

Influence of Public Benefit Organizations' School Based Strategies in Addressing Psychosocial Wellbeing of Neglected Children in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8100206>

Received: 06 September 2024; Accepted: 19 September 2024; Published: 16 November 2024

ABSTRACT

The psychosocial well-being of neglected children is a pressing global problem, with research indicating that child neglect is a primary cause of mental health challenges among children. Despite the efforts of Government and Public benefit organisations addressing the problem, neglect and associated mental challenges remain prevalent. There is limited information regarding the influence of strategies employed by these organisations. This study aimed to explore how public benefit organizations influence the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, using a descriptive survey design. This study sort to investigate how public benefit organizations strategies influence psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County Kenya, using descriptive survey design. The theoretical framework includes Bowlby's attachment theory and Durkheim's structural functionalism. The target population consisted of 494 children supported by these organizations, with a sample size of 248 children and 34 staff members selected for data collection. The study utilised Standardized starling's Children Well-being Scale and the WHO-5 well-being Index, ensuring the tools reliability through pilot testing. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, employing various statistical tests, including Cronbach's(α) to test level of consistency. Mann-Whitney U test for difference across age groups, Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of adequacy, Kruskal-Wallis H test for differences in scores, and analysis of measures of central tendency. Results indicated significant variations in wellbeing score across six age groups, highlighting age as a crucial factor in psychosocial health. The findings revealed that school-based strategies employed by public benefit organizations positively impact the psychosocial well-being of neglected children. This underscores the need for targeted, age-appropriate interventions in counseling psychology. The study advocates for policy changes prioritizing mental health resources for neglected children and emphasizes the importance of collaboration among stakeholders. Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to during the research process. Overall, the study concludes that public benefit organizations play a vital role in supporting the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County.

Keywords: Addressing, Influence, Children, Neglected, Psychosocial Wellbeing Public Benefit Organization, School based Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The Psychosocial well-being, of neglected children can be understood as mental, emotional, social and spiritual health of neglected children. The influence of public benefit organisation's (PBOs) school-based strategies in addressing psychosocial wellbeing of neglected children; refers to the impact of (PBOs)

interventions in educational setting, to mitigate the negative effects of child neglect by promoting resilience, and psychosocial well-being of neglected children. Eisenberg (2024) Points out that despite societal advancement and progress in public health issues, mental health improvements for children have lagged behind. Public benefit organizations (PBOs) have played a pivotal role in providing psychosocial support to neglected children in society by addressing the adverse effects of neglect through prevention and intervention strategies.

Hoeboer (2021) shows that there is significant evidence to suggest that child neglect is the primary root cause of social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health difficulties among children. World Health Organization (WHO) report (2020) shows that emotional abuse is estimated to impact the lives of millions of children all over the world, with an estimated global prevalence of 363 per 1000 children aged less than 18 years. Elkin (2020) noted that in England, child neglect scores (48%) of child abuse reported cases, this is why many children are on child protection placement. In Wales in the United Kingdom, child neglect cases are at (36%), being the second most common cause for children to be in the child protection plan.

Alfarhan (2022) observes that (63.1%) of children in Saudi Arabia suffers maltreatment (39.2%), of children experience supervisory neglect, 6.8 %, medical neglect (5.5%) emotional neglect and (3.2%), physical neglect and educational neglect respectively. WHO (2020) report statistics reveal that the African continent performs worst with the highest rates of child neglect, with about (41.1%) of girls aged between (2-17) years and (39.1%) of boys in the same age group in the year 2020 alone. For example, in Nigeria, Edo's Study confirms that child abuse and neglect are prevalent in the everyday life of the child in Nigeria. Med (2020) in Uganda did an integrative systematic review study on psychosocial support interventions for children with a history of Maltreatment. The study investigated the situation in the East African Community. The study found there is evidence of child maltreatment. Endo (2021) asserts that Uganda ranks the highest, scoring (42%) with the most children in rural areas abandoned by their parents.

