Extensiveness of Children's Self-Protection Training Strategy By Parent-Teacher on Enhancing Curbing of Abuse in Public Primary Schools In Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania

[1]**Mary Jerome Mmass, **[2]**Rev. Dr. Eugene Lyamtane, **[3]**Dr. Fortunatus M. Mbua**

1. Masters Student at Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania
2. Lecturer, Department of Education, Psychology and Curriculum Studies, Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania
3. Lecturer, Department of Education, Psychology and Curriculum Studies, Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the extent Children's Self-Protection Training Strategy by Parent-Teacher Enhance Curbing Abuse in Public Primary Schools in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania. The Ecological Systems Theory (1979) guided this study. This study employed a convergent research design under a mixed-methods approach. The study targeted 82 primary schools, 1 social welfare officer, 82 heads of schools, 1,766 teachers, 7,570 standard seven pupils, and 328 parents (from the school committee), resulting in a total target population of 9,737. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select respondents. The sample included 12 public primary schools, 1 Social Welfare Officer, 12 headteachers, 240 teachers and 98 Standard Seven pupils, and 12 parents, totaling 363 respondents. The study utilized questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussion for data collection. Two educational planning and administration experts from Mwenge Catholic University validated the instruments. A pilot study was conducted in two public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality. The reliability of the Likert-type questionnaires was ensured using Cronbach's Alpha, with values of .866 for teachers. The trustworthiness of the interview guide was ensured through peer debriefing and triangulation. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, with descriptive statistics (Means, Frequencies, and Percentages) for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The study adhered to ethical considerations throughout the research process. The study found that public primary parent-teacher training in self-protection strategies reduces incidents of child abuse in public primary schools. The study concludes that Kinondoni Municipal primary schools train children in self-protection strategies to reduce incidents of child abuse in primary schools by equipping pupils with essential knowledge and practical skills to recognize and respond to abuse. However, inconsistent implementation, inadequate teacher training on child protection, and inadequate follow-up mechanisms to reinforce the skills learned hinders its extensiveness of the training. The Ministry of Education should integrate self-protection training as a core subject within the curriculum, delivered through participatory methods like role-playing and storytelling.

Keywords: Parent-Teacher, Child Abuse, Self Protection, Training Strategy.

1. Introduction

Child protection in education is globally recognized as a fundamental aspect of ensuring children's holistic development and well-being, forming a critical foundation for their ability to learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to society (Marzullo 2021). This commitment aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, Target 4.a, which aims to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all (UNESCO, 2015). Despite the recognized importance of protective strategies in education, school-related violence remains a pressing challenge globally. According to UNESCO (2023), an estimated 246 million

children and adolescents experience violence in and around schools every year, with Sub-Saharan Africa bearing a significant burden due to limited protection systems and capacity gaps in enforcing safeguarding policies. This underscores the urgent need for countries to strengthen preventive strategies such as child protection clubs, awareness campaigns, and inclusive teacher-parent-child training models to create safe and nurturing environments where children can thrive and learn free from harm.

According to article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, violence against children consists of all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. The World Health Organization (WHO) asserted that violence against children and its devastating consequences remain a major health and social issue. Data shows that every five minutes, a child dies as a result of violence (WHO, 2024). Global estimates indicate that one billion children over half of all children aged 2-17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence in the past 12 months alone while nearly 3 in 4 children aged 2-4 years repeatedly suffer physical punishment or psychological violence at the hands of parents or caregivers (WHO, 2024). However, violence against children remains a critical global issue, with devastating consequences for their health and well-being.

Globally, children's self-knowledge has emerged as a vital strategy in a decrease of child abuse within public primary schools. Through "Speak Up Be Safe" curriculum in the United States and the "Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum" in Australia have demonstrated measurable impact (Gubbels et al. 2021). Also, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2021) revealed that schools implementing self-protection training saw a 28% increase in students' ability to recognize abusive behaviors and a 35% improvement in reporting mechanisms. Similarly, in South Australia, children who received structured self-protection education were 42% more likely to disclose abuse compared to those without training (Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2020). Despite the successes, disparities in the implementation of training persist, highlighting the critical issue of the uneven integration of the strategies across all public primary schools, even in developing nations.

Child abuse in Africa has reached critical levels, particularly in countries like Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Kenya, where children face physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and neglect, with devastating consequences on their well-being (Ifayomi et al., 2024). In Nigeria, the situation is especially severe among vulnerable groups such as street children and those in conflict zones, worsened by a lack of open communication between parents and teachers, which allows abuse to go unchecked (Ariyo, 2021; Balogun et al., 2020). Addressing this crisis requires a proactive and coordinated response, with schools playing a central role in providing safe, supportive environments. Evidence from Sudan and Uganda highlights the positive impact of counseling, mentorship, and safe spaces in helping children build trust and speak out against mistreatment (Gudovitch et al., 2021; Edwards et al., 2023). Moreover, empowering children with knowledge of their rights and protection strategies fosters resilience and encourages self-advocacy (Fantaye et al., 2022). However, these promising interventions, inconsistent implementation across Sub-Saharan Africa continues to hinder meaningful progress, underscoring the urgent need for stronger, more reliable child protection systems.

