

EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPEMNT OF CHILDREN; A CASE STUDY IN KAYOLE SOUTH NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue with profound implications for the growth and development of children. This study will examine the effects of domestic violence on children's psychological, emotional, and social development, focusing on Kayole South, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study will be guided by the following objectives; To assess the occurrence of domestic violence and its impact on children's emotional and physiological well-being in Kayole south Nairobi County, to analyze the social and behavioral effects of domestic violence on children's synergy with family, peers and the community, to examine the effects of domestic violence on academic performance and school attendance of children in Kayole south and to explore the coping strategies and support systems accessible to children exposed to domestic violence in Kayole south and its effectiveness in promoting growth and development. The study will utilize the following theories; Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the research explores how various environmental factors interact to influence children's development in the context of domestic violence. The study adopts a descriptive research design within a post-positivist paradigm, emphasizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain comprehensive insights. The target population includes children aged 6–16 years residing in Kayole South who have been exposed to domestic violence, along with parents, guardians, and community social workers. Using stratified random sampling, a sample size of 70 participants was determined to ensure representation of diverse experiences. Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires designed to capture the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of children's development. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while assent was sought from the child participants. Measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and emotional support, with referrals to counseling services provided where necessary. The findings will provide critical insights into the far-reaching effects of domestic violence on children, offering actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and social service providers to create supportive interventions and foster resilience among affected children in Kayole South.

Key words; Domestic violence, Child development, Emotional well-being

Background

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts, with devastating impacts on children who witness or experience it directly. Children exposed to domestic violence face significant challenges in their psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive development, which can have long-term implications for their well-being and societal integration (Holt et al., 2021). Globally, efforts have been made to address domestic violence and its effects, but its prevalence remains alarmingly high, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities.

In the United States, approximately 1 in 15 children is exposed to domestic violence annually, leading to heightened risks of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Carlson et al., 2020). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, research indicates

that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and struggle with academic achievement (Radford et al., 2022). In Germany, studies have found that exposure to domestic violence significantly hinders cognitive development and contributes to emotional instability among children (Schmidt et al., 2023).

In the USA, Violence in the household increases a child's risk of maltreatment as a culture of violence is established within that household. According to Walker-Descartes, et al, approximately 26% to 73% of families reported to have child abuse present also are affected by IPV, whereas approximately 30% to 60% of families reported to have IPV present also are affected by child abuse. The study further found that Children's exposure to violence occur in a variety of ways including witnessing violence, hearing but not observing the violence, becoming aware of the

violence and living in a household in which violence occurs but not being aware of it.

In Europe, according to Arai & Shaw (2021). Domestic violence is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behavior, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality Domestic violence can take physical and emotional forms and includes financial and sexual abuse. Women are more likely to experience domestic violence than men; around one in four women in England and Wales will experience it in their lifetime. Many of these will be mothers. It is estimated that 15% of children have been exposed to at least one form of domestic violence at some point in their childhoods, and 3.1% have been exposed in the last year.

According to Khemthong, & Chutiphongdech, (2021), domestic violence largely affects children The study further found out that domestic violence can often be seen that activities involving are victims of this incident, but in fact, domestic violence affects all family members, especially children. But they always get help after women, and the impact activities on children are less and less widely discussed. Children are valuable for national development, but domestic violence is detrimental to children; it results in them being in a stressful environment, where they are usually overcome by anxiety, anger and fear. Therefore, children are as vulnerable to domestic violence as their mothers. To gain an overview of the issue, this research aims at concisely reviewing the impact of seeing and falling victim to domestic violence on children.

According to Clark, et al. (2020), violence against children includes all forms of violence against people the age below 18 years, whether perpetrated by parents, guardians, caregivers and strangers. Globally it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2-17 years have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect in the past year. Experiencing violence in childhood impacts lifelong health and wellbeing. Target 16.2 of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development is to "End abuse exploitation trafficking and all forms of violence against torture of children." Around the world 168 million children are engaged in child labor while 100 million live or work in the streets.

In Africa 50% of the child population is estimated to have experienced or witnessed some of violence (physical, emotional or sexual). The situation even continues to worsen where children experience several forms of human rights violations.

According to Ekiugbo, (2023). In Nigeria is not an exception to the global trend of domestic violence, which is occurring in many communities. While the public's understanding and criticism of these concerns have grown in recent years, the abuser's control and authority, as well as the victim's fear, intimidation, and humiliation, remain a hidden and ongoing problem. Families with ongoing disputes are more likely to have children who struggle with personality adjustment and are at risk for a variety of physical, mental, and sexual health issues in the short and long term. Young individuals who are exposed to domestic violence are more vulnerable to these effects. Studies have also shown that these kids are more likely to grow up with emotional and behavioral issues including insecurity and adolescent misbehavior. Due of marriage's prominence in society, domestic violence is of concern to everyone, especially high school students on their way to becoming mature adults and future leaders.

In South Africa (Johannesburg), According to Rasool, (2022). indicates that adolescents have witnessed up to 2.8 incidents of domestic violence. Adolescents were more likely to witness physical and sexual violence among family members. In addition, the results suggest differential exposure by gender, with boys being more likely than girls to have reported witnessing sexual domestic violence. Girls were however more likely than boys to report witnessing physical and emotional domestic violence. The impact of the high levels of violence that adolescents are exposed to needs to be addressed, since this could result in the perpetuation of domestic violence across generations

In Tanzania, over 72 % of individuals aged between 13-24 years have experienced physical violence before the age of 18. The study shows that mostly the caregivers other adult relatives and teachers are most commonly reported suspects of physical and emotional violence towards children in Tanzania with corporal punishment considered normative according to Martin, et al. (2021)

Locally in Kenyan society tends to penalize the victim of domestic violence more than the culprit. The government of Kenya through the Ministry of Labor and social protection launched the Violence against children survey report in (2019- 2023). This survey shows that nearly half of females and more than half of males experienced some form of violence during childhood. Physical violence is most common from the parents and caregivers. The report however highlights concerning trends which showed increase in certain forms of physical and sexual violence among adolescent's girls aged 13-17 years in the past one

year. According to UNICEF, Kenya Bureau of Statistics.

