

STUDENTS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN BOTSWANA: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Kabo Diraditsile
Waseda University, Japan
Graduate School of Social Sciences
kabodira@fuji.waseda.jp

Morena J. Rankopo
University of Botswana
Department of Social Work
rankopom@ub.ac.bw

Abstract

Children in Botswana schools have expressed concerns regarding child sexual abuse (CSA) which has potential to negatively affect their learning if timely action is not taken. Specifically, CSA in schools involves teachers who are supposed to be the custodians of learning. Abuse of children by those in positions of authority and care have been a central focus for many of those concerned about children's safety, advocating that the subject deserves urgent attention as it threatens to violate the children's rights and compromise their psychosocial well-being. To put this into perspective, this study set out to explore students' views on CSA in schools. It adopted a cross-sectional quantitative approach. Data was collected from three secondary schools in Gaborone. A survey questionnaire was self administered to 300 randomly selected student participants. A research permit and permission to enter the schools was obtained from education authorities, and parents/guardians. The findings reveal that 53% of the respondents agreed that CSA exists in the schools under study. The majority of students believed that this mostly affected female students (89%). Most students engage in sexual relationships with teachers mainly for financial gain (93%), to acquire electronic devices; mainly cellular phones (53%), to receive favourable treatment (48%) and good grades (41%). Further, the majority of students (73%) in this study reported that they did not know about the existence of a sexual harassment policy in their school. The paper concludes that it imperative for secondary schools and relevant stakeholders to develop context specific strategies to address the persistent problem of CSA.

Keywords: Sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, children, educational research, policy.

1.0 Introduction

In recent years the media have been awash with allegations and reports of teachers having sexual relations with students in Botswana. These allegations of amorous relationships between students and teachers are one of the complex and controversial issues in modern civilized societies. It is even more complex and controversial because issues of sexual engagement by nature, particularly in an African perspective, are secretive. Despite their complexities, sexual relations between teachers and students remains a bizarre and emotional shock to many (Mathews, 2011). The premise of this paper is that while school teachers are part of the care system that is expected to mould the nation's future leaders, the activities of some, especially those sexually exploiting the students under their tutelage, is increasing and worrisome. This paper builds on the few publications on CSA conducted in Botswana which advocate for the need to develop effective prevention strategies to deter CSA in schools. Some interesting studies have been undertaken on CSA in schools (Seloilwe &

Tshweneyagae, 2009; Diraditsile, 2012; Mhlauli & Muchado, 2015). However, there still exists a large gap in the literature in Botswana due to the sensitivity and hidden nature of the subject.

Seloilwe & Tshweneagae (2009) conducted a study on sexual abuse and violence among adolescent girls in Botswana. However, they were looking at the sexual abuse and violence from a mental health perspective. Along the same lines, Mhlauli & Muchado (2015) conducted a study on “Hearing voices inside schools: issues of sexuality in upper classes in primary schools in Botswana”. Their study was mainly based on sexuality education as part of the school curriculum. Therefore, based on the above studies, a gap has been noted for further research in getting a deeper understanding of child abuse in order to inform policies and practice interventions. It is the contention of this paper that, increasing public awareness on the extent of child sexual abuse in Botswana’s schools, will contribute in reducing the trend of increased sexual abuse of children in the schools. It would also escalate public pressure on the government to adopt legislation for the protection of children.

2.0 Problem statement

Between 25% and 50% of children in the world suffer from physical abuse and 20% of girls experience sexual abuse (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2018). Botswana has its own incidence of CSA, which has now become a global phenomenon (Mhlauli & Muchado, 2015). It is widely acknowledged that CSA, particularly among young girls, is a widespread and growing problem of concern in Botswana, and the current socio-economic situation is aggravating the problem. Consequently, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the teacher’s code of conduct in Botswana has not fully addressed the problem of CSA in schools. Diraditsile (2018) argues that the enforcement of existing code of conduct for teachers has not been effective hence the persistence of CSA in schools.

