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Amani Mapamba
amani.amapamba@udsm.ac.tz

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Influence of Household Characteristics and Incident Setting on Child Abuse Cases in Shinyanga Region.

Amani Mapamba

Institute of Resource Assessment, University of Dar es Salaam
amani.amapamba@udsm.ac.tz

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of household characteristics and incident settings on child abuse cases in Shinyanga Region, Tanzania. Grounded in Rational Choice Theory, the study assumes that perpetrators make calculated decisions influenced by household structure and contextual settings. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, cross sectional secondary data were collected from 401 reported child abuse cases at Shinyanga Regional Referral Hospital between July 2020 and April 2023. Binary logistic regression was used to analyze the predictive influence of variables such as relationship to household head, history of abuse in the household, perpetrator identity, and location of the incident. Findings revealed that sexual abuse was more likely to be committed by strangers and in rural areas, while household members were mostly responsible for other forms of abuse. Interestingly, households with no history of abuse showed higher vulnerability, and parents were found to be less effective protectors than assumed. The study concludes that targeted awareness, parental engagement, and localized intervention strategies are essential to curbing child abuse. Limitations include reliance on secondary data, limited geographic scope, and lack of qualitative data to back support the quantitative data collected. Recommendations for further studies include exploring social structures, abuse typologies, and effective education methods for prevention.

Key words: Household Characteristics, Child Abuse, Rational Choice Theory, Shinyanga Region.

Introduction

Child protection is a fundamental right of every child (UNICEF, 2021). The globally determined efforts to overcome child abuse have led to the development of Treaties and other protocols on the rights of the child. These include but are not limited to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 to recognize that in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions and that such children need special consideration (UNCRC, 1989, p.3). This declaration is a useful starting point for any enquiry that sets out to demonstrate the existence of a social problem that potentially puts children in great danger (McCrann, 2017).

Abuse of children across the globe has continued to be an important challenge for societies and a debated subject because it hits at the heart of the deep-seated disgust that people have about

it (McCrann, 2017). The societies' levels of development tend to create the potential for either enjoying child rights or not. In the developed world such as Europe, child rights are highly enjoyable as the infrastructure supports the same and the abuse of the rights is highly punishable as the abuser cannot easily go unnoticed (WHO, 2018).

The consequences of child sexual abuse are multiple and long-term. The effects of child abuse may include substance abuse such as alcohol and drug abuse; obesity and eating disorders; suicide; high-risk sexual behaviour; smoking; sleep difficulties; and revictimization which reflects a failure of social connections and homelessness (Odhayani, Watson, & Watson, 2013). It is necessary to provide empirical evidence to improve legal and organizational decisions that may have social-based implications.

At the global level, frameworks such as Goal 16 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which calls for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" which emphasizes a people-driven development approach, recognize the centrality of child protection (African Union Commission, 2015). Yet, despite progress, abuse remains widespread and under-addressed, especially in lower-income regions.

In Tanzania, efforts to combat child abuse include the enactment of the Law of the Child Act (2009), the adoption of child protection policies, and the establishment of reporting mechanisms. Nonetheless, child sexual abuse remains prevalent, particularly in regions such as Shinyanga. For instance, from July 2021 to May 2022 alone, over 4,660 cases of child abuse were reported in Shinyanga Region (SPC, 2022). Understanding why and how such incidents occur is crucial for targeted intervention.

In Tanzania, about 1 in 3 females and about 1 in 7 males have experienced sexual violence, and almost three-quarters of both females and males have experienced physical violence before the age of 18 (URT, 2011). The most commonly reported type of child sexual abuse was unwanted touching (16% and 8.7% of females and males, respectively) and unwanted intercourse (14.6% and 6.3% of females and males, respectively). Also, about 6.9% of girls and 2.9% of boys were physically forced into sexual intercourse before the age of 18 (URT, 2011). Physical abuse, including corporal punishment and sexual abuse, is frequently reported. For instance, the Tanzania Police Force received 15,870 reports of child abuse in 2020 and 11,499 in 2021 (MOHCDGEC, 2022). About 47% of school-going children reported experiencing physical violence, while about 20% of school children have experienced sexual violence (Hakielimu, 2020).

