



Family factors, school environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Kampala District, Uganda

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 04

Issue: 04

July-August 2023

Received: 18-06-2023

Accepted: 04-07-2023

Page No: 657-663

Abstract

Adolescent conduct problems in relation to family factors (socioeconomic status, authoritative parenting style) and School environment had received little attention in Uganda, thus the major purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES), authoritative parenting style, school environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Kampala district. The study was guided by three specific objectives viz: To determine the relationship between SES and conduct problems, to establish the relationship between authoritative parenting style and conduct problems, to ascertain the relationship between school environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. A correlation survey design with a quantitative approach was employed to empirically examine the relationships. It involved primary seven pupils in four purposively selected schools from which a sample of 406 respondents was selected using simple random sampling. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Pearson correlation was used to establish the relationships between the variables. Overall SES, Authoritative parenting style and School environment were found to be not significantly related to pupils conduct problems. In conclusion, family factors (SES, Authoritative parenting style) and school environment did not show any direct relationship with conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. However, the study findings revealed 3-34% of conduct problems among school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. Therefore, the study recommends that parents and teachers should continuously engage in frequent communication with children and be reasonably nurturing to reduce the probability of developing conduct problems.

Keywords: Conduct problems, socioeconomic status, Authoritative parenting style, School environment

1. Introduction

Favourable Family factors (Socio economic status, Authoritative parenting style) when complemented with a Conducive school environment directly impacts on children's conduct in society. Family factors and conduct of children scholarly works have been cited as early 1950s and 60s in Europe and USA (Arifin, Cheyne, & Maxwell, 2018) ^[1]. Since 1950s, enormous work on SES, parenting styles, school environment and children's conduct problems has also been done in Asia, Latin America and Africa (Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9]. Universal in all these studies is; what a child becomes at home and later at school is influenced by home and school environment factors.

The notion that family factors translate into a child's conduct in society seems realistic, especially when shaped by school environment (Arifin *et al.*, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[1, 9]. There is also a long history of SES being associated with parenting and educational outcomes in Africa (Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9].

Several studies in Uganda, also consider SES, parenting styles and school environment as key in shaping children's conduct (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018) ^[13, 14]. Disarray in any of these variables may yield to children's conduct problems at school. Hence, SES, just like parenting styles and school environment can be explored as children's conduct influencers (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018) ^[13, 14]. Socio-economic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group which is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018) ^[13, 14]. An authoritative parent combines warmth and sensitivity in caring for a child, setting positive reinforcements and avoiding threats and it is the most preferred parenting style (Arifin *et al.*, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[1, 9].

School environment is a composite description of school settings that are in place to support and promote learners' cordial stay, health, and safety as they study (Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9]. On the other hand, as noted by Nkurunungi (2018) ^[14], pupils' conduct problems (CPs) are repetitive patterns of antisocial acts of children that most times yield to psychological harm to others.

2. Related Literature

Related literature affirm that the SES like parenting styles influence what we become now and in later years. Manzoor (2017) ^[12]; Muzaki (2018) ^[13]; Nkurunungi (2018) ^[14] revealed that there is a close bond between SES, parenting, and school environment both directly and indirectly on the learners. This influence may be destructive and constructive depending on the status of influencing factors. It was explored that family income, maternal and paternal education levels are predictors in the relationships between SES, family processes, and child conduct and how the children relate at home and school (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[13, 9, 14].

In light of the above therefore, it is possible to question whether there is a relationship linking: SES, authoritative parenting style, school environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye Division Kampala District. In Uganda, scholars pointed out that SES plays a distinctive role in shaping conduct of pupils in society. Where SES is not good, prevalence of conduct problems has been manifested (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9, 13, 14].

Research also indicates that, due to poverty, children from low SES tend to exhibit intolerable conduct. Whether children learn these behaviours from family members or colleagues at school or out of SES standings, it remains a questionable matter.

