



## SOCIAL WORKERS' KNOWLEDGE LEVEL INFLUENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION APPROACHES IN KAJIADO NORTH SUB-COUNTY, KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

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**Abstract:** *The study's objective was to establish the extent to which social workers' knowledge level influences child protection interventions in Kajiado North Sub County. The study was guided by Competence Based curriculum theory and used mixed method design, specifically convergent parallel mixed method approach. A total of 223 respondents (employers, social workers, OVCs & key informants) were sampled using census, random, purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Questionnaires, interview schedule guides, KIIs guides, FGDs guides were used for data collection. The major findings indicated that knowledge level influences child protection interventions and singly it cannot effectively guarantee appropriate child protection. For guaranteed appropriate child protection interventions, the social worker should besides knowledge have the right skills and values as the right attitude. Most social workers felt adequately trained to make decisions on child protection interventions at undergraduate degree level and use of a combination of theories as what makes their intervention faster as it made them take the shortest time. The researcher concluded that a major gap exists between social work training and practice which need to be addressed. In addition, education sponsorship promotes institutionalization since children were placed in CCIs for education support which explained the fact that majority of the OVCs in the OVC Centre's were of school going age confirming the problem statement. The recommendations of the study include; social workers, need to keep updating their knowledge in regard to their relevant field of practice; Employers need to engage competent social workers within the boundaries of their level of education, experience and correct attitude and have ability provide appropriate intervention like supporting OVCs with education while at their family/community and not institutions as priority; CUE and ASWEK, need to standardize the training content for social workers across all institutions of higher learning, bridge the gap between social work training and practice by developing a curriculum specific to social work area of specialization in consultation with practitioners and frequently evaluate its applicability and implementation; to the policy makers, enact the social workers act because without a legal and policy framework in place injustice for children and social workers is inevitable, the MOLSP should in the short term, have an administrative directive for any social worker undertaking child protection interventions or any other staff working in child protection to have the relevant training, experience, attitude and have undergone a background check to establish their suitability to work with children and put in place mechanisms to have available information on the previous social workers records so that in case there was any professional misconduct and they moved to a different area, the information can be obtained and protect children.*

**Key Words:** *social workers, knowledge level, appropriate child protection approaches*

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

Child protection approaches refer to responsive safeguarding activities geared towards ensuring the safety of a child. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, (Article 53) recognizes the need for all children to be protected. This is among other, child protection measures made by Government including enacting laws and policies like the Children Act 2001, National Children Policy, policy directives including the most recent (2019) on deinstitutionalization of children by family tracing and alternative family care for children in institutions/residential care, support to OVCs through Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC). Despite these efforts, a lot still needs to be done to protect children in Kenya. Social workers being the core professionals ideally supposed to determine appropriate child protection interventions for a child are supposed to be competent in dealing with child protection issues as the only guarantee for them to offer appropriate child protection interventions(basic needs, rescue services, counseling services, family strengthening and protection from violence). The situation is however different where for example, although there are efforts from the Government of Kenya to regulate agencies working with children like Part V of Children Act 2001, many are those handling children and have not been registered neither is it known the caliber of staff handling these children. As a result, children have been exposed to abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence due to their being handled by staff that are not competent. Consequently, children find themselves locked up in cells with adults, other children are placed in permanent alternative family care instead of tracing their parents or families, other children are removed from their local community and placed in institutions.

Social workers being key child welfare professionals entrusted, with the welfare of children to act in the best interest of children best interests, habitually make crucial decisions that significantly impact on children and their families and as such should have the competence to do so since such decisions may influence positively or negatively both short and long term outcomes for children as pointed out by Farmer, Sturgess, & O'Neill, (2008). As recognized globally, children in need of protection receive insufficient services from professionals, as cited by Hope & Wyk, (2018) and continue to experience poor outcomes (Coman & Devaney, 2011 and Hansen & Ainsworth, 2013). All these affirming the importance of ensuring only competent social workers handle children who have adequate knowledge to handle them. Petrowskia, Cappaa, & Gross (2017) estimate that approximately 2.7 million children between ages 0-17 years could be living in residential and foster care across the world; as well as International Labour Organization (ILO), (2017), in their report on Global Estimates of Child labour: Results and Trends, 2012-2016, state that 152 million children are in child labour globally, with 19.6% being from Africa. UNICEF (2018) on the other hand in their brochure on global statistics on children's protection from violence exploitation and abuse, state that as of 2014, there were 29 million children in Female Genital Mutilation/cut, 62 million children with child discipline issues, 120 million children with child marriage cases. Further, there has been little empirical research in Kenya specifically on social workers knowledge level and its influence on child protection mechanism, hence the significance of this study.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

