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An Evaluation of the Kilimanjaro Women Information Exchange and Community Organization Project on Decreasing Gender-Based Violence in Primary Schools, Tanzania

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Abstract

Gender-based violence is violence directed at a person's gender. However, there is more violence directed against girls. In response to the pandemic of violence against girls, Kilimanjaro Women Information Exchange and Community Organization (KWIECO) established a project to decrease GBV against girls in primary schools in Siha District. This study was a formative evaluation of the project, employing a Convergent parallel design. The study targeted 4 primary schools as study sites; both probability sampling and non-probability sampling methods were used to sample 72 students, 4 heads of primary schools, 8 teachers, 1 KWIECO's officer, and 20 parents, for a total sample of 105. The study employed In-depth interview guides and questionnaires as instruments for data collection. Content validity of the evaluation instruments was assessed, and the reliability was calculated. Quantitative data were analyzed in terms of means, frequencies, and percentages. The qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and similar themes were linked together, followed by translation and interpretation. The study found that the project was effectively implemented, though there was poor involvement of parents and students, which promoted GBV against girls. However, the study found that students were included in the implementation of the project, and they were educated and saved from GBV against girls. The study recommends that intensified GBV awareness for parents improve case reporting. Additionally, there is a need for the second phase of the project because the practices of GBV require continuous monitoring by all educational stakeholders.

Keywords: Gender-based Violence; Violence; Project; Primary schools; Implementation; Gender.

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a brutal violation of human rights. It is one of the worst manifestations of gender discrimination and a major obstacle to achieving gender equality (Fiona, Dunne & Salvi, 2013). The term 'GBV' is most commonly used to underscore systemic inequality between males and females (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015). The United States of America Government (2012) asserts that Gender-based violence takes on many forms and can occur throughout the life cycle. Most of the children in Tanzania are faced with problems of violence as they live in a society with different norms and conduct. The violence against children is in the form of child abuse, such as sexual abuse and child labour. Also, the National Bureau of Statistics, Tanzania, and the International Coach Federation (ICF) Macro (2011) report noted that Tanzania also has among the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. On average, four out of every ten girls will be married before their eighteenth birthday. However, Mikongoti & Wazambi (2016) reported that the major issues affecting children's rights in Tanzania were sexual violence, child abuse and torture, child marriage, and female genital mutilation, which are forms of violence against children.

Tanzania is one of the countries in Africa where some of its Ethnic groups practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). According to the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (TDHS-MIS) 2015-16 (Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children [MoHCDGEC] et al., 2016), 12 regions



in Tanzania practice FGM, with prevalence rates ranging from 4.3% to 57.7%. Table 1 shows the percentages of FGM practices in Tanzania.

Table 1: Prevalence of FGM in Tanzania by Regions

SN	REGION	PERCENTAGE
1	Manyara	57.7
2	Dodoma	46.7
3	Arusha	41
4	Singida	30.9
5	Tanga	13.7
6	Kilimanjaro	10.1
7	Tabora	0.6

MoHCDGEC et al., (2016)

The data in Table 1 confirm that violence against girls, particularly FGM, is a serious problem in Tanzania, including in the Kilimanjaro region, where 10.1% of the girls undergo FGM. As a response to the pandemic of violence against children, which affects more girls than boys, KWIECO established the Project of decreasing Gender-based Violence against girls in primary schools in September 2017 in Kilimanjaro. The project focused on youth empowerment, community sustainable development, education, reduction of violence against women and children, leadership, and governance. The main objectives of this project were to reduce gender-based violence against girls and to educate boys on gender issues.

The different activities conducted by KWIECO were awareness sessions on GBV, engaging the community, and referrals to achieve their intended objectives. Therefore, efforts made to achieve the intended objectives included providing a safe place for participants to share their experiences, to learn about gender issues, sexual health, and strategies to combat GBV, directed to four primary schools in Siha District. Tanzania is among the countries that implement Sustainable Development Goal number 5, which emphasizes gender equality. To explore this phenomenon, the study was designed to answer two key questions, which were drawn from the project objectives: (i) How effective is the KWIECO project for decreasing gender-based violence against girls in primary schools in Siha District? (ii) To what extent has the project educated boys on gender issues in primary schools in Siha District? Therefore, this evaluation study focused on identifying the strategies for enhancing the achievement of gender equality.

