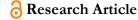
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# Socio-Demographic Patterns on Child Abuse among Secondary School Students in Uganda

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#### Abstract

Child abuse remains a critical global concern with millions of children experiencing physical abuse at home with most of them living with mothers who suffer emotional abuse, hence becoming a serious problem. This study sought to examine the socio-demographic patterns of child abuse among secondary school students in Uganda. The study underscored the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and levels of abuse experienced. Using a convergent parallel research design that combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected from 239 students and 11 school administrators through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using Adjusted Odds Ratios (AOR), Confidence Intervals (CI), and p-values, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed significant socio-demographic disparities in abuse experiences and reporting patterns. Female students were more likely to report abuse (AOR = 1.4, CI: 1.0-2.1, p < 0.022), indicating gender-specific vulnerabilities, while male students tended to underreport incidents due to stigma and societal expectations. Additionally, students from certain schools reported higher rates of physical and sexual abuse (AOR = 2.1, CI: 1.2-3.8, p < 0.022), highlighting the influence of institutional factors and the urgent need for improved oversight and accountability. Qualitative findings confirmed that physical harm, sexual harassment, and emotional abuse were the most common forms of abuse. Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening gender-sensitive interventions, auditing and reforming school policies, tailoring child protection strategies to different socio-demographic groups, simplifying reporting mechanisms to be more child-friendly, and implementing comprehensive awareness campaigns. Therefore, there should be stronger national child protection policies within the education sector are crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in Uganda.

Keywords: Socio-Demographic, Child Abuse, Interventions, Secondary School, Student

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, child abuse remains a critical issue, with 22.6% of children experiencing physical violence, 36.3% emotional abuse, and 18% of girls and 8% of boys enduring sexual abuse, often linked to poverty, family stress, and domestic violence (Dickson, Ameyaw, Adde, Paintsil, & Yaya, 2024). In Sub-Saharan Africa, 64% of children face physical violence, alongside significant rates of emotional and sexual abuse, exacerbated by gender inequities and cultural norms that normalize violence (Dickson et al., 2024). According to Ugandan statistics, 75% of children suffer physical abuse, 34% from emotional abuse, and 35% of girls are sexually abused by the age of 18 (Logie, Okumu, Mwima, Hakiza, Irungi, Kyambadde, & Narasimhan, 2019). These statistics highlight the pervasiveness of abuse in East Africa, which is exacerbated by socioeconomic difficulties and detrimental cultural practices. Teachers are occasionally accused of being the perpetrators of abuse that frequently occurs in schools.



Furthermore, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (2022), a lack of community and governmental support causes vulnerable and less educated populations to be disproportionately impacted by abuse. Due to its covert nature, sexual abuse which can range from harassment to rape remains the least reported, according to Nyangoma (2019). This trend is in line with international research showing that older children (15–19 years old) experience higher rates of abuse than younger ones (10–14 years old) (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, & Vieira, 2019). Regional patterns indicate that rural poverty, low schooling for parents, and traditional discipline methods are the main causes of the high abuse rates in Rubanda District, which are in line with national averages (Dickson et al., 2024).

Studies reveal that child abuse throughout history, has been influenced by Social and cultural values. For instance, a survey conducted by Nyangoma, Florence, and Julius (2019), indicates that children were traditionally treated as property, and rigorous punishment was acceptable as a way to teach obedience. According to Rudgard, Swaminathan, Orkin, Banougnin, Shenderovich, and Toska (2023), physical and emotional abuse was commonplace in various settings, and there were no explicit laws protecting or defining the rights of children. Nonetheless, there have been notable changes worldwide, with children now being acknowledged as individuals with rights who should be protected.

Advocacy efforts led by institutions like the United Nations have shaped legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Ratified by Uganda, the UNCRC sets universal standards aimed at protecting children from abuse, exploitation, and neglect (UNICEF, 2023).

In Uganda, community-based projects and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are essential in the fight against child abuse. Plan International and Save the Children are two organizations that protect abused children and increase awareness of children's rights, especially in rural areas where implementation is less effective (Save the Children Report, 2017). Attitudes toward child abuse have changed thanks in large part to sensitization campaigns in communities, schools, and places of worship. These programs encourage communities to report cases and pursue legal punishment for offenders by educating important stakeholders, including parents, educators, and community leaders, about the psychological and emotional suffering caused by abuse (Akello, Reis, & Richters, 2010).