Kayole south being a low-income area domestic violence becomes a concerning issue. Root causes are associated with drug abuse, unemployment of parents or negligence of either one of the parents. Here the young girls aged 12 to 13 years are adversely affected with sexual violence and emotional violence while a lower percentage of male's experience. The male gender tends to face physical abuse and torture due to their physique in nature. Study have been conducted but not looked deeply on how it affects the growth and development of children in low-income areas such as Kayole south hence information gap that this study will fill by conducting the current study. The impact of domestic violence extends beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and societies. It impairs children's productivity and income, further entrenching them in poverty. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including legal, social, and economic interventions to support and empower children, and to break the cycle of violence in their lives.

Statement of The Problem

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts, with devastating impacts on children who witness or experience it directly. Children exposed to domestic violence face significant challenges in their psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive development, which can have long-term implications for their well-being and societal integration (Holt et al., 2021).

Globally, efforts have been made to address domestic violence and its effects, but its prevalence remains alarmingly high, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities. children should grow up in safe and nurturing environments that foster their psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Such environments enable children to thrive and integrate effectively into society as well-rounded individuals. However, domestic violence undermines this ideal, exposing children to toxic stress and adverse experiences that hinder their growth and development (Holt et al., 2021).

Domestic violence remains a persistent challenge despite the government's efforts to address it, such as the adoption of human rights frameworks and the drafting of the Domestic Violence Bill. Reports highlight the significant impact of domestic violence on children, with many affected children in urban informal settlements such as Kayole South being forced into street life, where they often engage in criminal activities due to their exposure to violence

and neglect (Mugambi & Odhiambo, 2023). While existing research has explored domestic violence in broader terms, there remains a gap in understanding its specific effects on children's growth and development, particularly in low-income urban areas. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, and familial conflicts exacerbate the problem, with children bearing the brunt of these adverse conditions. This study seeks to address the identified gaps by focusing on the psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive effects of domestic violence on children in Kayole South, Nairobi County. By examining these dimensions, the study will provide insights into how domestic violence disrupts children's developmental trajectories and increases their vulnerability to negative outcomes such as criminal involvement. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the root causes of domestic violence in low-income urban settings, providing evidence-based recommendations for interventions tailored to the unique challenges of such environments.

Theoretical Review

The study is guided by three key theories; the Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) which explores how various environmental systems from immediate settings like family (microsystem) to broader cultural and societal norms (macrosystem) interact and influence child development. The theory emphasizes how domestic violence within the family disrupts emotional and psychological well-being. The Attachment Theory by John Bowlby (1969) highlights the importance of early caregiver-child bonds, showing that domestic violence can lead to insecure attachments, resulting in emotional instability and difficulties in forming healthy social relationships and the Cognitive Development Theory by Jean Piaget (1936) which explains how violence-related stress and trauma can impair cognitive functions such as memory and problem-solving, leading to academic and developmental challenges. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how domestic violence affects children in Kayole South at both individual and systemic levels.

Empirical literature review

This section reviews literature based on the research objectives as follows;

Domestic violence and its impact on children's psychological and emotional wellbeing

Domestic violence has had a great impact on the psychological and emotional wellbeing of children

which can manifest in various mental health disorders. Recent studies have confirmed that children subjected to such hostile environments often suffer from anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with these conditions becoming chronic if not addressed (Randle, 2020; Evans et al., 2021). The constant exposure to fear, unpredictability, and emotional turmoil in violent households significantly heightens stress, leading to psychological distress that can persist long into adulthood (Cicchetti & Toth, 2016).

These children may exhibit behavioral symptoms such as aggression, withdrawal, and difficulties in emotional regulation (Zeanah et al., 2018). Further, prolonged exposure to domestic violence has been shown to increase the likelihood of developing mental health issues like low self-esteem, depression, and emotional instability, often leading to long-term psychological challenges (Barker et al., 2021). A diverse body of research has supported the role of psychological characteristics in heightened risk for physical illness such cardiovascular health issues. Hostility has been linked to increased sympathetic reactivity to stress, which may represent the biological mechanism by which it increases coronary heart disease (CHD) risk (Davis et al., 1992).

Depression has been associated with increased risk of developing CHD (Anda et al. 1989), increased mortality of children with CHD (Frasure-Smith 2000) and increased sympathetic reactivity to stress (Heim & Nemeroff 2002). Looking on to the attachment theory high quality social relationships and a secure attachment style have been implicated in lowering risk of disease and may alter cardiovascular response to stress (Christenfeld et al., 2000, Cacioppo et al., 1996). Research shows that children see or hear some 40% to 80% of intimate partner violence and that these children suffer the same consequences as those who are abused directly. According to (Saltzman et al., 2005) drew the conclusion that the “psychological scars” borne by children who are exposed to violent interactions between their parents could be more detrimental than those of children who had been the direct targets of physical abuse by a parent.

The social and behavioral consequences of domestic violence on children

The social and behavioral consequences of children who experience domestic violence is profoundly impacted by the disruption of secure attachment bonds and social interactions. According to Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, children rely on stable caregivers for emotional security, and when exposed to domestic violence, these attachments can become insecure or disrupted. This leads to difficulties in regulating

emotions, as children exposed to violent environments often struggle with emotional dysregulation, heightened anxiety, and poor emotional coping mechanisms (Holt et al., 2021).