Imbesi (2008) study in Australia indicates that CSA by teachers in and around schools is a serious and pressing problem, which troubles parents whose children are traumatized after failing to complete their studies. Seloilwe & Tshweneagae (2009) have also talked about CSA in Botswana, indicating that a number of teachers are impregnating students and the numbers of teachers who are being disciplined is insignificant. Based on the foregoing, it can be said that CSA is a social problem that calls for all concerted efforts from all sectors of the society. There is a substantial body of documented evidence which shows that CSA is a major problem in contemporary days. Research also indicates that it has been linked with the spread of sexually transmitted infections, students dropping out of school, and teenage pregnancies. It is against this backdrop that the study on the students’ views to CSA in the school is imperative owing to the fact that acknowledging the full scope of the subject leads to better interventions and preventative measures to curb CSA. It is the argument of this paper that generating reliable empirical data will increase awareness on the subject with the aim to make schools a conducive and better place of safety for child protection.

3.0 Literature review

Definition and perspectives on CSA

It is worth noting that since there is a lack of consensus on a definition of sexual abuse, the words ‘child sexual abuse’ and ‘sexual exploitation’ of children will be used interchangeably. Child sexual abuse is a widespread complex social phenomenon globally and not a diagnosis or a disorder (Putman, 2003). According to Finkelhor (2009), CSA involves an entire spectrum of crimes and

offences in which children up to the age of eighteen years are victims of sexual relations. Many professional groups are expected to play key roles in the prevention of CSA (Scholes, Jones, Stieler-Hunt, Rolfe & Pozzebon, 2012). From a psychological perspective, CSA is seen as an abuse of power in order for one person to obtain sexual gratification from another. The abuse of power can occur on three levels. CSA is contextualised as the use of physical ability, intellectual capacity and authority by the perpetrator to obtain sexual gratification from the child (Rudd & Brakarsh, 2002). With regard to the present study teachers use their power, authority and intellectual capacity to obtain sexual gratification from their students. Nonetheless, laws in Botswana are clear on what constitutes CSA – children younger than eighteen years of age do not have legal capacity to engage in sex in line with the Revised Penal Code (Botswana Government [GoB], 2018).

Globally, it is evident that CSA in schools is an issue of major concern, not only to children, but also to families, educators and society at large. In addition, scholars, practitioners and authors agree on a number of things concerning CSA in secondary schools. For instance, Mirsky (2006) and Sossou & Yoytiba (2009) concur that teachers are reported to offer good grades in exchange for sexual favours. The other factor that runs across the globe and elsewhere in Africa is that researchers comprising: Olafson (2011); Rossetti (2004) and Quadara (2008) indicate that CSA exist even in elementary schools. Studies have been conducted and researchers share the same sentiments that there is a problem of CSA perpetuated by teachers in schools.

Evidently, CSA violates the standards for practice in a school environment as sex between a teacher and a student is considered highly unethical. Finkelhor (2009); Wood (2009) and Diraditsile (2018) concur that engaging in sexual behaviour with students is perceived to be highly inappropriate. Noticeably, Olafson (2011); Johnson (2008) and Trickett, Noll & Putman (2011) share the same sentiments that CSA is occasioned with benefits being promised to students. Feminists have long argued that CSA is largely a product of unequal power relations and intellectual capacities between teachers and students (Hepburn, 2017). Most cases of CSA are perpetrated by male teachers because they have they have been socialised to express their intimacy through sex, use sex to reconfirm their egos, and they desire sexual partners who are younger (Finkelhor, 2009). Students fear getting lower grades if they do not comply with the demands made by their teachers (Diraditsile, 2012). This, in itself is a problem because it should not be the case as it goes against teachers' professional code of conduct (Botswana General Orders, 1996).

On factors promoting CSA, researchers share a common view that teachers are attracting students with money and other material benefits. Some scholars (see for example, Collin-Vezima, Daigneault & Hebert, 2013; Scholes et al., 2012) concur that students find it abnormal to be engaged sexually with their teachers. Sossou & Yoytiba (2009); Mathews (2011) and Scholes et al (2012) agree that stress interferes with student's ability to make sensible decisions when they are sexually abused and find it difficult to disclose the ordeal to school authorities. Though the magnitude of CSA is not explicitly shown in statistical facts in some countries, including Botswana, several governments have resorted to proactively designing measures to prevent and curb the occurrence of CSA. The basis of such interventions is the Convention on the Rights of Children (United Nations, 1994) which seeks to protect children against all forms of abuse.