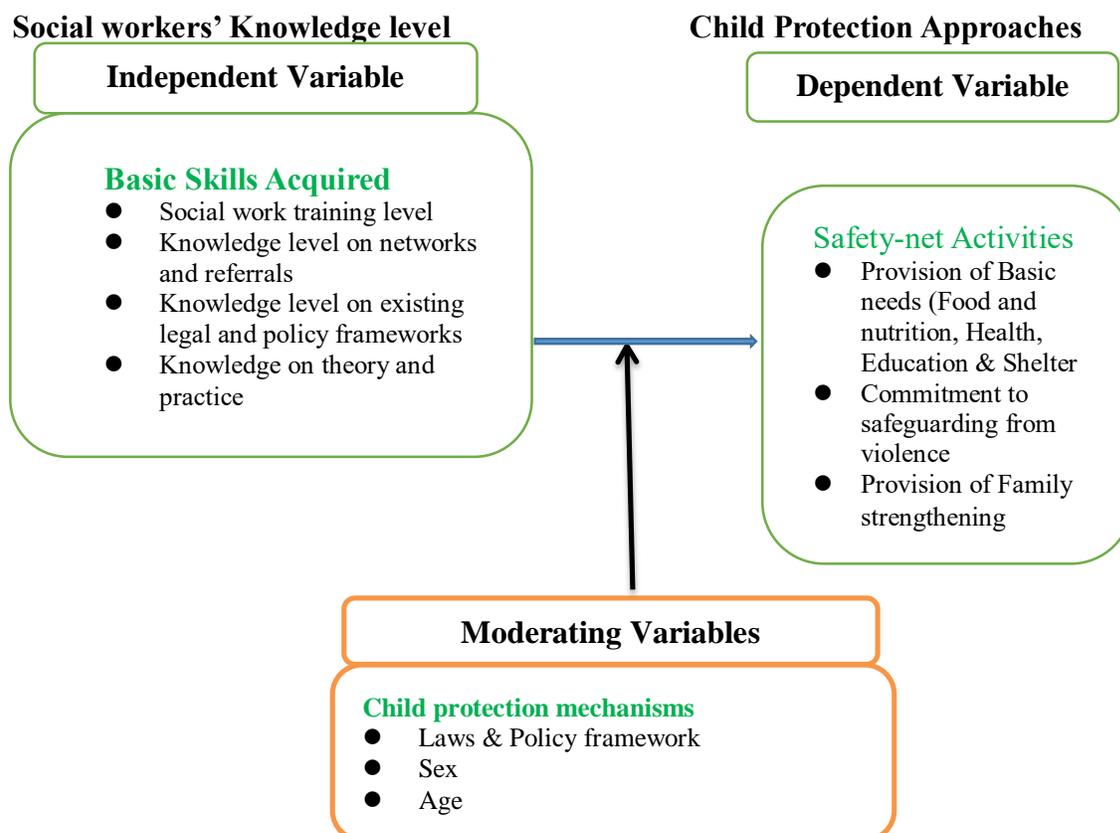
Ideally, social workers are the principle professionals charged with making decisions on appropriate child safeguarding approaches and should therefore have the right social work training, skills, values. Additionally, social workers are expected to adhere to the NASW code of ethics because it is the only way to assure their competence. However, this has not been the case as evident by the many inappropriate child protection intervention decisions made for children by

those making these decisions. Many times children have been removed from their families, local community and taken to institutions in the name of sponsorship thereby denying these children their right to be cared for by their families. Where children are found to have done an offense, in some areas they find themselves locked up in the same cells with adults. Other times children that have been found lost and end up being placed in permanent alternative family care while all that was required for such children is tracing their families. These, among other children maltreatment, have been worsened by incompetent workers and the fact that there are no laws specific to social worker's competence in handling these children. In the absence of clear laws and policies that define the knowledge level for competence children are exposed to abuse and other forms of violence and miss out on appropriate child protection interventions. As a consequence, many of these children have ended up being sexually and physically abused, exploited as child laborers and even permanently separated from their families and communities a state if not urgently addressed will rob this country of future happy and healthy adults. These and above all the fact that there was scanty information close to or relating to appropriate child safeguarding approaches and the knowledge level of social workers providing these interventions led to this study.

### 1.3 Main Objective of the Study

The study set out to examine the extent to which social workers' knowledge level influences child safeguarding approaches in Kajiado North Sub County.

### 1.4 Conceptual framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

**Source:** Researcher's illustration, 2020

## 1.5 Literature review

### Review of Empirical Studies

#### *Social workers Knowledge level and appropriate child protection interventions*

Social workers knowledge is impeded in social work education. Guo, Lu, Huang, Wang & Zhang, (2018) agree that competency-based approach has been applied in social work education. In their study conducted in China, on 332 Chinese students to examine how competency-based education and assessment prepares students of social work to become competent professionals, they clarify that the idea of competency requires different types of qualifications in an interpretation that encompasses the ability and realistic abilities of a person at the same time. This study identified both conceptual and professional dimensions as the core competencies. The study which surveyed eight Chinese universities used quantitative method and purposive sampling method. The major gap identified by the researcher was their use of quantitative research which is likely to omit significant findings that could have been obtained had the study incorporated a mixed design where the findings could have been corroborated by qualitative data. In addition, their use of an already existing scale and modifying it to suit the Chinese social work could have left out key components in the research and especially since it was in English and had to be translated into Chinese. There could have been incorrect translation for example there is no guarantee that all the words in English could be translated to words of equivalent meaning in Chinese.