In Uganda, child abuse has serious economic repercussions especially in vulnerable populations, perpetuates cycles of extreme poverty and abuse by adversely affecting children's development and future possibilities, according to Sserwanja, Kawuki, and Kim (2020). Abused children frequently have long-term mental, emotional, and physical repercussions that impair their capacity to learn and fully engage in society.

Despite progress, much work remains to address child abuse in Uganda. A multi-sectorial approach involving the government, civil society, and local communities is essential. Legal reforms must be accompanied by stronger enforcement mechanisms and continued investment in education and awareness campaigns to change harmful cultural norms that perpetuate abuse (Nakabazzi, Wachira, Oyeyemi, Ssenyonga, & Onywera, 2020).

Research on child abuse has been done, yet there are still unanswered questions. The majority of research has focused on younger children or specific forms of maltreatment, usually ignoring older students. For example, Nakabazzi et al. (2020) ignored the Sociocultural and physical characteristics of rural places like Rubanda and concentrated only on Kampala primary school students, omitting secondary schools. Similarly, Wandera, Clarke, Knight, Allen, Walakira, Namy, and Devries (2017) looked at violence committed by peers in elementary schools but neglected to discuss the larger sociodemographic variables affecting abuse in secondary school populations. A thorough knowledge of how age, gender, marital status, and institutional settings affect abuse among older students is hampered by these limitations.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the socio-demographic patterns of child abuse among secondary school students in Uganda. By examining the prevalence and drivers of abuse, the research aims to inform the design of targeted interventions and policies to protect children in this vulnerable demographic.

# 2. METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively address the research objectives. The convergent parallel design was chosen for its ability to gather quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, thereafter the outcome is merged. Contextually, this design permeates collection of data from diverse participants at a specific time, allowing for a detailed understanding of child abuse among secondary school students in the study area. In this study, quantitative data were gathered through questionnaire tools which were administered to students whereas qualitative data on participant's views and opinions were obtained through interviews which were conducted to school administrators and Ministry of Education officials.

# 2.2. Study Population

The target population included students and school administrators. The school administrators included head teachers, deputy head teachers, District Education Officer, and Inspector of School, with a total sample size of 250 participants (239 students and 11 school administrators).

# 2.3. Research tools

The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data from students regarding child abuse. The questionnaires had fifteen questions in subscale regarding each study variable. The tool was developed by the experts in the area of study and was pretested before use. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was obtained to be 0.8 implying it was credible for use. Concerning the scoring criteria, the questionnaire used the Likert scale. The scoring was as follows; strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, not sure=3, Agree=4, strongly agree=5. For qualitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted to the participants through an interview guide. The interview was done through face to face interaction in order to extract more insights on the study constructs.

# 2.4. Validity and the Reliability of the Rresearch Instruments

To enhance the reliability and validity of the research tools, a pilot study was conducted before the main data collection. This helped to identify and correct errors in the research tools and allowed research assistants to get used to data collection process. Additionally, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was employed to evaluate the internal consistency and consistency of the research instruments in measuring the targeted concepts (Cronbach alpha coefficient, 0.80). Following an expert evaluation, three of the 50 items that were originally included in the study instruments were eliminated, leaving a final set of 47 items. The panel of experts judged 94% of the items as relevant, resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.94. Furthermore, pre-testing and expert evaluation during the pilot phase guaranteed the validity of the existing instruments, which were modified to fit the study's setting. The researcher observed trustworthiness of qualitative tools used in the study.

#### 2.5. Data Collection Procedure

Preparatory visits to schools were conducted to organize logistics, and research assistants received training to reduce bias, including pre-testing of research instruments to enhance clarity and relevance. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to a simple random sample of students, ensuring socio-demographic representation. The questionnaire captured socio-demographic characteristics and child abuse indicators. The tools were administered by principal researcher and trained research assistants in a safe environment to ensure participants could be concentrate and give their responses freely. This was also done to increase the return rate of questionnaires and clarify any issues during the filling of the questionnaires. Furthermore, qualitative data was collected with the help of the Key Informants Interview Guide targeting School administrators including the head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, District Education Officer, and Inspector of School. This was done through face to face sharing

with the intention of getting enlightenment of the experiences and reasons behind child abuse in the area. Data were collected in readiness for analysis.