Moreover, the social consequences are equally severe, as children from violent homes face significant challenges in forming healthy relationships, both with peers and adults (Turner et al., 2018). These children may exhibit distrust, social withdrawal, and poor socialization skills, as they are often unable to model positive interpersonal behavior due to their exposure to violence (Choi et al., 2020). Such emotional and social challenges can hinder their development, not only affecting their immediate relationships but also influencing their capacity to engage in prosocial behavior throughout their lives.

Young children depend on their caretakers to meet their needs for safety and security. Violence in the household undermines these needs, interfering with a child's normal development of trust and later exploratory behavior that leads to autonomy. Because younger children do not have the verbal skills to express their feelings adequately, infants and toddlers who witness violence in their homes show excessive irritability, regressed behavior, sleep disturbances, emotional distress, and fear of being alone. Pre-adolescent children exposed to domestic violence may show a loss of interest in social activities, withdrawal from or avoidance of peers and disruptive behavior in the social setting. These children appeared more responsive to aggressive information relative to non-aggressive cues and often attempted to intervene in fights, with a majority presenting disproportionately with extremity trauma according to (Pediatrics clinic article 2021). Most of the research done there has been no direct link in looking onto the behavioral consequences the externalizing factors and the internalizing factors such as regulating their emotions in a maladaptive way (Cicchetti et al., 2014).

The effects of domestic violence on academic performance and school attendance of children

Academic performance and school attendance is another area significantly impacted by exposure to domestic violence. Chronic stress resulting from domestic violence can disrupt the normal progression of academic progress in children, affecting memory, executive functioning, and problem-solving skills (Shonoff et al., 2012). Studies have found that children exposed to violence often experience delays in cognitive development, including difficulties with academic achievement and reduced IQ scores (Zolotor et al., 2020). Trauma-related stress impairs brain development, particularly in regions responsible for emotional regulation and cognitive processing

(McEwen & Gianaros, 2011). As such, these children may struggle with tasks requiring focus, attention, and critical thinking, which can translate into long-term academic difficulties and a reduced capacity for learning (Anda et al., 2006).

Studies also show that children who are chronically absent from school miss important learning opportunities (Ginsburg et al., 2014). They have an increased risk of low grades (Hancock et al., 2013) and not completing school (Porche et al., 2011), both of which impact long term outcomes for children. Therefore, it is imperative that factors associated with poor school attendance are identified to enable appropriate interventions. Children may leave their home to seek refuge from other people and then onwards to new accommodation.

These accommodation moves may also involve new schools due to changes in maybe hiding from the perpetrator. School age children who leave their homes due to domestic violence have the added stress of leaving their school friends and social network and dealing with the challenges of making new friends and adapting to a new school environment. This may lead to increased absences, school disengagement, conduct and behavior issues, and increased rates of suspension which reduces the level of school attendance (Chen et al., 2011; Nathan et al., 2019). Furthermore, cognitive impairments due to trauma can have lasting effects on children's overall well-being, hindering their ability to perform well in school and affecting their future opportunities (De Bellis et al., 2002).

The coping strategies and support systems available for children affected by domestic violence.

Coping, as defined by Richard and Folkman (1984), involves addressing external and internal pressures that exceed an individual's capabilities. Children who experience to domestic violence often struggle to develop essential coping skills. Coping mechanisms regarding domestic violence refer to the thoughts, relationships and actions and help children process and overcome the experience of violence. Studies shows various coping strategies employed by children witnessing domestic violence from adaptive strategies to avoidance. (Ravi et al., 2018). These go hand in hand with stressing and emotion-focused coping strategies. (Lazarus et al 2018). In order to comprehend the effects of domestic violence on children and how they cope, it is necessary to take into account the children's viewpoints on their own encounters (Goldblatt et al., 2003). According to (Benzies et al., 2009) he suggests that "protective factors" could contribute to the formation of resilience in families during challenging times. These factors,

such as positive relationships, self-esteem, problem-solving abilities, and available resources, could aid in shielding individuals or families from the harmful outcomes of stress or disaster due domestic violence. Given the intentionally individualized nature of DV programs' work with children (Sullivan et al. 2008), the ultimate goal that programs are working toward can be described as enhancing children's subjective well-being, or quality of life (Diener 2009). Subjective well-being has been conceptualized as including three components: life satisfaction, experiencing positive levels of pleasant emotions and experiencing relatively low levels of negative moods. Social well-being includes the extent to which one has the material and interpersonal resources needed to be healthy, safe, and happy. There is considerable empirical evidence describing how social and emotional well-being is impacted by intrapersonal and social factors. While these support systems may differ, they tender to share common features across all domestic violence issues. For instance, across all support systems are expected to treat victims with empathy, support and respect. These support systems are trained to be non-judgmental, respectful of differences, and to be culturally competent. Behaving in this manner has been empirically linked to increases in victim sense of self-efficacy (Maton et al. 2004; Saleebey 2006). The support systems' encouragement, empathy and respect encourage survivors to recognize their skills and strengths. It also addresses the range of physiological factors that can impact people's ability to engage in new behaviors (Hyde et al. 2008).

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design. This design was chosen as it aims to explore the effects of domestic violence on the growth and development of children. The design was suitable for assessing the psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being of children exposed to domestic violence in Kayole South, Nairobi County. The study yielded mixed method approach which allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The target population for this study is 90,089 (KNBS, 2019). The study focused on children aged 6 to 16 years who are exposed to domestic violence in Kayole South, Nairobi County. Out of this population, 11,015 live in Kayole south. This study had a target population of 11015 children (KNBS, 2019). The quantitative sample size with a Margin of Error = $\pm 5\%$ is 371 calculated as below

Population Proportion = 50% (0.5, for maximum variability)

$$\begin{aligned}
 e &= 0.05 \\
 n &= (0.05) \cdot (11015 - 1) + (1.96) \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5 \\
 &= 11015 \cdot (1.96) \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5 \\
 n &= 0.0025 \cdot 11014 + 3.8416 \cdot 0.25 \\
 &= 11015 \cdot 3.8416 \cdot 0.25 \\
 n &= 27.535 + 0.9604 \\
 &= 11015 \cdot 0.9604 \\
 n &= 28.4954 \\
 &= 10583.206 \\
 n &\approx 371.4
 \end{aligned}$$

The qualitative sample size was determined by saturation method. Saturation was achieved after

interviewing 30 respondents. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the study participants from the sample. The sample was stratified based on key variables such as age, gender, and the extent of exposure to domestic violence (e.g., children who witness violence vs. those who experience it). Two (2) focus group discussions (FGDs) of five members each were held with caregivers to gain deeper insights into the broader social and emotional effects of domestic violence within families.