In addition, the study is not specific to competence on child protection interventions and the competencies required there in. Moore (2016), states that continuing education can play an important role in the development of social workers. That a master's degree in social work is required in health care social work positions because its curriculum prepares graduates for advanced practice through the mastery of specialized knowledge and practice behaviors. He further points out that there appears to be a discrepancy in regard to the practicability of campus-acquired knowledge in professional social work practice and recommends that the gap can be filled through social work field education experiences which are designed to socialize students to the role of practitioner and ensure the integration of theory and practice. Moore, (2016) study was undertaken in Las Vegas and used qualitative research method. Semi-structured interviews were done to obtain data from 12 respondents that included six experts and eight exemplary performers. The study had some contradictions in terms of the role of knowledge in influencing practice where on the one hand it pointed that it did while on the other hand it did not. The study was on health care social workers and not child protection which meant that the findings may not have been applicable to child protection. The study also used qualitative research method only, which may have been subjective. This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to avoid subjectivity and brought out comprehensive findings.

Guo, et al., (2018), agree on the one part with Moore, (2016) when they stated that higher education is the key to 'Creating competence' of an economy that wishes to succeed in innovation, developing a skilled workforce equipped with vital skills and knowledge (Mok, 2013), with the goal of increasing employability and productivity. Guo, et al, (2018), claimed that the competency-based approach focuses on the incorporation of values, knowledge, and skills and, in particular, the translation of expertise into practice. They emphasized that competence based approach was significant in social work education and stated that, it was vital to evaluate and increase the educational quality. They stated that more attention in social work education should be put in

cultivating student critical thinking, strengthen the research-practice link, and encouraging student participation in policy analysis or policy evaluation to enhance competence. This differed with Moore (2016) who reported a discrepancy in regard to the practicability of campus-acquired knowledge in professional social work practice and recommended that the gap could be filled through social work field education experiences which are designed to socialize students to the role of practitioner and ensure the integration of theory and practice.

#### *Basic Skills in safeguarding Assessment Process*

Toros & LaSala, (2018) state that a need for assessment-related knowledge, skills for engaging children and families among others as significant in making decisions for child protection. They recommend that in order to help in filling up the social workers skill deficit, the solution would be setting up minimum education requirements for social workers as well as providing extensive training in child welfare assessment and interventions. They further state that, there is need for greater understanding and improved skills in empowering families to ensure the safety and well-being of children given the fact that child protection social workers must exercise a high degree of independent professional judgment. This was reported in their study undertaken in Estonia which used quantitative method and comprised of a self-administered questionnaire to 101 child protection workers sampled in Estonia, to establish their perspectives in regard to child welfare work and assessment and focused on the context of children in need.

The findings obtained by Toros & LaSala, (2018), showed that the child protection workers relied heavily on deficit-based approach instead of a strengths-based approach. It also suggested that the staff lacked skills to understand their role, to perform assessments and to engage in trusting relationships with children and families that suggest the need for training. It brought out a solution to dealing with skills deficits in social work. However, the study was conducted on Estonian child protection workers who are social workers and may not be applicable to African setting and especially Kenyan context. In addition, the study was a quantitative study consisting of self-administered questionnaires undertaken among a sample of 101 child protection workers and the findings are based on the self-reported views of child protection workers and hence not corroborated by other primary sources nor secondary sources which limited the study.

#### *A brief on Social work in the East African Context*

Within the African context, Spitzer, (2017) traces social work training back to 1960s with the spread of modern training institutions for social work personnel having begun after the period of independence. This was based on the Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa'(PROSOWO)project conducted between 2011 to 2014 and a follow up in 2016 which used a participatory, demand-driven approach, as cited in his article titled, Social work in East Africa: A mzungu perspective. On the other hand, Mupedziswa & Sinkamba,( 2014) state that Social work education and training in Africa began in the 1930s in such countries as Egypt and South Africa. In the case of South Africa, the Jan Hofmeyr College was one of the early institutions established in 1924, while in Egypt the Higher Institute for Social Work in Cairo was among the first in 1946. The School of Social Work at the University of Khartoum in the Sudan was established in 1969. In Ethiopia, a fully-fledged university department of social work was launched in 1966.