In Tanzania, the intersection between a safe, supportive learning environment and pupils' academic performance has increasingly drawn attention, particularly through the efforts of organizations such as UWaWa (Ushirikiano wa Wazazi na Walimu) (Collaboration between Teachers and Parents'), which has prioritized initiatives aimed at fostering discipline, pupils' protection and supporting students with special needs (Eather et al., 2022). The initiatives encompass educational programs on self-protection to provide targeted support for at-risk pupils. Yet, recent data from the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) underscores a disturbing escalation in child abuse cases within Dar es Salaam's primary schools between 2021 and 2023, with Kinondoni District consistently reporting the highest incidence rates 60% in 2021, 59% in 2022, and a peak of 71% in 2023.

While Ilala District reported similarly high figures, other districts such as Temeke, Ubungo, and Kigamboni demonstrated relatively lower prevalence (URT, 2023). The dominant forms of abuse include physical and emotional maltreatment, alongside rising reports of child labor and neglect, particularly within Kinondoni. Alarmingly, Save the Children (2023) reports that many of the violations are perpetrated by individuals

entrusted with children's care, including parents, guardians, teachers, and extended family members. The substantial rise in child abuse cases in 2023, including the tragic loss of two children, highlighted the urgent need to strengthen child protection efforts through direct and practical measures such as children's self-protection training. Therefore, this study investigated on the Extensiveness of the Children's Self-Protection Training Strategy on Curbing Child Abuse in Public Primary Schools in Kinondoni Municipality.

2. Statement of the Problem

Child abuse remains a pressing problem in Tanzania, as in other parts of the world, with profound psychological, emotional and physical implications for children and their general well-being and society as a whole. Parents, religious leaders, head teachers, teachers and organizations are warned about the future well-being of the children and the generation of Tanzanians. Reviewed Studies by Simpson (2021) and Vedasto et al., (2023) reveal that, despite efforts to address cases of child abuse in the new papers, radio, televisions and social media, prevalence remains high as also indicated by recent report by Legal and Human Rights Center which indicate child abuse is on the rise and is the leading violation of human rights in Tanzania (LHRC 2022). The report documented 350 and 370 cases of violence against children in 2022 and 2023, respectively, with 81% of them being sexual abuse, posing substantial challenges to children's safety and development within the context of primary schools and homes where children spend portions of their time. Reviewed Studies by Simpson (2021) and Vedasto et al., (2023) have been introduced to curb the problem of child abuse in schools and at home one among them being children's self-protection training strategy. None of the reviewed studies adequately addressed the children's self-protection training strategy on curbing child abuse in public primary schools. It's in this regard that this study investigated the Extensiveness of the Children's Self-Protection Training Strategy on curbs child Abuse in Public Primary Schools in Kinondoni Municipality.

3. Research Question

This study will be guided by the following research question.

To what extent does children's self-protection training strategy help to curb child abuse in public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality?

4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on school-based child protection strategies by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of children's self-protection training in reducing incidents of child abuse within public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality. It addresses a critical gap in existing literature, particularly within the Tanzanian context, where such interventions remain under-researched. By examining how equipping children with self-protection skills influences their ability to recognize, resist, and report abusive situations, the study reinforces and expands the application of child protection and empowerment theories in practical settings. The findings offer policymakers valuable insights for shaping evidence-based child safety policies tailored to high-risk urban areas. Additionally, the study provides teachers, headteachers, and educational practitioners with practical guidance for integrating self-protection training into school programs, while encouraging stronger collaboration with parents and community stakeholders to create safer and more responsive learning environments.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in (1979), which views a child's development as the outcome of interactions within multiple, interrelated environmental systems. These systems include the microsystem (such as home, school, and peer groups), the mesosystem (interconnections between these immediate environments), the exosystem (external influences like parental employment and community services), the macrosystem (societal norms, laws, and cultural beliefs), and the chronosystem (the influence of time and life events) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the context of this study, the theory offers a structured way to examine how protective behaviors in children nurtured not just through school-based interventions, but also through active involvement from families and communities working together to curb child abuse and enhance children's safety (Tudge et al., 2009).

While the theory excels in explaining external environmental influences on child development, one limitation is its limited attention to the internal psychological processes of the child such as personal resilience, coping skills, or emotional intelligence which also play a vital role in how children respond to threats like abuse (Miller, 2022). However, this limitation does not diminish the theory's practical value in this study. Its comprehensive and collaborative approach makes it an ideal foundation for designing and implementing child protection interventions that are context-sensitive, sustainable, and community-driven.