This study drew on both theoretical and empirical literature related to gender-based violence (GBV), two theories guided the evaluation: Cognitive Development Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. Cognitive Development Theory explains how children's thought processes evolve, influencing their ability to make decisions and resist harmful practices. Self-Efficacy Theory emphasizes how individuals' belief in their ability to accomplish tasks contributes to confidence and resilience. Together, these perspectives suggest that empowering children with knowledge and self-belief can reduce their vulnerability to GBV. However, studies conducted across different regions provide further insights. For example, Andrew, Foerander, Russo, and Iqbal (2016) evaluated a prevention program in Australia and found that male youth participants gained greater awareness about violence against women and children. Similarly, an impact assessment by Interchurch Medical Assistance (2016) in the Democratic Republic of Congo revealed that the Ushindi program significantly improved survivors' access to care and services that were previously unavailable. These findings highlight the role of structured interventions in changing attitudes and increasing support for survivors. In Tanzania, UNICEF (2011) reported that children exposed to emotional violence often experienced negative health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. These findings reinforce the urgency of addressing GBV at early stages of child development. The present study, therefore, builds on such evidence by evaluating the KWIECO project in Siha District, with a focus on both the effectiveness of interventions and the extent of inclusion of boys in gender awareness programs.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a mixed methods approach, specifically the convergent parallel design, which allows the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. The use of this design provided an opportunity to



balance the limitations of one method with the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2012). The target population was 105 individuals drawn from four primary schools in Siha District.

Different strategies were applied depending on the group of participants. Four head teachers were automatically included due to their direct involvement in school leadership. Purposive sampling was used to select four primary schools, eight teachers, and one project officer. For students, stratified and simple random sampling were employed to ensure representation across the schools, resulting in 72 pupils. Additionally, snowball sampling was used to recruit 20 parents who were actively engaged in project-related activities.

Two main tools were used. Questionnaires were administered to students to capture quantitative information, while in-depth interview guides were developed for head teachers, teachers, parents, and the KWIECO project officer to collect qualitative insights. These instruments were tested for validity and reliability. Content validity was established through expert review, and pilot testing produced a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.766 for the Likert-scale items in the student questionnaire.

This evaluation was guided by the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), a comprehensive framework for conducting formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, personnel, products, organizations, and evaluation systems (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

Context evaluation refers to an attempt to assess the settings or environment within which the educational activity is taking place (Ogula, 2002). The project involves parents and teachers to ensure that the context is identified. When the context is identified, it will be easy to seek the necessary inputs for the project, for example, a lack of awareness of GBV. Stufflebeam (2003, as cited in Zhang et al., 2011) asserted that the objective of context evaluation was to facilitate the overall environmental readiness of the project, examine whether present goals and priorities were attuned to needs, and assess whether proposed objectives were sufficient. The context evaluation assessed the pre-existing awareness and needs related to GBV in the primary schools of Siha District.

Ogula (2002) underscores that the purpose of input evaluation is to provide information for determining how to utilize resources to achieve program objectives. In the project, the input evaluation had helped the evaluator determine the extent to which the resources planned were available and utilized as intended in the project, so as to serve the structuring decision. The resources in the project include funds, human resources, and material resources.

The process of evaluation provides an opportunity to create the essential potential approaches and help formulate a responsive plan and action. For example, the evaluator had identified the sections and activities that were conducted in the project, such as how the project team responds to different activities and responsibilities, so as to serve the implementing decision. These processes also include: awareness raising, community and stakeholders' engagement, and assistance.

Zhang, Zeller, Griffith, Metcalf, Williams, Shea & Misulis (2011) point out that product evaluation identifies and assesses project outcomes, both intended and unintended. For example, the intended outcomes for this project include: participating students to experience less abuse and be aware of their rights, girls to be confident leaders and advocates on their own behalf and on behalf of the other girls, and participating parents to be less abusive towards girls and children and denounce abuse in their communities.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, percentages, and frequency distributions, to identify patterns in students' responses. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and organized into emerging themes. The integration of the two data sets during interpretation enhanced the credibility of the findings, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the project's outcomes.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the formative evaluation of the KWIECO project, structured according to the two primary evaluation questions. Quantitative data from student questionnaires are summarized, and qualitative insights from interviews with teachers, parents, and the project officer are integrated to provide a comprehensive analysis.