Avdibegovi (2020) asserts that children who experience neglect in early childhood more often experience emotional and social long-term consequences which influence their emotional and behavioral adaptations. Gencoglu and Demirtas (2019) indicate that early childhood psychosocial interventions yield positive, social, and emotional outcomes for children. Jurca (2022) found out that intervention which focused on activities that addressed issues of self-awareness, emotions, attitudes, communication and team building have positive impact to children. World Health Organisation (WHO),2020 report shows about one billion children are neglected globally. Nation Media Group in Kenya reported that between July 2020 and June 2021, the reported cases of child neglect in Tharaka Nithi County totalled 1800. In Tharaka North Sub County, 280 children dropped out of school due to parental neglect. Despite the presence of 9 PBOs dealing with children's welfare in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The cases of child neglect and psychosocial difficulties among neglected children is still high and there is little information that tries to establish the influence of PBO strategies in addressing the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi county. Therefore, this study sought to establish the influence of PBOs school- based strategies in addressing Psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The Psychosocial well-being of neglected children is a significant concern in the world today. Notably child neglect exposes children to long-lasting psychosocial difficulties in life. Public benefit organizations (PBOs) have played a pivotal role in providing psychosocial support to neglected children in Society by addressing the adverse effects of neglect through prevention and intervention strategies. WHO report shows that about one billion children are neglected globally. Nation Media Group in Kenya reported that between July 2020 and June 2021, the reported cases of child neglect in Tharaka Nithi County totaled 1800. In Tharaka North Sub County, 280 children dropped out of school due to parental neglect. Despite the presence of 9 PBOs dealing with children's welfare in Tharaka North and South Sub-counties, there is little information that tries to establish the influence of PBO strategies in addressing the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka North and Tharaka South Sub-counties, Tharaka Nithi County Kenya. Therefore, this study sought

to establish the influence of PBOs strategies in addressing Psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The was guided by the following objective.

1. To evaluate the PBOs school-based strategies that address the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka North and South Sub-counties

Research Question

1. How do PBOs' school-based strategies address the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka North and South Sub-counties

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used quantitative descriptive research survey design. It is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. The main goal is to describe the current state by defining the respondent's characteristics and derive patterns, traits, behaviors, attitudes, and values (Mugenda, 2010). It is best suited to explore the phenomena which is to examine the influence of PBOs' School Based strategies in addressing Psychosocial well-being of neglected children. The study was carried out in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Because despite the presence of the PBOs dealing with children's welfare there is scanty information on the influence PBOs in the area. The target population was 5152 both children and workers from PBOs that deal with child welfare in Tharaka Nithi County- Kenya.

The accessible population was 17 PBO centers dealing with children's welfare. The accessible population (528) respondents comprised (34) PBO workers and (494) children supported by PBOs. The PBO workers were preferred because of the nature of their work experience with children and, therefore, were better placed to inform the study. Children respondents were essential in this study since they are the recipients of PBO services. The study purposively sampled 17 PBO center managers and 17 center social workers. The accessible population of 494 children between the ages of 12 and 17 was systematically sampled by taking the following steps. In step one, the researcher assigned a unique number to each member of the accessible population from 1 to 494. The interval (k) was determined by divided the population size (494) by the sample size (248): $k=494/248=2$. In this case, the researcher randomly selected a starting point between 1 and the sampling interval (k), which is (2). The random starting point was 7. Therefore, every k^{th} individual, 2^{nd} from the population starting from 7^{th} individual, was sampled as $7^{\text{th}}, 9^{\text{th}}, 11^{\text{th}}, 13^{\text{th}}$, until 494^{th} respondents. This systemic sampling was to ensure that a sample of 248 respondents is evenly spread across the 494-accessible population.

The sample size for this study was 282 respondents derived from 17 PBO centers spread within the county. The number comprised 248 systematically sampled children within the range of 12-17 years of age since this age can read and write. Plus, 34 center workers which comprised 17 center managers and 17 center social workers. The PBO workers were believed to have pertinent information for this study since they interact and address the needs of children on daily basis. The researcher sought permission from PBO center managers to interact with children and consent form signed to prove the permission. The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity through verbal and written requests on the first page of the questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the standardized tools that were used to measure the influence of PBO s strategies on children's wellbeing, A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were differences in SCWBS scores and WHO-5index scores across different age groups. Results were summarized in Table 1. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in SCWBS scores across the six age groups, $H(5) = 28.462$,

$p < .001$ $H(5) = 28.462$, $p < .001$ $H(5) = 28.462$, $p < .001$. This indicates that age is a significant factor influencing social and emotional Psychosocial well-being of children supported by PBOs. This finding suggests that different age groups experience varying levels of psychosocial well-being, highlighting the need for age-specific interventions and support strategies.

Table 1 Kruskal-Wallis's test

Factor		SCWBS Score	WHO_5
Age group	Kruskal-Wallis H	28.462	20.731
	Df	5.000	5.000
	Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.001
Care givers living with Child	Kruskal-Wallis H	19.607	25.551
	Df	6	6
	Asymp. Sig.	0.003	0
Grade level	Kruskal-Wallis H	34.011	12.668
	Df	6	6
	Asymp. Sig.	0.0000	0.049

Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference in WHO-5 index scale scores across the six age groups, $H(5) = 20.731$, $p = .001$ $H(5) = 20.731$, $p = .001$ $H(5) = 20.731$, $p = .001$. This result implies that general well-being, as measured by the WHO-5 index scale, varied significantly among different age groups. The variation in WHO-5 Index Scale scores indicates that age-related factors may have played a crucial role in influencing overall well-being, and therefore, tailored approaches might be necessary to address the psychosocial well-being of neglected children. The Kruskal-Wallis H test also showed statistically significant differences in SCWBS scores ($H(6) = 19.607$, $p = 0.003$) and WHO-5 Index Scale scores ($H(6) = 25.551$, $p < 0.001$) based on the number of caregivers living with the child. This indicates that the presence and number of caregivers living with the child are associated with differences in Psychosocial well-being scores, as measured by both scales. This finding indicates that the social and emotional support provided by different caregivers vary, impacting the child's overall psychosocial well-being. The findings are consistent with Zou (2019), who observed that children living with biological parents often exhibit higher SCWBS and WHO-5 Index Scale scores, attributed to more stable and consistent emotional support. The findings also agree with Bowlby (1988) attachment theory which postulates that early attachment experiences shape an individual's social, cognitive, and emotional development throughout the lifespan. That is to say, the quality of the attachment relationship between a child and their primary caregivers profoundly impacts the child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. According to Wagner (2024) parents can build a positive parent-child relationship and foster healthy attachment by understanding a child's emotions and identifying their underlying causes by developing practical communication skills that open up emotional conversations. These outcomes are generally better for children in parental care compared to those in foster care or institutional settings, where disruptions in caregiving can negatively impact psychosocial well-being. Influences of child well-being. Caregivers' gender, marital status, and financial stability have been identified as significant predictors of psychological distress among caregivers, which can subsequently affect children's emotional and behavioral development

However, Kruskal-Wallis H test is limited because it can only indicate the presence of significant differences between groups but does not specify which groups differ significantly from each other. Therefore, post-hoc analyses, such as pairwise comparisons, would be necessary to determine the specific group differences driving the overall significant results.

Mann Whitney test

A non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to evaluate differences in SCWBS and WHO-5 Index Scale scores between male and female participants. The analysis in Table 2 revealed a statistically significant

difference in SCWBS scores between genders, with males and females exhibiting different levels of social and emotional well-being as measured by the SCWBS scale ($U = 5690.000$, $Z = -2.107$, $p = .035$). This suggests that gender plays a role in influencing the SCWBS scores, indicating potential differences in the social and emotional well-being between male and female participants.

Table 2 Mann-Whitney Test

	SCWBS Score	WHO_5
Mann-Whitney U	5690.000	6270.000
Wilcoxon W	13193.000	13773.000
Z	-2.107	-.516
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.606
a. Grouping Variable: 1. Gender		

However, the analysis for WHO-5 Index Scale scores did not show a significant difference between genders ($U = 6270.000$, $Z = -.516$, $p = .606$). This suggests that the general well-being as measured by the WHO-5 Index scale was relatively similar for both male and female participants, with no significant gender-based differences observed in this sample. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender differences when assessing social and emotional well-being; contrary to Bauch (2022), who suggested that a gendered role plays a critical role in children's psychological support. However, general well-being measures like the WHO-5 Index Scale may not exhibit the same gender disparities, suggesting that different aspects of well-being might be differently influenced by gender. Further research could explore the underlying factors contributing to these gender differences in social and emotional well-being.

Correlation

A Spearman's rho correlation was run to determine the relationship between SCWBS scores and WHO-5 Index Scale scores. From Table3, there was a moderate, positive correlation between SCWBS scores and WHO-5 Index Scale scores, which was statistically significant, $rs=0.323$, $p=0.001$. This indicates that higher scores on the SCWBS, which measures social and emotional well-being, are associated with higher scores on the WHO-5 index scale, which measures general well-being.

Table 3 Spearman Correlations

		SCWBS_Score	WHO_5
Spearman's rho	SCWBS_Score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.323**
		N	233
	WHO_5	Correlation Coefficient	.323**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	229

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The moderate, positive correlation found between SCWBS and WHO-5 index scale scores is consistent with Kabonga (2023) who observed that measures of social and emotional health are closely tied to mental health outcomes, supporting that emotional stability and supportive social environments contribute significantly to a child's overall well-being. This aligns with the broader psychological research indicating that emotional support systems, such as positive relationships and secure attachments, play a crucial role in enhancing general life satisfaction and mental health, as reflected in WHO-5 index scale scores. The correlation reinforces the idea that interventions aimed at improving social and emotional psychosocial well-being have a substantial impact on general psychosocial well-being.