According to Midgley (1981, 61), by 1973 the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) had 25 schools of social work from Africa in its register. As cited by Spritzer, (2017), In East African countries like in Uganda, (Twikirize, 2014b) state that social work training began with the establishment of the Nsamizi Training Institute for Social Development in 1952 whose

mandate was to prepare clerical officers in the social sector of the colonial government, later in 1963, training in social welfare, community development and social administration commenced at Makerere University. In 1969 the first degree program was started. Social work education began in Tanzania in 1973 at the Institute of Social Work which served as the country's sole provider of social work training until 2000 (Mabeyo, 2014). In Rwanda, it was as late as 1998 that the National University of Rwanda initiated a Bachelor's in Social Work program to tackle the complex problems exacerbated by the aftermath of the genocide (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014).

The study done by Spritzer et al., (2017) in East African countries, used mixed method of qualitative and quantitative with structured and semi structured questionnaires, and it was not clear how the sampling was undertaken. In addition, the study focused on social work training in relation to sustainable development perspective and not on competence and child protection interventions. Although it was the closest within Africa in regard to social workers knowledge level competence since it addresses knowledge (training), it had gaps of what the specific knowledge level is required since it was silent and did not have any reference to child protection. The results of the study however supported this study in terms of progressive training for social workers. This is supported by Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa & Mugumbate, (2017) in their study when they stated that teaching of a developmental social work curriculum, and collaborative developmental social work learning experiences in social work education play a transformative role. The study undertaken in southern and East Africa used quantitative and qualitative method. It made use of semi-structured interview design, where quantitative demographic data were collected. The sampling technique used was purposive theoretical sampling.

#### *A Synopsis of the Local Experience*

In Kenya, formal social work education at the Kenya-Israel School of Social Work was initiated at diploma level in 1962, and degree-level training at the University of Nairobi began in 1976 (Wairire, 2014). In reality, as reported by Karani, Mavole & Ngendo (2017), the degree to which professional social workers carry out their mandates and roles in society depends primarily on the adequacy and relevance of the training and education they receive. In their report on the role of social work education in social development in Kenya, they highlighted the importance of education and training because it prepares a social worker for practice. Their study was exploratory and used census, purposive and random sampling methods. In their finding having censured 15 higher learning institutions, they affirm that knowledge is paramount in social work which can be achieved through proper training of social workers. Their study however only used one research method, the current study used mixed method to comprehensively establish if social workers knowledge level influences child protection interventions.

#### **Theoretical Framework Model**

The study was guided by the Competency Based Education (CBE) approach which is a model guiding the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes desired for effective professional practice in service of the public. Its main objective is to ensure that the public is represented by competent professionals who possess and employ the full range of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for qualified and productive professional performance (Albanese et al., 2010). The model emphasizes social responsibility, as well as protecting and serving the public whereby it makes sure that every student is competent for practice (Albanese et al., 2010; Frank et

al., 2010; Litzelman & Cottingham, 2007). As Conger & Ready, (2004) state this approach ensures that expectations about the knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant for a particular job are clearly set, at the same time there is consistency in that a common framework and language for communicating and implementing a work force system has been articulated. And there is connectivity to workforce development components such as education, professional preparation and a connection from behaviors to outcomes among others from the present to a desired future state. The model tenets were significant in the study in assessing the relationship between the social workers education level and their competence in performing the acts of providing an appropriate child protection intervention. This is despite its weakness that it is student centered and not client centered. It also considered a student within the confines of education and did not have a consideration of a work place set up where the student being assessed is handling practical clients. Despite these weaknesses the theory was relevant to the study as the researcher used its tenets in developing the tools for the study. For example, to identify and measure social workers demonstrated ability to accomplish an activity the researcher was cognizant of the knowledge, desired for effective professional practice in service of the public as guided in the model. In addition, the model appreciates that there are levels of competence which are necessary in social work. For example, in social work profession there are various levels where there are social workers at supervision level who supervise other social workers who are at the basic level that is, just beginning to practice immediately after their social work training.

## 1.6 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods research design to access a sample of 223 respondents; with both probability and non-probability sampling techniques being predominantly applied. Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size from all the categories of respondents. Interviewing methods particularly key Informants (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth content analysis were used in data collection with interview guides, questionnaire, key informants and focus group discussion guides used as tools. Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively by assessment of different themes as they emerged from the data, while Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was employed to analyze the quantitative data. Results and findings were categorized in accordance with the appropriate social service delivery agents on child protection in the study area within the recommended ethical values recommended for child safeguarding and their service providers.

