

Child Sexual Abuse in Rural Schools in Zimbabwe: Can Teachers Address the Needs of Abused Learners?

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Abstract

Child sexual abuse robs children of their virtuosity and innocence, leaving them with a host of challenges which require support from all stakeholders – parents, teachers and community members. If learners do not receive the help and support they need, negative effects include poor academic performance, early school drop-out, and behavioural disorders. Although all stakeholders have a role to play in supporting abused learners, this study focuses on the support that form 2 learners in rural schools receive from teachers to assist them in becoming resilient. This study is grounded in the person-centered theory of Carl Rogers. A descriptive survey research design was used, applying a non-probability sampling technique to select 5 sexually abused form 2 girls, 1 senior teacher and 3 parents with sexually abused children from the community to participate. Findings from the study revealed that girl survivors of sexual abuse do not receive the needed support in schools, as the quest for justice after disclosure is greater and support of survivors is not valued nor prioritized. Teachers feel that they lack the training and expertise in supporting sexual abuse issues. Negative behavioral problems and a decline in academic performance are furthermore observed in learners who do not receive the much-needed assistance. We recommend that teachers should have ongoing training programs on issues relating to Child Sexual Abuse and counselling, and schools should employ a resident trained counsellor in each school so as to support disclosure and counselling of survivors.

Keywords: sexual abuse, survivor, support, teachers, rural school