Ecological Systems Theory is particularly relevant to this study as it supports a holistic and multi-layered understanding of how self-protection training can empower children in public primary schools to prevent and respond to abuse. It emphasizes the critical roles of teachers, parents, community institutions, and policy environments in shaping children's ability to recognize, resist, and report abuse (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The theory aligns with the study's goal of promoting school-based child protection strategies by highlighting the importance of coordinated support systems across home, school, and community. It validates the design of self-protection programs that are not limited to classroom instruction but are integrated within a broader framework that engages multiple stakeholders in creating safe and supportive environments for children (Ellis et al., 2022).

6. Review of Empirical Studies
This section focuses on a review of empirical studies, basing on the research themes developed from the research question on the Extensiveness of the Children's Self-Protection Training Strategy on Curbing Child Abuse in Public Primary Schools in Kinondoni Municipality.

6.1 The Extent to which Training Children in Self-Protection Strategies Helps Curb Child Abuse in Primary Schools
This study aimed to establish the extent to which training children in self-protection strategies can reduce child abuse in primary schools. It focuses on empowering children with the knowledge and skills to recognize threats and seek help, aiming to enhance their safety. The research emphasizes the significance of proactive educational programs in creating a safer school environment and lowering the incidence of abuse.

Barlow et al. (2022) conducted a study about unpacking School-Based Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: A Realist Review in China. The study adopted a quantitative design, supplemented with citation tracking to locate relevant literature. The study considered evaluation studies that focused on students aged 5–18 years, who were enrolled in primary or secondary schools. Descriptive data were analyzed in terms of means, frequencies, and percentages. The study concluded that School-based child sexual abuse prevention education can be successful by tailoring programs to participants' cognitive developmental levels, repeated exposure to key concepts and skills, interactive delivery methods, and positive feedback. On the other hand, the study provides valuable insights within the Chinese context using qualitative methods with a little focus on different educational systems, cultures, and geographic areas like Tanzania. Additionally, the minimal quantitative data suggests a need for broader approaches. Hence, the current study was conducted in Tanzania to provide a detailed interpretation and the outcomes using a mixed method in generalizing findings for more comprehensive results.

Bustamante et al. (2019) conducted a study about "I have the right to feel safe": Evaluation of a school-based child sexual abuse prevention program in Ecuador. The study aimed to evaluate the immediate and medium-term impact of a 10-week educational program on children's knowledge of CSA self-protection strategies in Ecuador. The study included Children aged 7–12 years from six public elementary schools in Ecuador who were cluster-randomized to either receive the intervention between October and November 2016 (Group 1, k = 4) or between March and April 2017 (Group 2, k = 2). The study used a random sample of students who completed a questionnaire at three time points. The study revealed that the self-protection education provided to pupils increased and maintained child sexual abuse knowledge six months after the intervention finished. On the other hand, programs addressing CSA must carefully balance educating children on self-protection with ensuring psychological safety. The study provides valuable insights within the Ecuador context using quantitative methods with a little focus on different educational systems, cultures, and geographic areas like Tanzania. Additionally, the minimal qualitative data suggests a need for broader

approaches. Hence, the current study was conducted in Tanzania to provide a detailed interpretation and the outcomes using a mixed method in generalizing findings for more comprehensive results.

Wolfersteig et al. (2022) conducted a study about Empowering Elementary and Middle School Youth to Speak Up and Be Safe: Advancing Prevention of Child Maltreatment with a Universal School-Based Curriculum. The study employed a randomized control study employed a pre-, post-, and six-month follow-up design for students in kindergarten to grade 8, approximately ages 5–13 (n = 2797). Surveys measured the efficacy of the curriculum in increasing students' knowledge of safety rules and self-protection strategies. The study concluded that the SUBS curriculum significantly and the education provided to pupils increased pupils' knowledge of safety rules and self-protection strategies, helping them keep themselves and others safe. However, the study finding primarily focused on knowledge acquisition and safety awareness across a broad age range (5–13 years) in a different sociocultural context. The current study sought to build on and extend this work specifically examined the extent to which self-protection training translates into actual reduction of child abuse cases in primary schools, with a focus on the unique social, cultural, and educational environment of Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania.

Kandi et al. (2022) conducted a study about the Significance of Knowledge in Children on Self-Protection of Sexual Abuse: A Systematic Review in Iran. The study used a systematic review, "sexual abuse", "self-protection" and "knowledge" were searched in Scopus, Google Scholar, Ovid, PubMed, and Science Direct as the search words, and after considering the inclusion criteria and excluding irrelevant articles, the relevant articles were included for data extraction. In the included studies, children were educated about sexual abuse, and questionnaires were designed to compare the impact of education and the level of knowledge in children before and after education. The study concluded that education to children about sexual abuse led to 77.43% more awareness and self-protection against sexual abuse and rape. The conclusion that the SUBS curriculum helps students protect both themselves and others is promising. Nevertheless, it's unclear how knowledge gained translates into practical skills in real-life situations, particularly for younger students who may struggle to apply abstract knowledge under stress. , the recent study focused on the extent training children in self-protection strategies helps to curb child abuse in primary school.

