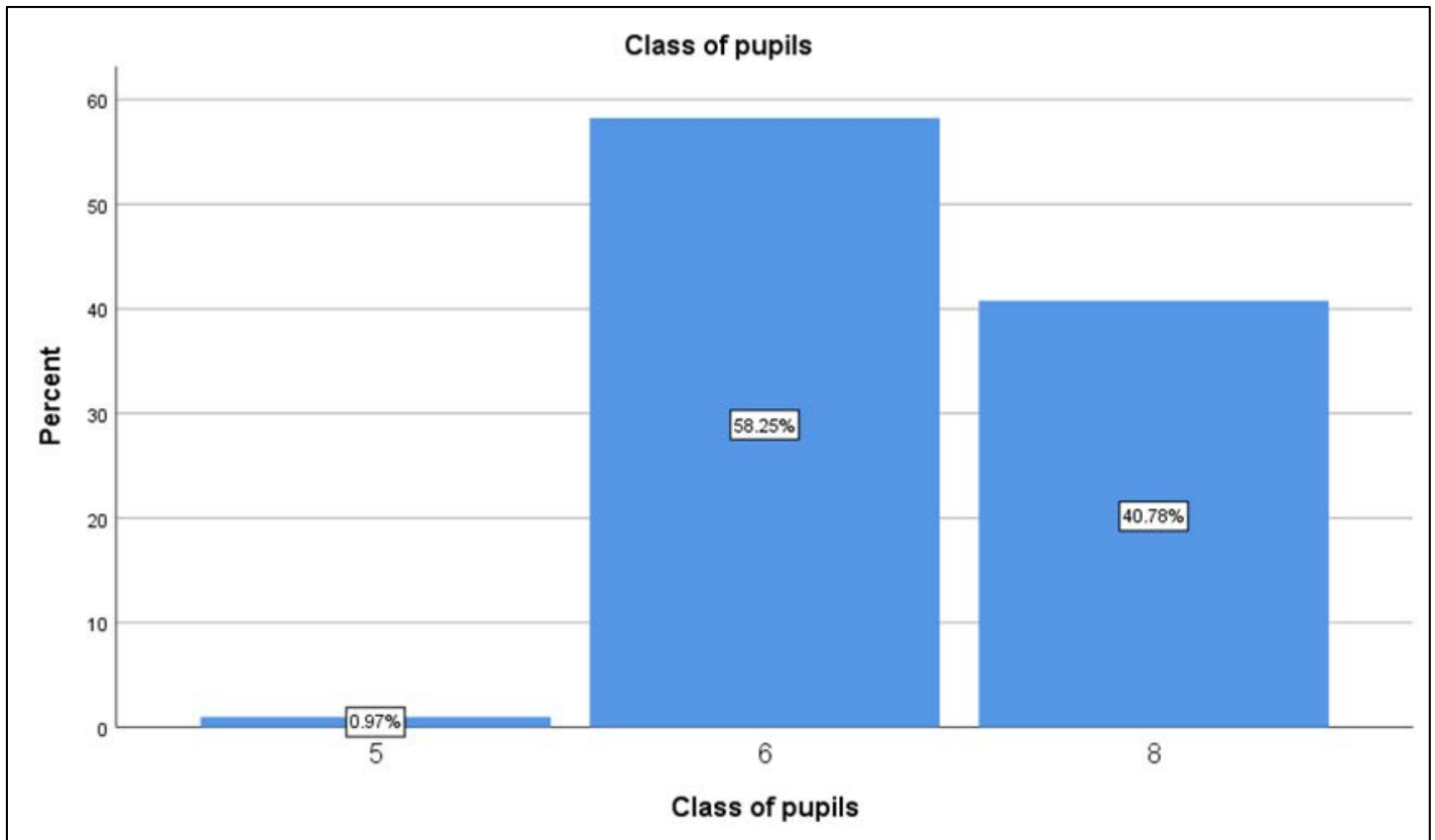
The study reveals that the majority of the respondents were between 10 and 17 years of age which comprised of 98.06%. This implies that they are of the teenage age, thus there is a need to establish the causes of sexual abuse from this age bracket stated. However, 1.9 % were below years of age. The reason for this is that some pupils join school early.



