

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESEARCH

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problems related to the impact of domestic violence on the education of children

- i. There are two main problems affecting children due to the impact of domestic violence: emotional problems and behavioural problems.
- ii. Children experienced acute and negative emotions following an incident of abuse. These emotions include hopelessness, worthlessness, sad, miserable, unhappy, scared worried, ashamed, embarrassed, worried, lonely, hurt, angry and depressed.
- iii. These acrimonious emotions lead to negative behaviour in the classroom. Some of these behaviours include aggressiveness, bullying, trouble-making, harassing other children, skipping school, sleeping during class, unable to focus in class, rude to the teacher, drop out from school and suicidal.
- iv. As a result of emotional and behavioural problems caused by domestic violence, 77 per cent of children engaged for the study claimed that they could not focus on their schoolwork properly.
- v. 35 per cent of children confirmed that they performed very poor in school while the other 35 per cent claimed they performed poorly as a result of abuse at home.
- vi. The majority of school principals (50 per cent) believed that abused children performed poorly at school.
- vii. Teachers shared the same view. The majority of them (43 per cent) agreed that children who are abused at home perform poorly at school.

Impact of domestic violence on teachers and non-teaching staff

- i. Teachers and non-teaching staff experienced emotional, work-related, home-related and health problems as a result of overseeing abused children in the classroom due to their poor behaviour.
- ii. The majority of principals (37 per cent) claimed that they experienced a mixture of emotions that include feeling hopeless, despair and sorry for the abused children.
- iii. The majority of teachers (29 per cent) on the other hand feel sorry for the abused children.
- iv. Teaching staff claimed that they experienced other emotions like anger, frustrations, sad, disappointed, disturbed, confused, depressed, and disgusted.

- v. The majority of non-teaching staff (43 per cent) claimed that they experienced a combination of emotions of hopeless, despair and sorry for the abused children.
- vi. Teaching staff experienced a range of work-related problems as a result of caring for abused children. These include delays in teaching targets, overloading, ignoring other children, disruption in daily work-plans and losing a lot of time.
- vii. Teaching staff complained about the health problems they experienced as a result of negative emotions they go thorough in the classroom. The majority of them claimed that they suffered from hypertension while some declared suffering from depression.

Creating a supportive and a safe learning and teaching environment for children to learn and teachers to teach

- i. The current learning and teaching environment lacks focus on the special needs of abused children in the classroom and support for teachers caring for traumatised children in the classroom.
- ii. The current environment assumes that all children are living in a safe home setting and as a result, teachers are applying the same pedagogical approach to all children in the classroom. This practice is based on the view that what happens to the children at home is neither the business of the teacher nor the school.
- iii. Seven key elements are proposed for a safe learning and teaching environment policy: management support; teachers' capacity and personality; curriculum; better coordination with other government authorities and non-government organisations targeting violence against children; close partnership with the school community; explicit supporting process to help abused children; and children's awareness of the help available from the school if experiencing abuse at home.
- iv. Management support, which is mainly referred to the school principal, is critical in providing support to teachers. This includes proper teaching load, good understanding of teachers, teamwork, and counseling teachers.
- v. The re-introduction of Christian values in the curriculum and the need for MESAC to work with the responsible Faculty at NUS to include a course on how to work with abused children in the classroom for the Bachelor of Education.
- vi. Building a coherent working relationship with other government authorities fighting violence against children like the Ministry of Police and Prisons, and the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development is critical in breaking the vicious cycle of violence against children.

- vii. An explicit and uniform supporting process for each school to follow in identifying abused children and to make the most useful decision.
- viii. Improving partnership with the community in which the school is located. There is a suggestion for schools to use advisory committees to promote awareness on the danger of violence against children and to assist the principal in counseling parents that are abusing their children.
- ix. Children to be aware of the assistance from the school if they are experiencing abuse at home.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is part of the Spotlight Initiative (SI), which is a global partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) aiming at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) around the world.

Domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) are significant and longstanding problems in the Pacific, and Samoa is no exception. A study by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) in 2017 claims that: “Domestic and gender-based violence in Samoa are a multi-faceted problem with devastating impact on the most vulnerable members of the family. The victims are women, children, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and elderly people” (MWCSD, 2017: xiii).

Children in Samoa are experiencing all types of abuse at home. It is a renowned fact established by two recent studies carried out by MWCSD in 2017 and the Office of the Ombudsman in 2018. What is not known however is the impact of such violence on the ability of children to learn in the classroom not to mention the problems encountered by the teachers who are on the opposite end of the learning process.

The main purpose of this study is therefore about producing a platform of knowledge on the impact of domestic violence (DV) on the lives and education of children, as well as teachers and non-teaching staff handling abused children at school.

Such knowledge is deemed crucial in determining effective policy intervention by the government, development partners and stakeholders to develop a safe learning and teaching environment for children, teachers and non-teaching staff.

Following data collection and analysis, this report presents the findings of the study, its key conclusions and recommendations based on a careful and thorough analysis of information collected from children, teaching and non-teaching staff from schools in Upolu and Savai'i.

With the current learning and teaching environment lacking attention on the special learning needs of children who are experiencing violence at home and contemporaneously ignores problems the teachers endure in the classroom, the findings are valuable in rethinking an effective

approach to support the children who are abused at home and the teachers who are engaging with this vulnerable group of children in the classroom on a daily basis.

2. STUDY METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALES

This study as alluded to earlier is amongst the plethora of actions established under the Spotlight Initiative partnership to fight violence against women and young girls. In essence, the study seeks to generate a body of knowledge that is specifically relevant to decision-making for both the government of Samoa and development partners in order to produce sound policy intervention that addresses the adverse impact of DV on the lives and education of children and teachers.

2.1 Study rationales

Children in Samoa are facing all types of abuse at home according to studies conducted recently by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) in 2017 and the Office of the Ombudsman in 2018.

Of the children surveyed by the MWCSD study, 89 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys experienced life-time violence while 69 per cent of girls and 63 per cent of boys experienced violence in the last 12 months before the study (MWCSD, 2017: xiii). These figures according to MWCSD indicated a high rate of violence against children.

Emotional abuse which included name-calling, telling off, swearing at, teasing, not speaking to child for a while, and telling others or neighbours about child's wrong-doing is the most common form of emotional abuse according to the children participated in the study by MWCSD. In terms of gender, 50 per cent of the girls participated experienced emotional abuse compared to 37 per cent of boys surveyed.

Physical abuse is the second highest form of abuse according to the findings of the survey. This form of violence includes hitting with an object or hand, slapping, punching and thrown at with a heavy solid object. In terms of abuse frequency, 67 per cent of boys and girls engaged indicated that they rarely experienced physical abuse while 15 per cent admitted that they frequently experienced physical abuse (MWCSD 2017: 44).

With the staggering quantitative and qualitative evidence highlighting extensive violence against children in Samoa, the need for a study to examine the impact of domestic violence on children's education

performance and teachers' ability to handle traumatised children is warranted.

Based on the findings obtained from the existing literature, children who are exposed to domestic violence struggled at school due to emotional, physical and psychological impact of domestic violence. Teachers who are dealing with traumatised children at school also suffered from emotional and psychological effect of the situation according to existing evidence discussed earlier. Such situation strongly demands support for teachers in terms of proper training, adequate resources and clear policies.

In the case of Samoa, there is dearth of knowledge on the impact of DV and IPV on the lives and education of children as well as teachers and non-teaching personnel. This study sets to fill this knowledge-gap by obtaining and sharing information on the impact of DV and IPV on children, teachers and non-teaching staff. Such findings are critical in finding alternatives to support traumatised children and teachers in the school system.

The end result of this study is to inform policymaking inside and outside government that is based on good evidence and sound knowledge on the impact of DV on the lives and education of children, teachers and non-teaching assistants.

2.2 Study methodology

Based on the key objectives of the study, the choice of tools used for data collection is based on the types of data needed, sources of data, timeframe for the consultancy and available resources.

Types of data needed for the study

The study needs both qualitative and quantitative data. With the study's emphasis to find out the impact of DV on young children, teaching and non-teaching staff, the need for qualitative data is essential in understanding the details of the effect of DV and IPV.

Quantitative data on the other hand is equally important for this study. In order to gauge the breadth and depth of DV on children and staff in the education system, quantitative data is needed to quantify the extent and scope of the problem(s) caused by DV and IPV.

Sources of data

Sources of data selected for the study followed what was provided in the ToR. Four groups were targeted: school children, school principals, teaching and non-teaching staff. Other sources, mainly secondary sources of information were also examined for the study. These include reports on studies carried out earlier on the subject matter and academic research papers.

Data collection tools

For the purpose of this study, a set of tools was selected based on the information provided in the ToR.

Focus group consultation workshops

Workshopping is one of the main tools used for data collection due to its capacity to generate information needed for the study quickly. This was essential with the limited time assigned for the study data collection phase. There were four workshops conducted for Upolu and Savai'i. Each workshop targeted each group identified for the study.

Short questionnaire

A short questionnaire was used for each target group to generate quantitative data required for the study. The questionnaire was distributed to target groups at the end of the workshop. Copies of the questionnaires used for target groups are provided in Attachment 1.

Interviews

As argued earlier, qualitative data is critical to this study in terms of understanding and detailing the diverse impact of DV and IPV. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with randomly selected individuals representing each of the four target groups for the study.

Literature review

Existing documents (reports, studies, etc) on the impact of DV and IPV on young children and teachers in Samoa and other countries were examined for the study.

Sampling

The main challenge of a study of this magnitude concerns the representation of the study population. With only 15 days allocated to field work, the need for a sample was critical.

Based on the guidance provided by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS), the sample of schools selected for the study were randomly selected from

the schools within each statistical region. Each group was represented by 25-30 participants randomly selected from the schools selected in the sample.

Table 2.2.1 summarises the sample size and selection for the schools included in the study.

Table 2.2.1: School sample size and selection

Region	Total No. of Schools	Proportion	Sample size	Sample interval
AUA	17	0.1	3	6.7
NWU	29	0.2	4	6.7
ROU	65	0.4	10	6.7
Savai'i	56	0.3	8	6.7
Total	167		25	

Note: Sample size and selection is based on the advice of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics

3. PROBLEMS RELATED TO IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON EDUCATION AND LIVES OF CHILDREN

This section outlines the findings of the study on the key problems caused by the impact of DV on the lives and education of children. In essence, the study finds out that children experienced extreme negative emotions as a result of violence at home. These negative affections triggered behavioural problems.

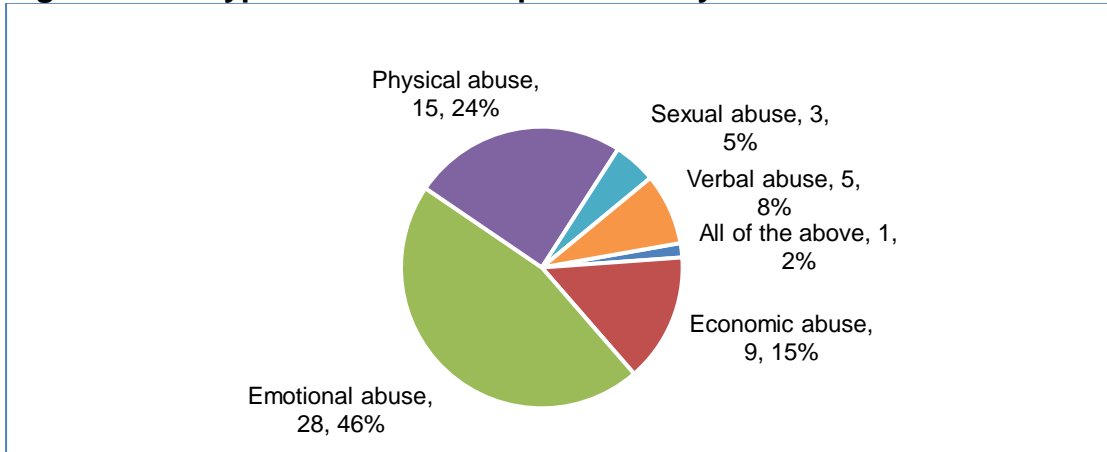
Unfortunately, children cannot control these behavioural problems when attending school. As a result, teachers in most cases ended up punishing them further in the classroom when they behaved inappropriately.

The proceeding analysis also highlights the need for teachers to get to know their children (students) better and the need to provide the relevant help for children who are abused at home when attending school.

3.1 Children experiencing abuse at home

All the children participated in the study experienced violence at home. Emotional abuse is the predominant form of violence according to 46 per cent of students (Figure 3.1.1) followed by physical abuse at 24 per cent and economic abuse at 15 per cent. Unfortunately, 5 per cent of the students engaged also claimed suffering from sexual abuse.