Masath et al. (2020) conducted a study about reducing violent discipline by teachers using Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T) in Tanzanian public primary schools. The study was conducted in 6 randomly selected regions in Tanzania. 2 schools were randomly selected in each region (12 in total) that fulfilled the inclusion criteria. 8 students between the ages of 9 to 12 years (N = 960) and 20 teachers from each school (N = 240) were included in the trial. Using guided questionnaire the study concluded that the intervention Interaction Competencies with Children - for Teachers (ICC-T) aims to reduce teachers' positive attitudes towards and use of violent discipline in Tanzanian primary schools. However, the study details little on any ethical safeguards for students who may report experiences of violence during data collection. Therefore, the recent study involved an ethical consideration that ensured that participants were treated with respect and dignity. This includes informed consent, ensuring participants understand the study and agree to participate without coercion.

7. Demonstration of Research Gap
The reviewed literature were conducted studies in diverse contexts such as China, Ecuador, Iran, the United States, and Tanzania consistently revealed school-based educational programs increase children's awareness of abuse, improving their knowledge of self-protection strategies. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in foreign socio-cultural and policy environments limiting their applicability to Tanzania's unique educational, cultural, and institutional settings (Barlow et al., 2022; Bustamante et al., 2019; Kandi et al., 2022; Wolfersteig et al., 2022). Methodologically, several studies relied on either qualitative or quantitative methods with a little incorporation of localized, mixed-method approaches that capture both quantitative outcomes and qualitative insights (Bustamante et al., 2019; Masath et al., 2020). In terms of findings, while these studies highlight increased knowledge and awareness, they often fall short in evaluating the actual implementation extent and sustainability of such training programs, especially in resource-constrained and ethically sensitive environments (Wolfersteig et al., 2022; Masath et al., 2020). This gap underscores the

need for a context-specific investigation into the extent of children's self-protection training strategies in curbing child abuse in public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality.

8. Research Methodology

This study used a convergent research design under a mixed-method, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively understand the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study targeted 82 primary schools, 1 social welfare officer, 82 heads of schools, 1,766 teachers, 7,570 standard seven pupils, and 328 parents from Kinondoni municipality. Therefore, the total population will be 9,737 respondents from Kinondoni municipality (URT, 2023). Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select 12 public primary schools, 1 Social Welfare Officer from Kinondoni Municipality, 12 headteachers chosen via total population sampling, 240 teachers and 98 Standard Seven pupils selected using the Yamane formula for statistical accuracy, and 12 parents chosen through purposive sampling to capture specific insights relevant to the study's objectives, totaling 363 respondents. The research instruments for data collection included questionnaires (teachers), interview guides (Social Welfare Officer, Parents and Headteacher), and a Focus Group Discussion for pupils. Two research experts specializing in educational planning and administration from Mwenge Catholic University validated the research instruments. A pilot study was conducted in two public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality, which consisted of 24 teachers and 2 headteachers, totaling 26 respondents.

The reliability of the Likert-type questionnaires was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with values of .866 for teachers. The trustworthiness of the interview guide was ensured through peer debriefing and triangulation techniques to confirm the findings' credibility, conformability, transferability, trustworthiness, and dependability. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used in quantitative data analysis. Descriptive data were analyzed in terms of means, frequencies, and percentages. For the qualitative data, Otter software was used to transcribe interviews, organize and summarize the information, and identify important keywords and themes. In addition, coding and categorizing, extracting quotes for referencing and conducting thematic analysis following the seven stages outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2023). Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were followed throughout the study.

9. Findings and Discussions

This study sought to investigate the Extent Training Children in Self-Protection Strategy helps Curb Child Abuse in Primary schools. A five-level Likert scale was utilized for data analysis, with Very Low Extent, VLE =1, Low Extent, LE = 2, Moderate Extent, ME=3, High Extent, HE = 4, Very High Extent, VHE = 5. The frequency and percentage distribution of responses were categorized as follows: ≤ 20=extremely minority; 21-49=minority; 50-59=moderate; 60-69=majority; 70- 89=very high majority; 90-99=extremely majority; 100=overwhelming majority (Habibpour et al, 2009). According to Warmbrod (20214) a mean score greater than 3 indicated that training children in self-protection strategies helps to curb child abuse in Primary School, while a mean score lower than 3 suggested otherwise. A mean score precisely equal to 3 implied uncertainties regarding the training of children on self-protection strategy help to curb child Abuse in Primary School. Responses from teachers are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1 : Teachers' (TRs) Responses on the Extent of Training Children on Self-Protection Strategy Help to Curb Child Abuse in Primary School (n=240 Teachers)