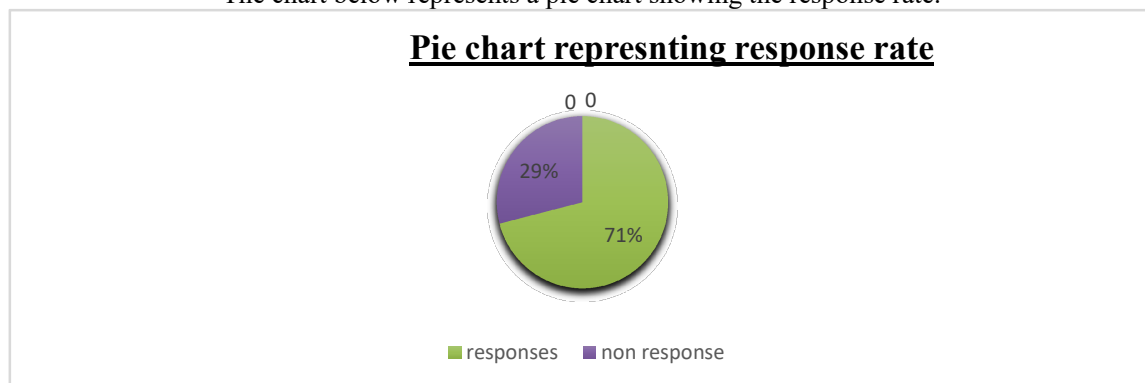
Research Findings and Discussion

Response rate

The table below shows the response rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Responses	50	71%
Non responses	20	29%
Total	70	100%

The chart below represents a pie chart showing the response rate.



Source; researcher 2025

A target population of 70 for the research study, a majority of the key informants of 50 participated in the interviews and answering of the questionnaires while 20 did not respond representing a response of 71%

responded and 29% non-respondents. A high response rate was more than enough to ensure the reliability of the research study

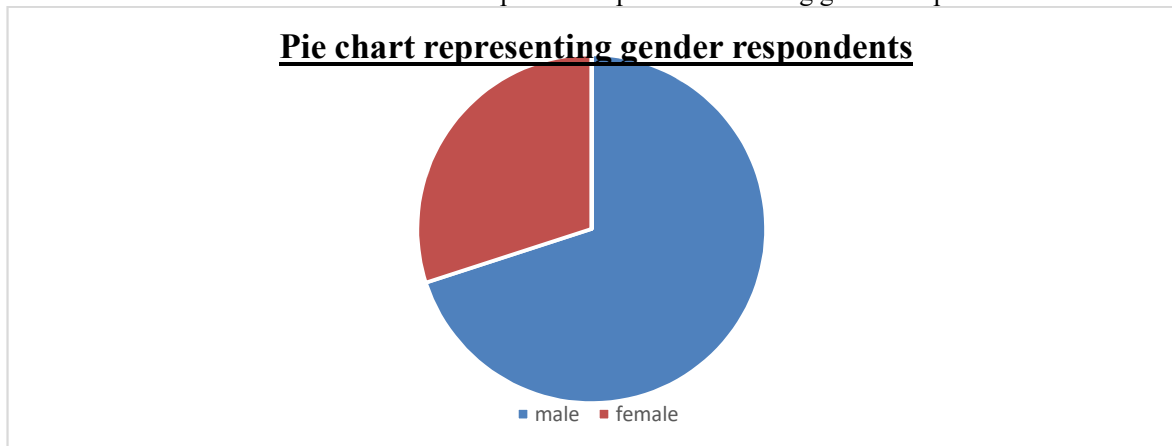
Gender Respondent

Table 4. 1. 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
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Male	35		70 %	
Female	15		30%	
Total	50		100%	

The chart below represents a pie chart showing gender respondents



Source; researcher 2025

As provided by the field research findings from the questionnaire as shown from the above pie chart the male respondents were the majority constituting 70% of the targeted population while the female were the least respondents constituting 30%. These finding

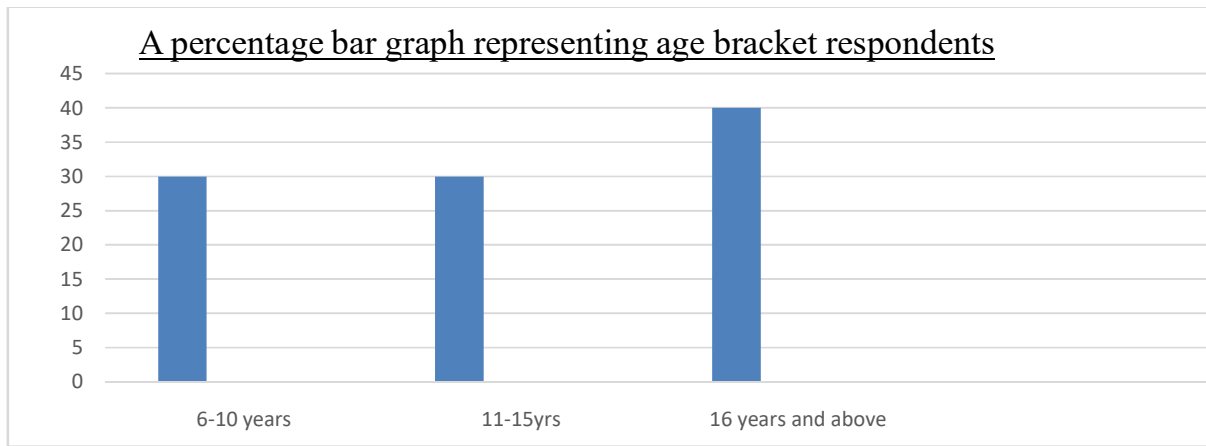
showed that the male gender faces domestic violence than female. The low turnout of female gender exhibited that girls still face domestic violence in a lower rate but still it can be viewed that the female gender is disadvantage due to vulnerability.