Source: Researcher, 2020.

**Fig 1: Gender of the pupils**

From the study it has revealed that the responses in from both side of the genders were 84.47% females and 15.53% of the male.

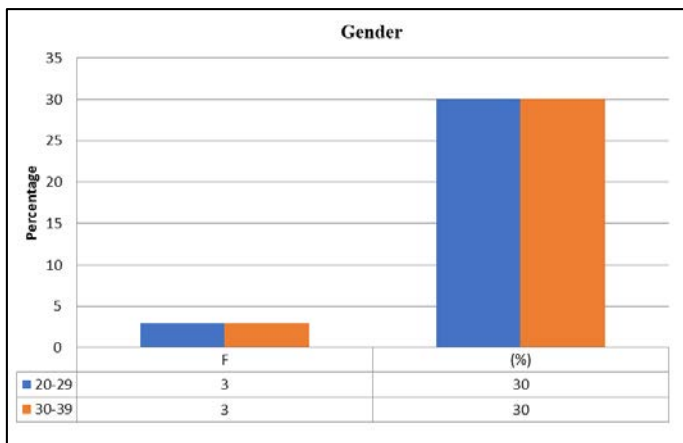


Source: Researcher, 2020

**Fig 2: Class of pupils**

The pupils who responded were mainly from class5, 6 and class 8, in proportion class 6 had 58.25% of the pupils that took part in

giving responses while class 8 took 40.78% of the total sample population that was explored.



Source: Researcher, 2020

Fig 3: Gender of Parents

According to the study 60 % of the parents were males while 40 % of them were females. The findings show that Emesa sub-location has both male and female members; however, the majority of them are males. The findings imply that the views expressed in this finding are gender sensitive and can be taken as representative of the opinions of both gender in regards to awareness of sexual abuse among pupils in the studied area.

**Age of the Key informants**

The level of informants may vary with the age of the respondents. In order to avoid biasness, this study thus had to investigate the composition of the respondent in terms of age brackets to understand their familiarity with the etiology of sexual abuse among pupils. The findings are presented in table 2.

Table 3: Age of key informants

Age	F	(%)
20-29	3	30
30-39	3	30
40-49	1	10
50-59	1	10
60-69	2	20
70 and above	-	-
Total	10	100

Source: Researcher, 2020

According to the study, majority (30%) of the Key informants were between the age brackets of 20-29, and 30-39 years, 10% and another 10 % of them indicated that they were aged bracket of between 40-49 and 50-59, years, 20 % of the informants were aged between 60 and 69 years. From the results depicted in table 3 above, none of the respondents was aged below 20 years or above 70 years. It is also clear that the respondents were well distributed in terms of age and that they are active in responding to the interviews which were conducted.

**Extent of Pupils' Awareness on Sexual Abuse**

Table 4: Extent of Pupils' Awareness on Sexual Abuse

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
My parents always talk to me on sexual abuse and its consequences	5	4.8%	0	0.0%	6	5.7%	33	31.4%	61	58.1%
Teachers in school always talk to us on sexual abuse and how we need to stay safe.	2	1.9%	1	1.0%	5	4.8%	30	28.6%	67	63.8%
Watching pornographic videos leads to sexual abuse	8	7.6%	2	1.9%	5	4.8%	30	28.6%	60	57.1%
Exposing private parts increases risk to be sexually abused	15	14.3%	2	1.9%	16	15.2%	23	21.9%	49	46.7%
Being alone in dark places increases chances of sexual abuse from perpetrators	6	5.7%	1	1.0%	16	15.2%	31	29.5%	51	48.6%
Child Sexual abuse leads to early pregnancies and SDIs	2	1.9%	1	1.0%	16	15.2%	25	23.8%	61	58.1%
Both boys and girls can be sexually abused	1	1.0%	1	1.0%	7	6.7%	46	43.8%	50	47.6%
Child Sexual abuse is both a social and public health concern	5	4.8%	5	4.8%	9	8.6%	41	39.0%	45	42.9%
Child sexual abuse leads to low self-esteem, psychological disorders and trauma	4	3.8%	2	1.9%	22	21.0%	34	32.4%	43	41.0%
Even a close family member can abuse a child sexually.	2	1.9%	2	1.9%	3	2.9%	48	45.7%	50	47.6%