While these statistics reveal a national crisis, there are certain regions in Tanzania where child abuse occurs at significantly higher rates and requires targeted intervention. Regional disparities in the prevalence and nature of child abuse often reflect a combination of socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, enforcement of laws, and community awareness levels. Shinyanga Region stands out as one such area, with alarmingly high reports of both physical and sexual violence against children. The unique social dynamics and entrenched harmful practices in this region necessitate focused academic inquiry to inform more localized and effective child protection strategies.

The region, being one of those with high rates of violence against women and children, prompted the Regional Secretariat to develop a Regional Strategic Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (RSP-VAWC) 2020/2021 – 2024/2025, aligned with the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children 2017/2018 – 2021/2022. However, the data collected are from July 2020 to April 2023. This strategic framework aims to provide clear priorities, coordination mechanisms, and guidance for both government institutions and civil society stakeholders working to make Shinyanga free from violence (URT, 2020; Ofisi ya Mkuu wa Mkoa, 2023). Shinyanga RSP-VAWC is now in its thirty-fourth month of implementation. In recognition of these efforts, this research aims to identify areas requiring intensified focus, as part of a broader contribution to the ongoing battle against child violence in the region. In addition, Shinyanga is among the regions in Tanzania with a high rate of child abuse cases being reported in recent years (SPC, 2022). Many children are being abused physically and sexually, while others associate the persistence of such incidents with harmful traditions and customary practices still prevalent in many communities in the region (Francis, 2020).

A key approach to understanding child sexual abuse involves examining the household characteristics and incident settings in which abuse takes place. Abuse may occur either within the home or in external settings such as schools, communities, or public spaces. When it occurs at home, it becomes important to investigate the internal dynamics of the household such as the age, gender, marital status, and behavioral history of the household head as these factors can increase or reduce the likelihood of abuse (IOM, 2019). Households with histories of violence or weak supervisory structures may be more prone to such risks.

Conversely, incident settings refer to the specific circumstances and locations in which abuse takes place. These include details such as the time of day, physical setting (home, school, street), and the relationship between the child and the perpetrator (Hakielimu, 2020). Each setting offers distinct risk profiles and intervention challenges. For instance, abuse that occurs in schools may point to institutional failures, while community-based incidents may reflect broader socio-cultural or environmental vulnerabilities.

This study focuses on Shinyanga Region, one of the areas in Tanzania reporting high rates of child abuse. It seeks to assess the influence of household characteristics and incident settings on child abuse cases, drawing on local data to inform more effective protection strategies. By understanding these two dimensions, the internal dynamics of homes and the contextual risks of different settings this research aims to contribute statistically backed evidence and, thereafter, knowledge toward reducing child abuse.

Literature Review

Almuneef et al., (2016) in their study on the family profile of victims of child abuse and neglect in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia collected data retrospectively from case files of the Child Protection Center. The study involved chi-square and logistic regression analysis. The study found that about 63% of heads of households of abused children were married. Children from single parents were four times more likely to be physically abused than the ones living with both parents and 40% more likely to be sexually abused than the ones living with both parents.

Sharratt et al., (2023) studied childhood abuse and neglect, exposure to domestic violence and sibling violence; profiles and associations with sociodemographic variables and mental health indicators in the United Kingdom. Cross-sectional survey data collected from primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary colleges collected by questionnaires was employed. Latent class analysis was used with a four-class solution and later involved multinomial logistic regression with class 2 as a reference category. Findings indicated that living with both children significantly decreased the odds of being abused including class 1 by 40%, class 2 by 30%, class 3 by 62% and class 4 by 33%. Living in a rural area or urban area seemed to have no influence on the occurrence of child abuse (class 1 = high verbal domestic violence, class 2 = low victimization, class 3 = emotional abuse and neglect and class 4 = maltreatment and domestic violence).

Msangi, (2017) in his study on factors influencing child sexual abuse in Dodoma municipality, applied a cross-section research design with a purposive sampling technique and interview as a method of data collection. Findings indicated that household factors including marital problems in the families (16%), history of violence (16), and alcohol/drug use among some of the family members (27%) were among the factors for the occurrence of sexual child abuse. Other factors included poverty and inadequate education on child protection.