Controversies on CSA

From the literature as much as agreements have been identified there are also a number of controversies with regard to CSA. Scholars do not agree that acts of CSA are consensual. For instance, Collin-Vezima et al (2013) and Misky (2006) share the same sentiments that CSA acts are consensual. Whereas on the other hand, Bagele & Bennell (2004) and Irenyi (2007) disagree that CSA acts are not consensual; they interpret CSA as a form of sexual harassment rather than consensual relationship. A number of scholars, Olafson (2011) and Imbesi (2008) point fingers to teachers for initiating CSA. While Johnson (2008) and Diraditsile (2012) disagree by stating that oftentimes students are initiators of sexual relations between themselves and teachers. They do so for material gain and social recognition to their peers. “*Grabbing a teacher*” is perceived as trendy and admirable.

Interestingly, Collin-Vezina et al (2013) share a different view with Johnson (2008) and Diraditsile (2012) on the grounds that, it is wrong to always cast teachers as victims of sexual relations between students and teachers because teachers are usually the instigators of such ordeals. On one hand, Quadara (2008) and Trickett et al (2011) argue that even consensual sexual interactions between students and teachers constitute sexual harassment because it involves abuse of power and authority by the concerned teachers. Noticeably, Sossou & Yoytiba (2008); Seloilwe & Tshweneagae (2009) and Wood (2009) conclude that consensual CSA imply that a teacher has explicitly informed the student of the purpose of the subject, outcomes and limits of such a relationship which is usually not the case.

Gaps in CSA scholarly literature

There are a number of gaps that exist in the literature on CSA. The study carried out by Rossetti (2004) sought to outline the effects of student-teacher sexual relations in schools. However, Rossetti (2004) did not comprehensively explain the root causes of student teacher sexual relations in Botswana. This gap has been noted for this study to fill in by establishing contributing factors to acts of CSA in secondary schools in Botswana. One other gap identified from reviewing literature is the lack of policies to address educator sexual misconduct in schools, globally and in Africa in particular (Long & Hubble, 2018; Shakeshaft, 2004). In North America and Europe, governments have begun to develop specific policies on educator sexual misconduct for students below 18 as well as those over 18years of age. In Botswana, efforts to develop a specific policy was first mentioned in the Botswana Teaching Professional Council Bill of 2017 (GoB, 2017) which sought among others to address teacher-student sexual relations but is yet to see the light of day.

However, the teachers’ code of conduct is silent on whether sexual relationships between students and teachers can be ever consensual or forced. The current 1994 National Policy on Education is silent on the issue of student-teacher sexual relationships and CSA as indicated in the literature by Mhlauli & Muchado (2015). Hence, there is a gap in literature in Botswana pertaining to existing professional conduct for teachers. This study has filled that gap by drawing valuable information to understand fully the nature, causes and effects of sexual abuse in schools. The other gap that has been identified in the literature review is the inadequacy in existing policies. For example the sexual harassment policy in schools is not implicit when it talks about sexual relations between student and teachers. Therefore, the findings of this study may urge policy makers to be proactive and take measures which should improve existing policies of child protection.

3.0 Theoretical framework

This study adopted the social construction of gender and sexuality as its guiding framework. Gender and sexuality are culturally and historically constructed concepts, different across cultures and changing over time (Foucault, 1992). Further, gender and sexuality involve power relations that are extended to all spheres of society including in formal organisations such as schools. Men generally have more power over women and will use the power inequalities to extract sexual favours from women and girls in exchange for diverse incentives. This kind of sexual relationships may be viewed as representing a continuum of violence against women (Kelly, 1988), which is seen by some as part of the normal male-female relations in society. Generally, it is accepted in many societies for men to initiate sexual relationships and for men to have intimate relations with younger women or girls. It is important to note that sexual harassment is not the result of lack of knowledge, sexist attitudes or misplaced sexual desire. Rather it is a systematic process of reproducing dominant gender relations in society. Sexual harassment is a way “to express and reconfirm the public and private positions of hegemonic masculinity within a heterosexualized gender order” (Robinson, 2005: 20).