## 1.7 Study findings

### Response Rate

Out of 224 population, a sample of 223 respondents' responded as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

| <b>Respondents</b>                         | <b>Total Target</b> | <b>Actual Target</b> | <b>%</b>    |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Employers/administrators                   | 10                  | 9                    | 90          |
| Social workers                             | 20                  | 18                   | 90          |
| Orphans and other Vulnerable Children OVCs | 180                 | 180                  | 100         |
| Key informants                             | 24                  | 16                   | 66.7        |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>224</b>          | <b>223</b>           | <b>99.6</b> |

**Source:** Study findings, 2020

All OVCs responded, while social workers and Employers/administrators were at 18(90.0%) and 9(90.0%) respectively. On the other hand, the key informants' response rate was 16(66.7%). The response rate results are in line with the average acceptable response rate according to Baruch & Holtom (2008) who established it as 52.7%. The high response rate success is attributed to the fact that the researcher personally administered the questionnaires, moderated the FGDs as well as conducted the key informants' interviews. The findings indicated that most of the OVCs centres had one social worker with other OVC centres having more than one to seven social workers.

### **Social workers Gender and knowledge on current laws and policies protecting children**

The researcher compared the demographic responses for social workers against their knowledge on laws and policies protecting children as indicated in the table 2 below. The results indicated that all the gender knew the current laws, which meant that gender did not matter since the response was the same for both genders. Knowledge in the current laws that are protecting children is significant for all social workers regardless of their gender as it contributes to their making appropriate child protection interventions. Ideally, any social worker that is providing appropriate child protection interventions to children should have adequate knowledge on the laws and policies protecting children.

**Table 2: Gender \* Do you know current laws and policies protecting children Crosstabulation**

| <u>Gender</u> | <u>Do you know current laws and policies protecting children</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------|--|--------------|
|               | <u>Yes</u>   |              |
| Male          | 6  | 6            |
| Female        | 12   | 12           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>18</b>  | <b>18</b>    |

**Source:** Study findings, 2020

**OVCs Age group:** Majority of the OVCs respondents were within the age group of 11 to 15 years who were 57(61.3%) and 47(54%) respectively being the highest percentage of the total sample. The lowest percentage was OVCs above 18 years age group who were 2(2.2%). The results show that majority of the OVC centres cater for children below 18 years. In a few instances some above 18 years who had not completed their education were still under the care of the centres. The researcher observed that majority of the OVCs in the OVC centres were of school going age that is attributed to the fact that all the OVCs Centres offered education support. This confirmed the problem statement that the researcher made prior to undertaking this research that children were placed in CCIs for education. This means support to education promotes institutionalization. This calls for the need to have a competent social worker dealing with these children to provide an appropriate child protection intervention of supporting the OVCs with education while at their family/community and not institutions as priority.

### **Education level of respondents**

**OVCs Education level:** The researcher established that majority of OVCs, 55(59.1%) and 75(86.2%) were of primary level. Followed by secondary level, meaning children had spent more time within the centres and had interacted with their social workers for a longer duration for them to provide concrete information for this study. These findings were consistent with those of the most common age group of the OVCs, which was between 11 to 15 years which is also the primary

and secondary school level age groups.

### **Completed Highest Education level for Social Workers, Administrators and Key informants:**

The results indicated that, post graduate level was the completed highest education for Majority of the key informants where 10(62.2%) of them had masters and PhD as their highest education level. This means they have a wealth of academic knowledge besides the fact that they were sampled for being knowledgeable in the study area. On the other hand majority of the social workers, 13(72.2%) had their highest completed education level as undergraduate. It was evident that knowledge level is significant in providing child protection interventions, and that the most appropriate level is undergraduate and above based on the fact that the OVC centres employed majority of social workers of this education level. Therefore, the higher the knowledge level the richer the contribution towards the phenomenon of interest. Knowledge level indeed influences social worker's decision on child protection interventions. This is in agreement with Stone (2016) who in her study on, stated that academic knowledge in social work brings out the competencies and capabilities that fall within the domains of social work knowledge, skills and values which are all essential and are not of hierarchical significance.

### **Field Trained on: Social Workers, Administrators and Key informants**

The adult respondents were requested to state the field trained on and their response is as indicated below.

**Table 4: Field trained on; social workers, administrators and Key informants**

|                 | <u>Social workers</u> |              | <u>Administrators</u> |              | <u>Key Informants</u> |              |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                 | Frequency             | Percent      | Frequency             | Percent      | Frequency             | Percent      |
| Social Work     | 13                    | 72.2         | 4                     | 44.4         | 14                    | 87.5         |
| Non-Social work | 5                     | 27.8         | 5                     | 55.6         | 2                     | 12.5         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>18</b>             | <b>100.0</b> | <b>9</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>16</b>             | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source:** Study findings, 2020

As indicated in Table 4 above of the total 43(100.0) respondents that participated in the study, 31 (72.1%) had obtained training in social work while 12(27.9%) of them were non social workers. Majority of social workers and Key informants had acquired social work training. This was an indication that besides having practiced and acquired experience in social work they had social work training. This was significant for the study since it focused on establishing if social workers knowledge level influences the child protection interventions. This also meant that majority, 31(72.1%) of the respondents clearly understood social worker NASW code of ethics requirement of what is expected of them in regard to professional development and in enhancing their competence which enriched the findings of the study.