S/N	Statement	VLE		LE		ME		HE		VHE		M
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
i.	Self-protection training improves children's ability to identify unsafe situations	5	2.1	23	9.6	81	33.8	106	44.2	25	10.4	3.51
ii.	Personal safety education in schools lowers child abuse risk	5	2.1	19	7.9	82	34.2	104	43.3	30	12.5	3.56
iii.	Awareness campaigns boost children's resilience to abuse.	9	3.8	20	8.3	88	36.7	89	37.1	34	14.2	3.50
iv.	Emergency drills help children respond to threats effectively.	4	1.7	36	15.0	78	32.5	84	35.0	38	15.8	3.48
v.	Understanding safe vs. unsafe	11	4.6	22	9.2	93	38.8	88	36.7	26	10.8	

		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	Mean
	touch reduces abuse vulnerability.											3.40
vi.	Role-play prepares children for potential abuse situations.	13	5.4	46	19.2	69	28.7	82	34.2	30	12.5	3.29
vii.	Regular training reduces child abuse cases in schools.	8	3.3	15	6.3	76	31.7	102	42.5	39	16.3	3.62
viii.	Assertiveness training helps children avoid abuse.	8	3.3	15	6.3	57	23.8	106	44.2	54	22.5	3.76
ix.	Ongoing workshops build confidence in handling unsafe scenarios.	3	1.3	20	8.3	67	27.9	102	42.5	48	20.0	3.72
x.	Teaching safe vs. unsafe touch lowers chances of victimization.	10	4.2	14	5.8	72	30.0	96	40.0	48	20.0	3.66
	Grand Mean											**3.6**

Source: Field Data (2025)

KEY: 1= Very Low Extent (VLE), 2= Low Extent (LE), 3=Moderate (M), 4=High Extent (HE), 5=Very High Extent (VHE), F=frequencies, %=Percentages

Data in Table 1 indicate that 54.6% of teachers were of the view that a high extent that children's ability to identify unsafe situations to a high extent improves participation in self-protection training while 33.8% of teachers rated it to a moderate extent and 11.7% of teachers rated it to low extent and very low extent. The mean score of 3.51 also falls under a a high extent level. The data imply that training programs implemented to enhance children's self-protection skills are well-received and meaningfully to the beneficiaries. The positive rating reflects that children are not only learning self-protection strategies but are also applying them in real-life situations. Teachers perceive children's ability to recognize unsafe situations as a crucial factor in improving their engagement in self-protection training. When children are equipped with the ability to identify risks, they become more proactive in responding to potential threats. This heightened awareness fosters a sense of responsibility and encourages them to take preventive measures.

During face-to-face interview with SWO regarding children's ability to identify unsafe situations in improving participation in self-protection training, had the following to add;

"Many children who have participated in the training sessions exhibit greater confidence in handling difficult situations. They are more vocal about their concerns, and they tend to make safer choices in their daily interactions. Teachers and parents have also reported that children who receive self-protection training are more aware of their surroundings and are quicker to report any threats they encounter (SWO, Personal Communication, 20th February 2025)".

The information from the social welfare officer and head teacher implies that the training encourages children to be more vocal about their safety concerns however,there some childrens still . This suggests that they are more likely to seek help, report suspicious behavior, or discuss their experiences with trusted adults, which is crucial in preventing harm.

To top up on the above information in one of the primary schools 12 during the focus group discussion pupils had the following to say; *"Yes! Because when we know what is dangerous, the training that had to be given provides us to handle the situations and stay safe. Also, helps us listen more in training and take it seriously". (FGD12, Personal Communication, 19th February 2025).*

However, during an interview with a headteacher 10 from a different primary school, a contrasting view was expressed regarding children's readiness and engagement in identifying unsafe situations:

"While the training is a good initiative, we still see many children failing to fully grasp the seriousness of the threats discussed. Some treat the sessions like just another lesson, and we have had cases where

children, despite being trained, did not act or report when exposed to risky encounters. This makes us question how deeply the training resonates with every child." (HT 10, Personal Communication, 12nd February 2025).

This dissenting view highlights that despite the general success of self-protection training, challenges remain particularly in ensuring that all children internalize and consistently apply the knowledge and skills taught. Factors such as age, maturity, learning environment, and prior exposure to trauma influence children's ability to recognize and respond appropriately to unsafe situations. The insights from teachers, the social welfare officer, focus group discussions, and the critical headteacher interview suggest that while many children benefit from self-protection training and demonstrate increased safety awareness, there are still gaps in comprehension and behavior change among some participants. These variations indicate the need for a more individualized and context-sensitive approach to training, ensuring reinforcement through family, school, and community collaboration. This finding aligns with the study by Maleki et al. (2022), which demonstrated that such interventions significantly enhance children's knowledge, protective skills, and ability to identify appropriate responses to potential threats. Furthermore, it resonates with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasizes the interconnected influence of multiple environmental systems particularly the microsystem (family and school) and mesosystem (interrelations among immediate settings) in shaping a child's developmental outcomes. Embedding protective interventions within these systems not only strengthens children's ability to recognize and report danger but also promotes sustained behavioral change and resilience.