Discussing incident setting, Jin et al. (2021) studied emotional, physical and sexual child abuse in China: prevalence and psychological consequences involving cross-section design, descriptive statistics and questionnaire as a method of data collection, while chi-square test was employed in data analysis. Unlike many parts of Africa, the prevalence of child sexual abuse was very low about 4% in which the respondents reported they had no genital contact. Physical abuse was 34.3%, for mild level, 19.3% for moderate level and 3.1% for severe level, larger effect being on males than females. Additionally, it was reported that, if a girl was sexually abused, the perpetrator was mostly likely to be her father or another male caregiver.

David et al., (2018) did a community-based study on child abuse and disclosure in southwestern Nigeria by involving a cross-sectional study with a multistage sampling technique and questionnaires as a method of data collection in Lagos state also, Chi-squared was employed in data analysis. Perpetrators were mainly boyfriends (31.2%), neighbors (16.1%), relatives (7.5%) and strangers (7.5%). Other perpetrators included class teachers, school mattes and domestic helpers. Sexual abuses were reported to occur at home (24.7%), at school (23.7%), at neighbour's house (23.7%) and other places (27.9%). Further, the study found out among the children who reported being sexually abused only 34.4% disclosed the abuse. The main reasons for disclosure were feelings of shame (40.4%), the belief that nothing would come from disclosing the incident (31.6%), fear of the abuser (10.5%) and not being believed (17.5%).

Ezekiel, (2017) did a cross-sectional study with a qualitative approach and interview as a method of collecting data from a sample obtained from four regions in Tanzania. The study aimed to explore factors, forms, context of abuse and perpetrators of child sexual abuse in Tanzania. Findings indicated that girls are the major victims of child sexual abuse while incidents mostly occur in perpetrators' homes, neighborhoods, and religious places. Perpetrator involved close relatives and the ones trusted by the children.

Additionally, Japhet (2019) studied factors associated with child sexual abuse among public secondary school students in Kinondoni Municipal in Dar es Salaam by using a cross-section study design with a questionnaire being a method of data collection and a chi-square measure of association. The study reported that about 50.2% of respondents experienced sexual abuse of which (64.8%) reported their homes to be one of the places where abuse occurred, 59.2% between home and school and 67.6% at the school environment.

Several studies have been done in Tanzania and other places in the world with remarkable efforts and coverage for child abuse at various settings. Most of such studies involved the use of primary data obtained from sampled respondents. Also, most scholars focused on studying this topic were interested in finding out factors, prevalence, perpetrators and effects of child abuse. Most of them could not measure numerically the specific factor contribution on the problem but rather, they involved chi-square to measure different associations. Through this study, the methodology gap is to be filled by involving the use of secondary data of reported cases of child abuse in a single region of Shinyanga with a high rate of child abuse cases to obtain more details on the problem. In this study therefore, the influence of factors (household characteristics and incident setting) associated with the occurrence of child sexual abuse is measured with the help of the Binary Logistic Regression Model.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

This theory was established by Cornish and Clarke (1986). The theory assumes that the commission of crimes is not perceived as random, but as a calculated choice made by an individual because they see it as an effective way to achieve a desired benefit. The theory suggests that before individuals commit a crime, they engage in a cost-benefit analysis to consider what will need to happen so as to achieve a criminal goal, as well as the potential for opposing outcomes if they are caught.

If the costs for committing the crime are perceived as too high, the potential committer may be less likely to commit that crime, also, decisions made to commit a crime may be limited by situational factors, such as time available to commit the crime, or individual factors, such as the offender's cognitive abilities (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). Beyond the initial choice to commit a crime, offenders continue to make choices throughout the commission of the crime based on situational factors that will minimize risks and maximize benefits, and finally, as individuals commit more crimes over time, they get better at understanding the relative impact that various decisions will have on their success, given a particular set of circumstances (Zatkin, 2021). Generally, rational choice theory purports that a potential offender must make four primary choices (Hassan, S., Lett, D. et al, 2013);

i. Whether or not to commit a crime

There is an excess of reasons why an individual may commit a crime (for example, child abuse). However, crime is seen as a decision as a man is not coerced into a life of crime. There is a clear conscious choice in becoming an offender. Legitimate and illegitimate opportunities are considered and the best choice for that individual is made. Sometimes the rational choice is to offend.

ii. Whether or not to select a particular target

The rational choice of whether or not to select a particular target is of utmost importance. Potential offenders must interpret signals given off by the environment to decide upon what or whom to offend such as if the target valuable enough to risk getting caught. It has questions such as the area familiar to the offender? Are there potential guardians nearby?.