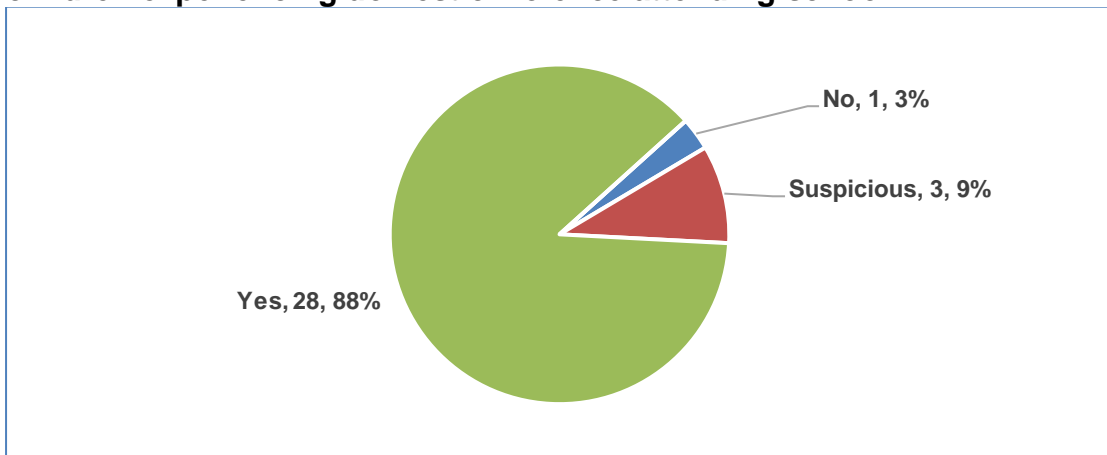
Figure 3.1.1: Types of violence experienced by children



Source: Information collected from study questionnaire

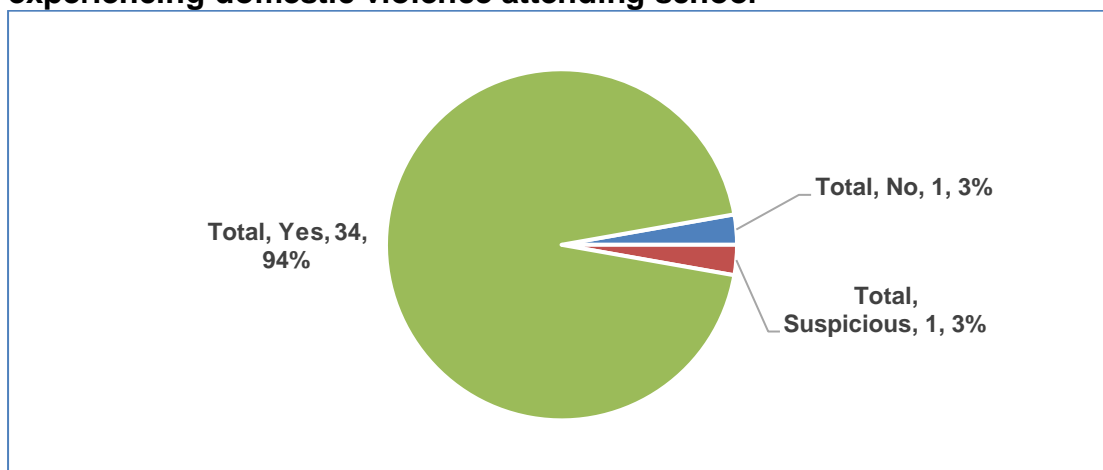
School principals and teachers also confirmed through the questionnaire that they are aware of children who are abused at home when attending school. Figures 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 show that the majority of principals (88 per cent) and teachers (94 per cent) are aware of children that are suffered from domestic violence attending school.

Figure 3.1.2: Percentage of school principals who are aware of children experiencing domestic violence attending school



Source: Information obtained from the response of principals to the study questionnaire

Figure 3.1.3: Percentage of teachers who are aware of children experiencing domestic violence attending school



Source: Information obtained from the response of teachers to the study questionnaire

The majority of principals and teachers claimed that most abused children are easily detected in the classroom from their behaviour, appearance and facial expression. From the questionnaire, principals and teachers claimed that the majority of abused children behaved aggressively, isolated or discreet and are easily distracted.

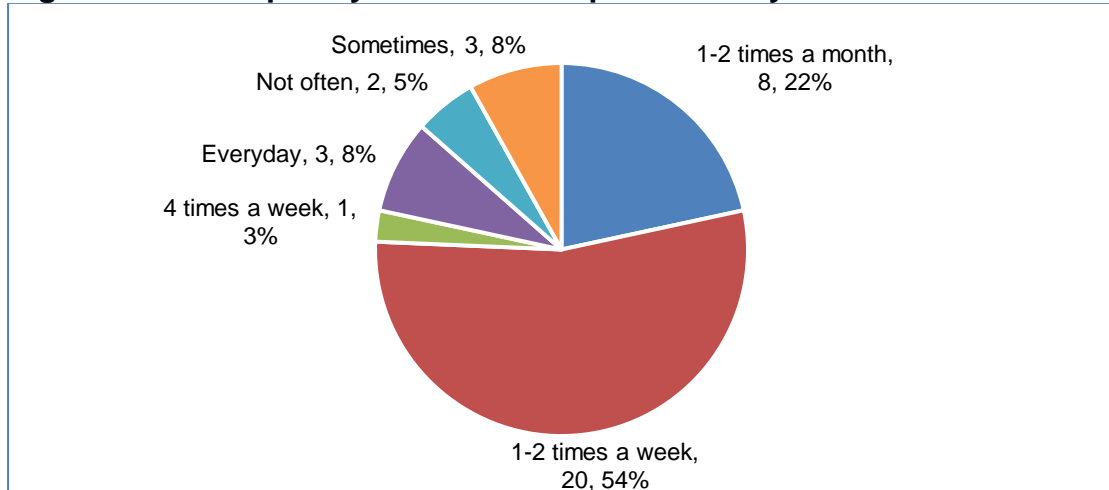
The findings from the workshop added more depth to the questionnaire responses. Table 3.1.1 summarises the range of behaviours and appearance of children that are abused at home according to principals and teachers.

Table 3.1.1: Behaviour of domestically abused children in the classroom

Behaviour			
Crying	No homework	Skipping classes	Violent
Quiet	Unable to focus	Scared	Ashamed
Aggressive	Harassing other children	Vandalism	Discrete
Long absence from school	Causing trouble	Disruptive behaviour	Seeking attention
Staring	Withdrawn	Swearing	Bullying
Rude	Skip classes		
Appearance			
Untidy	Wrinkled uniform	Sad eyes	

Source: Information obtained from focus group workshops

Figure 3.1.4 indicates that the majority of the students (54%) are abused one to two times a week while 8 per cent are abused on a daily basis.

Figure 3.1.4: Frequency of violence experienced by children

Source: Information obtained from the response of children to study questionnaire

Evidence from the preceding analysis clearly confirms the findings of previous studies discussed earlier that violence against children in Samoa is widespread. In essence, emotional abuse is the most common form of abuse followed by physical abuse.

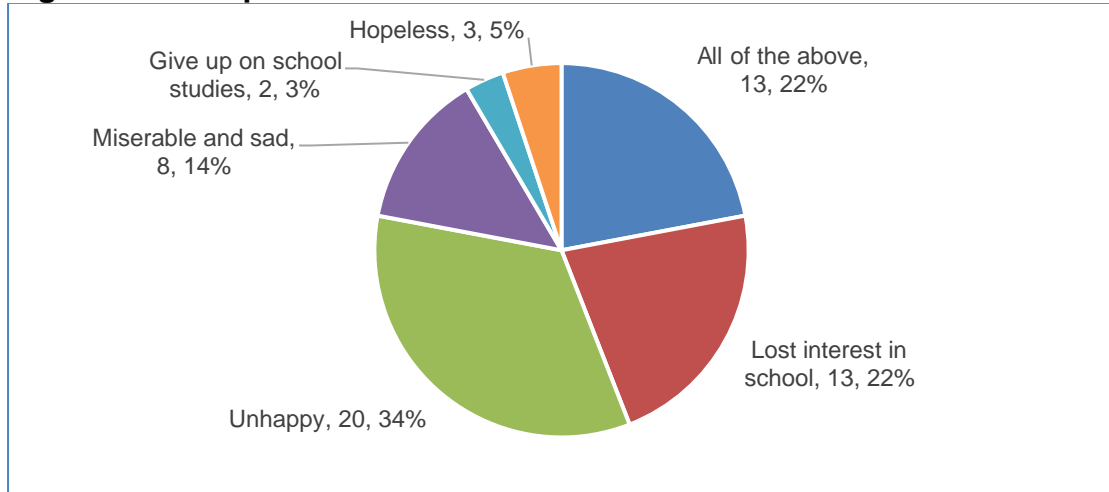
One of the interesting discoveries of this study concerns the common behaviours, facial expression and appearance of children who are abused at home as listed in Table 3.1.1. This evidence is helpful in guiding teachers to identify children who are victims of domestic violence in the classroom and importantly provided with the relevant assistance that they need.

3.2 Impact of domestic violence on emotions of children

One of the critical problems affecting children who are abused at home concerned strong negative emotions they felt afterwards. Emotions are intense feelings that are intended to someone or something and are triggered by a specific event (Robbins 2017). Negative emotions expressed an unfavourable evaluation or feelings (Robbins 2017).

Children who are violently abused at home are affected emotionally according to the findings gathered for this study. Unfortunately, these are negative rather than positive emotions. Figure 3.2.1. summarises the response of children to the questionnaire on their emotions following an incident of abuse at home.

Figure 3.2.1: Impact of domestic violence on the emotions of children



Source: Information obtained from children’s response to the study questionnaire

Feeling unhappy is prevalence to the majority of students following an incident of abuse at home. The second highest are losing interest in school and a combination of hopeless, giving up on studies, miserable and sad.

The findings from the focus group workshop added more depth of knowledge to those obtained from the questionnaire. Table 3.2.1 summarises the emotions of children after an incident of violence at home.

Table 3.2.1: Emotions of children following an incident of abuse at home

Emotions			
Sad	Low-self esteem	Miserable	Embarrassed
Angry	Hurt	Scared	Ashamed
Stressed	Hopeless	Worried	
Depressed	Worthless	Lonely	

Source: Information gathered from the study focus group workshop

It is evident that children who are abused at home are incriminated with negative emotions. Some are extremely acute as in the case of hopeless, worthless and low self-esteem. This evidence is valuable for teaching and non-teaching staffs when handling children who are suspects of domestic abuse in the classroom.

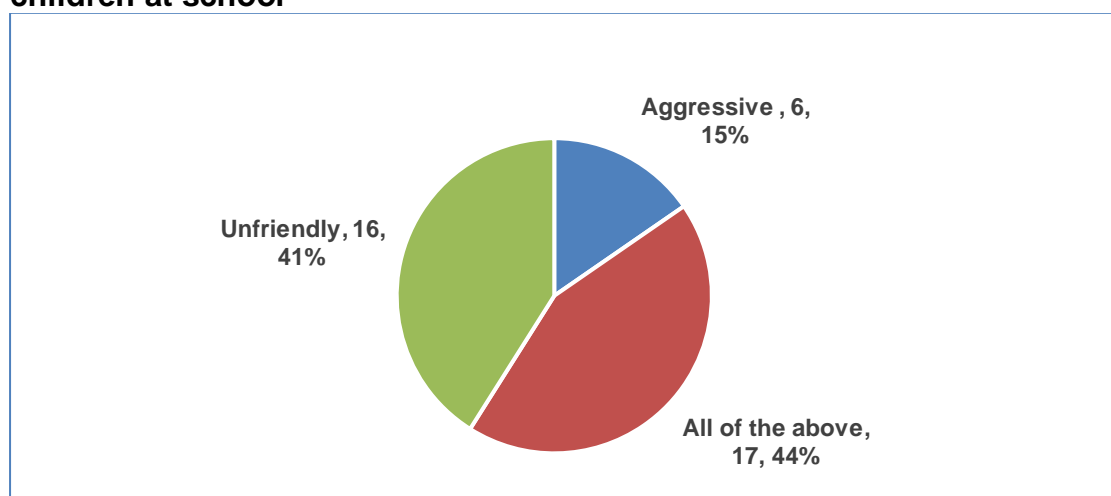
Moreover, emotions are action oriented. Negative emotions usually fueled negative behaviour. Teachers therefore need to be cautious in rushing to discipline children with poor behaviour in the classroom. Findings of this study suggest that teachers need patience and care to conduct a thorough diagnosis of poor behaviour in the classroom, prior to any further action in order to avoid further punishment of children who are abused at home.

Evidence from the study also suggests that children who are abused at home are not blessed with any positive emotion. None of the children engaged in the study referred to any positive emotion gained from such act.

3.3 Behavioural problems as a results of domestic violence

Poor behaviour is regarded as the other major problem associated with children who are abused at home. The majority of children (Figure 3.3.1) that responded to the questionnaire selected the ‘all of the above’ choice provided in the questionnaire which includes behavioural combination of aggressiveness, unfriendly, isolated and withdrawn.

Figure 3.3.1: Impact of domestic violence on the behaviour of children at school



From the focus group workshop, the children shared more examples of poor behaviour at school as a result of abuse at home. These behaviours are listed in Table 3.3.1.

Table 3.3.1: Children’s behaviour at school following an incident of abuse at home

Behaviours		
Looking for a fight	Sleeping during class	Giving up on study
Harassing other children	Run away from home	Do not want to return home
Skip school	Bullying others	Suicidal
Unable to focus in the classroom	Staring and dreaming away	Rude to the teacher
Causing trouble	Do not want to listen to the teacher	Do not want to participate in classroom activities

Source: Information obtained from the focus group workshops.

Table 3.1.1 in the previous section lists the behaviours of abused children in the classroom based on the observation of teachers. Both Tables 3.1.1 and 3.3.1 underline several issues that teachers and administrators in the education sector should consider in order for abused children to gain the desired support that they need in the classroom.

In particular, the behaviours discovered in the study are considered unfavourable for traumatised children and other children to learn in the classroom effectively. Unfortunately, if these children are not provided with the right support that they need in the classroom, they are most likely to be left behind academically.

In essence, the findings of the study demand the need for teachers and administrators of the education sector to revisit the approach taken in the classroom for misbehaving children. Very often teachers are rushed to penalise mischievous children in the classroom using various measures without a proper consideration of what the children are facing at home. Such view is based on the assumption that what goes on at home is neither the concern of the teacher nor the school.

In essence, the information gathered from the target groups shows that abused children’s behaviour is diverse. Some are aggressive and troublemaking while others are discrete and silent.