Data in Table 1 show that 55.8% of teachers indicated the high extent on the inclusion of personal safety education in the curriculum reduces the likelihood of child abuse in schools. While 34.2% of teachers graded at a moderate extent and 10.0% rated it to low extent. The mean score is 3.56, reflects a high extent of reduction of child abuse in schools. The data imply that teachers recognize the importance of equipping children with the knowledge and skills to understand and respond to potential threats. Personal safety education, when incorporated into the school curriculum, provides children with critical information on how to protect them, identify unsafe situations, and know where to turn for help. These results are supported by the views of the parent 12 and Headteacher 9 during face-to-face interview conversations. Parent 12 during the interview commented:

Parent 12 commented that:

"Yes, I think it would be very helpful. Children need to learn how to protect themselves, especially when we, as parents, are not around. It teaches them how to recognize dangerous situations, like when someone tries to touch them inappropriately or asks them to keep secrets that make them uncomfortable. If children are aware of these things, they react and tell a trusted adult (P12, Personal Communication, 24th February 2025)".

This statement implies that parents recognize the importance of personal safety education in equipping children with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from potential harm. It suggests that children, when educated about unsafe situations, such as inappropriate physical contact or being asked to keep harmful secrets, will be better able to identify the risks and take appropriate action. The emphasis on children being able to recognize danger highlights that awareness and preparedness help children feel empowered to speak out and seek help from trusted adults, ultimately reducing their vulnerability to abuse.

Headteacher 9 added on the above information during face-to-face interview by saying that;

"Yes, I firmly believe that including personal safety education in the curriculum is crucial. It plays a major role in helping children understand their rights and recognize what constitutes abusive behavior. By teaching them how to identify unsafe situations, we empower them to protect themselves and seek help when necessary (HT9, Personal Communication, 10th February 2025)".

To further support this viewpoint, during an interview with a Ward Education Officer (WEO), additional insights were shared regarding institutional support for personal safety education:

"In my observation, schools that have formally included personal safety lessons in their timetables show noticeable improvement in pupils' behavior and awareness. Children are asking more questions, reporting issues sooner, and showing confidence when something doesn't feel right. But we still have a long way to go this content must be reinforced not only in schools but also at home and through local community engagement" (WEO, Personal Communication, 26th February 2025).

The information gathered from teachers, parents, school leaders, and education officials indicates the critical importance of personal safety education in protecting children. When incorporated into the school curriculum, children have been found to be equipped with the essential knowledge and skills needed to identify unsafe situations and take appropriate action. The findings align with the study by Wolfersteig et al. (2022), which demonstrated that the Speak Up Be Safe (SUBS) curriculum considerably improves pupils' understanding of safety rules and self-protection strategies, thereby reducing the incidence of child maltreatment. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which posits that a child's development is influenced by multiple interconnected environmental systems. Personal safety education, when supported by both schools (microsystem) and families (also part of the microsystem), and reinforced through community awareness and societal values (exosystem and macrosystem), creates a multi-layered protective network around the child. This integrated approach strengthens children's ability to recognize risks, take action, and seek support, ultimately reducing their vulnerability to abuse.

Data in Table 1 also show that 51.3% of teachers indicated to a high extent the awareness campaigns in self-protection strategies increase children's resilience against abuse, while 36.7% of teachers rated the statement to at a moderate extent and 12.1% of teachers rated it to a low extent and very low extent. The mean score is 3.50, connates a high extent ability. The data imply that teachers acknowledged the value of raising awareness about self-protection strategies as a preventive measure. The campaigns help children understand how to protect themselves, recognize the signs of abuse, and build emotional strength to resist or seek help when faced with potentially harmful situations. These findings are supported by the views of the Headteacher and social welfare officer (SWO) during face-to-face interview conversations. Headteacher 1 commented: *"I believe that awareness campaigns on self-protection strategies play a crucial role in increasing children's resilience against abuse. These campaigns give children the tools and knowledge they need to recognize unsafe situations and respond appropriately". (HT10, Personal Communication, 12nd February 2025)".*

The information from the headteacher implies that awareness campaigns focused on self-protection strategies are vital in helping children develop the skills and confidence to identify and handle potential abusive situations. By providing children with the necessary tools and knowledge, these campaigns empower them to recognize unsafe circumstances and take appropriate action to protect themselves. Essentially, it highlights the role of education and awareness in building children's resilience, making them more capable of resisting abuse and seeking help when needed.