#### 2.6. Data Analysis Procedure

For data analysis, two methods were employed for quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Adjusted Odds Ratios (AORs) with 95% confidence intervals, and p-values. The AORs were utilized to measure the strength of associations between demographic characteristics (independent variables) and child abuse reporting (dependent variable), with confidence intervals providing reliability measures, and p-values indicating the statistical significance of associations. For qualitative data a deductive thematic investigation of the data was conducted for qualitative data in parallel with the interviews. After gathering data from the initial few responders (about 6), the researcher began the analysis. According to Sekiwu (2020), the main goal of the deductive technique is often to release the limitations imposed by organized approaches and enable research findings to arise from the frequent, dominating, or noteworthy motifs inherent in raw data. Themes were created from the first descriptive codes and then further developed via frequent comparison.

# 2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education at Kabale University, and permission was secured from the Chief Administrative Officer of Rubanda District. Informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians, while students provided assent before participation. To safeguard participants, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and referral mechanisms were established to offer psychosocial support to any participant in need.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the socio-demographic patterns as correlates of child abuse among secondary school students. Data collection were collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the distribution of the data. To assess the relationship between the independent variables (demographic characteristics) and the dependent variable (reporting of Child abuse), the study employed the Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) was employed. The 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) estimates. The statistical significance of the found connections was evaluated using p-values, and the accuracy and dependability of the AOR estimations were gauged by the 95% CI.

# 4.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The study sought to establish the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in relation to age, gender among others. The results were summarized in Table 1.

C 1	1 , ,			
Variable	Variable option	n (%)		
Gender of the respondent	Male	110 (46.0)		
-	Female	129 (54.0)		
2. Respondents by age category	11-14 years	50 (20.9)		
1 , 0 ,	15-17 years	177 (74.1)		
	18 and above	12 (5.0)		
3. Designation of respondents	Student	239 (100.0)		
	Others	0 (0.0)		
4. Marital status of respondents	Married	2 (0.8)		
•	Single	237 (99.2)		
5. Duration respondents have stayed in their places	Less than 1 year	62 (25.9)		
	1-5 years	168 (70.3)		
	5-10 years	4 (1.7)		
	More than 10 years	5 (2.0)		

**Table 1.** Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n=239)

A detailed summary of the socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1. Among the 239 participants in the quantitative study, the results revealed that the majority of the participants were females (54.0%) while 46 percent were males. About age, the results indicated that 74.1% (177) of child abuse were aged 15–17 years. Most of the participants were students (239, 100%). Concerning family status, the findings revealed that most participants were drawn from single (237, 99.2%), and 0.8% were from married families. Status. Similarly, a significant proportion (168, 70.3%) had lived in their current locations for 1–5 years.

This study sought to assess the level of child abuse across socio-demographic characteristics among secondary school students in Uganda. The summary is as follows in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Level of Child Abuse across Socio-Demographic Characteristics among Secondary School Students in Uganda (N=239)