3.1 Effectiveness of the Project Implementation



The first evaluation question sought to assess the overall effectiveness of the KWIECO project in decreasing GBV against girls in primary schools. Data collected from 72 students via a five-point Likert scale questionnaire revealed strong positive outcomes in awareness and education, alongside identifiable challenges in case identification and peer engagement. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' responses on the extent to which school activities contributed to the effectiveness of the project (n = 72).

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree		Mean
	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	
Students are educated on gender issues	3	4.2	0	0.0	1	1.4	27	37.5	41	56.9	4.43
Awareness sessions for students and teachers about gender-based violence were conducted in the school	5	6.9	5	6.9	9	12.5	23	31.9	30	41.7	3.94
The students who experience gender-based violence were identified in the school	26	36.1	7	9.7	7	9.7	20	27.8	12	16.7	2.79
The students who are at risk of gender-based violence are not supported by the project	29	40.3	13	18.1	4	5.6	10	13.9	16	22.2	2.60
No peer discussion on gender-based violence which are conducted in the class	20	27.8	7	9.7	2	2.8	17	23.6	26	36.1	3.31
There is no quarterly meeting with parents in the school about gender-based violence against girls	24	33.3	12	16.7	13	18.1	15	20.8	8	11.1	2.60

From Table 2, it was noted that the majority of students (94.4%) who responded on the questionnaire agreed to the statement that the students were educated on gender issues in the school. This implies that the project in primary schools in Siha district educated students on gender issues which enabled students to have knowledge and skills about GBV against girls, for example 100% of the students were able to respond to questionnaire.

Furthermore 73.6% of students agreed and strongly agreed that awareness sessions were conducted for students and teachers about GBV. This implies that the project conducted awareness sessions on GBV to both teachers and students in primary schools in Siha district in its implementation. Also, the students and teachers were able to attend the awareness sessions easily as the sessions were conducted at their schools. Also, the responses of students on the statement that the students who experience gender-based violence were identified in the schools, only few students



(44.5%) agreed. This implies that the project was not able to identify students who experienced gender-based violence in the primary schools in the Siha district. This indicated that the cases reported were also few from students about GBV against girls.

Similarly, 36.1% of the sampled students agreed that the students who are at risk on gender-based violence are not supported by the project. On the other hand, 58.4% of the students disagreed with this statement. This implies that most of the students in the primary schools who are at risk of gender-based violence were supported in the implementation of the project. It also indicates that the survivors of GBV against girls in the primary schools were helped and able to continue with their studies. However, the majority (59.7) of the students agreed that no peer discussion on gender-based violence was conducted in the class. This implies that peer discussions on GBV were not conducted in the classes. The discussions were conducted in the project clubs. The study also found that only few students participated in these clubs' activities.

Likewise, 11.1% of the students strongly agreed and 20.8% of the sampled students agreed to the statement that there was no quarterly meeting conducted with parents in the school about gender-based violence against girls. On the other hand, 33.3% of the students strongly disagreed and 16.7% of the students disagreed with the statement that there was no quarterly meeting conducted with parents in the school about gender-based violence against girls, while 18.1% of the sampled students were neutral, and the mean was 2.60. This implies that the project was conducting quarterly meetings with the parents in the primary schools about GBV against girls in its implementation in Siha district.