iii. How frequently to offend

The rational choice regarding how often to offend is mainly dependent on several factors including the potential offender's social network, peer influences, monetary or other needs, and their ability to successfully avoid detection. The main point is that frequency is still a choice.

iv. Whether or not to desist from crime

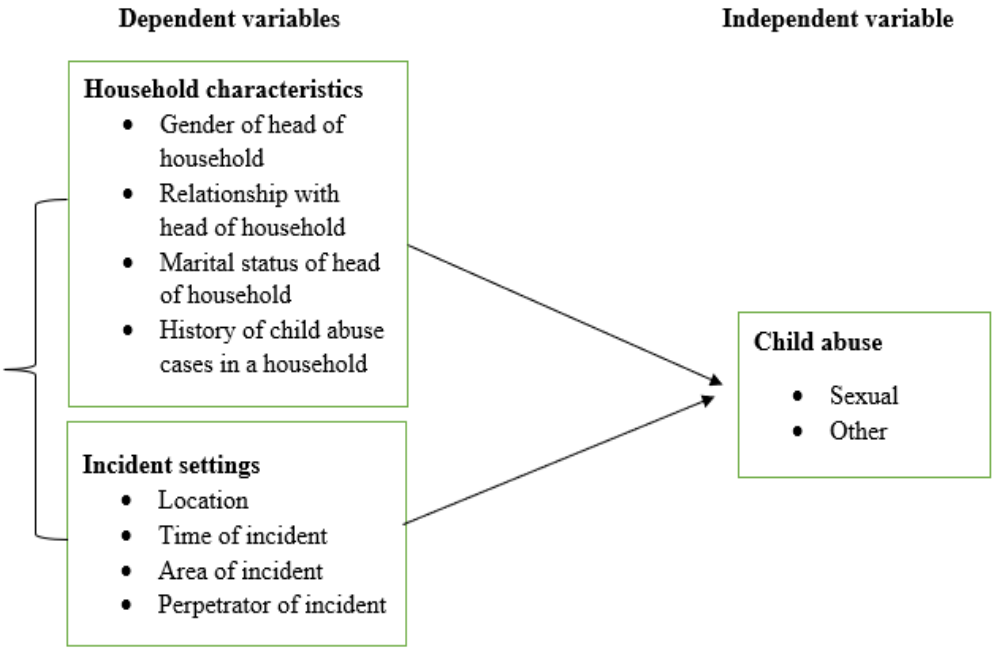
Desisting from crime or continuing crime is another rational choice. A potential offender could have issues with committing a crime such as exhausting targets, age-related issues, and getting detected – all of which are internal issues. On the other hand, getting married, suffering from injury, or being offered employment represents external issues that interfere with a life of crime.

This theory, therefore, gives a better understanding of the typical strategies that perpetrators use to commit acts of child abuse. Seeing these crimes as deliberate choices, and not misunderstandings or mistakes, makes clear that the commission of an act of child sexual abuse is the responsibility of the perpetrator with the help of household characteristics and incident settings.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for determinants of child abuse incidents. Based on rational choice theory, decisions of offending child abuse may be determined by household characteristics of the offended child such as whether or not the head of a child's household is male or female, married or not married, parent or not a parent and also child abuse occurred previously or not. Also, incident settings such as it is rural or urban, home, on the way or other place, day or night may affect the individual decision to commit a crime or not.

Figure 1: Relationship between household characteristics and incident settings to the occurrence of child abuse



Source: Modified from Zatkin, 2021.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research approach. This approach is very useful for gaining broader knowledge and understanding of real-life situations. Also, since the study involved analysis of numeric data to describe and explain the desired phenomenon that is child abuse, the quantitative research approach was the suitable approach to be applied (Kothari, 2004). This study employed cross-section research design as data collected was obtained from different individuals in at a single point of time throughout the period of July 2020 to April 2023. The reason for the choice of this research design was to allow comparability of as many variables as possible at the same time. The study used administrative records of reported child abuse cases from Shinyanga Regional Referral Hospital Department of Social Welfare which is a reliable sources, that is government's health data. Suitability was assured by ensuring that data obtained was aligning with the scope of this study. Adequacy of data was assured by ensuring that obtained data was aligning with the coverage of this study.