Socio-	Physical	Physical	Sexual	Sexual	Emotional	Emotional	AOR (95%	p-		
Demographic	Abuse	Abuse	Abuse	Abuse	Abuse	Abuse	CI)	value		
Characteristics	(Yes)	(No)	(Yes)	(No)	(Yes)	(No)	/			
Gender										
Male	110	129	60	179	69 (29%)	170 (71%)	1.0			
	(46%)	(54%)	(25%)	(75%)						
Female	129	110	85	154	85 (34%)	154 (64%)	1.4 (1.0-2.1)	0.022		
	(54%)	(46%)	(36%)	(64%)						
Age										
11-14	215	24 (10%)	150	89	129 (54%)	110 (46%)	1.0			
	(90%)	` ,	(63%)	(37%)	` ,	` ,				
15-17	15	224	10	229	10 (4.2%)	229	1.3 (0.8-2.1)	0.045		
	(6.4%)	(93.6%)	(4.2%)	(95.8%)	, ,	(95.8%)	,			
18 and above	2 (0.8%)	237	1	238	1 (0.4%)	238	2.0 (1.1-3.6)	0.015		
	( )	(99.2%)	(0.4%)	(99.6%)	(* * * * )	(99.6%)	()			
School Code		( , , , ,	( )	( , , , ,		( , , , ,				
NS1	59	180	40	199	40 (16.7%)	199	1.0			
1,01	(24.8%)	(75.2%)	(16.7%)	(83.3%)	10 (1011/0)	(83.3%)	1.0			
MS2	75 (30%)	164	50	189	50 (20.9%)	189	1.3 (0.7-2.4)	0.065		
11102	73 (3070)	(70%)	(20.9%)	(79.1%)	30 (20.570)	(79.1%)	1.3 (0.7 2.1)	0.005		
BS3	72	167	48	191	48 (20.1%)	191	2.1 (1.2-3.8)	0.022		
<b>D</b> 03	(28.8%)	(71.2%)	(20.1%)	(79.9%)	10 (20.170)	(79.9%)	2.1 (1.2 3.0)	0.022		
AS4	41	198	27	212	27 (11.3%)	212	1.2 (0.6-2.4)	0.045		
1104	(17.2%)	(82.8%)	(11.3%)	(88.7%)	27 (11.570)	(88.7%)	1.2 (0.0-2.4)	0.043		
Marital Status	(17.270)	(02.070)	(11.570)	(00.770)		(00.770)				
Married	12 (5%)	227	8	231	8 (3.3%)	231	1.0			
Marricu	12 (370)	(95%)	(3.3%)	(96.7%)	0 (3.370)	(96.7%)	1.0			
Single	215	24	145	94	145	94 (39.3%)	1.8 (1.0-3.2)	0.032		
Single	(90.4%)	(9.6%)	(60.7%)	(39.3%)	(60.7%)	94 (39.370)	1.6 (1.0-3.2)	0.032		
Voore Doomondo			(00.770)	(39.370)	(00.770)					
Years Responde		•	40	100	40 (17 70/)	100	1.0			
Less than 1 year	59 (24.897)	180	40	199	40 (16.7%)	199	1.0			
1 5	(24.8%)	(75.2%)	(16.7%)	(83.3%)	115	(83.3%)	1 ( (0 0 2 1)	0.020		
1-5 years	170	69	115	124	115	124	1.6 (0.8-3.1)	0.028		
5.40	(71.1%)	(28.9%)	(48.1%)	(51.9%)	(48.1%)	(51.9%)	4.407.00	0.046		
5-10 years	4 (1.7%)	235	2	237	2 (0.8%)	237	1.4 (0.7-2.8)	0.048		
	=0	(98.3%)	(0.8%)	(99.2%)	- (0.00/:	(99.2%)		0.04-		
More than 10	4 (1.7%)	235	2	237	2 (0.8%)	237	2.3 (1.1-4.7)	0.018		
years		(98.3%)	(0.8%)	(99.2%)		(99.2%)				

The regression analysis of child abuse levels across socio-demographic characteristics among secondary school students in Uganda revealed notable patterns that address the research question. Female students were found to be significantly more likely to report experiencing abuse (AOR = 1.4, 95% CI: 1.0–2.1, p < 0.022). This finding aligns with previous studies, such as those by Anwar et al. (2020), who highlighted that girls are more likely to experience and report abuse, particularly sexual and emotional abuse, due to societal gender inequalities and vulnerabilities. These results highlight the necessity of gendersensitive interventions in community and educational contexts. Additionally, students aged 18 and above

demonstrated a higher likelihood of reporting child abuse (AOR = 2.0, 95% CI: 1.1–3.6, p < 0.015). This supports the findings of Gewirtz-Meydan, and Finkelhor, (2020) who suggested that older adolescents are more aware and capable of identifying abuse, leading to increased reporting. Furthermore, a study by Currie, Apondi, West, Biraro, Wasula, Patel, and Massetti (2021) supports the finding that females and older students are more likely to report experiencing abuse, aligning with several recent studies. For example, the Uganda Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) report shows that girls are more likely to experience and report abuse, particularly sexual and emotional abuse, due to societal gender inequalities and vulnerabilities. Similarly, a study by Nabunya, Curley, and Ssewamala (2021) highlights that child maltreatment rates vary over time and across different contexts, influenced by structural features of the natural, built, and social environments. These findings suggest that factors such as neighborhood disadvantage, crime rates, and community dynamics play significant roles in abuse prevalence, implying that the impact of gender and age on abuse reporting may differ based on these contextual factors.