In Makindye division, pupils hail from High, medium and low levels of SES, and the prevalence of conduct problems seem to be at arise. Hence in exploring conduct problems, SES ought to take a pivotal consideration. Studies about parenting styles have been carried out in Uganda and reveal that parenting styles are one of the core influencer of children's behaviour (Otman, 2018 ^[16]). Some authors further emphasize authoritative parenting style for best and desirable conducts among adolescent students, though it is less used by many parents in many countries (Muzaki, 2018; Otman, 2018, Nkurunungi, 2018) ^[13, 16, 14]. Subsequently, children at school interact with peers with varying parenting backgrounds. This shapes their conduct though external factors in the school environment may also adversely

influence the resultant conduct at school. A number of authors have also pinned conduct problems to challenges in the school environment, although this has not been explored in the context of Ugandan schools in Makindye Division. Hence in exploring conduct problems, School environment ought to take a pivotal consideration.

According to (Otman 2018) ^[16] the prevalence of conduct problems among the youth is estimated at 2%–10% in the United States. Conduct problems among Indian primary school children is higher among the males (66.67%) as compared to that of females (33.33%) (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9, 13, 14].

In Uganda, adolescent conduct problems are a great problem to urban centres and families because it impairs an adolescent's social, academic and family functioning hence a threat to the general public. Furthermore, there are several cases related to aggressive conduct; deceitful behaviour, destructive and violation of rules cited among city-based primary schools. (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[9, 13, 14]. Therefore, conduct problems prevail among Ugandan pupils and this vice seems escalating especially in urban Schools. This could be associated with divergent Socio-economic statuses of pupils' families, weaknesses in parenting and/or school environment which nurtures such conduct, though this had not been explored. There was inadequate empirical data to explain why conduct problems persisted in Primary Schools despite efforts by school administrators to punish, and counsel the culprits. In view of the above therefore, there was an information gap regarding family factors (SES, Authoritative parenting style), School Environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division and hence the desirability to carry out this study.

3. Material and Methods

The study was undertaken in four (4) purposively selected Primary schools in Makindye division Kampala district from November 2020 to January 2021. It employed a correlational, cross sectional survey design with a purely quantitative approach. The study was correlational because it intended to determine whether or not there was a relationship between SES, authoritative parenting style, school environment and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. It was cross sectional because a snapshot of a population was taken at a certain time allowing conclusions about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn, which reduced on the time and costs.

It used a survey design because it involved collecting data from a relatively large sample of respondents through their responses to questions using a questionnaire. It was purely quantitative because numerical data was collected to help explain, predict, and control phenomena of interest and data was analyzed using statistical procedures. The target population of the study comprised of 720 primary seven (P7) pupils from four (4) selected primary schools within four education zones in Makindye division. Primary seven pupils were considered because they were more knowledgeable and capable of interpreting the items in the questionnaires. Primary seven pupils were also within the adolescence age bracket hence prone to conduct problems.

Using Krejcie and Morgan's formula that calculates a representative sample, a sample size of 406 pupils was selected. In order to have a fair representation of the pupils, simple random sampling technique was used to select