Influences of PBO school-based Strategies

The analysis in Table 4 focused on understanding how PBOs' school-based strategies influence the psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County Kenya

Table 4: School-based strategies

		Education neglect can only be addressed by taking the child to school	Neglected children who are taken to school have improved social life skills.	Being in school, neglected children improved their self-esteem.	As an organization, we pay the school 100% of the fees for neglected children.	As an organization, we pay partial school fees for neglected children.	The school we take neglected children has Anti-Bullying programs.	At school, our beneficiary receives Emotional skills development.	Schools have social skills development.
N	Valid	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Missig	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.91	4.38	4.59	3.31	3.06	3.03	4.16	4.50
Median		4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Mode		5	4	5	4	2	3	4	5

It was found that PBOs emphasize the importance of education in addressing neglect, with a strong belief that taking the child to school is critical (M = 3.91). The data suggests that enrolling neglected children in school significantly improves their social life skills (M = 4.38) and self-esteem (M = 4.59), highlighting the positive impact of educational interventions. This agree with Profile (2023) who observed that Education is an influential tool for individual welfare, bridging up equality and social justice. In contrary Majeed (2021) observed that PBOs educational intervention is not completed effectively. His findings significantly shows that the public education system in Pakistan does not fulfill the needs of Society. And PBOs whose role is to assist the Government in none official capacity were faced with several challenges, the outstanding challenge being community resistance. Therefore, positive results of Education intervention in Tharaka Nithi County may have been contributed by community support and their welcoming nature of PBOs and development initiatives.

Financial support from PBOs varies, with some centers covering 100% of the school tuition fees (M = 3.31), while others provide partial assistance (M = 3.06). This financial support is crucial in ensuring that neglected children have access to education. In contrast Abdullah (2021) observed that in Ashanti region in Ghana parental poverty posed a dilemma in addressing children's basic need which includes education. Furthermore, schools attended by these children often have anti-bullying programs (M = 3.03) and offer emotional skills development (M = 4.16), which are essential in fostering a supportive and nurturing environment. Additionally, the development of social skills at school is rated highly (M = 4.50), indicating that schools play a significant role in the holistic development of neglected children.

These findings seem to agree with Mason's (2021) model and principles for promoting well-being in schools which emphasizes the importance of caring, compassion, and community in creating a supportive student environment. However, it lacks the specific strategies for implementation that the research findings provide. This comparison reveals that the practical application of school-based strategies by PBOs in Tharaka-Nithi directly contributes to tangible improvements in children's lives, whereas the Mason (2022) tends to offer more generalized frameworks. In addition, the findings seem to agree with Jurca, A.-M., Borca (2022) who focused on students' activities to improve self-awareness, emotion, communication managements, and team building.

The findings also seem to agree with Wichmann (2023) whose study observed that nine school-based interventions reduced mental health problems among children and adolescents. However, the intervention in Wichmann study focused on adolescent's victims of interpersonal violence. Therefore, all the nine interventions were geared toward mitigating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after interpersonal violence, in more developed contexts, such as the USA. In contrast, the research findings in Tharaka Nithi county focus on neglected children, highlighting how PBOs' involvement in education can mitigate the adverse effects of neglect. The differences in geographical context and focus areas suggest that PBOs in Tharaka Nithi are generally influence the psychosocial wellbeing of neglected children. while Wichmann (2023) and Jurca (2022) provides valuable insights into mental health interventions, it may not fully address the specific needs and circumstances of neglected children in less developed regions like Tharaka-Nithi. This also explains the variation between the findings. Equally, the research in Tharaka-Nithi reflects a context where PBOs often fill the gaps left by under-resourced government systems, providing direct support to vulnerable children. Additionally, the emphasis on practical, school-based strategies in Tharaka's Nithi research may result from the immediate needs of the children, who might not have access to more comprehensive mental health services

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study indicates that there is significant influence of PBOs school-based strategies on psychosocial wellbeing of neglected children. a statistically significant difference in SCWBS scores across the six age groups, indicate that age is a significant factor influencing social and emotional Psychosocial well-being. Suggesting that different age groups experience varying levels of psychosocial well-being. implying the need for age-specific interventions and support strategies. Caregiver living arrangements, and grade levels highlight the importance of considering these factors when assessing and interpreting children's psychosocial well-being. Targeted interventions and support may be necessary to address the specific needs of children in different age groups, living arrangements, and grade levels to promote overall psychosocial well-being. The study concludes that PBOs play a crucial role in addressing the Psychosocial well-being of neglected children in Tharaka Nithi County, through various school-based, support programs. These findings highlight the importance of considering these factors when assessing and promoting children's mental health and psychosocial well-being. The data suggests that enrolling neglected children in school significantly improves their social life skills ($M = 4.38$) and self-esteem ($M = 4.59$), highlighting the positive impact of educational interventions. The significant differences in psychosocial well-being scores across age groups, caregiver living arrangements, and grade levels highlight the importance of considering these factors when assessing and interpreting children's psychosocial well-being. Further research is needed to understand the underlying reasons for these differences and to develop more comprehensive models of factors influencing children's psychosocial well-being.

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