### **a) If lecturer/educator whether their institution offers social work training/ Highest Level of training for social workers offered by your institution**

The researcher sought to establish the level of social work training offered in the institutions that were represented by the key informants. Out of all the key informants respondents that participated, 7(43.7%) were social worker educators. The 7 were asked the level their institutions offered social work training. The findings indicated that majority of the institutions had their highest level of training as undergraduate and master's. Only one institution, Catholic University

of Eastern Africa was offering social work training at PhD level.

### **b) Whether it matters if the social worker has completed training or not**

Majority of the OVCs 78 (83.9%) believed it matters if the social worker has completed social work training or not. This was corroborated by those in FGDs like one of the participants stated, *“kama amesoma atasaidia vizuri kuliko kama hajasoma”* (FGD04, personal communication, August 13, 2019), meaning “with education he will help better than if he has no education”. This meant that the OVCs understand the need to have social workers who have high education level, since education level defined how a social worker intervened in their problems. This also meant that the higher the education level of a social worker, the most likely that they would make decisions that are most appropriate when undertaking child protection interventions. This was consistent with their responses when they were asked whether the education level the social worker has makes a difference into how they help them. Out of all 93 OVCs respondents 87(93.5%) stated that it makes a difference how the social worker helps.

The FDGs corroborate this stating *“social worker mwenye amesoma zaidi, anaeza kuwa anajua kitu na wewe hujui akuambie ndio ujue. kama mtoto anauliza swali na hajasoma hawezi jibu, atawafunza ndio mjue, ndio msaidiane”* (FGD05, personal communication, August 16, 2019). Meaning, “a social worker who has higher education level knows more than you and since you as a child you don’t know, the social worker would inform you what you do. And when a child asks a question, if he has no education level he cannot provide the information and cannot give you the information so that you can know”. This was consistent with Stone (2016), who in her study on the role of practice educators in initial and post qualifying Social worker education, she emphasis the importance of education level stating that knowledge is important because besides one being able to follow instruction and perform set tasks, it also promotes critical thinking and cognitively engaging with practice. Knowledge according to her also enables one to use theory and knowledge to inform practice.

### **c) Whether social workers know current laws and policies protecting children**

The researcher sought to establish if the social workers knew the current laws protecting children. 18 (100.0%) of the social workers knew the current laws protecting children. The results indicate that 13 (72.2%) of them stated Children Act, 4 (22.2%) the Kenyan Constitution, 1 (5.6%) the evidence act, 1 (5.6%) matrimonial property act, 2 (11.1%) Counter trafficking in persons Act and 1 (5.6%) the UNCRC. The researcher noted that not all the social workers, knew of the Children Act since only 13 (72.2%) stated it although they stated other laws that protect children.

### **d) Level of social work training social workers are adequately training for practice**

The researcher sought to establish the level of education that social workers feel/are adequately trained to practice in child protection. The results indicated that majority of administrators, 6 (66.7%) believed that diploma level is adequate. On the other hand majority of the social workers, 6 (33.3%) believed that social work undergraduate degree is the level that social workers feel adequately trained. The researcher noted a thin margin between diploma and undergraduate level since 5 (27.8%) of the social workers indicated the diploma level as adequate while 3 (33.3%) of the administrators stated social work undergraduate is the level that is adequate. Based on the fact that majority of the social workers stated that undergraduate degree was the level they felt adequately trained, the researcher concluded that this was the level social workers are adequately trained, since the social workers had practiced and made decisions on child protection

interventions, and were therefore best placed to provide a practical response. This was corroborated by KIIs stating, “undergraduate Degree because the lower levels need close supervision” (KII11, personal communication, September 12, 2019).

#### **e) Whether completion of social work training is adequate**

The researcher asked whether completion of social work training is adequate for social workers to provide appropriate child interventions. The findings indicated that majority of the administrators, 7 (77.8%) and half of the social workers, 9(50.0%) believed that completion of training alone was not adequate while 2 (22.2%) of the administrators and half of the social workers 9 (50.0%) believed it was adequate. This agrees with Moore, (2016) who reported that knowledge, although critical to sound social work practice, had no bearing on performance. The results indicated that although social work training is significant in providing child protection interventions, besides training, there are other aspects that a social worker needs in order for them to have the ability to provide appropriate child protection interventions which include mentorship/in service training supervision for two years by a practicing social worker, attendance to child protection conferences and child protection workshops.