With the findings of this study, such position needs retrospection for a couple of reasons. In essence, abused children are most likely to sustain

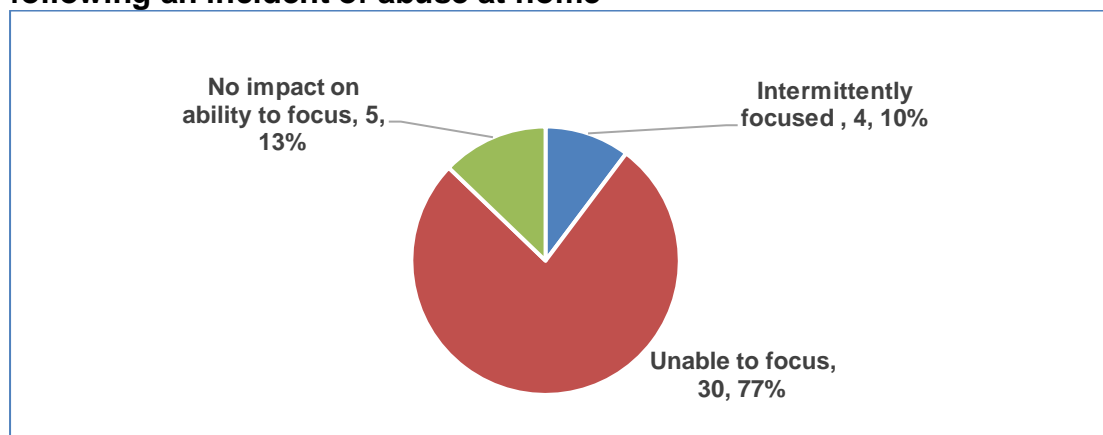
further punishment at school due to bad behaviour triggered by the abuse they experienced at home. Second, these children are most likely to perform poorly at school due to counter-learning behaviours caused by the violence at home.

It is evident from the study that children who are abused at home need the relevant help from the school. Children spend six to eight hours of the day at school hence the school can be another mechanism to ease the pain and to save a life for this group of vulnerable children.

3.4 Impact on education

Children who are abused at home do not perform well and do not focus on their schoolwork according to the children themselves. The majority of children that responded to the questionnaire claimed that they could not focus on their learning activities in the classroom following an incident of abuse at home according to Figure 3.4.1. This view coincides with the behaviour of children discussed in Table 3.3.1. For instance, children declared that they fall asleep during class and are not interested in listening to the teacher to mention a few.

Figure 3.4.1: Ability of children to focus on their school work following an incident of abuse at home



Source: Information is obtained from the children's response to study questionnaire

Similar responses were gathered from the focus group workshop. Children during the workshop expressed that they could not concentrate on activities in the classroom and did not want to learn. Table 3.4.1 summarises the children's responses to their ability to focus on their schoolwork during school hours.

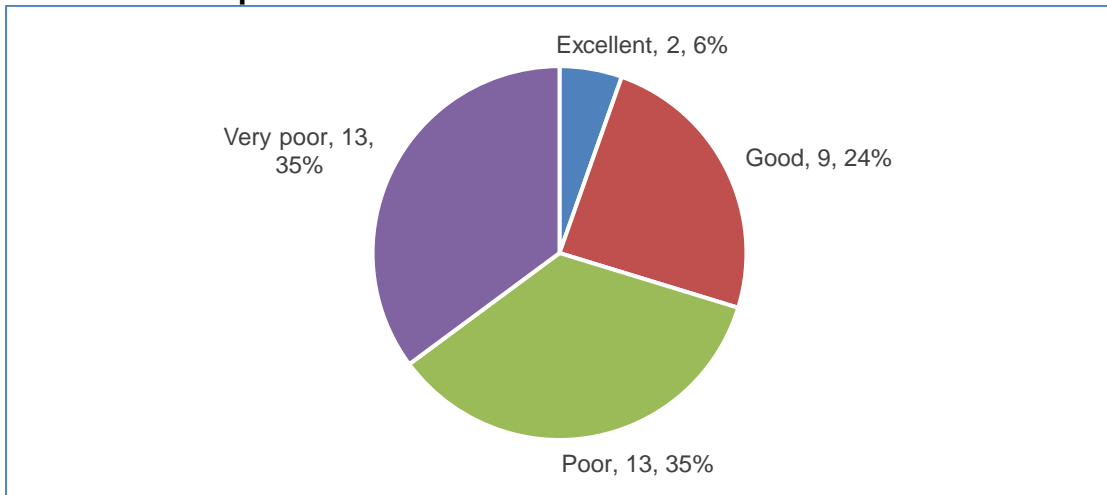
Table 3.4.1: Children's response on their ability to focus on schoolwork following an incident of abuse at home

Cannot concentrate	No motivation to study
Just sit and stare	Refused to listen to the teacher
Not interested in learning	Spent too much time on thinking
Lost interest in group work	Give up hope

Source: Information obtained from study focus group workshop

The majority of children according to their response to the questionnaire believed they are doing very poorly (35 per cent) and poorly (35 per cent) academically as a result of the abuse at home as in Figure 3.4.2. The others believed that they are performing well (24 per cent) and excellent (6 per cent). This group of children argued that they tried their best to turn the abuse at home into a positive outcome by studying hard at school and be better.

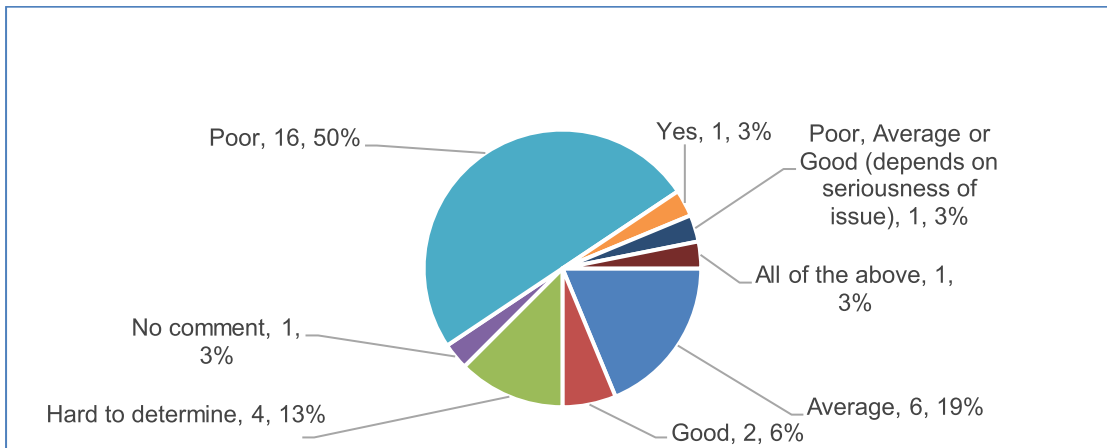
Figure 3.4.2: Children’s view on the impact of domestic violence on their academic performance



Source: Information obtained from children’s response to the study questionnaire

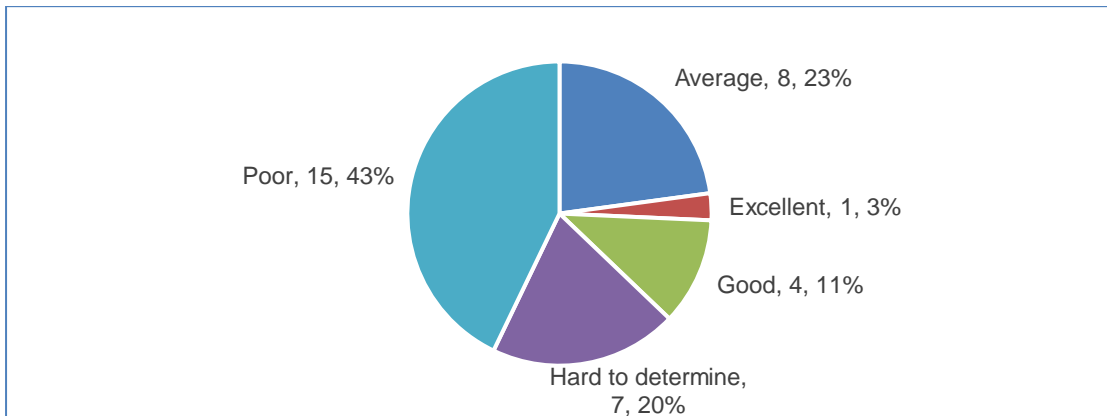
The majority of both principals (Figure 3.4.3) and teachers (Figure 3.4.4) concurred that the children who are abused at home are performing poorly at school.

Figure 3.4.3: School principals' view on the academic performance of abused children



Source: Principals' response to study questionnaire

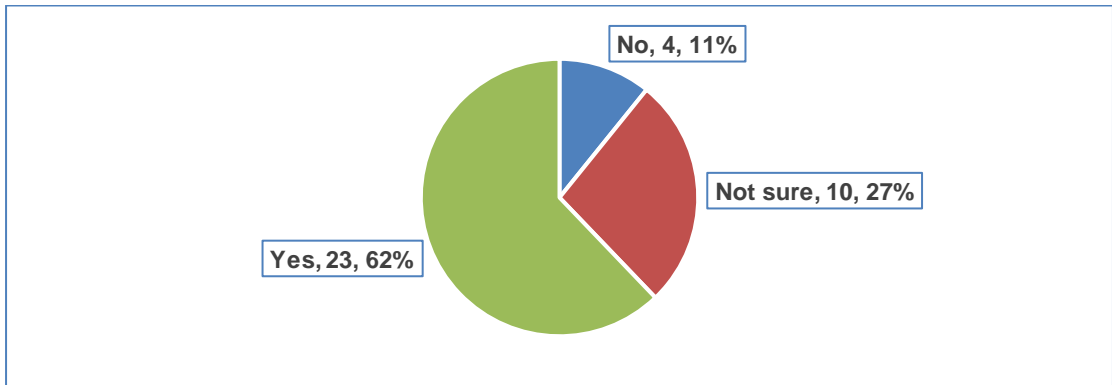
Figure 3.4.4: School teachers view on the academic performance of abused children



Source: Teachers response to study questionnaire

Children when asked whether they would have done better if they were not abused at home, the majority of them (62 per cent) responded in the affirmative while 24 per cent were not sure according to Figure 3.4.5.

Figure 3.4.5: Children’s response to the question of whether their academic performance would have been better if they were not abused at home



Source: Children’s response to the study questionnaire

The evidence discussed overwhelmingly supports the view that children lacked focus on their schoolwork and are performing poorly at school as a result of abuse at home. The children themselves admitted that they could not be able to focus on learning activities in the classroom and as a result, they are also performing poorly. The findings also show that the majority of school principals and teachers agreed that abused children are under performing in the classroom.

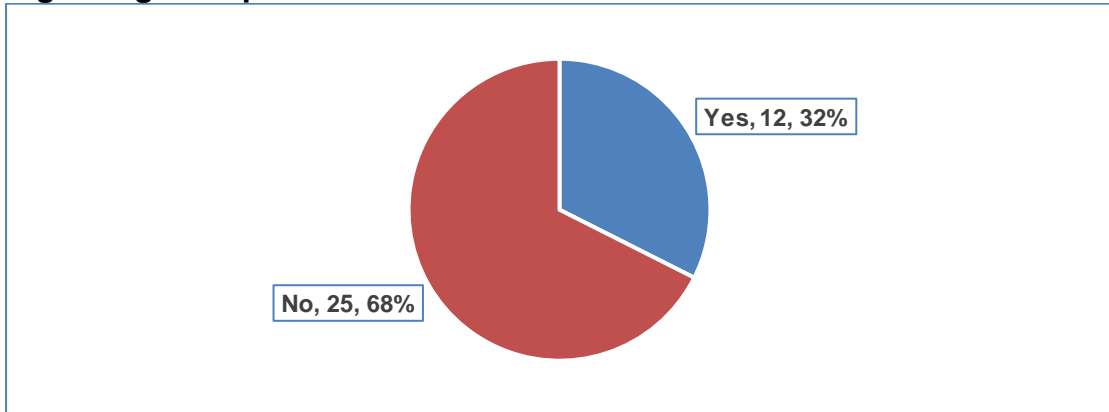
3.5 Assistance available at school

In light of substantial evidence that details the unfavourable impact of domestic violence on children’s emotions, behaviour and academic performance, the question of how this disadvantaged group of children is supported at school becomes a point of interest.

The following discussion is mainly based on the information obtained from the children. A broader discussion of this issue is provided in Section 5. According to children’s response to the questionnaire, the majority of them (68 per cent) have not approached their teachers for help regarding their problems at home while 24 per cent made an effort to seek their teachers help according to Figure 3.5.1.

Most of the children claimed that they are not comfortable or embarrassed to share their personal problems with their teachers. Teachers offered a similar reaction to the issue. Accordingly, most children do not approach them regarding their problems at home for a number of reasons. One in particular concerns the fact that the children are scared that their parents may get into trouble if they report their stories of abuse to their teachers.

Figure 3.5.1: Percentage of children seeking help from their teachers regarding their problems at home

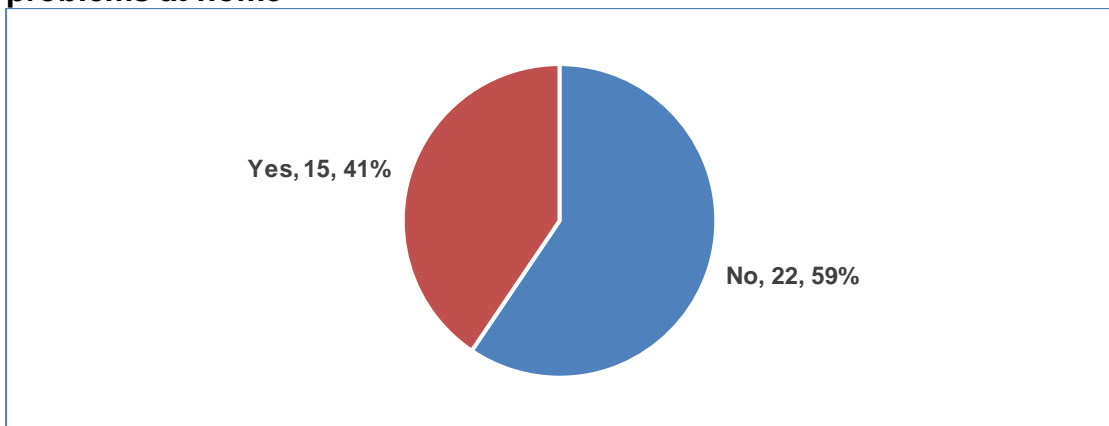


Source: Children's response to the study questionnaire

The second reason why children do not disclose abuse at home to their teachers is because they are not aware of any obligation on their part to report any case of abuse at home to their teachers. The current learning and teaching environment does not empower children to report abuse at home to their teachers.