Respondent Age Bracket

The table below shows the respondents age bracket

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage
6 – 10	15	30%
11 – 15	15	30%
16 and above	20	40%
Total	50	100%

The chart below represents a percentage bar graph of age bracket respondents.



Source, researcher 2025

As show in the chart above, majority of the key respondent age bracket indicated that majority of the children fall in the age bracket of 16 years carrying a higher percentage of 40% followed by children under 6-10 and children under 11-15 years with a percentage of 30%. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents in Kayole South fall under 16 years and above. This indicated that children in this age range were likely to be greatly affected by domestic violence reason being not having a stronger support system

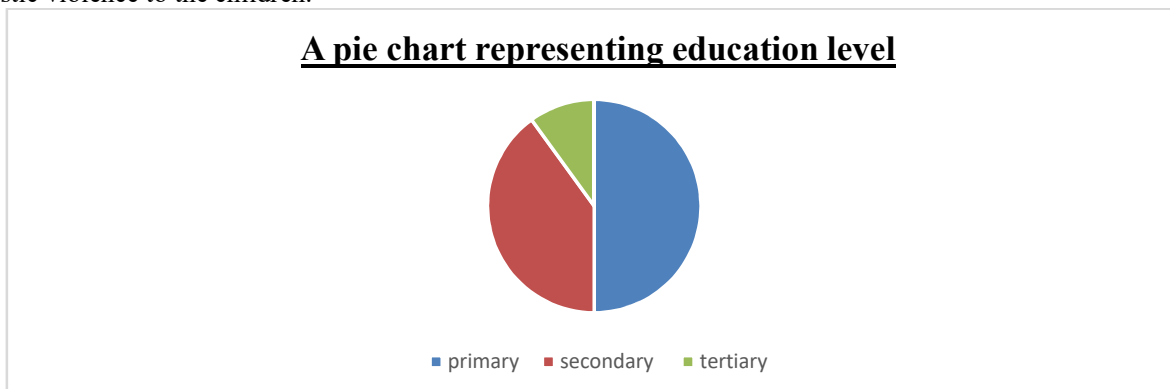
where they can be saved from domestic violence The age bracket of 11-15 years and 6-15years suggested that there is a reduce number or children in this bracket who experience domestic violence maybe because they ran away or left their homes to seek help where necessary or coming from poor backgrounds not being able to defend themselves.

Education Level

The table below shows a representation of education levels

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	25	50%
Secondary	20	40%
Tertiary	5	10%
Total	50	100%

This chart below shows education level of parents and guardians to see how see their level of understanding of domestic violence to the children.



Source, researcher 2025

The findings indicate that a majority number of them have attended the primary level at 50% followed by secondary level at 40% and tertiary level at 10% lastly there was none that never attained education.

These findings indicate each and every one has been able to gain necessary basic education that is required. Having a high percentage of them attaining the primary level education at 50% shows that parents have only a basic schooling which limits their potential ability to understand the great effects of domestic violence to children in Kayole South. However, 40% and 10% having been able to attend secondary and tertiary level respectively constituting a lower number of parents have only been able to attain the tertiary level having a full understanding of domestic violence due to their broader access to information and critical thinking skills.

Discussion of the findings

Emotional and psychological Well-being

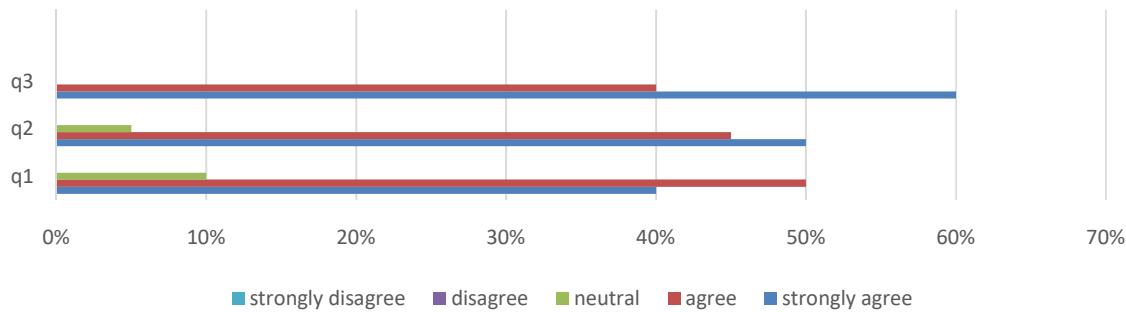
The study established that majority of the respondents representing 70% were of the view that domestic violence causes a huge effect to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of children showing signs of fear, sadness, anxiety, trauma, helplessness and hopelessness. One of the Respondent had this to say

Some of the children here suffer from anxiety. When a child approaches you, you will know that they have an issue. They look gloomy, sad and anxious. This spells doom if you don't intervene.(respondent,2025)

The table below shows the response rate from the questionnaire on the emotional and physical well-being of children affected by domestic violence

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q1.)The child shows signs of sadness fear or anxiety after experiencing domestic violence.	40%	50%	10%	0%	0%
Q2.)The child has expressed feelings of hopelessness due to the violence at home	50%	45%	5%	0%	0%
Q3.)The child has exhibited symptoms such as trauma e.g. nightmares, fear of people due to domestic violence	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

A percentage bar graph representing the impact of domestic violence on the emotional and psychological well-being



Source; researcher 2025

The findings indicated a higher percentage from questionnaire1, questionnaire2 and questionnaire3 a strongly agree of 40%, 50% and 60 % respectively this exhibited a higher observable sign of anxiety, hopelessness in terms of emotional effects and signs of trauma in terms of psychological effects. No single respondent disagreed showing consistency and seriousness of these observations.