Source: (Author 2020)

The findings revealed that 80.3% of the pupils receive advice from their parents about sexual abuse and its consequences. 88.3% of the pupils from Emesa sub locations reported that teachers in school always talk about sexual abuse and how to stay safe. The pupils are also aware that watching pornographic videos leads to sexual abuse as reported by 45.1% of the population. Further, exposing their private parts and being alone on private dark places increases chances of contact with perpetrators as cited by 63.8% and 73.5% of the pupils respectively. 79.4 % of pupils

agreed that child sexual abuse leads to early pregnancies and STIs. Also, 58.9% of the pupils said that both boys and girls are at a risk of being sexually abused, 40.9% of the pupils said that child sexual abuse is both social and public concern. Sexual abuse leads to low self-esteem, psychological disorders and trauma as 62.7% of pupils agreed. It was interesting to learn that close family member are key perpetrators of CSA as reported by 65.7% of the pupils.

## Parental Opinion on the Extent of Pupils' Awareness on Sexual Abuse

**Table 5:** Parental Opinion on the Extent of Pupils' Awareness on Sexual Abuse

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
My parents always talk to me on sexual abuse and its consequences	5	4.8%	0	0.0%	6	5.7%	33	31.4%	61	58.1%
Teachers in school always talk to us on sexual abuse and how we need to stay safe.	2	1.9%	1	1.0%	5	4.8%	30	28.6%	67	63.8%
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Child Sexual abuse is both a social and public health concern	5	4.8%	5	4.8%	9	8.6%	41	39.0%	45	42.9%
Child sexual abuse leads to low self-esteem, psychological disorders and trauma	4	3.8%	2	1.9%	22	21.0%	34	32.4%	43	41.0%
Even a close family member can abuse a child sexually.	2	1.9%	2	1.9%	3	2.9%	48	45.7%	50	47.6%

Source: (Author 2020)

The findings revealed that 89.1% of the parents talk to their children about sexual abuse and its consequences while 84.4% of the parents reported that teachers in school always talk about sexual abuse and how to stay safe. The parents also agreed with fact that watching pornographic videos leads to sexual abuse. This was represented by 85.7% of the parents surveyed. Exposing their private parts leads to sexual abuse and being alone on private dark places increases chances of sexual abuse by perpetrators as represented by 68.6% and 78.5% of the parents. It is important to note that 81.9% of parents agreed that child sexual abuse leads to early pregnancies and STIs. 91.4% said that both boys and girls are at a risk of being sexually abused and 81.9% said that child sexual abuse is both social and public concern. Finally, CSA as reported by 93.3% of the parents thought that close family members are sexual abuse perpetrators.

### Opinions of Key Informants on the Extent of Pupils' Awareness on Sexual Abuse

The findings from the Clan elders on the interview conducted at the assistant chief's office reveal that most parents always talk to their children on sexual abuse and its consequences. They also reported that teachers in school always talk to pupils on sexual abuse and how to stay safe. One of the elder's clan elders interviewed observed that:

"Most parents in my clan talk to their children on sexual abuse although fathers shy off from discussing sexual abuse with their daughters and leave it to the mothers... Teachers in school always talk to the pupils on sexual abuse and guide them on how to avoid falling victims of the abuse. The teachers also tell them where to report when they have such experiences both at home and in schools." (Clan elder, 2020)

On this, the assistant chief's opinion was that, the family as the primary agent of socialization should play its educative role to their children on the morally acceptable norms. She further noted

that she has always had community barazas across all the clans and have had fruitful discussions on Child sexual abuse. Therefore, she was confident that parents always talk to their children without fear on sexual abuse, its consequences and ways of staying safe from the abusers as indicated in the excerpt below. "I am very confident that from the regular community barazas that we hold in the sublocation, parents talk to their children on sexual abuse... We always invite experts from the ministry of gender and social protection to educate the parents...It's the responsibility of each parent therefore to guide their children at family level..." (Assistant chief 2020)