A minority of children (41 per cent) on the other hand, confirmed that their teachers approached them regarding problems they have at home according to Figure 3.5.2.

Figure 3.5.2: Percentage of teachers approaching children regarding problems at home



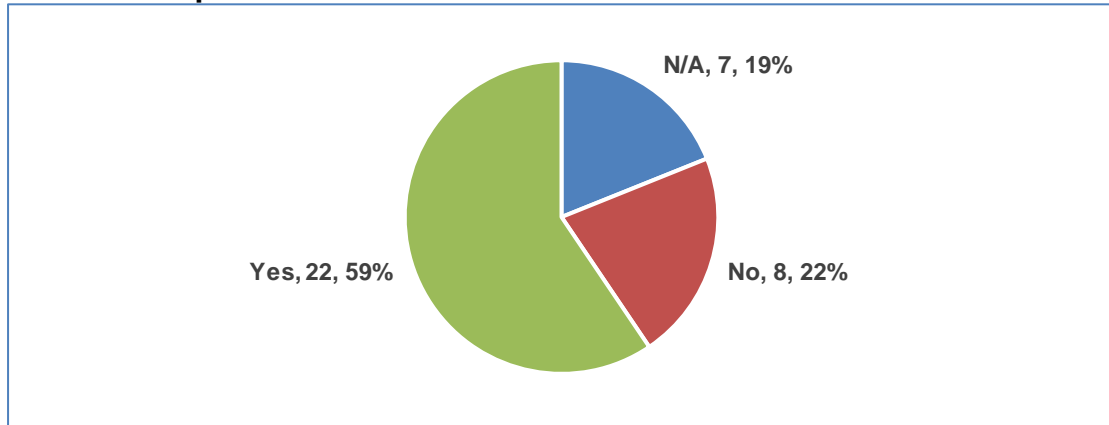
Source: Children's response to the study questionnaire

According to the teachers, they normally operate on the assumption that what happens at home is strictly a matter for the children and their parents or family members. Their main role is about the advancement of children's education rather than addressing their problems at home. They only approached children when they are concerned about an extreme change

of behaviour and appearance of children as discussed earlier. This is when they suspected that there is something wrong at home.

The majority of children (59 per cent) that received help from their teachers found such help to be helpful while 22 per cent found it not helpful according to Figure 3.5.3.

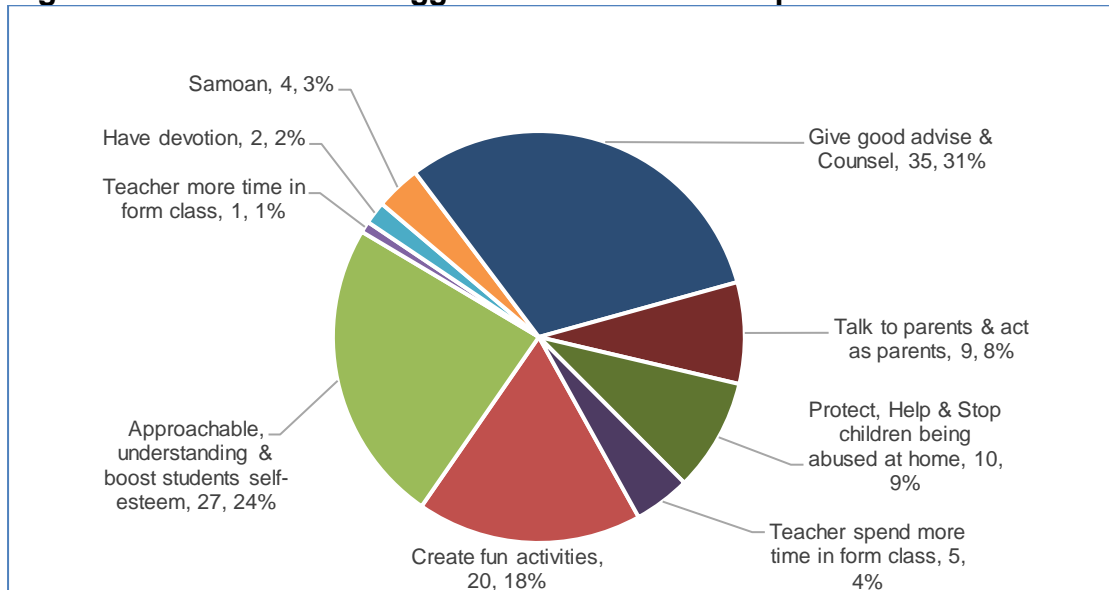
Figure 3.5.3: Percentage of children who found help from their teachers helpful



Source: Children’s response to study questionnaire

Children have suggested a number of ways for the school and teachers to help them improve their situation when attending school. In Figure 3.5.4, children requested that teachers should give good advice and counseling; create fun activities; and be approachable and friendly among others.

Figure 3.5.4: Children’s suggestions on how to help them



Source: Children’s response to the study questionnaire

It is evident that children need counseling from their teachers in order to address the impact of abuse they experienced at home. This suggestion constitutes the highest percentage (31 per cent) of responses from the children. With traumatic emotions children experienced from abuse at home, their need for counseling is inevitable.

Children also requested their teachers to be approachable and understanding while at the same time developing their self-esteem. In addition, children suggested that the school should consider staging fun activities for them.

Two other suggestions from the children in Figure 3.5.4 deserve attention. These include teachers to talk to their parents and act as parents and to protect and help stop the abuse at home.

During the focus group workshop, children suggested more ways for their teachers and schools to assist them. These are listed in Table 3.5.1.

Table 3.5.1: Children’s suggestions on how their teachers and school should help them

Teachers to talk to parents in order to change their behaviour	Teachers to have a good understanding of them
Teachers to provide counseling	Teachers to offer time to share
Strengthen Christian values	Teachers to keep their problems confidential
Increase form-class time	Each school to have a counselor
Teachers to be more approachable, friendly and loving	Fun activities and games
Special place at school for children to share	Teachers to be resourceful and creative

Source: Information obtained from focus group workshop

The findings suggest that traumatised children need help from their teachers. However, the current practice to access such help from the teachers or the school is voluntarily. It is mainly the choice of children whether to seek help from the teachers or otherwise. Evidence discussed earlier suggests that most children do not seek their teachers’ help due to their fear of placing their parents into trouble.

Suggestions made by the children in Table 3.5.1 and Figure 3.5.4 can be charted into four main categories that include counseling, classroom activities, characters of teachers, and teachers-parents relationship.

Counseling according to the evidence gathered is the foremost need of children. With extreme emotional stress they experienced from abuse at home, it is understandable that they need help and guidance to prepare them mentally in order to focus on their studies and to make right choices in life.

School activities that include more form-period time with the teacher, more time to share with teachers, fun activities and a special place at school for children to share are the other leading suggestions from children as essentials to help them out.

The character or the personality of teachers is regarded by children as important to a safe learning environment for them. Children favoured teachers that are understanding, friendly and embracing.

The fourth factor concerns the relationship between teachers and parents. Children according to the evidence obtained preferred their teachers to communicate with their parents to raise awareness about the adverse effect of abuse on their children and importantly, to put a stop on violence against children.

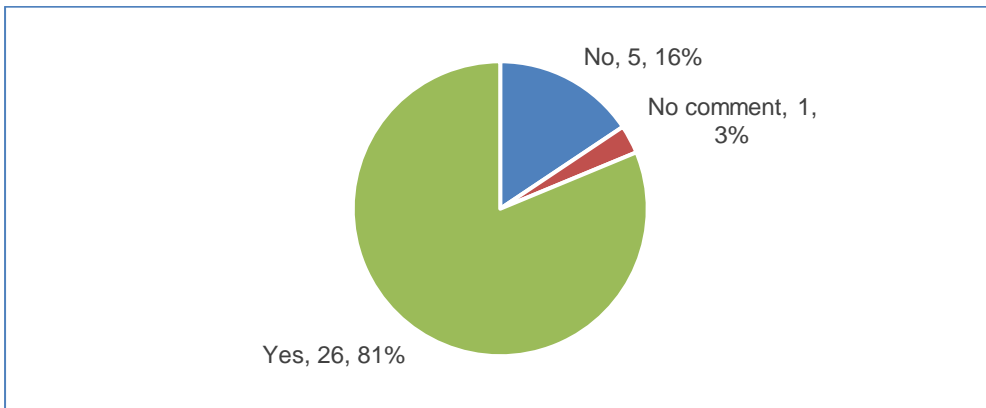
4. IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON TEACHERS AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

Teachers and non-teaching staff experienced emotional, work-related, home-related and health problems as a result of facing traumatised children in the classroom according to the findings of the study. It is evident that the impact of behaviour of abused children on teachers and non-teaching caused several problems for them.

4.1 Emotional problems experienced by teaching and non-teaching staff

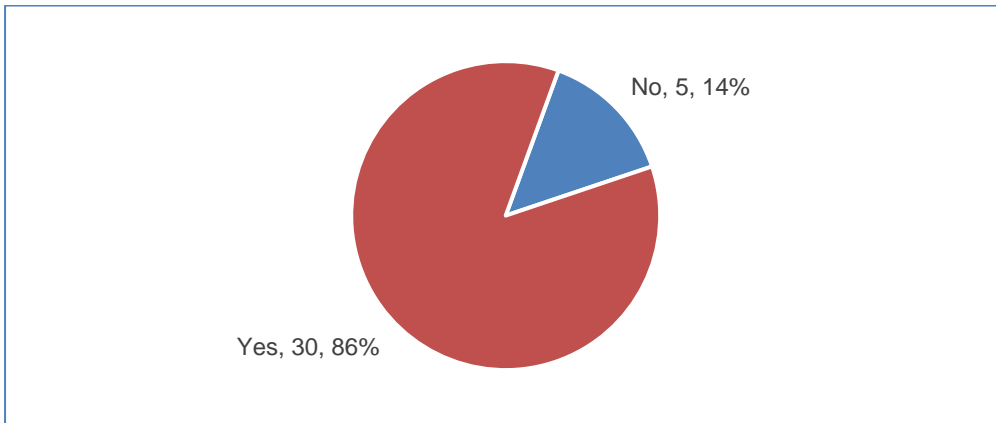
The majority of teachers (principals and teachers) admitted that they have taught children whom they believed are abused at home in the classroom according to Figures 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

Figure 4.1.1: School principals who experienced teaching abused children in the classroom



Source: School principals response to the study questionnaire

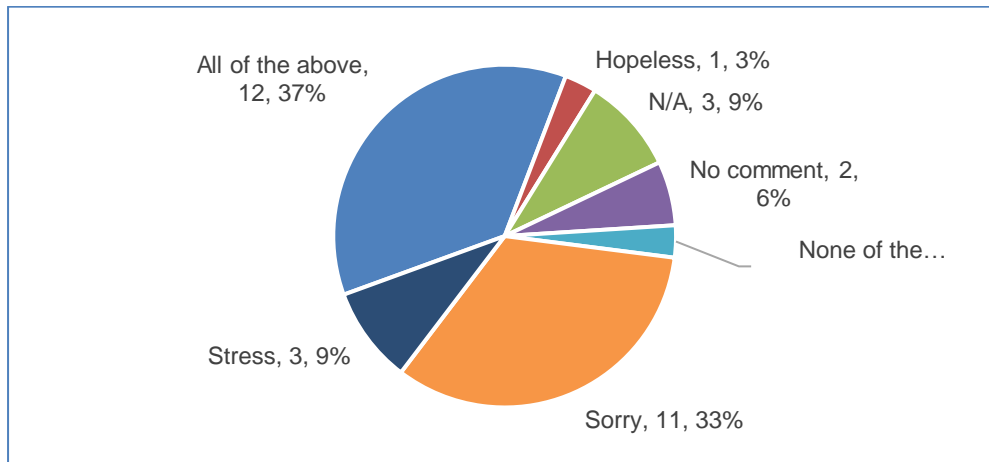
Figure 4.1.2: School teachers who experienced teaching abused children in the classroom



Source: Teachers response to the study questionnaire

The majority of teaching staff experienced a range of emotional problems when dealing with children who are believed to be abused at home in the classroom. Figure 4.1.3 shows that 37 per cent of principals selected the “all of the above” choice on the questionnaire. This option includes emotions of hopeless, despair, sorry and stress. The second majority of principals (33 per cent) felt sorry for the children according to findings in Figure 4.1.3.