Based on the above, sexual relations between teachers and students, especially male teachers and female students may be understood through a socially constructed gender analysis lens. Teachers have economic, social and psychological power over students. They assess students’ personalities and environmental factors to determine whom to target for sexual exploitation. Financial incentives, material gifts and good grades are often promised to students by teachers to lure them into sexual relations. It must be noted that sexuality has different meanings and effects for males and females with the latter being expected to be cooperative at all times. Despite the work that has been done by feminists and career guidance and counselling programmes in schools to empower the girl-child on gender equality, the power of sexuality remains asymmetrical in the public domain. Thus, sexual harassment in schools derives from this gender asymmetry. The presence of informal power structures in schools also influences behaviours that are not necessarily tolerated by official policies and structures. Informal culture also includes peer perceptions among students that promote sexual relations with teachers. The result is that a ‘culture of silence’ is promoted whereby students are discouraged to report sexual exploitation by teachers and other teachers are afraid to blow the whistle on their offending colleagues (Isai & Gibson, 2018). Thus, responses to CSA in schools may benefit from this theoretical framework in addition to others that exist.

5.0 Method

Study design

A quantitative cross-sectional descriptive design was adopted. Taking into consideration that the study revolved around students’ views, a descriptive research design was deemed suitable on the basis that it describes and interprets phenomena that are in existence, whilst at the same time using cross sectional survey method to collect data from participants at one point in time to describe a phenomenon. The instrument was a self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured with closed and open ended questions. The open ended questions were included to capture a variety of responses so as to enhance and enrich the quantitative data.

Participants

The study comprised of 300 participants from 3 senior secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana. Out of the 300 participants, 100 students were chosen from each school. Of all the students who participated in the study, 77% were aged 16-17 years old, 22% 18-19 years old, and only 1% 20 years old. With regard to gender, 47% were male and 53% female.

Sample selection

The survey used a multi-stage stratified sampling design dictating that the analysis should use a complex sample module to account for multiple stages of sampling. Information was obtained from the then Ministry of Education & Skills Development, which indicated a total of 5 government senior schools in Gaborone. On the basis that it's impossible to study the entire population, the researchers relied on sampling to acquire a relevant section of senior secondary schools to observe. Of the total of 5 senior schools, 3 were selected as primary sampling sites. The second sampling was classrooms within the 3 schools which were selected as study sites. In selecting classrooms, a list of classes in each school was ordered by grade in which 10 Form 4 classes in each sampled school were randomly selected. From the chosen 10 classes, 10 participants were selected using simple random sampling.

Dates for data collection were pre-arranged with the school authorities. A special class was organised with each participating school where a survey questionnaire was administered to selected participants. The participants were assisted in facilitating the administration of the instrument and addressing any emerging concerns. The administration of the questionnaire lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Instrument Validity

To ensure validity, a wide range of literature was consulted on the variables of interests. Moreover, the instrument was piloted with students from one senior school which was not part of the study before the actual data collection could take place with the 3 selected schools. The pre-testing results were used to rephrase and modify some aspects of the questionnaire hence making it more suitable and comprehensible to the study participants.

Instrument reliability

The instrument was based on tried and tested research strategies and data collection techniques. The data analysis techniques were appropriate to the research and were implemented properly. All the above were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Botswana.

Ethical Consideration

The study was submitted to the University of Botswana Institutional Review Board (UBIRB) for ethical clearance, thus permission was sought and granted by UBIRB. Accordingly, permission to conduct the research and to enter schools was obtained from the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. The aim and purpose of the study was explained to all participants, they were assured

that information obtained from them will be kept confidential; they were neither forced, nor manipulated to answer the questions on the questionnaire.