The elders also pointed out the fact that watching pornographic videos leads to sexual abuse. They noted that when the pupils especially girls in the adolescent age bracket expose their private parts, they become more susceptible to abuse from the perpetrators because of the predisposing factors. A clan interviewed observed that:

"The pupils are always aware that watching pornographic content from their phones and TV gives them the urge to practice what they have just seen... We have always warned parents on buying their pupils phones or controlling the content that the pupils watch on TV. Older children especially in class 7 and 8 who watch pornography mostly abuse the young children in lower classes or even their siblings" (Clan elder, 2020)

They further reported that walking alone in dark places increases chances of getting sexually abused by the perpetrators. They all accepted that child sexual abuse leads to early pregnancies and STIs. All the elders reported that both boys and girls are at a risk sexual abuse although the risk is higher on the girls as compared to the boys as indicated by an elder in the following excerpt:

"When pupils especially girls in the adolescent age bracket expose their private parts, they become more susceptible to abuse from the perpetrators because of the predisposing factors. Secondly, walking alone in dark places increases chances of

sexual abuse by perpetrators... Child sexual abuse has very bad effects on the pupils because it leads to early pregnancies, forced marriages and STIs this negatively effects the education of the girl child... I also want to agree with my colleagues that both boys and girls are at a risk sexual abuse although the risk is higher on the girls as compared to the boys.” (Clan elder, 2020)

## Discussion of Findings

### Awareness Level of Pupils on Child Sexual Abuse

According to Galindo, *et al.*, (2017)<sup>[5]</sup>, the knowledge of teachers, parents and other caregivers on CSA preventions directly influences the child’s prevention awareness. The research found that 80.3% of the pupils received advice from their parents about sexual abuse and their consequences. 88.3% of these pupils reported that teachers in school always talked about sexual abuse and how to stay safe. The pupils also agreed that watching pornographic videos leads to sexual abuse as reported by 45.1% of the populations. Exposing their private parts leads to sexual abuse and being alone on private dark places increases chances of sexual abuse by perpetrators as show from the findings of the study in 63.8% and 73.5% respectively. Further, the research found that 79.4% of pupils agreed that child sexual abuse leads to early pregnancies and SDIs. It was found that 58.9% said that both boys and girls are at a risk of being sexually abused and 40.9% said that child sexual abuse is both social and public concern. Sexual abuse leads to low self-esteem, psychological disorders and trauma as 62.7% of pupils agreed. Even close family member can abuse a child sexually as reported by 65.7% of the findings from the study. On average, sexual violence against children occurred at the age of 13 years. According to Greathouse, *et al* (2015)<sup>[6]</sup> most child sexual harassment occurs between the ages of 9 and 13. This is due to the fact that most participants in the study had unwanted sexual experience by coercion as opposite to material gain. A girl’s risk for transactional sex with an abuser increase after the age of 14 (Soto, 2016). This finding is further supported by the high number of respondents (24% of female and 17% of male) admitting that seduction, money and allurements were involved in the sexual violence.

## Conclusion

All the stakeholders need to know the CSA preventive measures since this will influence the children level of awareness through passing of such information across the social institutions. The family as the primary agent of socializations should emphasize the importance of communication within its system. Parents should continuously talk to their children on the effects of sexual violence and how to stay safe. The religious institutions need to play its fundamental role of inculcating morals both to the perpetrators.

## Recommendations

The media needs to play a key role in creation of public awareness on prevention of child sexual abuse and condemn cultural practices such as FGM that violate the girls right making them susceptible to abuse because of the notion that they are now ready for marriage once they have undergone the ‘cut’. The religious institutions, policy formulators, teachers and parents need to start a dialogue on the introduction of sex education both

at school and societal level to equip the learners with the possible refusal techniques, abuser identification, where to report in the event of abuse and the consequences of the abuse and the emphasize should not only be on girls but also boys since all can be sexually abused.

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