Other research warns against oversimplification, even though these trends imply that age and gender are significant factors of abuse reporting. According to studies by Kim and Drake (2023) and Nabunya, Curley, and Ssewamala (2021), social cohesion, neighbourhood disadvantage, and community crime rates are some examples of broader contextual factors that also influence child abuse. These environmental structural characteristics have the potential to either increase or decrease the likelihood of abuse, suggesting that the connections between gender, age, and abuse reporting are intricate and situation-specific. These findings have important policy and practice ramifications. They highlight the pressing need to create age-and gender-responsive reporting systems and to fortify school-based child protection systems, particularly in high-risk neighborhoods. Additionally, by providing data-driven insights that can guide national child protection initiatives, enhance educational frameworks, and assist in the development of focused social intervention programs, the study adds to the expanding body of information on child abuse in Uganda. In addition to addressing local issues, the study contributes to international conversations on child protection in high-risk and low-resource settings by placing the findings within recent literature.

Furthermore, the study indicated that students attending the school coded as BS3 were significantly more likely to report both physical and sexual abuse (AOR = 2.1, 95% CI: 1.2-3.8, p < 0.022). This observation resonates with studies like those by Cluver et al. (2015), who found that schools or institutions with limited oversight and inadequate support systems exhibit higher abuse prevalence. Marital status also emerged as a significant factor, with single students being more likely to report abuse (AOR = 1.8, 95% CI: 1.0–3.2, p < 0.032). This is in line with the findings of Wan, Carlson, Quade, and Kacmar's (2022) study, which indicated that the absence of spousal protection or other family support systems may present special difficulties for single people, especially teenagers. The relationship between institutional oversight and the prevalence of abuse is complicated and context-specific, though; for instance, a report by the Learning Policy Institute (2017) highlights that community schools, which typically operate with less oversight and more autonomy, can be successful in improving student well-being and educational outcomes when they set up comprehensive support systems (Maier, Daniel, Oakes, & Lam, 2017). This implies that the possibility of misuse is more influenced by the presence or absence of protections in these learning situations than by autonomy alone. Together, these findings contribute to our understanding of the sociodemographic and institutional factors associated with child maltreatment in Ugandan schools. They highlight the urgent need for targeted policy changes aimed at strengthening supervision in high-risk educational environments and enhancing support systems for vulnerable student groups. Additionally, by offering data that policymakers, social workers, and educational planners in Uganda and other comparable contexts across the world may utilize, the study adds to the growing body of research on child protection.

Moreover, the duration of residence emerged as a significant factor contributing to the prevalence of child abuse among secondary school students. Those who lived in the same area for 1–5 years reported the highest levels of abuse across all categories (AOR = 1.6, 95% CI: 0.8–3.1, p < 0.028), students residing in an area for more than 10 years demonstrated a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing abuse (AOR = 2.3, 95% CI: 1.1–4.7, p < 0.018). These findings directly address the study's research question by showing a pattern in which prolonged residence is associated with increased vulnerability to abuse. Since lengthier residence durations are frequently linked to ingrained community dynamics that sustain abuse, these findings are consistent with those of research like Bailey (2024), which suggested that limited mobility or extended exposure to abusive contexts can raise the likelihood of abuse. Other study, however, indicates that there is a more nuanced and context-dependent association between the length of stay and the

likelihood of abuse. For instance, a study by Morris et al. (2018) discovered that while empty housing was associated with greater rates of sexual abuse and neglect, socioeconomic factors including high poverty and neighborhood crime rates have been associated with greater rates of physical abuse. Furthermore, a study by Kim and Drake (2023) highlighted how structural elements of the constructed, natural, and social surroundings affect the prevalence of child abuse, which varies over time and across places. This study suggests that while time spent in a location is an important element, the prevalence of abuse is influenced by a variety of broader contextual factors, including social instability and poverty in the community. Interventions must thus consider both individual residency patterns and community-level factors in order to effectively reduce the likelihood of child abuse. The study examined different types of child maltreatment among secondary school students using a theme analysis of qualitative data. According to the results, children were subjected to a variety of child abuse behaviors, including emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, all of which have a substantial negative impact on the well-being of students. One of the most common forms of child abuse, according to the key informants, is physical damage. One of the head instructors expressed the following personal opinions:

"Yes, there have been multiple incidents where students have been physically harmed, either through fights or punishments. These happen quite often, at least a few times a month. The school usually takes swift action by liaising with parents and sometimes guiding the students involved." H5

The head teacher's quote attests to the fact that the participants the students fight frequently. The results highlight how frequently physical abuse occurs and how quickly the school responds to these occurrences. Peer disputes, bullying, stress, and the influence of a punitive environment are some of the potential reasons of these clashes.

Additionally, qualitative findings indicated that emotional and sexual abuse were also experienced, but with fewer reported incidents than other types of abuse. One of the administrators said as much;

"There have been a few cases of sexual harassment involving students. The school takes these matters seriously, investigating thoroughly and involving the police if necessary. Such vices occur normally with members of close links who seem to be trusted." H2. Emotional abuse, such as bullying and verbal insults, is quite common here. It really affects the students they become withdrawn, their grades drop, and they often miss school."H1

According to the results of the verbatim extracts, other types of child abuse included verbal insults and bullying, as well as sexual and emotional abuse. Given this result, it is important to offer victims psychosocial support in addition to guidance and counseling. In addition, awareness campaigns must to be implemented to stop these kinds of accidents.

# 4.2. Educational Implications

Based on the findings, the study it is critical for secondary schools to design awareness programs geared towards provision of support services to the vulnerable groups by providing amicable interventions. The policy makers should strive to conduct frequent workshops from school level to the national level to sensitize the affected groups.

For teacher training colleges, they should equip the trainees with effective knowledge and skills through capacity building sessions especially on how to identify and deal with child abuse incidences and reporting measures. Equally, schools should encourage safe and friendly environments to accommodate such groups. The study highlights the necessity of stakeholder collaboration with relevant stakeholders in order to curb child abuse cases in school settings.

# 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regression research of Ugandan secondary school pupils' levels of child maltreatment across Sociodemographic factors provides interesting results. The prevalence of gender-based vulnerabilities stemming from societal inequality is highlighted by the disproportionate number of female students who report experiencing abuse, especially sexual and emotional abuse. Students who are older, particularly those who are 18 years of age or older, are more likely to report abuse, which may indicate that as adolescents get older, they become more aware of and capable of recognizing abusive behaviours. Interestingly, children from the school with the code BS3 report higher levels of abuse, suggesting that there may be institutional issues that need further investigation. With single students reporting higher rates of maltreatment, marital status becomes a critical factor, underscoring the unique vulnerabilities of teenagers without family or spouse support networks. Additionally, longer stays in a community are associated with higher rates of abuse, which probably reflects ingrained social dynamics and structural issues. Together, these results highlight the intricate interactions between institutional, societal, and individual factors that influence the frequency of child abuse and open the door for focused interventions and legislative changes.

There is need to create and execute intervention programs that address the widespread gender disparities and vulnerabilities that fuel mistreatment of female students. These programs might offer secure environments where girls feel comfortable and encouraged while giving them the tools they need to deal with and overcome social obstacles.

According to the study, schools and communities should give priority to awareness efforts to adolescents by providing them with avenues and information they need to report abuse. In addition, it is essential to develop community-based solutions that highlight the value of safe extended stays in neighborhoods with deeply ingrained abusive patterns. This can be done by lessening hazards of living in high-abuse contexts is to work together with local leaders to encourage family mobility possibilities and fight harmful norms. To guarantee their successful implementation and sustainability and, eventually, to create a more secure and fair learning environment for all students these reforms necessitate cooperation with regional and global partners.

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**Research Ethics.** Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education at Kabale University, and permission was secured from the Chief Administrative Officer of Rubanda District. Informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians, while students provided assent before participation.

**Data Availability Statement.** All data can be obtained from the corresponding author.

**Conflicts of Interest.** There was no conflict of interest.

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