Figure 4.1.3: Emotions experienced by principals when dealing with children who are abused at home

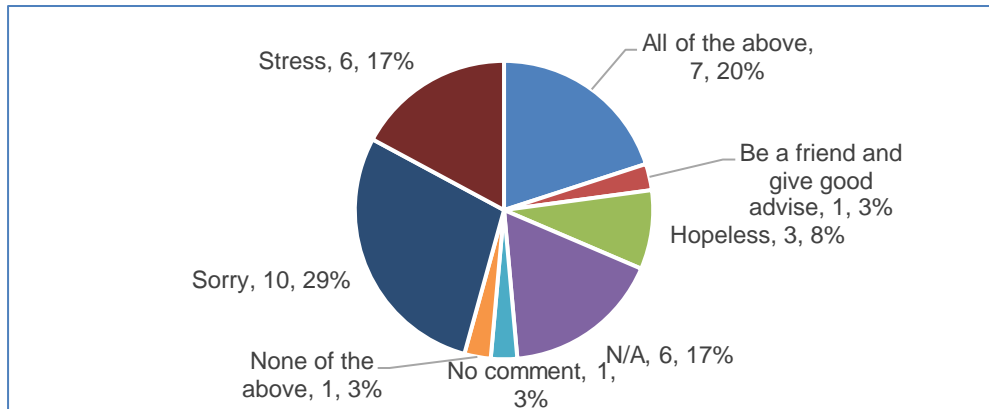


Source: Principals response to the study questionnaire

Note: "All of the above" option includes emotions of hopeless, despair, sorry and stress

Teachers on the other hand showed a slightly different response according to Figure 4.1.4. The majority (29 per cent) felt sorry for the children while the second majority (20 per cent) claimed the "all of the above" choice on the questionnaire which contains of a set of emotions like hopeless, despair, sorry and stress. The former indicates the close relationship between the teachers and traumatised children in the classroom.

Figure 4.1.4: Emotions experienced by teachers when dealing with children who are abused at home



Source: Teachers response to study questionnaire

School principals and teachers provided additional emotions summarised in Table 4.1.1 during focus group meetings. Unfortunately, the emotions shared by the principals and teachers are predominantly negative. This is the main concern as it leads to more punishment for abused children rather than the necessary help that they need.

For instance, the majority of teaching staff during focus group consultations admitted that the initial emotion they felt is anger, especially when the children are showing coarse behaviour. Their initial reaction is to put them on detention or to apply physical punishment.

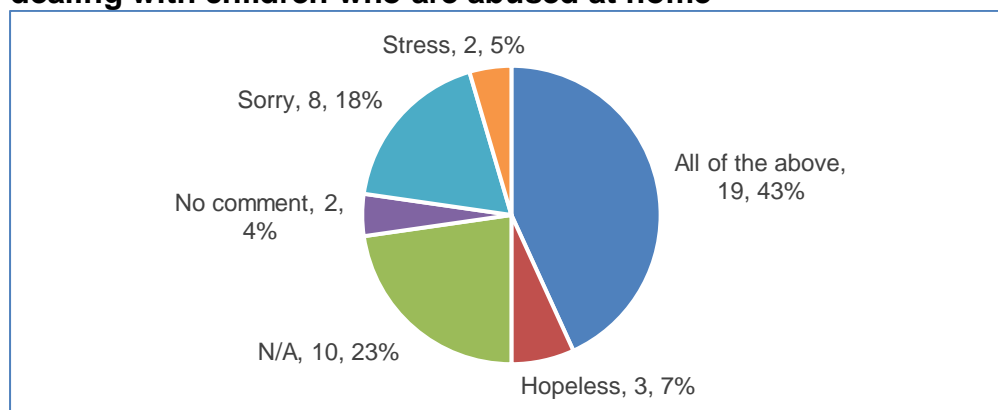
Table 4.1.1: Emotions experienced by principals and teachers when dealing with abused children in the classroom

Anger	Sorry
Frustrated	Disappointed
Mental stress	Pulled apart
Pressured	Disturbed
Traumatised	Confused
Emotional stress	Depressed
Sad	Disgusted

Source: Information obtained from school principals and teachers focus group discussion

A significant majority (43 per cent) of the non-teaching staff also claimed the set of emotions incorporated in the “all of the above” option provided in the questionnaire as indicated in Figure 4.1.5. The second highest majority (23 per cent) of non-teaching staff selected the non-applicable option on the questionnaire, indicating the fact that they rarely deal with abused children compared to the teaching staff.

Figure 4.1.5: Emotions experienced by non-teaching staff when dealing with children who are abused at home



Source: Non-teaching staff responses to the study questionnaire

4.2 Work-related problems experienced by teaching and non-teaching staff

Principals and teachers faced several problems that disrupted their plan for a day in the classroom as a result of abused children’s behavioural problems. Table 4.2.1 lists a range of problems the teaching staff experienced.

One of the common problems raised by teaching staff concerns the disruption to their teaching plans for the day due to the time spent on the children who are showing behaviour that is unacceptable and not conducive to learning in the classroom. Since other children in the classroom are affected by such behaviour, actions needed to be taken immediately.

Other children according to the teachers are disadvantaged as most of their time is spent on the children who are misbehaving and not participating in class activities.

Table 4.2.1: Work-related problems faced by teaching staff

Delays teaching targets	Lost interest
Overloaded	Disrupts daily teaching plans
Add extra responsibilities	Time consuming
Ruins the day	Teacher ignores other children

Source: Information obtained from focus group meetings

Teachers also complained about extra responsibilities and more load caused by the behaviour of traumatised children. In particular, they often created extra activities in order to engage children who are misbehaving and withdrawn from class learning activities. This derails them from the learning activities planned for the day causing delays.

Perhaps the most concerning problem is the admission by teaching staff that in most cases their day is ruined by the behaviour of abused children. As human beings, they too have their own problems and to encounter more problems in the classroom, their day quickly deteriorates to the point where they are not motivated to teach. The eventual outcome according to the teachers is substandard teaching performance in the classroom for that particular day.

Non-teaching staff also shared similar experience as teachers although their involvement is very limited compared to teachers. According to them, they mainly feel sorry for the children. The secretaries who normally interact with the children before seeing the principal claimed that they feel sorry for these traumatised children. Most of them when they come into the principal's office looked lost and disheartened.

Secretaries also protested about extra work they are required to do if the abuse is serious. There is paperwork involved as well as organising meetings with parents and the principal.

4.3 Health and family related problems

Teaching staff are convinced that the negative emotions experienced from interacting with abused children in the classroom contribute to their health problems. Hypertension is often identified as the main health problem they faced as a result of the stress they are exposed to at school.

Some teachers disclosed that they also experienced psychological problems due to the stress from school. They claimed that they could not be able to focus because it took some time to erase the unpleasant experience they encountered in the classroom from their minds especially in cases of sexual abuse.

According to the teachers, the mounting stress on them from school led to problems at home. They become agitated and lost their temper easily over minor issues at home. This could lead to unnecessary abuse of their own children and arguments with their respective spouses.

Non-teaching staff on the other hand did not provide any account of health and family problems they faced as a result of their encounter with abused children at school. The limited involvement they have with this group of children at school may contribute to the absence of such account.

4.4 Teaching and non-teaching staff knowledge and beliefs on domestic violence, intimate partner violence and gender equality

The knowledge of teaching and non-teaching staff of the concepts of domestic violence, intimate partner violence and gender equality is sound. However, the group is divided into two sides over their beliefs on the three concepts.

4.4.1 Knowledge of DV, IPV and GE

Both teachers and non-teaching staff expressed good knowledge of the concepts of DV, IPV and GE. With respect to DV, teachers and non-teaching staff agreed that it is wrong to abuse any family member and in particular the most vulnerable members of the family. The same with IPV, both target groups expressed the view that both partners should never engage in violent acts.

4.4.2 Beliefs on DV, IPV and GE

Teachers and non-teaching staff expressed opposing views on the three concepts. One group, which is mainly comprised of young staff believed in the concept of human rights that underlying the three concepts.

According to this liberal group, every member of a family has the right to a safe and peaceful family environment. They believed that family members should have the right to express themselves freely in their homes and should not be intimidated by fear of violence. When disciplining children, this group argued that families should steer away from using physical abuse and abusive words, which are the common ways of disciplining children in the Samoan society. They encouraged parents to use positive words to counsel their children in order to have self-esteem and self-confidence.

The liberalists often referred to the Samoan saying that: '*O au o matua fanau*' as the fundamental belief underpinning the practice of nurturing children through embracing and counseling rather than verbal and physical abuse.

This group believes that the same treatment should apply to intimate partners relationship. Both partners have a right to a safe environment in which one trusts the other of not causing any harm (abuse) when the relationship is stressed over certain matters.

The group also believes in gender equality. In particular men and women in a family should have the same role and status. According to them, such practice gives a balance view on how to perform a certain role in the family.

The other group of teachers and non-teaching staff believe in conservatism. They believe in the Samoan traditions and culture. For them, violence at home is part of life, especially when disciplining difficult children. While they acknowledged the benefit of counseling children at home, they believe that there is a point when counseling is futile and therefore applying physical punishment is justified.

In essence, this group uses one of the biblical verses from Proverbs 26 verse 3 to support their argument. Accordingly: 'A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools'. The biblical phrase according to the group supports their view that there is a place for physical punishment.

The same belief according to the conservatives is applied to IPV. Their motion is based on the traditional belief that the man or husband is the head of the family whereas the woman or the wife plays the advisory role. This means punishment should also be applied at some stage if the adviser is difficult to handle.

Apparently the traditionalist group of teachers and non-teaching staff do not believe in gender equality based on the previous discussion. They maintained that the man and woman in the Samoan culture have different status in the family and demarcated roles.

4.4.3 Behaviours

The liberalist group claimed that they never abused their children at home. They embraced them and disciplined them through proper counseling. The same behavior is applied to their intimate partners. Differences are sorted through honest dialogue and good understanding of each other's position on the subject matter.

Since they believe in gender equality, liberalist group of teaching and non-teaching staff shared their leadership role at home with their partners. They shared the decision-making role following a good discussion. This is applied to complex and challenging family matters.

The traditionalists on the other hand behaved according to their convictions. For them, they do not hesitate to use physical punishment to discipline their children when there are signs that counseling has failed.

Their view on IPV is ambiguous. While they believe that the woman or wife holds a lesser status, which is mainly of advisory nature and that she is also subjected to disciplinary measures, they were not forthcoming in the use of verbal and physical abuse as disciplinary measures.

5. CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN AND TEACHERS TO TEACH

The forgoing discussions distinctly urged the need to create an environment that is conducive for children who are abused at home to learn and for teachers to teach. The discoveries from the study discussed earlier have generated insights on the current supporting environment for children and teachers at school and importantly, critical changes that need to be made to strengthen the status quo.

5.1 The current supporting environment

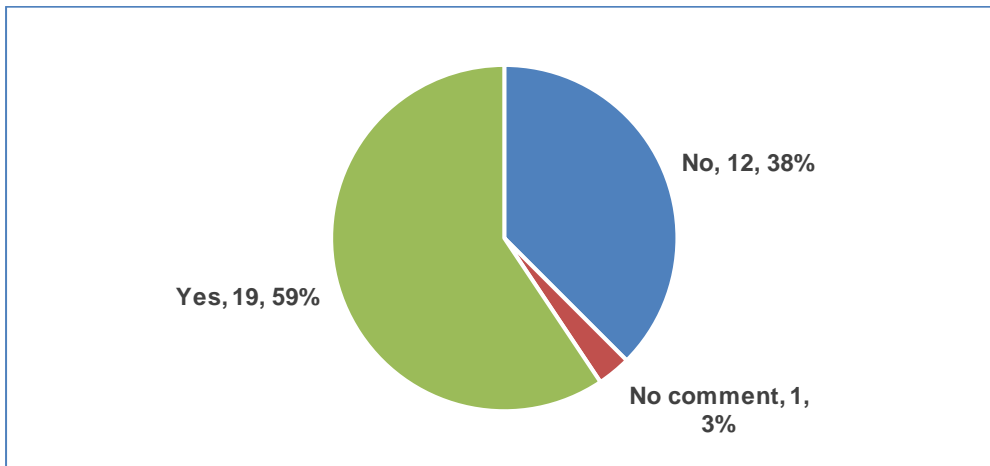
At present, there is no clear policy on how abused children and teachers who are working with traumatised children in the classroom are supported through the current learning and teaching environment. The prevailing practice according to the information collected for the study assumes that all children are free from abuse at home and therefore the teachers are teaching in a normal environment.

Perhaps the absence of a safe learning and teaching environment policy is induced by the assumption that what happens to children at home is the business of parents rather than the teachers. Teachers' prerogative is simply about advancing the education of children in the classroom.

Due to this fluid grounding, a decisive effort to build a safe learning and teaching environment for children and teachers is mainly discretionary. For instance, the current process of identifying children who are abused at home in the classroom is mainly left to the discretion of the teacher. If the teacher decides to ignore it, then the children affected are likely to miss out on the support that they need and continue to perform poorly in their education.

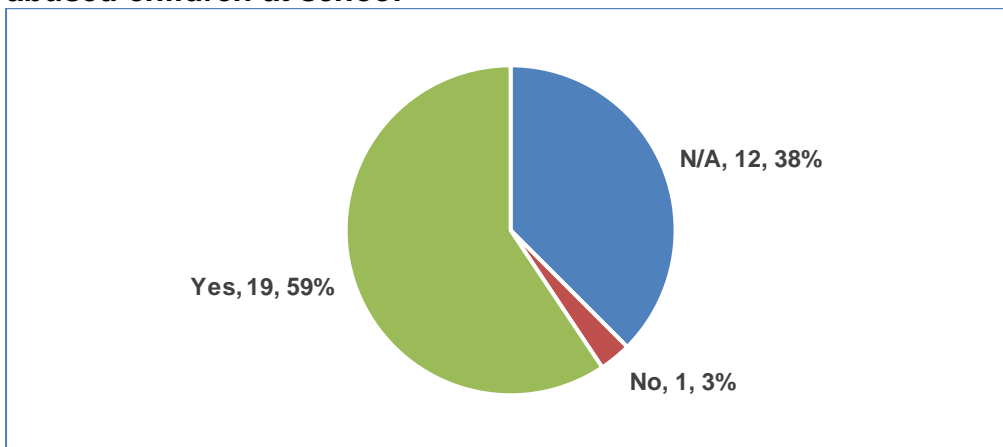
Figures 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 record the responses of principals and teachers on their awareness of an existing policy on how to handle children who are abused at home at school. The responses from both groups are significantly divided between the affirmative and negative. This result indicates the current arrangement, which is largely a common understanding in the Ministry on how to treat this group of children rather than a proper policy.