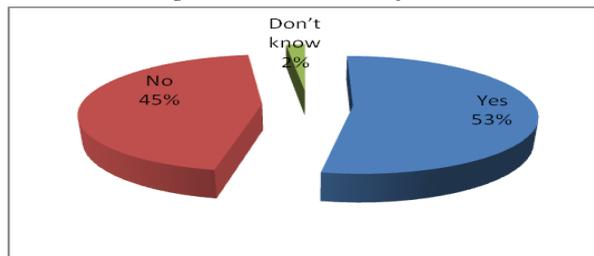
Analysis

The collected data was coded and analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used, all responses to research questions were analysed through the use of frequencies, percentages and charts in summarising the data.

6.0 Presentation of the findings

This section presents the students’ perceptions and experiences of CSA in selected senior secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana. The students commented on the existence of CSA, frequency of the phenomenon, level of school where CSA commenced and frequency of CSA by gender, factors contributing to CSA, effects of CSA and awareness of policy measures to address the problem.

Figure 1: Existence of CSA



This figure shows students’ views on the existence of CSA in senior schools. In response, the result shows that 53% of the participants reported that indeed CSA does exist in their schools. On the other hand, 45% reported that CSA does not exist, and the rest (2%) of the participants indicated that they did not know.

Table 1: Frequency of students affected

School	A	B	C	Male	Female
Boys mostly	3	1	91	4	2
Girls mostly	89	88	7	121	147
Girls and boys	8	11	7	16	10
Total	100	100	100	141	159

According to table 1, participants in different schools (A, B, and C) indicated that it is mostly girls who are affected by CSA. Female participants also indicated that they are the ones who are mostly affected as shown by the majority (147/159) which is 92%.

Table 2: Where the abuses take place

School	A	B	C	Male	Female
Junior	10	6	7	9	17
Senior	5	3	6	3	9
Not applicable	85	91	87	129	133
Total	100	100	100	141	159

Junior school seems to be the place where most CSA took place as compared to senior school. This is shown by 68% of participants who admitted they were in junior school and 32% who indicated they were in senior school when they were affected by CSA. These findings may have been influenced by the fact that, all of participants were doing Form Four. This might imply that students are sexually abused at a tender age.

Figure 2: Contributing factors to CSA

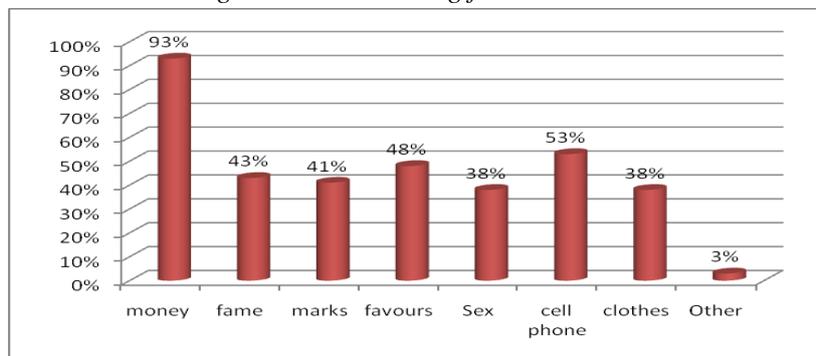
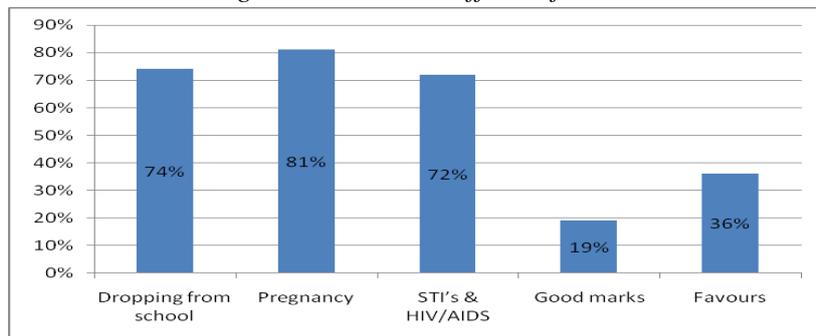


Figure 2 shows the likely reasons why students will engage in CSA. Among the eight likely benefits, financial gain (money) is at 93%, followed by the need to be bought some gadgets such as cell phones at 53%, then favouritism at 48%, good marks at 41%, sex at 38% and lastly clothes at 38%. Participants have shown that fame is not one of the major likely reasons as it has the lowest number of responses. However, there might be other reasons besides the ones stipulated above since it has been shown by the smallest 3%.