Sample Characteristics

The targeted population of this study were children reported to be subjected to acts of child abuse including sexual abuse, physical abuse and psychological abuse in Shinyanga Region. A total of 401 children were reported to be abused at Shinyanga Region Referral Hospital from July 2020 to April 2023 from different areas in Shinyanga region. The demographic characteristics of the study population included age distribution and sex distribution described herein:

In this study, children of all ages, from 0 to 17 years who were reported to be subjected to child abuse acts were involved. For the purpose of understanding clearly the problem, age was distributed into four groups as presented in table 1.

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age group	Freq.	Percent (%)
0-4	27	6.73
5-9	80	19.95
10-14	103	25.69
15-17	191	47.63
Total	**401**	**100.00**

Source: SRRH data, 2023

Table 1 indicates that 6.73% of children encountered with child abuse incident were children below the age of 5 years, while 19.95% of abused children were aged 5 to 9 years, 25.69% were aged 10 to 14 and the leading group of abused children were children of age 15 to 17 years. For sex distributed, it was found that 10 (27%) of males were reported to be victims of other abuse while 27 (73%) of males were reported as victims of sexual abuse. 63 (17.2%) females were reported as victims of other abuse while 301 (82.7%) of females were reported as victims of sexual abuse.

Association Between Type Child of Abuse a Child Encountered and Factors of Child Abuse

The chi-square measure of association was involved to study associations between the type of abuse a child encountered and the household characteristics of the abused child as well as in determining the association between the type of abuse a child encountered and the incident setting, results are as follows;

Table 2: Association Between Household Characteristics of Abused Child and Type of Abuse a Child Encountered.

Household Characteristic	Variable Category	Type of Abuse: Other (%)	Type of Abuse: Sexual (%)	P-value
Marital status of head of household	Married	81.1%	78.6%	0.805
	Single	8.1%	6.9%	
	Separated/Widowed	10.8%	14.6%	
Relationship to household head	Parent	59.5%	72.0%	0.034
	Relative	24.3%	22.5%	

Household Characteristic	Variable Category	Type of Abuse: Other (%)	Type of Abuse: Sexual (%)	P-value
	Other	16.2%	5.5%	
History of child abuse in household	No	64.9%	92.3%	0.000
	Yes	35.1%	7.7%	

Source: SRRH data, 2023

Table 2 findings indicated that there is no association between the dependent variable type of abuse and the independent variable marital status of the head of household since the p-value is 0.805. Independent variables' relationship with the head of household and history of child abuse cases in the household seemed to have a significant association with the dependent variable type of abuse as their p-values were 0.034 and 0.000 respectively.

For the independent variable relationship with the head of household, both sexual abuse and other abuse were leading by 72.0% and 59.5% respectively for households headed by parents. These findings are similar to the study by Chen (2022) in Hong Kong as the findings showed that children in families headed by fathers who were married and had lower education attainment reported more family violence. Despite some studies documenting a strong association between early marriages and poverty, Abera (2020) argues that rich families are not guaranteed to avoid early marriage rather it is seen as a mechanism to strengthen the tie between families, evade the risk of daughters to engage in premature sex (and loose virginity and/or become pregnant) or pass cultural defined desired age for marriage (and become unmarried).

Households with no history of child abuse were leading in reported numbers of both sexual abuse and other abuse by 92.2% and 64.9%. This is not very far from the study by Wongcharoenwatana (2021) at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok Thailand whose findings indicated 40.6% of households reported child abuse had no history of child abuse in their household. McElvaney (2020) argues that such findings may be affected by the problem of disclosure of child abuse cases in many societies.

Children may not define their experiences as child abuse and neglect because they do not know better or believe the conduct was deserved or acceptable, or because of distress associated with reporting that caregivers are behaving aggressively towards them (NA, 2014). Additionally, on other hand, substantial evidence showed that careful and detailed questioning of a child about his/her experiences produces higher rates than official reports (NA, 2014).