Another social welfare officer (SWO) during a face-to-face interview had the following to add;

"It's true that awareness campaigns are incredibly important. They provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to understand potential risks and how to respond to them. When children are taught how to recognize unsafe situations, they are more likely to take preventive actions and seek help when necessary (SWO, Personal Communication, 20th February 2025)".

To further complement the above insights, during an interview with a primary school headteacher who has directly facilitated awareness sessions, the following viewpoint was shared:

"From my experience, the effectiveness of these campaigns depends on how interactive and consistent they are. In some schools, the message fades quickly if follow-up sessions aren't conducted. Some children initially show understanding, but without reinforcement, they forget the strategies. We need more ongoing activities, not one-time events" (HT5, Personal Communication, 16th January 2025).

The information collected from teachers, the headteacher, and the social welfare officer (SWO) indicates that while awareness campaigns are beneficial, their long-term impact relies on consistent reinforcement and

participatory approaches that ensure children not only understand the content but also retain and apply it over time, awareness campaigns on self-protection strategies helped children identify unsafe situations, enabling them to act proactively and seek help when necessary. This boosts their resilience against abuse and promotes a safer environment. The finding highlights the position of such campaigns in enhancing children's ability to manage and report abuse. The results align with the study by Kiziltepe et al. (2021), which found that the teacher-based "I am learning to protect myself with Mika" program effectively improved self-protection skills in children aged 5 to 7, with sustained benefits two months after the program. The finding also tallies with Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasizes that a child's development is shaped by multiple interacting systems, from immediate settings like family and school (microsystem) to broader societal influences (macrosystem). Awareness campaigns implemented within schools and supported by families and communities represent the interplay between these systems. By equipping children with knowledge and strategies to protect themselves and by engaging the surrounding adults in creating a safe and responsive environment, these programs leverage various layers of the child's ecology to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to abuse.

Moreover, Data in Table 1 also show that majority of teachers (58.8%) maintained that to a high extent regular reinforcement of self-protection strategies decreases child abuse, while 31.7% of teachers considered it to be at a moderate extent and the extreme minority (9.6%) of teachers rated it to a low extent. The mean score of 3.62, replicates a high extent of regular reinforcement of self-protection strategies on decreasing child abuse in primary schools. The data imply that regular reinforcement of self-protection strategies is highly effective in reducing child abuse. This suggests that embedding self-protection strategies into the everyday routine, children are more likely to remember and act upon them in moments of danger. The results are further corroborated by interviews with the parent 2, who shared views on the regular reinforcement of self-protection strategies as effective in decreasing child abuse. During the face-to-face interview parent 2 had the following to complement the above information, who said that;

> "It should be a collaborative effort. Teachers and parents are both important influences in a child's life. When children hear the same messages at home and school, it strengthens the impact of those messages. Parents and teachers need to work together to create a safe environment where children feel supported and know exactly what steps to take if they ever find themselves in an uncomfortable or unsafe situation (P2, Personal Communication, 6th January 2025)".

The information from the teacher and parent suggests regular reinforcement of self-protection strategies, especially consistently on implementation across home and school settings, strengthens children's ability to protect themselves. This, in turn, increased their resilience against abuse and created a safer environment for their growth. The finding aligns with the study conducted by Dacka (2022), which emphasized an important role of early prevention measures in both family and non-family environments in protecting children from sexual abuse and its long-term negative impacts. The results also correlate with Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which highlights that children's development is shaped by multiple, interacting systems. Consistently reinforcing self-protection strategies across various levels of a child's environment such as at home, school, and within the community, helps children better recognize unsafe situations and respond appropriately. This interconnectedness of environments, as emphasized by the theory, supports children's resilience and enhances their safety, reflecting the impact of self-protection training in curbing child abuse in primary schools.

Furthermore, data in Table 1 unveil that majority of teachers (66.7%) indicated Children who learn to say 'no' assertively during training to high extent are more likely to avoid abusive situations while minority (23.8%) of teachers rated the statement to a moderate extent and extreme minority (9.6%) of teachers rated it to a low extent and very low extent. The mean score is 3.76, falls under the high extent rate. The data imply that teachers believe that assertiveness is a crucial skill for children to develop in order to protect themselves. This consent helps children recognize when their safety is at risk and respond appropriately, signaling to potential abusers that they are not easily manipulated or coerced.

The results are in line with what was proposed by the headteacher 5 during interview conversations and focus group discussion. When asked about the children learning to say 'no' assertively as effective in helping them avoid abusive situations, headteacher 5 explained:

> "Teaching children to assertively say "no" is one of the most important skills they learn. By empowering children to communicate their boundaries clearly, we help them feel more confident in situations where they might be uncomfortable or unsafe (HT5, Personal Communication, 16th January 2025).