respondents who were from P7 classes in four schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the Division, Schools and class category that exhibit conduct problems. Purposive sampling was considered because it allowed the researcher to focus on particular characteristics of population that were of the researcher's interest which would enhance the research findings. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents which gave each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. It was considered because it is the easiest and accurate technique used when collecting data from a large population. Each pupil was assigned a unique number that was placed in a box and mixed thoroughly. The blind-folded researcher picked numbered tags from the box. All those bearing the numbers picked by the researcher were considered for the study. For primary data, the study used a structured self-administered questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended questions. Section A captured information on Sex, Religion and age of the respondent. It also included the respondent's family structure which was divided into five groups 1) Father 2) Mother 3) Both Parents 4) Guardian and 5) Others. Section B consisted of family socioeconomic status (SES). It was measured using a scale adapted from Home resources as a measure of socio-economic status by (Bofah, Hannula, 2017; Otman, 2018) [16]. It consisted of 12 household items. Respondents were asked to put a tick mark (✓) in the empty space below Yes or No which was indicating what they have or do not have at home. It also included the last item asking for the highest level of education of parents or guardian with a scale (1) Non formal to (7) Not sure. Section C consisted of authoritative parenting style. This was measured using the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting practices scale by (Muzaki, 2018; Otman, 2018, Nkurunungi, 2018) [13, 14, 16]. It was consisted of 13 items and was measured on a five point scale. (0) Never to (4) Always. Section D consisted of school environment and was measured using Social, Emotional and Bullying Behavior Scale which was developed by Pride surveys (2018). The scale was modified to focus only on school environment with three dimensions: Physical facilities, Peers and Teachers. It was constituted of 25 items and was measured on a five point Likert type scale. (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. Section E consisted of conduct problem. It was measured using a scale adapted from Development and validation of the Conduct Disorder (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) [9, 13, 14]. The focus was on four dimensions; aggressive conduct, deceitful behaviour, destructive behaviour and violation of rules. It was constituted of 18 items and was measured on a five point scale. (0) Never to (4) Always. It also had a structured question asking respondents to give reasons why children misbehave in schools. For secondary data, the study obtained data from different secondary sources such as published and unpublished sources e.g. journals, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, fliers, annual reports, bulletins, theses etc. To make sure that the instrument produces consistent results when administered to the same group of individuals under the same conditions (Reliability), the researcher consulted experts throughout the questionnaire modification process. After validation, the reliability of final questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study among 15 children in St. Joseph Nsambya Girls Primary School one of the primary School in Makindye division, that was not part of the study. The

reliability coefficient was calculated for each subscale of SES, APS, SE and CPs based on pre-test scores using IBM SPSS Statistics for windows version 23 (IBM Corp, 2015). Some less valuable items were removed to improve the reliability of the tool. The calculated value of alpha was .686. According to Creswell (2014) [5], alpha cronbach's value above 0.6 is still considered high reliability and acceptable. After establishing the validity and reliability of the instruments, an introductory letter was obtained from the supervisor, which introduced the researcher to administrators in the selected area of study. The researcher approached all the four heads of the institutions with letters which were presented to the Head teachers in the four schools seeking for permission to carry out the survey in their schools. After permission was granted the researcher requested for appointments in the four different schools. On the agreed dates and time of the appointments the researcher went to the schools.

To save time, the researcher used the services of teachers as research assistants who distributed SAQs to learners after thorough induction. Pupils were informed about the exercise before administering the questionnaires. The purpose of the study was communicated to the pupils as purely academic and confidential. The consent was sought from the participants and informed consent forms were given to every participant to sign (see Appendix i). A clear, explicit and elaborate explanation was done to ensure that respondents understood each and every item in the questionnaire. The raw data obtained from pupils was sorted to identify the errors and omissions as this would yield unreliable results. Those with errors were omitted. Data was then entered into a computerized system for analyzing data. IBM Corp. (2015) SPSS version 23. Tabulations for frequencies into percentages were done for all the items in the questionnaire. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 to establish the relationships.

4. Results and discussion

Results indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between family social economic status and pupils' conduct problems ($p = 0.269 > 0.05$, $r = -.055$). There is no statistically significant relationship between family social economic status and pupils' conduct problems ($p = 0.269 > 0.05$, $r = -.055$). Results further indicates that there no statistically significant relationship between school environment and pupils' conduct problems ($r = .062$, $p > .05$). The results on SES indicated that only three items were scored high whereas three items were averagely scored and six items below 50 percent putting the SES of the respondents' family to moderate socioeconomic status. Results further indicate that there is 3- 35% prevalence of conduct problems. This implies that there are conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district though the prevalence is low. Majority of the respondents reported that adolescence, family background and environment, were some of the other reasons why pupils misbehave in primary schools.