Association Between Incident Setting and Type of Abuse a Child Encountered

The chi-square test was further applied to explore whether the **setting of the incident** was associated with the type of abuse a child experienced. The results are presented below:

Table 3: Association Between Incident Setting and Type of Abuse a Child Encountered

Incident Setting Variable	Category	Other (%)	Sexual (%)	P-value
Time of incident	Day	91.9%	84.9%	0.249
	Night	8.1%	15.1%	
Location	Urban	59.5%	36.0%	0.005
	Rural	40.5%	64.0%	
Perpetrator	Household member	91.9%	37.4%	0.000
	School member	5.4%	2.7%	
	Stranger	2.7%	59.9%	

Source: SRRH data, 2023

The time of the incident (day or night) showed no statistically significant association with the type of abuse encountered (p = 0.249), suggesting that abuse can occur regardless of time. This aligns with the view that environmental supervision and protective presence, rather than the time of day itself, may be more important in preventing abuse (UNICEF, 2018).

Conversely, the location of the incident (urban vs. rural) had a statistically significant association with the type of abuse (p = 0.005). Sexual abuse was more commonly reported in rural areas (64.0%), while other forms of abuse were more prevalent in urban settings (59.5%). This contrasts with Maguire-Jack et al. (2020), who found that child maltreatment was more frequent in urban areas, possibly due to high population density and socioeconomic pressures. However, this discrepancy could reflect underreporting in rural settings, **or** greater familial proximity in rural areas that facilitates both detection and perpetration of sexual abuse. Structural violence as presented by Galtung, J. (1969) can also explain the hidden risks in rural settings, where traditional norms and lack of access to reporting mechanisms often obscure abuse.

Regarding perpetrator identity, there was a strong and statistically significant association with the type of abuse (p = 0.000). Most sexual abuse was perpetrated by strangers (59.9%), while other abuse was overwhelmingly perpetrated by household members (91.9%). This suggests that physical or emotional abuse often occurs within domestic settings, whereas sexual abuse may take place outside the home or involve non-familial actors. While Japhet (2019) found that 68% of sexual abuse cases in Dar es Salaam occurred at home, this may reflect urban-specific dynamics, whereas rural and peri-urban areas may have different exposure pathways.

The findings collectively imply that location and perpetrator context significantly influence the type of abuse, while the timing does not. These insights call for targeted prevention strategies that are sensitive to geographic and relational factors, including community surveillance, safe space education for children, and strengthening of school protection mechanisms.

Influence of Household Characteristics of Abused Child and Incident Setting on Occurrence of Child Sexual Abuse.

To further investigate the predictive power of associated factors on the likelihood of child sexual abuse, a binary logistic regression analysis was conducted. Only variables previously shown to have statistically significant associations were included in the model.

Table 4: Influence of Household Characteristics and Incident Setting on Child Sexual Abuse

				Number of observations = 401			
				LR chi2(6) = 81.44			
				Prob > chi2 = 0.0000			
Log likelihood = - 82.692506				**Pseudo R2** = 0.3299			
Type of abuse	**Odds Ratio**	**Coefficient**	**Std. Err.**	**Z**	**P>z**	**[95% Conf. Interval]**	
Relationship with head of household (ref: parent)							
Relative	0.8485156	-0.1642668	.4101808	-0.34	0.734	0.3289885	2.188462
Other	0.2614888	-1.341364	.1660784	-2.11	0.035	0.0753065	.907974
History of child abuse in household (ref: no)							
Yes	0.1176061	-2.140415	.0615214	-4.09	0.000	0.0421846	.3278729
Location of incident (ref: urban)							
Rural	1.928278	0.6566271	.8076641	1.57	0.117	0.8484798	4.382254
Perpetrator of abuse (ref: household member)							
School member	1.154691	0.143833	.9635629	0.17	0.863	0.2249873	5.926165
Stranger	60.30395	4.099398	62.54211	3.95	0.000	7.898637	460.4043
_cons	4.780436	1.564532	1.810274	4.13	0.000	2.275785	10.04162

Source: SRRH data, 2023

STATA output in table 4 gives p-value of 0.0000 for the overall model which indicates that the model is statistically significant.

Relationship with the head of household: Being relative is not statistically significant as the p-value is 0.734. This implies that the head of household being a relative did not have an influence on the occurrence of child sexual abuse as compared to the head of household being a parent. Contrary, the relationship with the head of household being other is statistically significant as the p-value is 0.035 hence relationship with the head of household being other has an influence on the occurrence of child sexual abuse.