#### **f) Best way to examine or assess social workers demonstrated ability to provide appropriate child protection intervention**

The researcher sought to establish from the administrators what would be the best way to examine or assess social workers demonstrated ability to provide child protection interventions since they have had experience in working with social workers at different capacities and levels. The findings indicated that Relevant Social work qualification, experience and skills in the specific child protection area necessary. This is because majority, 7(77.7%) of administrators identified them as significant. The administrators 5(55.5%) also pointed out that successful cases handled or accomplished works were important. In addition, they also added that it was important to get Feedback from beneficiaries 1(1.11%) as well as Certificate of good conduct (which would state if one has any previous criminal records). This was corroborated by the KII03 stating, “Through examination during training, practice-during practicum that is, hands on during practice. Track record for example data base that can tell you about their profile, child protection, look if they have been engaged in any malpractice during their practice. For example, abuse, trafficking, child labour, so that any malpractice can be identified if this happened before and the social worker has moved to another area.” KII03, personal communication, August 24, 2019.

#### **g) Ways social workers collaborate with colleagues to expand their knowledge and understanding**

The researcher sought to establish if social workers collaborated to expand their knowledge and understanding as required by NASW. The results indicated that majority of the social workers, 11 (61.1%) that participated in the study mostly collaborated with colleagues who were social workers. Further the social workers also Collaborated with their supervisors who were also social workers, which was 10 (55.5%). They also Collaborated with colleagues who were in different profession, 6 (33.3%) and Collaborated with their supervisors who were not social workers, 5 (27.7%). The findings pointed out that all social workers at one point needed to consult during their practice. Consultation in child protection is very important, because cases of children are dynamic and none of the cases is similar.

#### **h) Social work theories social workers use in child protection and the length of time it takes a social worker to respond/act on a case of a child**

The researcher sought to find out which social work theories were frequently used when providing appropriate child protection interventions. The findings indicated that most 11 (61.1%) social workers used a combination of theories. Further it revealed that the most single commonly used theory was the social learning theory (8, 44.4%), followed closely by the psychosocial theory as indicated by (5, 27.7%) of the social workers. In addition systems and cognitive theories were also insignificantly used. The findings are consistent with Tracy & DuBois, (1987) in their eclectic social work intervention approach who emphasized on the need to embrace an integrated approach in social work. The same was supported by Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, (2002) who stated that, “Single model practitioners do a disservice to themselves and their clients by attempting to fit all clients and problems into their chosen model”. The researcher compared the average time it took for social workers to intervene on a case of a child and the theory used. The findings indicated that half of social workers 9 (50.0%) took the least time, that is, between 1 hour and 1 day when using a combination of theories than when they used one theory. This meant that use of a combination of theories makes the intervention faster. Hence, it is important for social workers to make use of more than one theory when providing appropriate child protection interventions since this will take the shortest time possible and also expand their horizon in terms of diversifying their intervention options to appropriately address their client’s problems.

#### **j)Extent to which knowledge level influences CPI**

The administrators and social workers were asked to state to what extent they believed knowledge level influences child protection intervention. The results indicated that majority of the administrators as well as the social workers stated that knowledge level influences child protection interventions to a very great extent, administrators 5 (55.6%), social workers 7 (38.9%) and to a great extent, administrators 5 (55.6%), social workers 7 (38.9%). Few of them stated to some extent, administrators 1 (11.1%), social workers 1 (5.6%) as well as to a moderate extent administrators 1 (11.1%), social workers 2 (11.19%). Table 25 below indicates this summary.

**Table 2: Extent to which knowledge level influences CPI**

|                        | <u>Social workers</u> |              | <u>Administrators</u> |              |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                        | Frequency             | Percent      | Frequency             | Percent      |
| To some extent         | 1                     | 5.6          | 1                     | 11.1         |
| To a moderate extent   | 2                     | 11.1         | 1                     | 11.1         |
| To a great extent      | 8                     | 44.4         | 2                     | 22.2         |
| To a very great extent | 7                     | 38.9         | 5                     | 55.6         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>18</b>             | <b>100.0</b> | <b>9</b>              | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source:** Study findings, 2020

The findings indeed confirmed that child protection interventions are influenced by knowledge level. These results were corroborated by the FGDs when one of the OVCs stated that “*Hawezi kuya kufudisha watoto nayeye ajamaliza kusoma. Akiwa amemaliza shule mtoto mwingine anaeza kuya aulize swali na amwambie. Ata wageni wakikuja waulize watoto ni wangapi wataweza sema.*” (FGD09, personal communication, September 17, 2019). This means that a social worker cannot educate children while the social worker has not completed education. When the social worker has completed education he/she is able to answer questions. These results corroborate with Heimonen,

et al., (2015) who in their study carried out to 99 social workers, pointed out that knowledge level has a role to play in competent social work practice.

### **Appropriate Child Protection Interventions**

The researcher sought to establish the child protection interventions offered to OVCs. The results indicated that OVCs are provided with basic needs, protection from violence, provision of rescue services, provision of counseling and provision of family strengthening.