Demographic Data

Results indicate that 202(49.8) percent of respondents were females and 204(50.2) percent were males. Majority of the respondents 134(33.0) percent were Catholics, followed by Muslims 114 (28.1) percent, born again 76 (18.7) percent protestants 75(18.5) percent and Seventh day Adventists

were 7(1.7) percent. Furthermore, majority of the respondents 206(50.7) percent live with both parents, 106(26.1) percent live with the mother, 35(8.6) percent of the respondents live with the father, 47(11.6) percent live with the guardians and 12(3.0) percent live with others. Majority

of the respondents 142(35.0) percent were aged 13 years followed by 110(35.0) percent aged 12 years, followed by those aged 14 years 83(20.4) percent and 69(17.0) percent were aged 15 years and above.

Table 1: Correlations for socioeconomic status and conduct problems

Variables		SES
Socioeconomic status	Pearson Correlation	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N		406
Conduct Problems	Pearson Correlation	-.055
Sig. (2-tailed)		.269
N		406

Table 2: Correlations for Authoritative Parenting style and Conduct Problems

Variables		Authoritative
Authoritative Parenting	Pearson Correlation	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N		406
Conduct problems	Pearson Correlation	-.087
Sig. (2-tailed)		.080
N		406

Table 3: Correlations for School Environment and Conduct Problems

Variables		School environment
School Environment	Pearson Correlation	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N		406
Conduct Problems	Pearson Correlation	.062
Sig. (2-tailed)		.212
N		406

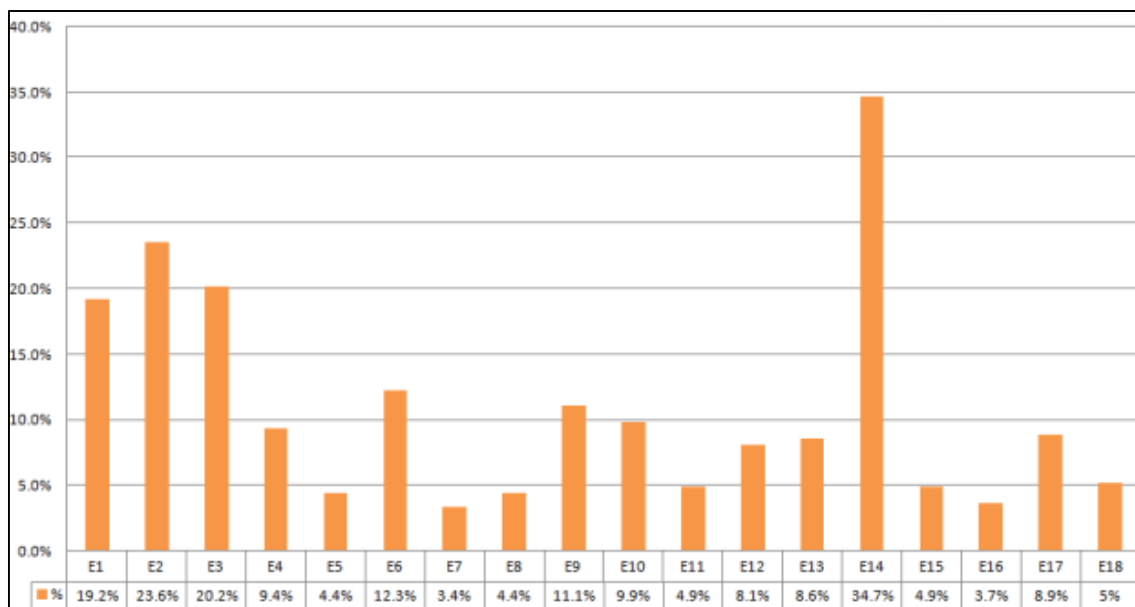


Fig 1: Prevalence of Conduct Problems in Primary Schools

5. Discussion

Socioeconomic status and conduct problems

The findings of the present study highlight an insignificant relationship between family socioeconomic status and conduct problems which mean that overall family socioeconomic status is not related to conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. The above results probably mean that different

factors that encompass quality of life attributes such as having a computer or laptop, car, bathroom, a cooker, motorcycle, bicycle, television, electricity as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded by people within society such as level of education may not be important factors relating to conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala District. The insignificant relationship may also be due to the fact that the

items that different families use at home in Makindye division tend to be fulfilling personality interests and may vary from home to home and may not necessary influence conduct problems among pupils.