Further, the probability of child sexual abuse occurring is 84% less if the relationship with the head of household is other compared to the parent, if other variables are constant as the odds ratio is 0.2614888. These results are contrary to Msangi (2017) as findings of the study in Dodoma indicated that children not living with their parents are more likely to be exposed to mistreatment, including sexual abuse. This anomaly could reflect varying definitions of 'other' and cultural caregiving practices in Tanzania, where some non-parent guardians may exercise more caution or oversight.

History of child abuse in the household: Surprisingly, children in households with a history of abuse had a 97% lower likelihood of experiencing sexual abuse ($p < 0.001$). This result challenges conventional expectations, such as those presented by Ezekiel et al. (2017), who found that previous abuse increased risk. A potential explanation may be heightened awareness

or intervention following previous incidents, or reluctance to report repeat cases due to stigma, an important issue in Tanzanian social structures.

Location: Although not statistically significant ($p = 0.117$), the odds ratio suggests rural areas had almost twice the likelihood of child sexual abuse compared to urban. This finding, although inconclusive, hints at underlying rural vulnerabilities, such as reduced access to protective services, limited education on sexual rights, or weaker legal enforcement as previously discussed by Terelak (2019).

Perpetrator identity: The variable perpetrator of child sexual abuse was grouped into three categories which are household members, school members and strangers. The perpetrator being a school member was statistically insignificant as compared to a household member as the p-value is 0.863. However, the perpetrator being other was statically significant as the p-value is 0.000. Further, the probability of occurrence of child sexual abuse was 60 times higher for the perpetrator being a stranger than a household member as the odds ratio was 60.30395. The finding was a bit contrary to the study done by Ferragut et al. (2021) in the Spanish population as the study findings indicated that child sexual abuse acts were committed by people in positions of power, close relationships and trusted by the children. Again this shows a social structure behaving different in Tanzania with western society suggesting that family and societies are more trustworthy when it comes to caring an unknown child.

The logistic regression underscores the complex and context dependent nature of child sexual abuse. While some findings aligned with existing literature, several contradicted prior assumptions highlighting the need for localized understandings of child protection risks. The high likelihood of stranger perpetrated abuse, and the counterintuitive role of household history, warrant further qualitative investigation to unpack the social and cultural dynamics at play.

Conclusion

Since the study findings indicated that relationship with head household being other had lesser influence on the occurrence of child sexual abuse as compared to head of household being parent, it can be concluded that parents in the Shinyanga region do not play the role of child protection effectively. Also, since history of child abuse in households had a significant influence on the occurrence of child abuse, it may be concluded that families with no history of child abuse are less aware of how to construct a safe environment for their children so that they become free from being abused.

Since the research was conducted solely in the Shinyanga region, the findings may not be applicable to other regions in Tanzania or elsewhere, where cultural norms, reporting mechanisms, and social support systems may differ significantly. Additionally, the issue of underreporting presents a major challenge, as cases of child abuse are often concealed due to fear, stigma, or mistrust in authorities. This means the actual prevalence of abuse may be much higher than what is reflected in hospital records, potentially leading to an underestimation of the problem. Furthermore, the study was limited to secondary data, it did not include interviews

with victims, perpetrators, or family members, which limits the depth of understanding regarding the context and motivations behind the abuse.

The study recommends it is wise for a parent with no history of child abuse in their households to take more precautions and strengthen the protection system in their household. Heads of households should be careful about who they leave with their children when they are at work or on journeys. Additionally, the study recommends parents live with their children at their places rather than letting them live with their relatives or other people. This is necessary for the follow-up of a child's progress both physically and mentally. Further, heads of households should have a regular tendency to discuss friendly with their children, asking about their children's progress and trying to find out if there is any threat a child is facing or if a child is encountered with any abnormal circumstance. In case anything suspicious is identified, it is very important to report it to legal bodies or social welfare services. To achieve these, education should be provided to the communities to increase awareness of heads of households to protect child rights and prevent child abuse. Furthermore, children at schools should be taught against child abuse and the importance of reporting incidences that have occurred as results show that it reduces child abuse cases.

This study recommends three other studies to be done. The first study should use primary data to understand the social structures that influence the occurance of child abuse as many findings in this study dropped down common factors for child abuse around the world. The second study that should be done is to identify and examine different form of child abuse existing in society and their prevalence in order to develop effective mechanism to fight it. Last but not for importance is a study of effective methods of education provision for protection against child abuse.

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