Figure 3: Perceived effects of CSA



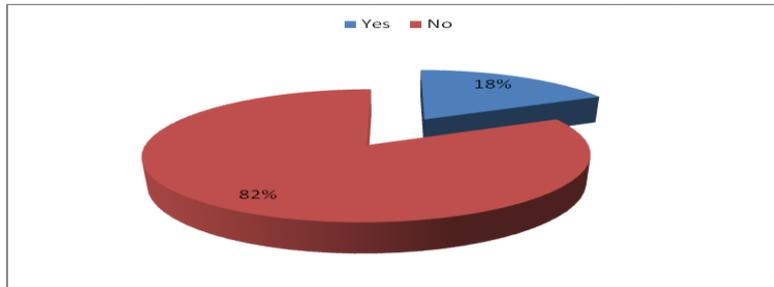
The figure shows perceived effects of CSA to students. Pregnancy is the highest represented by 81%, dropping out of school (74%) and being infected with STI's and HIV/AIDS with 72%, followed by favouritism at 36% and 19% of good marks respectively.

Table 3: Measure to address CSA

Schools	A	B	C	Count	Percent
Expulsion	41	34	40	115	38%
Suspension	9	9	10	28	10%
Warning	10	9	8	27	9%
None	40	48	42	130	43%
Total	100	100	100	300	100%

It seems like most of the students are not aware of the possible results that a teacher can face on the basis that, 43% of participants indicated no knowledge. On the other hand, the most common consequence that was stated from all the schools was expulsion. From the participants that had an idea, 38% of them mentioned expulsion, followed by suspension with 10% and only 9% mentioned that the teachers are given warning.

Figure 4: Awareness of sexual harassment policy



It is clear that the students are not aware of any sexual harassment policy in their schools. A massive 82% stated that not being aware of any sexual harassment policy in their schools. However, 18% were aware of an existing sexual policy in their schools. There is commonality in all the schools. In all the instances the percentage which had an idea was always less than those who are not aware of any policy.

Table 4: Knowledge of sexual harassment policy

School	A	B	C	Count	Percent
Yes	18	19	17	54	17%
No	71	75	73	219	73%
Don't know	11	6	10	27	10%
Total	100	100	100	300	100%

Table 4 indicate the source of knowledge that made students aware of the policy. From the table, 219 students represented by 73% shows that there is lack of empowerment because they mentioned that they have not been told of the policy in school. However a very small percentage of 18% indicated that they have been told about the policy in school. The rest of the respondents which is 9% indicated confusion as they could not recall where they got the knowledge.

7.0 Discussion of the findings

It is evident from the findings that CSA exists in senior secondary schools. The evidence from the study findings shows that girls are more likely to be subjected to sexual abuse than boys. This finding is buttressed by social construction theory that it is commonly accepted for older men to have sexual relations with younger women. When participants were asked if they know any of their colleagues who are sexually exploited by teacher(s), only a significant minority indicated knowing some of the students who were sexually abused. These findings concur with Johnson (2008) who found that students experienced some sort of physical sexual abuse by a public school employee and 14% of them admitted to having sexual affairs with their teachers.

When participants were asked why a student would remain silent when sexually exploited by a teacher; financial gain was more pronounced, followed by the need for material things. Sossou & Yoytiba (2009) found that teachers often attract students with money or entice them with material gifts. Contrary to this finding, Quadara (2008) asserts that often times students fear to disclose when they are being sexually exploited, and disclosure is not static (one-off event) but a process characterised by uncertainty. Students fear being questioned on the incident, do not know who to trust and confide in, what the consequences will be, and the benefits of reporting to school authorities (Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., 2018; Moynihan, Pitcher & Saewyc, 2018). A study in Uganda by people's voices on HIV/AIDS, reported that female students mentioned that they were promised good marks in class, money and clothing. Some even reported that they were promised marriage, or payment for their school fees and school uniform. With such promises, they found it hard to actually resist teachers' advances (UNICEF, 2011).