Furthermore, the findings from the interviews with teachers and project officers revealed that even though teachers are familiar with the activities conducted by the project in the primary schools, they declared that the project was effective due to the positive effects on students and society as well. The question was: *what activities have been conducted in the school in the implementation of the project?* This question was posed to teachers and the head teacher. As one female teacher declared:

"The project was educating pupils on the effects of sex abuse in society through conducting debates and clubs with teachers and pupils in the school. This enables students to have confidence in defending themselves and reporting any kind of abuses from their families" (Female Teacher, Primary School A: 24.05.2019)

In addition, during the interview, the Project Officer declared that there is a positive effect of the project on different stakeholders in Siha District. The question was: *In your view, do you think the project successful?* This question was followed by another question, which started: *Please explain your response?*

The response from the project officer was:

"Yes, the project is successful because there is more than one student in these primary schools who were saved from early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), they have now proceeded with studies" (Project officer A: 27.05.2019)

Due to the responses from the participants, the findings revealed that the project was effective not only for students but also for parents whose children were saved from different kinds of gender-based violence against girls, such as FGM. Also, the findings revealed that the project was effective as the awareness sessions conducted in the schools, which enabled both students and teachers to participate.

3.2 The extent to which the project educated boys on gender issues

The evaluation question two was prepared with the intention of checking if the project also educated boys about gender issues in its implementation in primary schools in the Siha district. The students were given a questionnaire with five points rating scale consisting of 3 items and requested to indicate the extent to which the project educated boys concerning gender issues by rating either SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree), N (Neutral), A (Agree), or SA (Strongly Agree) with the given statements are summarized in Table 3. Also, the evaluator had an in-depth interview guide with teachers in order to check what the project educated boys on gender issues.

Table 3: Students' responses on the extent to which the project educates boys on gender issues (n=72)



Statement	strongly disagree		Disagree		neutral		Agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Boys at this school are educated about gender issues	5	6.9	16	22.2	9	12.5	28	38.9	14	19.4
Also, boys are reported to be harassed or abused	7	9.7	17	23.6	8	11.1	27	37.5	13	18.1
Boys are allowed to participate in project clubs or groups	0	0.0	4	5.6	1	1.4	26	36.1	41	56.9
Boys who are at risk of GBV were not supported by the project in this school?	15	20.8	46	63.9	3	4.2	8	11.1	0	0.0
Boys in this school are not aware of GBV against girls?	33	45.8	31	43.1	2	2.8	6	8.3	0	0.0
Boys who experience GBV in school or at home were not able to be identified by the project.	5	6.9	43	59.7	4	5.6	19	26.4	1	1.4

Table 3 shows that 19.4% of the sampled students strongly agreed that the project educated boys about gender issues in primary schools. Also 38.9% of the students agreed that the project educate boys about gender issues while 12.5 % of the students were neutral whether the project provide education to boys concerning gender issues and 22.2% of the students disagreed to the statement that the project educate boys on the gender issue in primary, meanwhile 6.9% of the students strongly disagree to the statement that the project educate boys about gender issues in primary schools with the mean of 3.42. This implies that both boys and girls in primary schools are aware of gender issues within society, as the majority of the respondents (58.3%) agreed that the project was educating boys about gender issues. Furthermore, 18.1% of the students strongly agreed that boys were also reported to be harassed or abused, also 37.5% of the students agreed to the statement that boys were also reported to be harassed or abused. However, 23.6% of the students disagreed that boys were also reported to be harassed or abused; meanwhile, 9.7% of the students strongly disagreed, and 11.1% of the students were neutral to the statement that boys were also reported to be harassed or abused, with a mean of 3.31. This implies that not only girls but also boys reported being harassed or abused in the implementation of decreasing GBV against girls, so they were in greatly helped to be included or participate in the project. In addition, the findings agreed with the study conducted by UNICEF (2011) in Tanzania about the violence against children, which indicates that early traumatic/violent sexual debut (30% girls, 13% boys) is likely to be associated with reproductive health risks. Therefore, this shows that not only girls but also boys were at risk in different aspects.

Similarly, 56.9% of the students strongly agreed to the statement that boys were allowed to participate in the project clubs or groups. Another 36.1% of the students agreed that boys were allowed to participate in the project clubs or meetings. Meanwhile, 1.4% of the students were neutral to the statement that boys were allowed to participate in the project clubs or meetings. Moreover, 5.6% of the sampled students disagree to the statement that boys were allowed to participate in the project clubs or groups and no students who strongly disagreed to the statement that boys were



allowed to participate in the project clubs or groups. This implies that the project educates boys concerning gender issues in primary schools in Siha district, not only girls but also boys were educated and given chances to express their concern about GBV.