Majority of the respondents were of same sentiments that the occurrence of domestic violence on the psychological and emotional effects on children in Kayole. One respondent had this to say;

it is undeniable that any form of domestic violence will have a great impact on the mental state of the child.

Another respondent had this to say;

Having interacted in a focused group discussion with some of the caregivers and a few parents their views were some children are able to express the feelings such as others do not express such feelings making it difficult

for them to know how they feel. This can lead to depression where these children can cause self-harm to themselves or endanger their lives especially children who are 16 years.

Overall domestic violence negatively impacts the emotional and psychological well-being and this led to other adverse effects to them. Caregivers and parents need to find strategic ways in managing children to ensure that the mental state of children is well taken care of.

Social and Behavioral effects

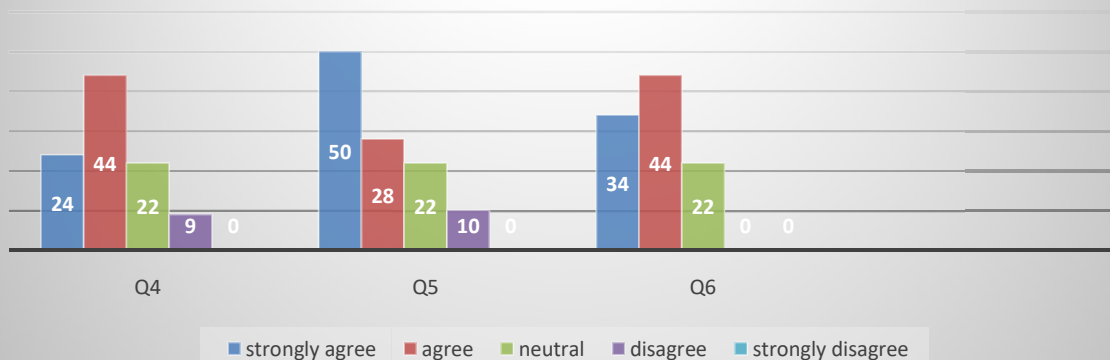
Domestic violence tends to pose a huge effect on children making them adapt some negative behavior to feel a sense of comfort. Such behavior includes increased aggression, withdrawal, social isolation, difficulty in interacting with peers.

The table below shows the response rate on the social and behavioral effects of domestic violence on children in Kayole South.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree				

Q4.) The child's relationship with family members has become strained due to domestic violence	24% 9%	44% 0%	22%				
Q5.) The child's behavior has changed e.g. (increased aggression, withdrawal, social isolation) as a result of domestic violence.	50% 10%	28% 0%	22%				
Q6.) The child faces challenges in interacting with peers due to the emotional effects of domestic violence.	34% 0%	44% 0%	22%				

A bar graph representing the social and behavioural consequences of domestic violence on children



Source; researcher 2025

Majority of the respondents including those interviewed in the FGD were in agreement with the fact that domestic violence has social and behavioral consequences on children. One respondent said;

This communicated that behavior and social changes were widely recognized among children by the caregivers and parents.

Family and other personal relationships with domestic violence can cause children, who are victims of domestic violence, to avoid having good relationships with other people because family relationships make

them anxious about their relationship with other people according to (Rollè et al., 2019; Mittal, 2020).

key informants on the caregivers noticed that children were consistently running away from their homes placing themselves in the streets by forming other relationships with their fellow peers and engaging in risk behaviors such as theft and drug abuse such as bhang.

One caregiver agreed and said;

that some children do not have a positive self-identity due to the feelings and shame about

their experiences with domestic violence which has caused a long-term difficulty in forming relationships with family members and other peers. Children also are too afraid to retain friendships or interact with their fellow peers out fear because the effect of domestic violence is seen. Children need to put to be put in an environment where they feel loved and appreciated after witnessing or experiencing

domestic violence. This will build the self confidence in them.

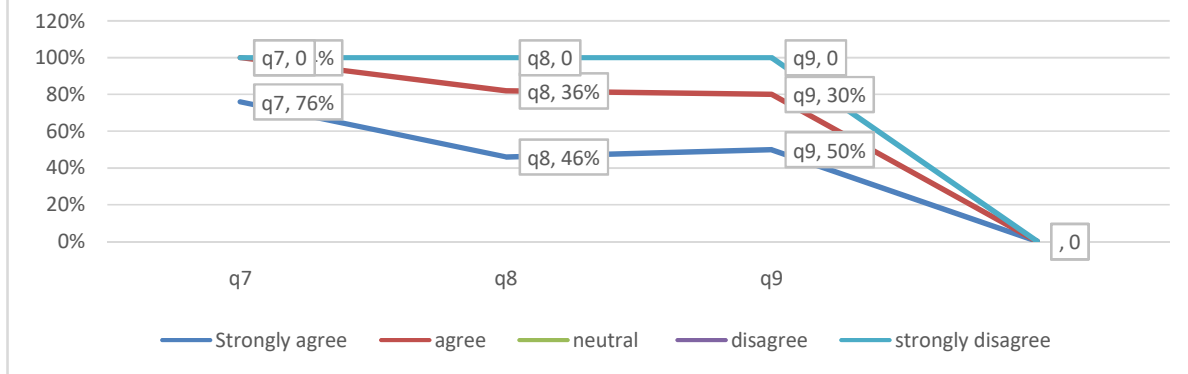
Academic performance and school attendance

As we have seen in in the chart above on how domestic violence affects the psychological well-being of children this automatically affects the academic performance of the children in school.