Figure 5.1.1: Percentage of principals aware of policy on how to treat abused children at school



Source: Information obtained from the response of principals to study questionnaire

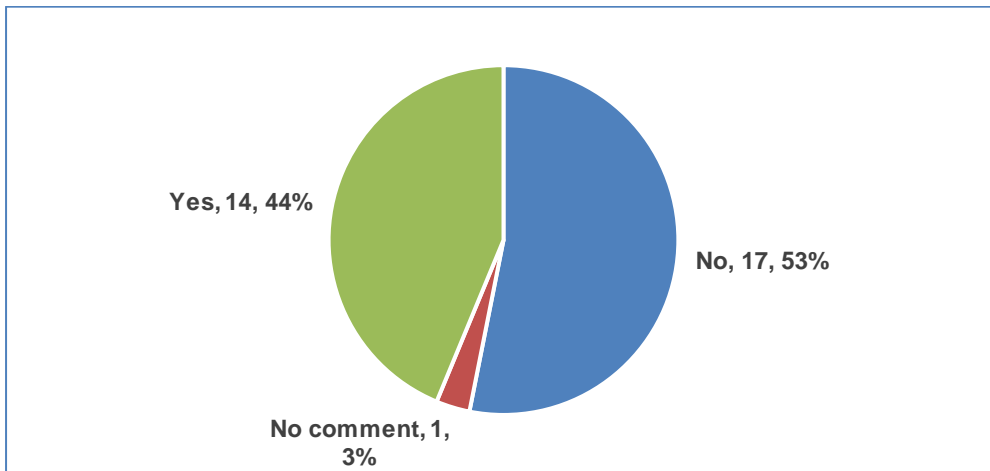
Figure 5.1.2: Percentage of teachers aware of policy on how to treat abused children at school



Source: Information obtained from teachers' response to study questionnaire

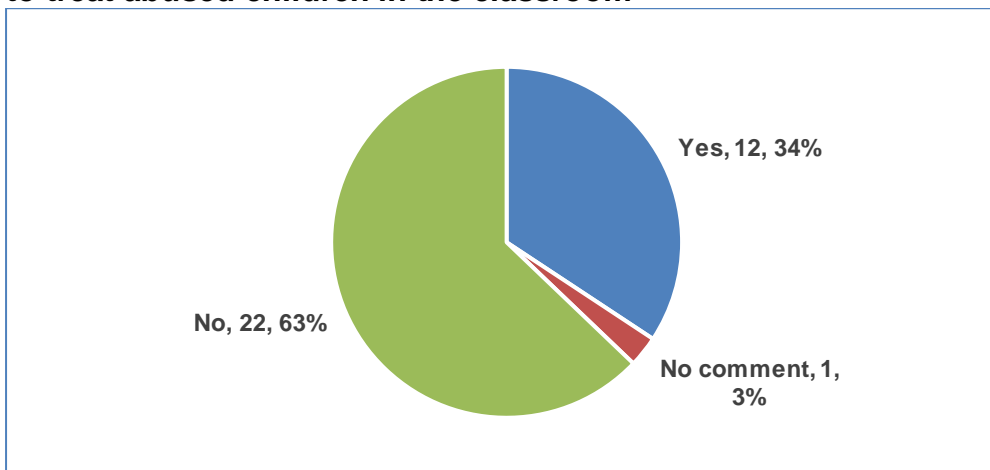
In addition to the absence of a proper policy on how to handle abused children, teaching staff are also lacking the knowledge and skills on how to treat abused children in the classroom according to Figures 5.1.3 and 5.1.4. Both figures indicate that principals and teachers lack specialized training on how to deal with abused children at school.

Figure 5.1.3: Percentage of principals with specialized training on how to treat abused children in the classroom



Source: Principals' responses to the study questionnaire

Figure 5.1.4: Percentage of teachers with specialized training on how to treat abused children in the classroom



Source: Teachers' responses to the study questionnaire

Children according to the current practice, which is summarized in Figure 5.1.5 are not obligated under any institutional arrangement to report an incident of domestic abuse to the teachers. This is the children's volition as discussed earlier in Section 3.

The same is applied to teachers according to the current practice. However, teachers based on their own observation and judgment of a child's change of behaviour and appearance, they initiated the process using their own discretion by interviewing the child. The child is then referred to the principal if there is sufficient evidence to suspect a case of serious abuse and in particular sexual abuse.

The principal conducted another interview and then decides on what action to take. Depending on the gravity of the case, the principal may take

no further action other than counseling the child concerned. In a serious case, the principal refers the matter to the school village committee or contacts the parents directly.

Based on the findings analysed, there is no clear policy to guide the principal on which matter should be referred to the school committee and which one should be discussed with the parents directly. Such decision is left to the judgment of the principal. Accordingly, there are two factors that determine such decision, confidentiality and the gravity of the case. In a case where sexual abuse is suspected, the matter is usually discussed directly with the parents rather than referring to the committee in order to protect the privacy of the child concerned and the family.

Another issue that is not embraced in the current practice concerns cases where there is a clear contravention of the law as in the case of brutal physical abuse and sexual abuse. While the principal is once again the final decision maker, there are other factors that make the situation more complicated and often resulted in the matter not reported to Police.

In particular, if the principal is from the village or the district in which the school is located and is in good relationship with the family of the abused child, the matter is unlikely to be reported to Police.

The same situation if the principal is not from the village or the district in which the school is stationed. The case is most likely to go unreported due to fear of victimization by members of the abused child's family and village.

The principal according to the findings gathered for the study is also mindful of the consequences of a decision to report the matter to the school committee or the Police on the child (or children) concerned. After all, the child returns home after school. The principal does not have control over what goes on at home and the major concern is about the child facing further abuse at home.

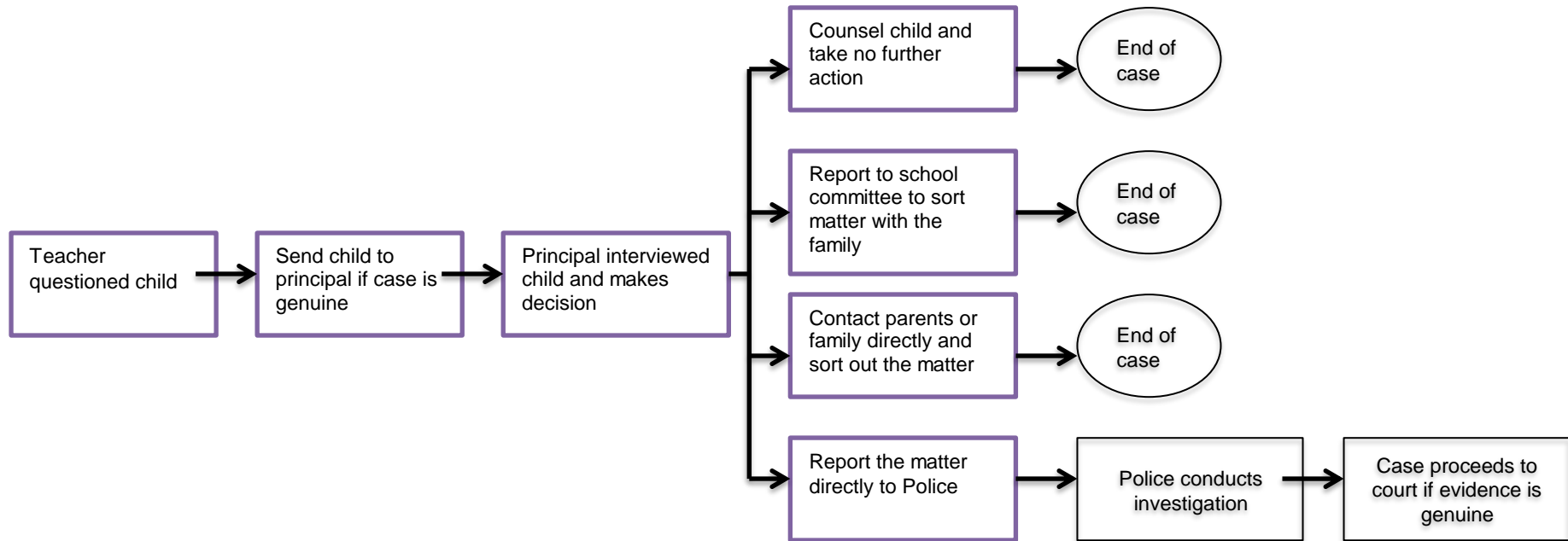
Figure 5.1.5, shows that the first three options do not involve the law. The matter is resolved between the principal and the family or the school committee and the family of the child affected. These options while considered adequate to maintain good relationships, they do not resolve the problem of abuse at home. It means the child continues to go through the vicious cycle of violence at home forcing the child to run away from home or in worst circumstances commits suicide.

The fourth option of reporting the case directly to Police has merits in controlling violence at home against children. The current practice involves

the removal of the child from home and places in the care of Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) which is a non-government organization battling violence against children at home. The perpetrator on the other hand goes through the prosecuting process and faces the corresponding penalty from the Courts in the end.

The current practice needs improvement if children and teachers are to learn and teach in a safe and healthy environment. There are gaps as explained earlier that need to be addressed. One of those is the need to have a clear policy that supports a safe learning and teaching environment for the children and teaching and non-teaching staff.

Figure 5.1.5: Current process on how to handle abused children at school

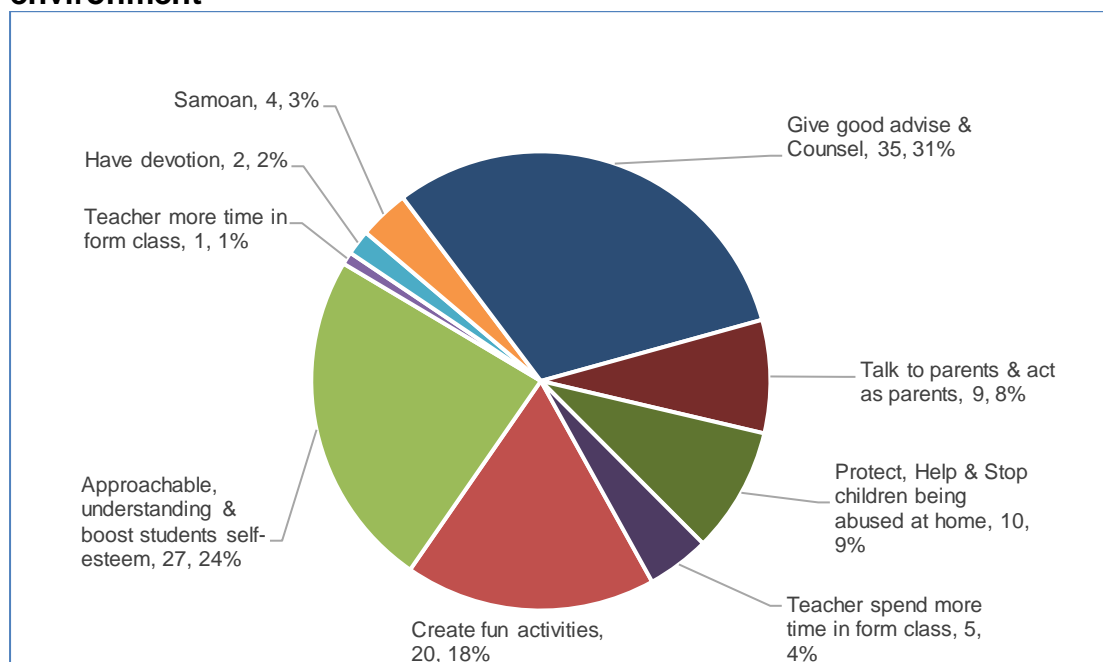


Source: Based on information obtained from interviews with teachers and principals

5.2 Children, teachers and non-teaching staff preferred characteristics of a safe learning and teaching environment

Figures 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 exhibit the preferences of children, teaching and non-teaching staff of what they aspire for a safe learning and teaching environment. Children in particular wish for three main factors to make their learning environment safe: good counseling, approachable and understanding teachers and fun learning activities.

Figure 5.2.1: Children's preference for a safe learning and teaching environment



Source: Children's responses to the study questionnaire

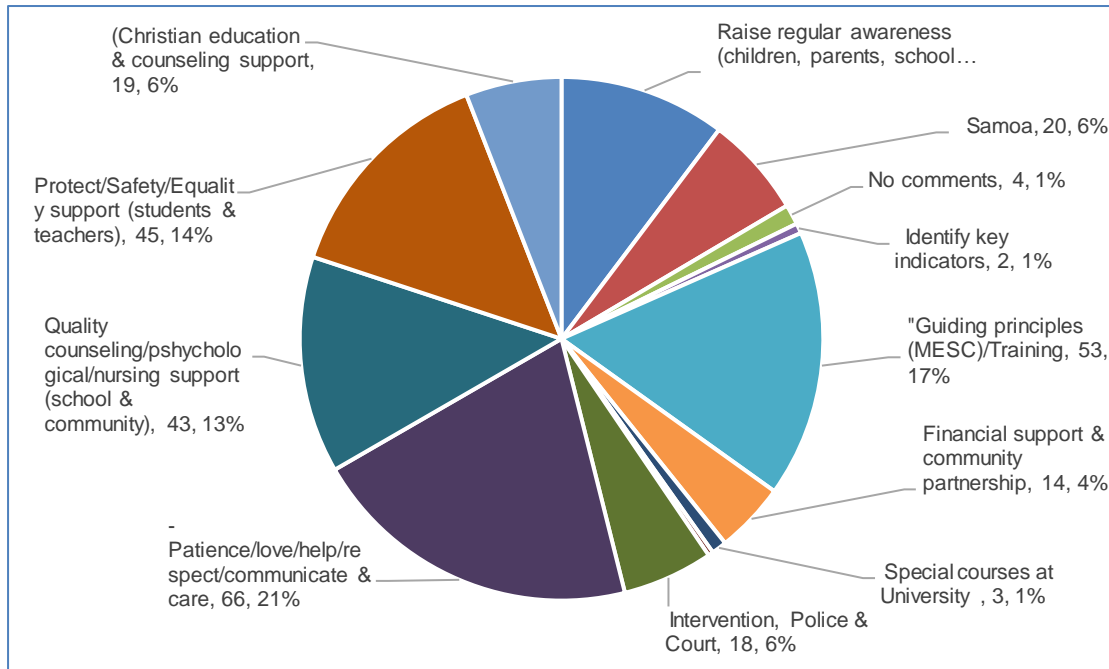
The majority of children (31 per cent) opted for teachers to provide effective counseling and advice. The second majority (24 per cent) asked for the teachers to be approachable and understanding while the third majority (19 per cent) would like fun learning activities in the classroom.