The study findings are in agreement with some studies that found the reverse effect between SES and conduct problems, when mediated by gender, in particular, the incidence of conduct problems in girls appears in some cases to increase with higher parental SES (Arifin *et al.*, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[1, 9]. The study revealed that this effect could have been due to changing sex roles and to the different motivations for girls to take up such behaviours as conduct problems.

Overall however, the evidence has generally shown that the relationship between family SES and pupils' indulgence in conduct problems is insignificant. Still in a recent multivariate study that modeled the relative effects of parental SES on conduct problems whilst controlling for a significant number of other variables (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, parental and peer conduct), both low parental education and low family income level were found to significantly and independently predict higher levels of youth conduct problems (Arifin *et al.*, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[1, 9]. However, the magnitude of this inverse relationship was sizable and young people from less advantaged families were on average, at least 30 percent more likely to be poorly behaved than those from more privileged backgrounds.

However, noting the prevalence of some data, most study findings indicates that SES increases cases of conduct problems (Arifin *et al.*, 2018; Hosokana Katsura 2018) ^[1, 9]. The current study findings are contrary to the study by Manzoor (2017) ^[12]; Muzaki (2018) ^[13]; Nkurunungi (2018) ^[14], found that, socioeconomic status, is a major correlate of conduct problems. Higher family social economic status relates with lower levels of conduct problems. However the strength of this relationship may depend on the conduct disorder subtype under investigation and the design of the study. Similarly, the results from the current study were from respondents whose parents live in Makindye division a city suburb which is mostly made up of urban and pre-urban populations characterized by most of Uganda's population with all forms of SES, busy in various chores in the city centre.

The study findings are also contrary to a study by Arifin *et al* (2018); Hosokana Katsura (2018) ^[1, 9] who established that there is a strong linear relationship between the socioeconomic deprivation and the prevalence of behavioral disorders in the school-age children. This implicitly reflects on the perspective that the SES occupied by family shapes what is exhibited by the child. The study findings are also in disagreement to Arifin *et al* (2018); Hosokana Katsura (2018) ^[1, 9] who found out that low SES had a significant influence on children's behavioral conduct. However their study findings did not explore the scope of Primary School pupils especially those in city centres.

Authoritative parenting style and conduct problems

The study findings also indicate that authoritative parenting style was found not to be significantly related to conduct problems. This implies that the expectations pupils have towards their parents as they are being parented may play a big role in determining how they will behave. In the event that children don't expect more than they are given in terms

of protection and care they may not act out negatively or get involved in conduct problems. The findings are in consistence with the findings of Arifin *et al* (2018) ^[1]; Hosokana Katsura (2018) ^[9] which found out that there is no significant correlation between authoritative parenting styles and conduct problems among children. Otman 2018 ^[16] stated that authoritative parents are most likely to be successful in parenting as this style of parenting creates an environment in which the child is willing to learn and be parented. There is a common thinking that authoritative pattern of parenting style is best for child development however; it may vary according to culture and societal changes (Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018) ^[13, 14]. According to, parenting style theory by (Otman 2018) ^[16], when parents have certain expectations from their children and exhibit responsive and supportive behaviour, the children can create their own self-confidence and responsibility with less conduct problems.

However, the study findings are not in consistence with findings of majority of works in literature, since the studies conducted by (Muzaki, 2018 ^[13]; Nkurunungi, (2018) ^[14]; Hosokana Katsura (2018) ^[9] showed positive and significant correlation between authoritative parenting style and social and behavioural disorders. Authoritative parents cause isolation and rejection of child. They have many expectations from children and show rare emotions to their children. These parents find no necessity to give a reason for their orders and give limited independence to their children and emphasize unconditional obedience and respect.