The table below represents on the effects of domestic violence on the academic performance and school attendance of children.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q7.) Domestic violence has negatively affected the child's academic performance e.g. poor grades or lack of concertation	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%
Q8.) The child has frequent school absenteeism due to stress cause by domestic violence	46%	36%	18%	0%	0%
Q9.) The child has trouble concentrating or completing school work due to emotional impact of domestic violence	50%	30%	20%	0%	0%

A line graph respensitng response rate on the effect of domestic violence on academic performance and schoolattendance of children.



Source; researcher 2025

The findings revealed that there is a higher percentage of the key informants the teachers and caregivers 76% in strongly agree in which it shows how domestic violence has negatively affected the academic performance of children as seen in their poor grades, a majority of the teachers' comments indicated lack of concentration in class. It was observed from the interview discussion with the teachers that children at times appear exhausted and they really struggle to focus on their school work.

Majority of the care givers responded with a higher percentage with a total of 82% of strongly agree and agree signified that there was frequent absenteeism of children affected by domestic violence. This was due to some children ran away from their homes in such of safer places henceforth they tend to miss school and at times. Also a higher percentage of 50% and 30% of strongly agree and agree respectively from the findings in agreeing the child finds it difficult to concentrate in school where a majority of the key informants were of similar view and one had this to say;

mostly the father is being violent makes the mother to move away with the child and the child has to move to another school and being able to adjust to another school becomes a challenge in concentrating or completing school work.

The findings highlight the need of prioritizing education to children affected by domestic violence. As the mental state of such children in school are not at a good state which therefore affecting their studies. Teachers and care givers or parents need to advocate in understanding more the mental well-being of a child and come up with solutions in assisting them.

Coping strategies and support systems

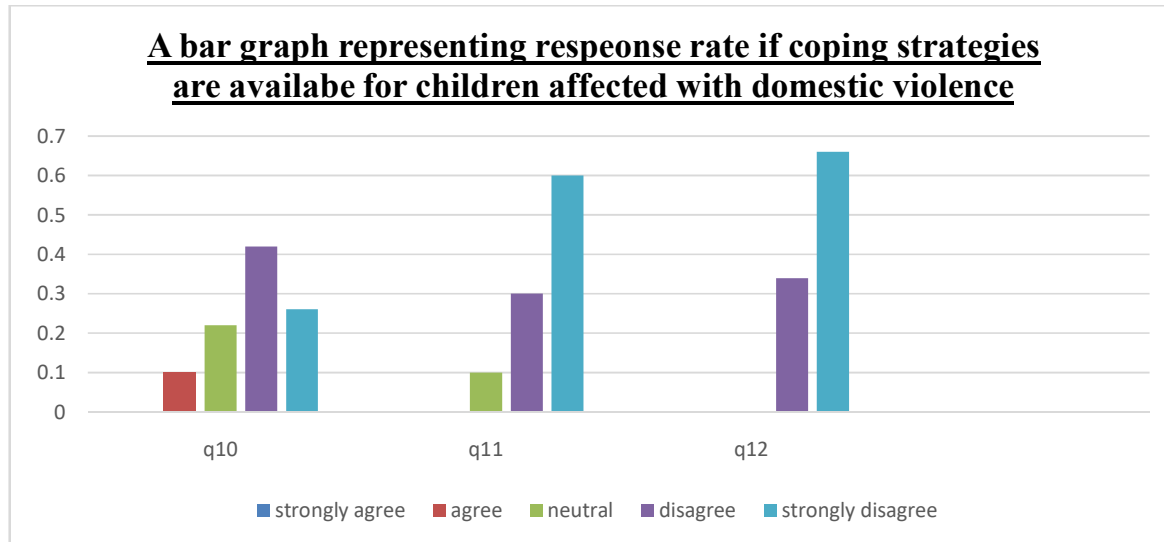
The coping strategies and support systems in aiding children who have witnessed domestic violence seems to be very ineffective in Kayole South.

The table below represents responses to show if coping strategies and support systems are available for children affected by domestic violence.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q10.) The child has access to support systems e.g. counselling services, social services and community support to help cope with effects of domestic violence	0%	10%	22%	42%	26%
Q11.) The child uses coping strategies such as talking to	0	0	10%	30%	60%

trusted adult or engaging in extracurricular activities to manage the stress from domestic violence					
Q12.) The support systems available to the child have been effective in helping them from emotional effects of domestic violence	0	0	0	34%	66%

The chart below shows a bar graph representing the response rate on coping strategies and support systems available for children affected with domestic violence.



Source; researcher 2025

The findings show in question 10 in the questionnaire a significant 10 % response who agree that the child has access to support systems in which a larger percentage of 68% both disagree and strongly disagree believe that children do not have access or are not aware of the support systems available. This has contributed to more emotional effects and poor psychological well-being.

The findings indicate that children especially those who are 11- 16 years may lack the knowledge or the importance of talking to a trusted adult for there is a 90% response of a combined strongly disagree and disagree in question 11 and this may be due to fear and lack of relationships with fellow peers.

One of the key informants had this to say;

having interacted with a 16-year-old girl who had experienced domestic violence had no clue of this social services offered by social workers

Majority key informants, the care givers with a response rate of 66% strongly disagree in question 12 shows that the support systems are not effective in assisting children who have experienced domestic violence. With a high large agreement from the

caregivers, it suggested that there is lack of awareness, ineffective policies and lack of mentorship programs in Kayole South. It clearly indicated that the caregivers are struggling to find the appropriate systems and coping strategies to give to children.