Children according to Figure 5.2.1 would like their teachers to talk to their parents and to help stop abuse at home. More time to spend with children during form-class is also on the list.

Teachers and non-teaching staff on the other hand suggested several elements for a safe environment. The majority (21 per cent) believed that as teachers they should be patient, loving, caring and respectful. The second majority (17 per cent) of teachers called for more training for teachers in the area of counseling children who are suffering from abuse at home. This is a gap that is evident from the discussion above.

The third majority of teachers proposed regular community awareness on the issue of violence against children at home and its unfavourable consequences on the children and teachers. This motion helps families to reduce violence against children and compliments the work of other government authorities and non-government organisations targeting violence against women and children.

Figure 5.2.2: Teachers and non-teaching staff preference for a safe learning and teaching environment



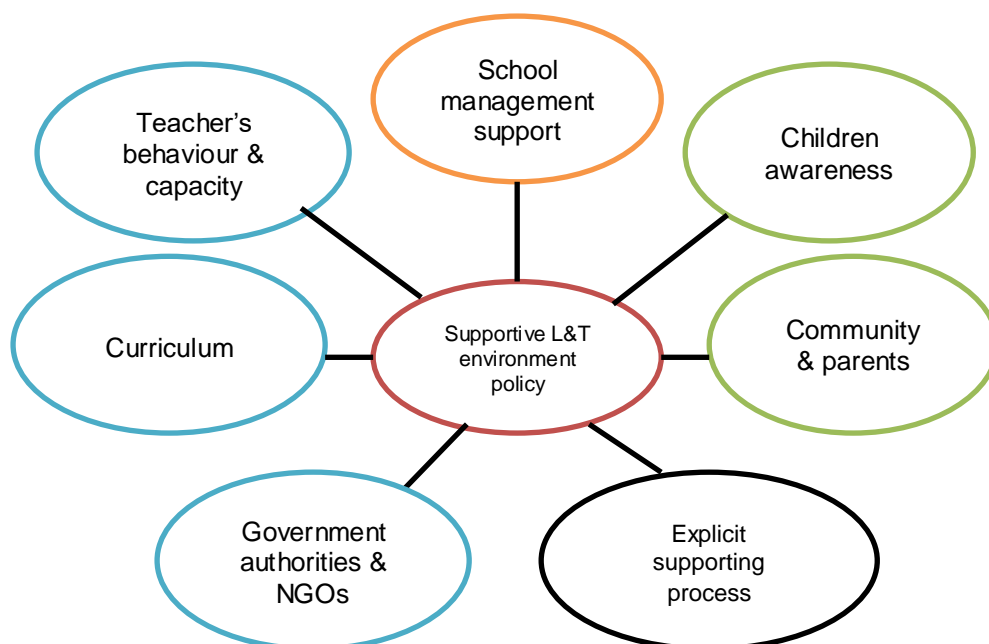
Source: Principals, teachers and non-teaching staff response to study questionnaire

Other suggestions according to Figure 5.2.2 include Police and Court intervention, quality counseling, Christian education and special courses for counseling abused children at the National University of Samoa.

5.3 The proposed safe learning and teaching environment for children and teaching staff

The previous analysis provides guidance to a proposed environment that is safe for both children to learn and teachers to teach. Figure 5.3.1 presents the key elements of a proposed learning and teaching environment based on the findings of the study. The elements should feature in a clear policy that underpins a safe learning and teaching environment for children and teachers.

Figure 5.3.1: A proposed safe learning and teaching environment for children, teachers and non-teaching staff



Source: Information gathered from study questionnaire and focus group discussions

The key elements of the supportive learning and teaching environment policy in Figure 5.3.1 aims at creating a safe learning environment that focuses on academic achievement, maintaining high standards of learning and teaching, and strengthening good relationships between teachers and children. In essence, it provides support for children who are abused at home in order for them to feel safe, engaged, connected and supported in the classroom.

School management support

Strong support from the school management is critical for teachers. School principals in particular according to the information gathered are encouraged to provide an environment that supports the teachers at school. This includes relevant teaching workload, teamwork, building professional capacity through relevant training and good understanding of teachers concerns. The existing Professional National Development Policy 2018-2023 for teachers supports this element of the supportive learning and teaching environment.

The behaviour of the teacher in the classroom largely depends on how the whole team that consists of the principal, deputy principal and other colleagues work as a team. Principals during the workshop emphasised this important part of their work. One of the principals claimed that once he

recognises that one of his staff members is not having a good start of the day, he pulls her or him to his office and gives his staff member a word of encouragement.

Team sharing is important as well as one-to-one sessions with the principal are some of the initiatives that are considered by teachers and principals as critical in supporting teachers at school.

Teachers' behaviour and capacity development

Teachers' behaviour on the other hand is at the centre of a safe learning and teaching environment. After all they are the individuals interacting with the children and in particular the despairing children on a daily basis in the classroom. From the evidence discussed earlier, character or the personality and professional capacity of the teacher are critical to a safe environment.

The information collected for the study can be aligned according to the five dimensions of a person's personality first proposed by Allport and Odbert in 1936. Table 5.3.1 summarises the five dimensions and the corresponding behaviour suggested by the teachers and children during focus group discussions.

The analysis provided in Table 5.3.1 is valuable for the information of teachers and principals. Teachers are usually ignorant about their personality and behaviour in the classroom. Principals on the other hand are also incognisant of the impact of their management decisions on the behaviour of the teacher in the classroom. With the findings from the research, it is critical for teachers to be aware of these behaviours and principals to sustain good support for teachers.

Table 5.3.1: Preferred teacher's personality

Dimensions of personality	Corresponding behaviour of teachers
Openness to new experience	understanding, supportive
Emotional stability	patience, calm, loving, high level of tolerance
Extravert	warmth, exciting, caring, creative
Agreeableness	trusting, helpful
Conscientiousness	controlled, thoughtful, wise

Source: Information collected from the study focus group discussions

Note: The personality dimensions used are based on the work of Allport and Odbert (1936)

The second demanding factor concerns the professional capacity of the teacher to counsel children when they proved to be victims of domestic violence. This is a monolithic suggestion from both children and teaching

staff. Such motion however reflects the lack of training for teaching staff on this aspect of their professional training.

For children to learn in a safe environment, teachers are expected to have a good background in counseling in order to have a better understanding of abused children and importantly, to provide the right support. It is evident from the analysis presented earlier that children who are abused at home suffered from acrimonious emotions and they need counseling as a therapy to keep them focused on their education.

Teachers are expected to have the capacity in basic counseling principles in order for them to handle abused children in the classroom properly. This is not to suggest that teachers should become professional counselors. The main purpose however is for teachers to gain a basic understanding in counseling so that they are armed with the knowledge to identify abused children immediately and apply the necessary support required before a further decision is taken by the principal.

Curriculum support and classroom activities

Principals and teachers strongly requested the need for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme taught at the National University of Samoa (NUS) to include a course on managing abused children in the classroom as one of the core courses of the programme. This new inclusion provides upcoming teachers with a sound background knowledge on how to counsel handle abused children in the classroom.

One of the recurrent requests that came out from the children and teaching staff is the need to reintroduce the teaching of Christian values in the curriculum. This curricula activity according to the children and teachers is very helpful in soothing the negative emotions of abused children.

Creating fun activities as part of learning is another suggestion that featured firmly in the children's presentation. Children claimed that such activities help in redirecting their attention from unpleasant and dreadful thoughts that they have as a result of the abuse they got from home.

More time for form-period discussion between the teacher and children is recommended by children and teaching staff. According teachers this is the time when the teacher should get to know his or her school children better by developing a good relationship. If the teacher is committed to this session in the classroom, it would be easy for any teacher to determine children who are abused at home.

Children on the other hand offered the same suggestion. They regarded the form-period as a good opportunity to get to know the teacher well and to share with the teacher.

In addition to using the form-period as an opportune moment to share with the teacher, children also suggested the need to encourage sharing with their classmates during form-period. It is a good opportunity especially for the abused children to let off their frustrations and emotions to their friends.

Better coordination with other government authorities and NGOs

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, need to relook at its current arrangement with several government ministries like the Ministry of Policy and Prisons (MPP) and Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD). Both ministries are at the centre of the fight to eliminate violence against children at home.

In essence MESC and MPP need to establish a proper and effective process on how to assist children who are identified at school as victims of domestic violence. The current practice while helpful, there are however other factors that make school principals hesitant to report a case of abuse directly to Police as discussed earlier in Section 5.1.

Teachers at the moment and in particular the school principals have the right under the *Young Offenders' Act; Child Abuse Act; and the Family Safety Act 2011* to report a case of abuse directly to Police. While this current practice is encouraging, there are issues that need further reflection as referred to earlier.

One of the issues in particular concerns the welfare and protection of the child if the matter is reported to the Police resulting in one of the parents taken to court. In the Samoan culture, it is tabooed for a child to engage in an act that betrays or harms his or her parents. Family members and relatives that are supposed to take care of the child regard this as an unforgiving disrespect of parents. The outcome is not pleasant for the child as family members may become hostile towards the child.

School principals and teachers suggested the need to prioritise counseling as the initial therapy to resolve this problem prior to any attempt to apply harsh punishment under the law. This line of thinking is for all other abuses except for sexual abuse. The latter according to the teaching and non-teaching staff requires the full wrath of the law.

The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development has recently introduced a National Policy on Child Protection. The Child Protection and

Case Management Division of the Ministry is mainly responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy. Staff members who are called Child Protection Officers are involved in protecting an abused child by providing the necessary protection.

In a high-risk case which involves brutal physical abuse or sexual abuse, the child is removed immediately from the child's family and placed in the care of a close relative's family. In the event that the abused child is not safe under the care of a close relative, the child is then referred to the care of SVSG.

It is strongly suggested that MESC should work together with MPP and MWCSO to establish a clear process on how to assist abused children identified at school and in particular when the parents or one of the parents are suspected perpetrators. This is a critical junction of the supportive environment that needs careful analysis due to consequences to the children concerned and the teachers.

Community partnership

The community is referred to as the village or villages of a district where the school is located. Awareness is critical in this element of the learning and teaching environment. School advisory committees are considered as one of the mechanisms that should assist teachers and the school in spreading the message to parents about the damaging effects of violence against their children at home.

Advisory committees, are also considered to be helpful in providing counseling for parents and family members who are perpetrators of abuse at home if properly trained on the basics of counseling. Each school through the principal works with the advisory committee to provide awareness and counseling for the parents concerned. This arrangement benefits the principal by sharing the responsibility of helping the parents with the special committee.

Involving church ministers who are serving in the village was also emphasized in the focus group discussions. With the high level of respect members of the communities granted to the church ministers, this initiative can be effective if the advisory committee and the school are able to secure the assistance of church ministers to provide counseling for the parents.

Children awareness

One of the flaws of the current practice discussed earlier concerns the absence of any policy arrangement that encourages children to share their

problems with their teachers in the classroom, especially if they are abused at home. Due to the assumption that what happens at home is strictly the business of the children and their parents, children are therefore not decreed under the current arrangement to discuss any abuse at home with their teachers. This is a gap of the existing setup that needs to be addressed.

If abused children are to be provided with the help that they need in the classroom, school management need to encourage them to share their experience with their teachers through a proper policy setting. Such policy encourages children to report an experience of abuse at home to the teacher. A critical part of such policy provides assurance to the children about the confidentiality of the process.

Explicit process to support abused children

This proposed process is an innate element of the safe learning and teaching environment discussed in the preceding section. Its purpose is to ensure that the children who are abused at home are promptly identified and provided with the pertinent help that they need.

Figure 5.4.1 outlines the proposed process. The process assumes that the teacher is armed with the essential proper training in counseling and is soundly supported by the principal and colleagues as discussed earlier in this section. With the findings of this research, the teacher is now in a good position to identify children who are abused at home based on their judgment of their behaviour, facial expression and appearance.

Moreover, the charted safe learning and teaching environment encourages children to report or to share their experience of abuse at home with the teacher if they need help. This new initiative makes the job of teachers easier in the classroom in identifying this vulnerable group of children.

Based on the teacher's assessment of the severity of the case, the matter can be discussed with the principal and to decide on the best option that is in the best interest of the child and the family concerned.