Moreover, 11.1% of the students agreed that boys who are at risk on GBV were not supported by the project in the school. Likewise, 4.2% of the students were neutral to the statement that boys who at risk of GBV were not supported by the project in the school, while 84.7% of the students disagreed to these statements. This implies that boys in primary school were supported by the project when they were at risk of GBV. However, 8.3% of the students agreed to the statement that boys in the school were not aware of gender issues. Then 2.8% of the students were neutral to the statement that boys in the school were not aware of gender issues, while 88.9% of the students disagreed to the statement. This implies that boys in the primary schools were aware of gender issues. Also 1.4% of the students agreed to the statement that boys who experience GBV in school or at home were not able to be identified by the project, then 26.4% of the students were neutral to the statement and 65.3% of the students disagreed to the statement that boys who experience GBV in school or at home were not able to be identified by the project. This implies that the project was able to identify the students who experience GBV at home or at school.

Apart from that, the findings from in-depth interviews with teachers and project officer revealed that boys in primary schools were also educated and involved in implementation for decreasing GBV against girls through clubs and role play, which enables them to be confident in reporting GBV against girls to teachers. The question was: *How does the project educate boys on gender issues in this primary school?*

The response from the teacher during the in-depth interview was:

“The boys in this school are involved in clubs and role play to learn gender issues, and the majority of them were able to report violence against a child to teachers, such as corporal punishment at home” (Male Teacher, Primary School B:24.05.2019)

In addition, the project officer declared that not only girls but also boys are part of the learners in the implementation of decreasing GBV against girls because they experience corporal punishment at home and child labour. They form clubs together with boys and girls, which educate them on gender-based issues. The question was: *Are the boys involved in the project? If yes, how are they involved?*

The response from the project officer during the in-depth interview was:

“Yes, the project involves boys in its implementation in primary schools in Siha district, they participate with girls in clubs and share their ideas concerning gender issues, and learn how to protect themselves from child labour and abuse. They helped to raise awareness to their families as the majority of girls are afraid to talk with their parents about gender issues” (Project Officer A: 27.05.2019).

The findings were also supported by the study conducted by Fiona, Dunne & Salvi (2013), girls were most at risk of GBV in and around schools, but boys may also be targeted. According to the authors, it is important to educate girls and boys about GBV so that they can be aware of such practices. However, boys are likely to benefit from broad social and cultural changes associated with gender issues. Furthermore, the United States Government (2012) affirmed that boys and men can also experience gender-based violence, as can sexual and gender though women and girls are the most at risk and most affected by gender-based violence.

4. Conclusions

The formative evaluation revealed that the KWIECO project was successfully implemented and generated notable benefits for primary school learners and their communities in Siha District. Many girls were protected from harmful practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, enabling them to continue with their education. Awareness sessions provided in schools helped both students and teachers to gain knowledge about gender-based violence and appropriate ways of addressing it. Importantly, the inclusion of boys in clubs and awareness activities contributed to their understanding of gender issues, which is essential for achieving long-term change.

However, the study also found gaps that limited the overall effectiveness of the initiative. In particular, parental involvement remained low, leading to underreporting of cases and missed opportunities for early intervention.



Sustaining gains made by the project requires continuous monitoring, strong community participation, and active collaboration among education stakeholders.

5. Recommendations

- *Strengthen parental awareness programs:* Future initiatives should focus more directly on educating parents about GBV, as their lack of awareness was a barrier to reporting and prevention.
- *Promote cultural change through local leaders:* Ward leaders and community influencers should spearhead campaigns that discourage harmful practices and encourage supportive behaviors toward both girls and boys.
- *Expand project scope:* A second phase of the project should be initiated to consolidate achievements and extend protection efforts to more schools and communities.
- *Address GBV affecting boys:* While girls remain the most vulnerable, cases involving boys should also be studied and addressed, ensuring that interventions are inclusive and equitable.
- *Secure sustainable funding:* Donor agencies and government partners should be encouraged to provide consistent support so that the project's interventions can continue and expand.

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