#### **a) Basic needs**

Both administrators and social workers were in agreement that the basic needs provided to OVCs were shelter where 7 (38.3%) of social workers and 6 (66.6%) administrators stated so, food where 8 (44.4%) of social workers and 7 (77.7%) administrators stated this, education where 8 (44.4%) of social workers and 4 (44.4%) administrators stated so, clothing where 5 (27.7%) of social workers and 5 (55.5%) administrators stated so, health where 1 (5.5%) of social workers and 4 (44.4%) administrators stated so and sanitary towels as stated by 1 (5.5%) of social workers.

#### **b) Protection from violence**

When asked whether they protect children from violence, the results indicated that majority of the administrators, 6 (66.7%) and social workers, 13 (72.2%) affirmed to protecting children from violence. On the other hand, 3 (33.3%) administrators and 1 (5.6%) social workers stated that they do not protect children from violence and 4 (22.2%) social workers did not provide a response. The findings indicated that the ways in which children were protected as stated by the social workers and administrators included provision of rescue and secure environment where 16 (88.8%) of social workers and 4 (44.4%) affirmed to this. They also stated, empowering the child and guardians, training parents/guardians where 4 (22.2%) social workers and 2 (22.2%) administrators alluded to this.

#### **c) Provision of rescue services**

When both the social workers and administrators were asked if they provide rescue services, the results indicated that most of the social workers 10 (55.5%) and almost all the administrators 8 (88.9%) confirmed that indeed they provided rescue services. Additionally, 8 (44.4%) of the social workers and 1 (11.1%) of the administrators indicated that they did not provide rescue services. The above results were corroborated by the OVCs responses which indicated that their social worker was knowledgeable “because she gets children from the streets...” In addition, those in the FGDs affirmed the same when they stated that “*kupelekwa nyumbani*”. In translation meaning, “taking us home”. This means after the OVCs were rescued, some were reintegrated.

#### **d) Provision of counseling**

The administrators, 9 (100.0%) and social workers, 15 (77.8%) results indicated that OVCs are provided with counseling services as they affirmed that they provided counseling services. These findings were upheld by the OVCs, stating that the services they received was “*we get Counseling, kuongelehwa, kukuambia wacha stress*, (OVC20, personal communication, August 7, 2019).

## **1.8 Conclusion**

The researcher established that in deed social workers knowledge level influences to great extent child protection interventions. This is verified by the results which indicated that the level of education as well as knowledge in the laws, policies and children issues are key. The findings also

indicated that there is a connection between a social workers level of education and the average time it takes for them to respond to a child as confirmed by the fact that most of the social workers, who had acquired undergraduate level and above as their completed highest education level took between one hour and one day to respond to a case of a child. This meant that the higher the level of education the shortest time period a social worker takes to intervene to a case of a child. However, the findings have also alluded that social workers knowledge level single handedly is not adequate for social workers to provide appropriate child protection interventions. Engagement of children was established as key when providing appropriate child protection interventions. OVCs were engaged through; allowing them to give their opinion, through forums like bungenes, FDGs, meetings and barazas, through child protection clubs and mentorship programs. Social workers undertook consultations and networking in order to provide appropriate child protection interventions.

## 1.9 Recommendations

- i. **To the social workers;** they need to keep updating their knowledge in regard to the relevant field of practice because this enhances their competence, it is important for social workers to collaborate, consult and network to expand their knowledge and understanding and to effectively provide appropriate child protection interventions; It is important for social workers to make deliberate efforts to engage children through child participation which can be done through allowing them to give their opinion; through forums like Bungenes, FDGs, meetings, Barazas, in decision making. For example, in making rules and also through child protection clubs and mentorship programs; and above all the social workers working with children need to know that the OVCs and other children should be shown love, care, and understanding and treated politely not harshly. Actually, using one of the OVCs words, “atutreat kama watoto wake”, meaning treat the children as they treat their own children.
- ii. **To the social workers employers,** it is significant to engage the right social worker who is competent within the level of competence of relevant knowledge to handle children; and to consider the character and conduct; relevant qualification, experience and skills; successful cases handled or accomplished works ; feedback from beneficiaries which can be done regularly; Social workers attitude and passion for children, self-awareness, good morals and interest before engaging the social worker.
- iii. **To CUE and ASWEK,** It is important to ensure standardized training content of social workers since the study established that the content of social work training at various levels was not standard; certificate, diploma. Degree, masters and PhD is different in each social work institution which makes it challenging to specify a specific level without the knowledge of the content of the training; it is therefore imperative to standardize the content of social work training in all institutions offering social work. To this effect it is also imperative to frequently evaluate adherence to these standards once they are put in place; and it is also important to develop curriculum specific to child protection or specific specialization area to bridge the gap between training and practice. In this regard, develop a curriculum specific to child protection which should be developed in consultation with the State Department and State Agency charged with protection of children as well as other stakeholders in order to bridge the gap between social work training and practice.

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