Another key informant had this to say;

the community at large bodies should work together to enhance programs in creating awareness of the available support systems. Encouraging mentorship programs to promote trusted adult child relationship where a child can have a safe space to speak. There is need for policies that prioritize child protection.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Out of a target population of 70 people consisting of 50 children and 20 parents 50 people responded consisting 10 parents and 40 children with a percentage of 80% and 20% respectively. This shows a higher percentage of response from the target population which brought accurate data as shown in the findings in chapter four. From the field research data there were more male respondents than female respondents with a percentage of 70 % and 30 % respectively. This an indication that many children

who are greatly affected by domestic violence is the male gender than the female gender. A majority of the respondents have undergone through primary level at 50% followed by secondary level at 40% and the least was tertiary level at 10%. This was a bit of a challenge in collecting data as many of the respondents didn't have a clear view on the effects of domestic violence. Lastly the respondents were required to fill the age bracket where through findings a higher percentage of 40 % were falling in the age bracket of 16 years and above followed by 30 % and 30% in the age bracket of 11-15 years and 6-10 years respectively. In these findings, it is a clear indication that majority of the children who are 16 years are the ones who are really affected by domestic violence in Kayole South.

Emotional and psychological well-being.

From the findings which was in terms showing signs of fear and sadness, also expressing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness or exhibiting symptoms of trauma such as nightmares fear of people or certain places where there was a higher percentage of agree of 50 %, 45 % and 40 % respectively. There were none of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed a few only were neutral with a total percentage of 25%. This indicated that mental well-being of children is a huge concern which has led to poor growth and development. These findings agree with the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) Ecological Systems Theory where it explains domestic violence at the family level disrupts the child's emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Social and behavioral consequences

From the findings respondents agreed that domestic violence has brought about changes in the social and behavioral ways of children which come with great consequences with a higher percentage of respondents agreeing at 44, 22% and 44 % respectively and strongly agree of 24%, 50 % and 34% respectively. Only a percentage 22% were neutral, only a total 19% disagreed and there was none who strongly disagreed. According to attachment theory by Bowlby's (1969) children rely on parents or caregivers for emotional security but due to domestic violence the relationship becomes strained between children and parents or caregivers. These has led to children in Kayole exhibiting distrust and poor socialization. In interacting with the children, it was difficult in talking to them due to lack of trust and poor communication which became a clear indication that domestic violence has really affected the social and behavioral ways. Some of the children especially the male children were really aggressive and also receiving comments that some of them have been involved in fights and criminal activities.

Academic performance and school attendance

From the findings there was a higher percentage of strongly agree at 76%, 46% and 50% respectively and none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. A total percentage of 38% were neutral on the matter. This clearly shows that domestic violence has had a huge impact on the academic performance of children and the school attendance. In the findings look into the academic performance in terms of poor grades, frequent school absenteeism and trouble in concentrating or completing school work. These has been due to neglect of either the parent or care giver. This may also be due to the child's poor mental being that can have an effect on the academic performance. These study findings agree with the cognitive development theory by Jean Piaget (1936) where it outlines how children develop reasoning abilities at certain stages of growth. Due occurrence of domestic violence it can disrupt these stages affecting their memory, problem solving skills and critical thinking. Having visited Kayole 1 primary school and interacting with some teachers together with the deputy head teacher they were able to give out their views on the performance of children affected by domestic violence mostly those in grade 6 and grade 7 and their performance was low where some are not able to complete their assignments some miss school for even a full term. The teachers say that they try the best to bring out a better result of the pupils despite the difficulties. Some of the children have even dropout of school due to neglect from the parents.

Coping strategies and support systems

There was a strong negative response on strongly disagree at a percentage of 26%, 60% and 66% in supporting that there are less available coping strategies and support systems for children affected by domestic violence with none respondents who strongly agreed with this matter. Only a total percentage of 15% were neutral and a percentage of 42%, 24% and 34 % who disagreed. With none strongly agreeing it shows that these systems are not well known or they are not advocated to children affected by domestic violence. In the study findings you it is more evident that coping strategies such as talking to trusted adult or a caregiver or engaging in extracurricular activities such as sports seems to be difficult for the children to do so. Maybe because of unresolved emotional issues that leads to social isolation and the child keeps distant. Most counsellors have found it difficult in engaging children to talk or understand how they feel. There are fewer counselling officers and services in Kayole and they are not able to reach out to children who are facing domestic violence and those that are

able to attain such services they are not much effective to helping these children.

Conclusion

The study revealed that domestic violence significantly hinders the growth and development of children, particularly affecting their emotional, psychological, social, and academic well-being. It established strong links between domestic violence and negative outcomes such as poor school performance, behavioral issues, and inadequate emotional support. Additionally, the research found that existing coping strategies and support systems for affected children are largely ineffective. In Kayole South, a low-income area, domestic violence is widespread, driven by underlying issues such as unemployment, marital conflicts, substance abuse, and financial instability—all of which contribute to the poor development of children in the community.

Recommendations

1. The study recommends enhancement of public education and awareness campaigns in Kayole South to promote early detection and reporting of domestic violence, ensuring timely interventions to safeguard children's emotional and physiological well-being.
2. Introduce counseling services and behavior management programs in schools to address the social and behavioral challenges faced by children exposed to domestic violence, fostering positive peer relationships and emotional stability.
3. Establish targeted academic support initiatives, such as remedial classes and attendance monitoring systems, to help children affected by domestic violence improve their academic performance and maintain regular school attendance.
4. Expand access to child-focused support services—including safe spaces, mentorship programs, and community-based counseling to enhance coping strategies and resilience among children exposed to domestic violence in Kayole South.

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