School environment and conduct problems

Results also indicate that School environment was found not to be significantly related to conduct problems among pupils in primary schools in Makindye division Kampala district. The study findings are not in agreement with those of earlier researchers cited in by Raudino, Woodward, Ferguson and Horwood, (2018) ^[15] whose study found out that ironically, it's the school environment that pushes learners to adopt extreme delinquent and aggressive conduct. However, their perceptions were silent on personal factors. School environment was looked at in three dimensions i.e. physical facilities, teachers and peers. According to Manzoor (2017) ^[12]; Muzaki (2018) ^[13]; Nkurunungi (2018) ^[14], the Physical school environment in terms of school compound, location, class room size and structures, presence of facilities are core for shaping the behaviour of its constituencies meaning that school environment has profound impact on the learners' conduct problems.

The study findings for the current study are also contrary to those of (Otman 2018) ^[16] who found out that the existence of bad and problematic conduct among learners was a product of school environment. According to the studies by Arifin *et al* (2018) ^[1]; Hosokana Katsura (2018) ^[9] it was found out that teachers influence pupils' conduct when they make ineffective use of innovative pedagogies; shows little interest in pupils; does not provide academic feedback and guidance; does not communicate effectively; fails to plan in a proactive manner; uses punitive or reactive measures; teaches an irrelevant curriculum; comes late to class; uses the mobile phone in class; does have the leadership and authority to discipline the mischievous pupils; adopts a self-defeating attitude to the problem of a lack of discipline.

6. Conclusion

The study findings revealed that there is no significant

relationship between all the three independent variables and conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district, that is: family factors (Socioeconomic status, authoritative parenting style), school environment are not statistically related to conduct problems among primary school pupils in Makindye division Kampala district. This implied that there could be other reasons or factors that may either interact with socioeconomic status, authoritative parenting style and school environment or directly influence conduct problems among pupils. Some of these factors were stated by pupils and include: adolescence, family background, child neglect by parents and teachers, peer pressure, poverty at home, harsh teachers and poor teaching methods, ignorance, punishments given at home and school to mention but a few all which scored higher percentages. Findings from the descriptive statistics for conduct problems revealed that the prevalence of conduct problems was at 3-35%. However, it is worth mentioning that although the prevalence of these vices is low among pupils of primary schools in Makindye division, Kampala district but that doesn't exclude the fact that the conduct problems are present and therefore, their cause and prognosis needed consideration before the situation worsens / becomes alarming.

7. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, conduct problems are not rare in primary schools in Makindye division Kampala district much as all the independent variables revealed an insignificant relationship with the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics for conduct problems indicated that there are some cases of conduct problems that are cropping in and account for 3-35%. This requires intervention and preventive measures to curb down the situation before it worsens.

Pupils spend most of their time at school therefore; teachers should provide supervision, as needed, to ensure the safety and well-being of the pupils at the school. Be aware that some pupils with conduct problems may exhibit frequent fighting, bullying, threatening, intimidation of others, as well as cruelty to animals, deliberate destruction of property.

Continuous professional development (CPDs) programmes for teachers should be enhanced. School staff working with the pupils should be trained in crisis management and nonviolent crisis intervention techniques. They should be equipped with guidance and counselling techniques to ably attend to adolescents since it was noted that some pupils misbehave because of adolescence. The school management should enhance guidance and counseling in schools so as to address the economic challenges facing the pupils. This will enhance more participation of the pupils in school thereby enhancing their conduct.

Parents should be continuously involved with children, spend time with them because it can reduce the probability of developing some conduct disorders and if possible opt for authoritative Parenting style since it is the best style for child development Manzoor, 2017; Muzaki, 2018; Nkurunungi, 2018)^[12, 13, 14]. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) to explore the possibility of expanding the national curriculum to include more time for psychological assessments and recommend psychosocial interventions as first-line interventions for conduct disorder in schools and also organise workshops to equip considerable knowledge and skills to the stake holders.

A mental health policy and national mental health programme should be developed in Uganda more so in this COVID 19 era where children are likely to return to schools with a lot of conduct disorders. Mental health should become a part of the curriculum for both primary and secondary education levels and system. The mental health programmes opened should be provided with a sufficient budget for proper functioning.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

Special appreciation to all the head teachers who allowed data collection from their schools amidst the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

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