When participants were asked their views on whether or not CSA is consensual, a majority of female participants asserted that CSA is not consensual as opposed to their male counterparts. It would seem from the findings that male students believe that female students consent to sexual relations with their teachers and fully comprehend the implications of such unions. Irenyi (2007) made a distinction from consent and compliance suggesting that consent to sex implies an understanding of intimate relationships and their emotional impact as well as knowledge of the possible range of positive and negative consequences that might result in sexual behaviour. Moreover, Irenyi (2007) defined compliance as the tendency to agree willingly to someone else's demands or wishes, especially one who wields some form of power and authority over the other.

There is a substantial body of evidence which shows the effects of CSA. From the findings, it is clear that CSA has negative consequences to students. Some of the serious effects of CSA deduced from the findings include; dropping out of school due to pregnancies, being infected with STI's and HIV/AIDS. The findings are also in agreement with Finkelhor (2009) that while poverty, war, HIV and AIDS have impeded the enrolment of children in schools, it also appears to be the case that in some countries CSA plays a direct part in girls failing to enrol or dropping out of school. The findings also are consistent with UNICEF (2011).

From the findings, it is clear that students did not know about existing measures to address CSA in their schools. A majority of participants strongly felt nothing was being done across all the three schools under study. Only a small proportion of participants indicated awareness of something being done to address the issue. They revealed that Guidance and Counselling Departments provide guidance to students on their personal, academic difficulties and CSA issues. The findings are

significant looking at the fact that in Botswana, the teacher's code of conduct is silent on teacher-student sexual relationships. It is also evident from the findings that instead of teachers reporting incidents of CSA, they rather keep quiet and/or protect their colleagues. Teachers elsewhere have stated the presence of a "culture of silence" in education with regard to exposing teacher misconduct. They felt that even with whistle blowing policies the process was intimidating (Isai & Gibson, 2018). Thus, there is need for laws that will protect whistleblowers on issues such as CSA in schools.

8.0 Implications for research

It is apparent that the global literature is rich with information regarding CSA. However, in Botswana, the magnitude and dynamics of CSA and sexual harassment in schools have not been adequately documented. As a result, there is need to improve research in the area of CSA in Botswana in particular. The absence of research in addressing sexual abuse and exploitation of students often leads to poorly designed interventions. This paper argues that the Government of Botswana should examine the strengths and challenges of the existing teachers' code of conduct in the schools with a view to propose long lasting solutions to CSA. In addition, resources to prevent CSA should be improved as a matter of urgency to prevent, detect and manage the phenomenon. Developed countries have begun to develop guidelines on preventing and dealing with CSA in schools. However, legislations specific to educator misconduct are yet to be developed in many countries.

To this end, it is only through the use of scientific data that government can design well informed policies and child welfare programmes to effectively meet the needs and aspirations of children and reducing the number of school dropouts as well as the rate of CSA in the schools. This can only be achieved if greater emphasis is on research to generate ongoing and reliable data that may provide the answer to the pervasive problem of CSA in Botswana. Social Work and other disciplines have the requisite knowledge and skills to contribute to such a discourse.

9.0 Policy implementations

It is the contention of this paper that the need for advanced sexual education in the Botswana curriculum is not a new argument. For instance, Mhlauli & Muchado (2015) have argued that the absence of sex education in the curriculum have provoked several debates within the Botswana society. However, some commentators feel that issues of sexuality should be incorporated in the school curriculum while other people are in disagreement. Based on the findings of this study, this paper proposes that schools in Botswana should be required to teach sex education. The rationale to mandate all primary, junior and senior schools to teach students about healthy sexual relationships is occasioned by recognition that all students require help to navigate the risks associated with growing up, and vulnerability of CSA in schools. Policy implementers and curriculum developers should ensure that sexual education programs are developed and implemented with the active participation of students.