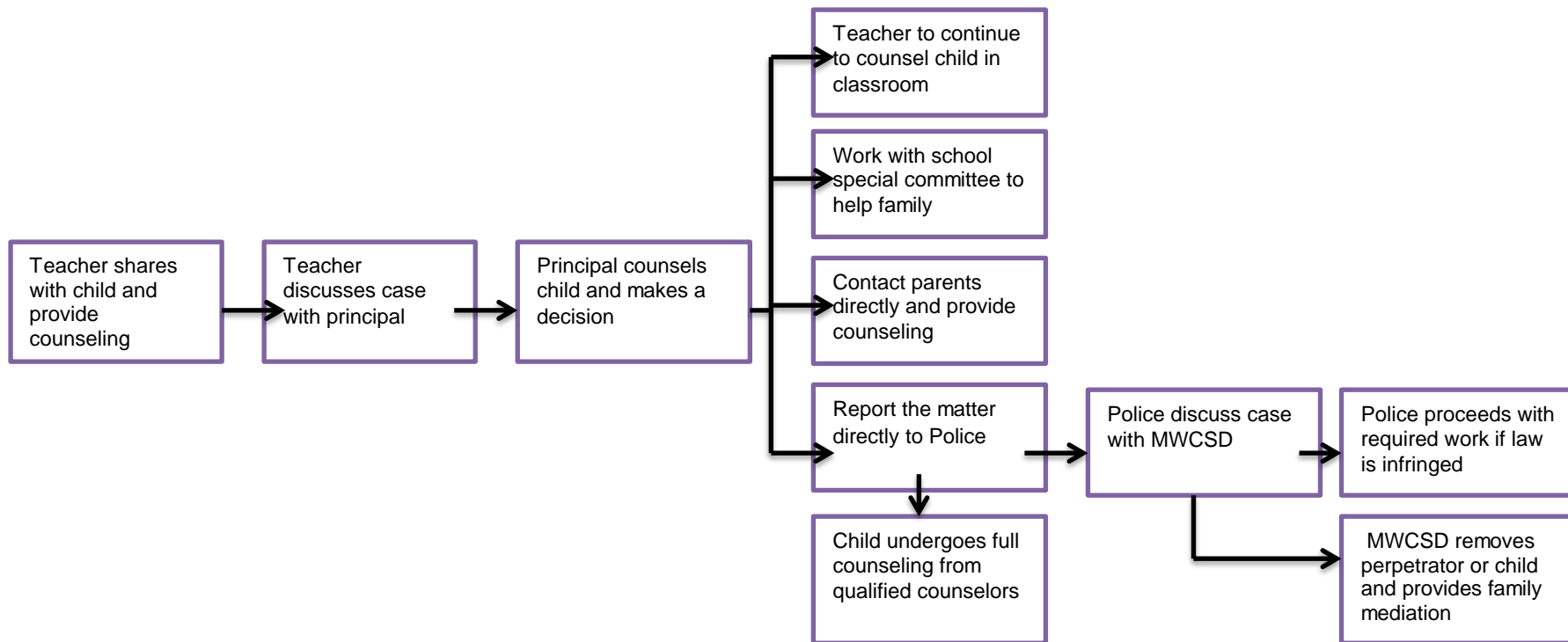
The first option is for a minor case of abuse. The teacher is asked to continue to provide support to the child in the form of counseling. The second option is for the principal to work with the school advisory committee to provide help for the parents of the child involved. This is applied to a case of recurring minor abuse. Parents need counseling and support from the advisory committee which may enlist the help of a church minister serving in the community.

The third option is for solemn case of abuse that involves physical, economical and emotional abuse and contemporaneously requires confidentiality. In this case, the principal works directly with the parents concerned.

The last option is reserved for brutal cases of physical abuse where marks and injuries are visible on the child's body and face and any form of sexual abuse. Such cases warrant an immediate involvement of the Police and MWCSO in order to protect the child affected.

For this last option, it is proposed that the principal reports the case directly to the Police where they advise the Child Protection and Case Management Unit at MWCSO immediately. The latter makes the decision on how to protect the child while the Police proceeds with its criminal investigation and prosecuting process of the perpetrator. The child on the other hand is required to undergo full counseling service from a qualified counselor immediately.

Figure 5.4.1: Proposed process to identify abused children and supporting options



Source: Proposed process is based on feedback from teachers and principals

6. CONCLUSION

This research sets out to find the impact of domestic violence on children's education and lives, and how teaching and non-teaching staff are affected in the classroom when facing this group of children. Moreover, the study seeks ways on how children and teachers are supported in a safe learning and teaching environment.

- i. The findings gathered for the study corroborate that children experienced excessive hostile emotions and behaviours as a result of abuse they received at home. These emotions forced them to engage in behaviours that strongly undermined their capacity to perform well in education.
- ii. Teaching and non-teaching staff are affected emotionally as a result of the behaviour and appearance of children in the classroom. In addition, teachers claimed to have work-related problems as a result of such poor behaviour and caused unnecessary problems at their own home due to the mounting stress they exposed to in the classroom.
- iii. Teaching and non-teaching staff are divided on the issues of gender equality, domestic violence and intimate partner violence. On one side is a group of liberal teachers and non-teaching staff that believed in gender equality and the right to a safe and peaceful home environment.

At the opposite end is a group of teaching and non-teaching staff who are strong believers of the traditional system. While they acknowledged the human rights approach to a safe environment and equal status between men and women, they are however believed that the Samoan society is better off with the traditional values where the husband is the head of the family and that physical punishment has a place if children are difficult to control.

- iv. The current learning and teaching environment needs improvement in order for children and teachers to be granted with the sensible support that they need. In particular, the existing process that identifies children who are abused at home needs advancement in terms of clarity of its purpose, awareness of teachers and children and the support for both children and parents.
- v. Several factors are critical to the proposed supportive learning and teaching environment: school management support for teachers; a curriculum that is inclusive of the learning needs of abused children;

sound coordination with other government authorities and NGOs; support and awareness of the community on the impact of violence against children; working closely with the community; children awareness of their rights to a safe home; and a comprehensive and effective process that identifies and provides help to abused children.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study reverberated the findings of previous studies conducted on the subject of violence against children at home. In essence, this study bridges a knowledge-gap about the impact of domestic violence on the education of children and the teaching and non-teaching staff who are interacting with them in the classroom on a daily basis.

Evidently, the impact of domestic violence on the education of children is devastating. Children experienced negative emotions and behaved poorly in the classroom as a result of violence. Teachers and non-teaching staff on the other hand are also affected emotionally by the behaviour and appearance of abused children in the classroom.

Unfortunately the current learning and teaching environment does not provide support for both abused children and teaching staff who are responsible for the education of abused children in the classroom. The following recommendations focus on options that are critical to building a learning and teaching environment that supports abused children and teachers in the classroom.

7.1 Short-term recommendations: policy development and awareness

- i. MESC to put together and endorse a *Learning and Teaching Support Policy for Abused Children* that features the key elements of the proposed supportive learning and teaching environment proposed in Section 5.
Note: The rest of the following recommendations can be activated once a comprehensive policy is in place.
- ii. School principals and teachers to be made aware of the policy through awareness workshops (and other modes of communication) and in particular the provisions on how abused children are identified and supported as well as teachers who need help.

7.2 Short to medium-term recommendations: capacity building

- iii. School principals to be trained through workshops on school management and leadership with a particular focus on

counseling staff members. This is a specialized area and it needs special training. This recommendation coincides with the Professional National Development Policy 2018-2023 of the Ministry.

- iv. Principals to be trained as trainers on the basics of counseling abused children in the classroom. This is the most realistic approach to take in light of the magnitude of the problem and the current knowledge of principals and teachers on basic counseling.
- v. Training for teachers on how to engage abused children in the classroom. This is separate from counseling abused children in the classroom.
- vi. Provide training for principals and teachers on the personality and behaviour of teachers expected by children in the classroom.

7.2 Medium to long-term recommendations: working with the community and stakeholders

- vii. MESC to liaise with the responsible faculty offering the Bachelor of Education at NUS to include a new course (or courses) on how to counsel and engage abused children in the classroom.
- viii. Principals to work and train qualified members of school advisory committees on how to help parents or family members who are perpetrators of violence against children at home.
- ix. MESC to liaise with the Public Service Commission to set aside scholarship opportunities for individuals to study counseling for children at universities abroad.
- x. MESC to establish a tripartite committee with MWCSO and MPP to ascertain an explicit process of how to handle an abused child who is detected at school. It is important to have a clear understanding of the role of each authority, where it begins and ends.

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ATTACHMENT 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN

QUESTIONNAIRE: Students

Personal details

A1: Gender:

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

A2: Class

- 1) Year 12
- 2) Year 13

: Impact of Domestic Violence ON YOUR EDUCATION

B1: Have you ever experienced any form of violence or abuse from a member or members of your household?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

B2: If Yes, which type of abuse have you experienced?

- 1) Emotional abuse
- 2) Verbal abuse
- 3) Physical abuse
- 4) Sexual abuse
- 5) Economic abuse
- 6) All of the above

B3: How often do you experience abuse at home?

- 1) Everyday
 - 2) 1-2 times a week
 - 3) 1-2 times a month
 - 4) Others (please specify) _____
-

B4: Following an incident in which you were abused at home, indicate your feelings when you attended school afterwards? (You can select more than one choice)

- 1) Miserable and sad
- 2) Hopeless
- 3) Unhappy
- 4) Lost interest in school

- 5) All of the above
- 6) Other (please specify other feelings that you had experienced): _____

B5: Following an incident in which you were abused at home, indicate your behaviour(s) when you attended school afterwards?

- 1) Aggressive
 - 2) Isolated and withdrawn
 - 3) Unfriendly
 - 4) All of the above
 - 5) Others (please specify) _____
-

B6: Explain the impact of abuse on your mental ability to focus on your school work following an incident of abuse.

- 1) Unable to focus on my school work
- 2) Intermittently focused on my school work
- 3) No impact on my ability to focus on my school work

B7: As a result of the abuse, how are you performing at school?

- 1) Very poor
- 2) Poor
- 3) Good
- 4) Excellent

B8: If you were not abused at home, do you think you will do better at school compared to your current situation.

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Not sure

B9: Have you ever been approached by any of your teachers to discuss your problem at home?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

B10: Have you ever received help from one of your teachers about your problem at home?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

B11: If Yes, was the support from your teacher helpful?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

B12: Have you ever approached one of your teachers for help about your problems at home?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

B13: If you are to suggest three things to help your teacher to handle children who are victims of domestic violence in order for them to assist the children better in the classroom, what would be those things?

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

**QUESTIONNAIRE:
School Principals & Teachers:**

Personal details

A1: Name
(optional): _____

A2: Surname
(optional): _____

A3: Gender:
3) Male
4) Female

A4: School level
3) Primary
4) Secondary
5) College

: Impact of Domestic Violence on the education of children

B1: Based on your experience as a school principal and a teacher, are you aware of children who are victims of domestic violence?
3) Yes
4) No
5) Suspicious

B2: If Yes, please identify the form or type of violence that you think the children suffered the most?
7) Emotional abuse
8) Physical abuse
9) Sexual abuse
10) Economic abuse
11) All of the above

B3: Please indicate the behaviour of these children.
7) Aggressive
8) Discrete and isolated
9) Easily distracted
10) All of the above
11) Other (please specify): _____

B4: How do these children perform academically?
6) Poor
7) Average
8) Good
9) Excellent

10) Hard to determine

: Impact on teachers

C1: In your experience as a principal/teacher, have you ever dealt (taught) with children who are victims (or suspected victims) of domestic violence?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (If No please proceed to C3)

C2: If Yes, what was the impact on you as a teacher?

- 1) Hopeless
- 2) Despair
- 3) Sorry
- 4) Stress
- 5) None of the above
- 6) All of the above
- 7) Other: _____

C3: As a principal/teacher, were you provided with a specialised training on how to handle children who are victims of domestic violence in the classroom?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

C4: As a principal/teacher, are you aware of any existing policy framework on how to handle children who are victims of domestic violence in the classroom?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

C5: If Yes, is the policy relevant and helpful in guiding teachers?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

C6: If No, do you think there should be a policy in place?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

C7: As a principal/teacher who experienced teaching children who are victims of domestic violence, list down three important factors that the policy should include in order to support teachers who are dealing with children that are victims of domestic violence.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

**QUESTIONNAIRE:
Non-Teaching Staff**

Personal details

A1: Name (optional): _____

A2: Surname (optional): _____

A3: Gender:
5) Male
6) Female

A4: School level
6) Primary
7) Secondary
8) College

: Impact of Domestic Violence on the education of children

B1: Based on your experience as a non-teaching staff, are you aware of children who are victims of domestic violence?

- 6) Yes
- 7) No
- 8) Suspicious

B2: If Yes, please identify the form or type of violence that you think the children suffered the most?

- 12) Emotional abuse
- 13) Physical abuse
- 14) Sexual abuse
- 15) Economic abuse
- 16) All of the above

B3: Please indicate the behaviour of these children.

- 12) Aggressive
- 13) Discrete and isolated
- 14) Easily distracted
- 15) All of the above
- 16) Other (please specify): _____

B4: How do these children perform academically?

- 11) Poor
- 12) Average
- 13) Good
- 14) Excellent
- 15) Hard to determine

: Impact on non-teaching staff

C1: In your experience as a non-teaching staff, have you ever dealt with children who are victims (or suspected victims) of domestic violence?

- 3) Yes
- 4) No (If No please proceed to C3)

C2: If Yes, what was the impact on you as a staff member?

- 8) Hopeless
- 9) Despair
- 10) Sorry
- 11) Stress
- 12) None of the above
- 13) All of the above
- 14) Other: _____

C3: As a non-teaching staff, were you provided with a specialised training on how to handle children who are victims of domestic violence at school?

- 3) Yes
- 4) No

C4: As a non-teaching staff, are you aware of any existing policy framework on how to handle children who are victims of domestic violence at school?

- 3) Yes
- 4) No

C5: If Yes, is the policy relevant and helpful in guiding you?

- 3) Yes
- 4) No

C6: If No, do you think there should be a policy in place?

- 3) Yes
- 4) No

C7: As a non-teaching staff who experienced dealing with children who are victims of domestic violence, please list down three important factors that the policy should include in order to support non-teaching staff who are dealing with children that are victims of domestic violence.

- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- _____
- _____