The insights imply that teaching children how to assertively say "no" is essential for their empowerment and protection. It suggests that when children are equipped with the ability to communicate their boundaries effectively, they are better prepared to handle uncomfortable or unsafe situations. This skill fosters confidence and enables them to take control of their personal space, making it less likely for them to tolerate inappropriate behavior or abuse. It highlights the importance of instilling self-confidence and clear communication as tools for safeguarding children.

To strengthen the above information during the focus group discussion with pupils in one of the primary schools 11, who contributed by adding that;

> "It's true when someone asks us to do something that feels wrong, like when someone asks us to keep a secret or touch us in a way that makes us feel uncomfortable, we have been taught to say "no". Sometimes it's hard, especially if the person is someone I trust, like a friend. But I know it's important to protect myself (FGD11, Personal Communication, 6th February 2025)".

However, during a face-to-face interview, headteacher expressed a contrasting opinion regarding the practicality of teaching children to say "no":

> "Honestly, while the idea of teaching children to say 'no' is good in theory, in practice, it doesn't always work. Some children are too shy, fearful, or conditioned to obey adults without question especially in our cultural context where saying 'no' to an elder or authority figure is considered disrespectful. So, while we teach them, not all of them can apply it confidently when it matters most" (HT6, Personal Communication, 19th January 2025).

The information gathered from teachers, focus group discussions, and the headteacher indicates that while psychological barrier hinder the effectiveness of self-protection strategies among children, teaching children to assertively say "no" was one of the most vital skills for safeguarding their well-being. This skill empowered them to make protective decisions, even in challenging situations. The finding supported by the study conducted by Walsh (2022), which highlights that learning to say "no" helps children develop essential skills such as self-reliance, self-discipline, respect, integrity, and the ability to delay gratification, all of which are crucial for success. T The finding also aligns with Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasizes the multiple layers of environmental influence on a child's development, including the microsystem (family, school, peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (external settings that indirectly affect the child), and macrosystem (cultural and societal norms). Training children in self-protection strategies fits within this framework, as it equips them with the skills to navigate and respond to risks within their immediate environments, especially within the school and home settings, while also encouraging stronger collaboration between caregivers, teachers, and the broader community in safeguarding children's well-being.

The study found that parent-teacher training in self-protection strategies reduces incidents of child abuse in public primary schools. This was most evident in areas such as children's ability to say "no" to abusive advances, reporting suspicious behavior, and seeking help from trusted adults' items that scored highest in the data. Interviews with headteachers, social welfare officers and focus group discussion with pupils confirmed noticeable behavioral improvements, particularly in schools using interactive methods like role-playing and peer discussions. The finding goes beyond surface-level observations, highlighting a clear connection between awareness-building and actual behavioral defense mechanisms among pupils. The finding is reinforced by a grand mean score of 3.48, reflecting strong consensus on the training's

effectiveness. This it affirms that parent-teacher collaboration in child safety education is yielding practical outcomes in safeguarding pupils. Suggesting that training among the children should be scaled up and integrated systematically across primary schools to ensure consistency and sustainability. This supports Oshodi et al. (2024) emphasis on participatory child safety education and aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which underscores the role of empowering immediate environments in shaping children's protective behaviors.

10. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Kinondoni Municipal' s Primary schools train children in self-protection strategies which reduces incidents of child abuse in primary schools by equipping pupils with essential knowledge and practical skills to recognize and respond to abuse. The study observed improvements in pupils' ability to assertively say "no," report abusive behaviour, and seek for help. Interactive teaching methods such as role-playing contributed to these behavioural outcomes. However, inconsistent implementation, inadequate teacher training on child protection, and inadequate follow-up mechanisms to reinforce the skills learned hinders its extensiveness of the training.

11. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, to effectively address and reduce incidents of child abuse in Tanzanian primary schools, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and local government authorities should institutionalize self-protection education by embedding it into the official primary school curriculum as a stand-alone life skill subject. This approach is recommended because findings clearly show that children who received systematic training in self-protection demonstrated greater behavioral awareness, assertiveness, and a proactive response to potential abuse. Integrating it as a subject, rather than an occasional session, ensures continuity and depth of understanding over time.

Additionally, interactive methodologies such as role-playing, storytelling, puppet theatre, and peer group-led simulations should be formally adopted across schools. These methods have proven highly effective in building children's confidence and awareness, as supported by field evidence. School heads, in collaboration with the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), should spearhead the design and rollout of these methods in the next academic year, beginning with pilot schools in high-risk regions.

Moreover, all teachers and school staff should undergo mandatory certified training on identifying, reporting, and responding to child abuse, including how to deliver self-protection content effectively. This training should be introduced as a requirement during teacher preparation and in-service training programs. The Tanzania Teachers' Service Commission, in collaboration with child welfare NGOs and teacher training colleges should roll out this initiative at least one week after four months within the next two years, ensuring sustainability through integration with teacher licensing and appraisal systems.

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