The authors are aware that government is in the process of formulating the Botswana Teaching Professional Council which will, among others, include a professional code of conduct for teachers. Further, we are also aware of debates by the teachers' unions on the inadequate consultations leading to the proposed bill. If such sentiments are truthful, we recommend that government should go back to the drawing board to ensure that teachers, students, parents, social welfare officers and other stakeholders are adequately consulted to ensure public wide support for the bill. It is the argument of

this paper that the failure of the government to seek the views and voices of the affected parties and to impose decisions from the top is a serious concern and might affect the achievement of the national objectives of creating a protective and safe environment for promoting children's rights. Based on the foregoing, in order to meet the objective of enabling children to stay safe, sexual education programmes in schools should include age appropriate content which enables children to recognise abuse and seek help without having second thoughts of going to be judged by the school system, family and friends.

Further, teachers themselves need to hold themselves accountable for professional misconduct to ensure a safe learning environment for students in schools. We challenge the teacher trade unions to be proactive and lead discussions on teacher professionalism rather than wait to respond to government initiatives in that regard.

10.0 Study limitation

The study findings should be cautiously interpreted. Adopting quantitative research might have been disadvantageous owing to the fact that it led to collection of much narrower information as participants were mostly given options to choose from. This could have limited the reliability of the scales as participants could have under reported CSA due to social desirability. Nonetheless, the study has confirmed some relevant findings from previous studies on the subject.

11.0 Conclusion

Evidently, CSA in schools is an issue of major concern in Botswana. This research was conducted in order to explore the existence of sexual abuse of students by teachers in three selected senior secondary schools. It identified factors contributing to sexual abuse among students and the effects of such abuse on students. The findings have confirmed that sexual abuse of students does exist in the schools and that majority of female students are negatively affected by this troubling reality. Our research has found that there is a dearth of literature on sexual abuse of students in schools in Botswana. Therefore, there is need for further empirical research to generate more data on the dynamics of sexual abuse in schools and understand students' perspectives on the issue. The Children's Act of 2009 recognises that teachers are mandated to report issues of child sexual abuse so that appropriate measures may be taken to protect the well-being of children in abusive relationships. However, generally schools tend to overlook this in an effort to protect the image of their schools and staff. Anecdotal evidence shows that most parents tend to settle CSA cases outside the courts to protect the teachers involved with the hope that their daughters would be married. The affected teachers may promise to pay "damages" to the girls' family and maintain any child(ren) born out of the relationships. However, after sometime they disappear and leave the family and single mothers with the burden of care.

This quantitative study did not go into depth to understand how teachers come to identify the students they sexually abuse. Research on teacher sexual misconduct in Canada suggests that male teachers employ extensive grooming behaviours that include paying special attention to the victims and building relationships with them through technology (Jaffe et al., 2013; Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2018). There is a need to study the patterns of sexual abuse in schools and the nature of such relationships. In a rapidly changing society such as Botswana, it should not be taken for

granted that such relationships are only heterosexual. Thus, students who may be involved in homosexual relationships may find it even harder to access help when they need it.

Botswana is committed to the protection of children as indicated by the more recent adoption of the human-rights inclined Children's Act of 2009 with social workers being custodians of children's rights and protection. It is against this backdrop that we believe that it is high time the government considered the appointment of school social workers to strengthen existing psychosocial support systems for students' care in schools. Experience in other countries has shown that students relate more openly with school social workers and counsellors who are not perceived as teachers. Government must be commended for acknowledging the seriousness of teacher sexual misconduct in schools and proposing a bill to address the issue. However, teachers' unions have rejected some aspects of the bill on the basis of inadequate consultation. It is important that all stakeholders be actively engaged in the shaping of the proposed legislation. Lastly, culture plays a role in the socialisation of children. Botswana's culture generally tolerates premarital sex and the "secrecy" surrounding sexual relations with people of authority. It is not surprising therefore when parents become reluctant to settle teacher sexual misconduct cases at the courts of law. This confirms the view that the power of sexuality remains entrenched in the public domain.

Schools play an integral role in shaping worldviews of children and social relationships generally. Adults working in schools are professionals and gatekeepers who play significant roles in modelling children's lives in this effervescent learning environment. These people, whether teachers, principals, counselors, educational assistants, custodians, or bus drivers, have unique access and relationships with children and their families, the foundation of which is trust (Mcalinden, 2006). The betrayal of trust that occurs when a school employee commits sexual offenses against children has lasting impacts on the victims.

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