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Community Insights on Violence against Children: Awareness, Engagement, and Predictive Variables in the Context of Hawassa City Administration

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Keywords:

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Approach.

This study seeks to investigate community insights on violence against children, focusing on awareness, involvement, and predicting factors within the Hawassa City Administration in Ethiopia. The study employed a cross-sectional explanatory research design, incorporating a mixed-methods approach. Three hundred ninety-one respondents participated in this study, along with seven individuals for in-depth interviews and sixteen participants in focus groups. A single population proportion formula was employed to determine sample size, and a systematic sampling procedure was utilized to select participants from the chosen kebeles. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed via the thematic analysis method. The study results revealed that all respondents are aware of violence against children; for 57.3% of the respondents, sexual abuse comes to their mind first when they think of violence against children. While 71.4% of the respondents are well informed on measures they can take to address violence against children, only 47.3% of the respondents have the experience of taking measures to address violence against children. The average mean score of 2.19 indicates that the community's level of engagement in addressing violence against children is low. The analysis identified key predictors of community engagement: attitude toward violence against children ($\beta = -.244$, $t(-4.286)$, $p < 0.05$), age ($\beta = -.223$, $t(-3.997)$, $p < 0.05$), habit of working with community policing ($\beta = -.220$, $t(-3.931)$, $p < 0.05$), and role in the existing community structure ($\beta = .178$, $t(3.135)$, $p < 0.05$). The study identified various community-based protection structures, including family systems, religious institutions, educational institutions, community policing services, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations, and legal frameworks. These findings suggest the need for strengthening community-based protection mechanisms while addressing the identified gaps between awareness and active engagement in child violence protection.

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INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the escalating denunciation of violence by the world community and the expanding framework of legislation, policies, and institutions designed to safeguard them, violence continues to be a grim reality in the everyday lives of numerous children (Coenraad de Beer, 2017). Consequently, children endure effects on their physical and emotional well-being, their schooling, and their overall quality of life (Pereznieto et al., 2014). Violence against children is a widespread issue impacting the lives of millions globally (African Child Policy Forum, 2014).

The World Health Organization characterizes violence as the deliberate application of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, directed towards oneself, another individual, or a group or community, which either leads to or has a significant probability of causing injury, death, psychological harm, developmental impairment, or deprivation. The World Health Organization's definition links intentionality to the execution of the act, regardless of the resultant outcome. The definition excludes unintentional accidents, which include the majority of road traffic injuries and burns (Krug, 2002). Social inequality, cultural values, and historical factors contribute to the

multifaceted marvel of violence, and addressing this problem requires the commitment of both governments and the wider public (UNICEF, 2015).

International human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Article 19, establish the right of all children to protection from all types of violence, as reported by UNICEF (2017). States shall implement all necessary legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to safeguard the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse. Evidence suggests that both girls and boys often experience multiple forms of violence, a phenomenon known as 'poly-victimization', underscoring the need for a comprehensive strategy to combat violence. It also acknowledges that research, policies, and programs addressing a singular kind of violence may neglect significant connections to the risks and repercussions of other forms of violence throughout infancy and across the lifetime (UNICEF, 2017).

Community engagement is collaborating with groups of individuals connected by physical proximity, shared interests, or comparable circumstances to tackle challenges impacting their well-being. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing

about environmental and behavioural changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It frequently entails collaborations and alliances that facilitate resource mobilization and system influence, alter partner relationships, and act as catalysts for policy, program, and practice modifications (CDC, 1997).

The community serves as the environment in which youngsters commence their exploration of the surrounding world and establish connections with others. The engagement of a community in addressing violence against children significantly contributes to the improvement of children's well-being. This study aimed to evaluate the extent, methodologies, and obstacles of community involvement in combating violence against children.

Statement of the problem

Violence against children (VAC) is an alarming problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Ethiopia. In 2014, the Africa Child Policy Forum conducted research in Ethiopia and seven other African countries, leading to the release of the African Report on Violence Against Children. This report provides a detailed and concerning summary, highlighting the widespread occurrence of physical, sexual, and emotional violence within domestic and communal settings. Regrettably, individuals seldom disclose and scrutinize their behaviours of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Consequently, we infrequently hold offenders accountable (Landers, 2013).

Numerous academics in Ethiopia have undertaken diverse studies on violence perpetrated against children. Andualem (2017) conducted a qualitative study on child violence in Debre Markos, focusing on the causes and consequences of familial violence against children. It examines the issue of child sexual abuse and its detrimental effects on survivors. The researcher examined the causes and consequences of child sexual assault on survivors. Edemealem (2017) investigated the fundamental

causes and effects of violence against children. Daniel (2018) employed a cross-sectional study design to examine the extent of community awareness of violence against children. The study indicates that several factors affect communities' apprehensions regarding violence against children.

Despite these efforts, researchers did not rigorously study the effectiveness of community engagement in mitigating violence against children across the country and in Hawassa City in particular. Upon reviewing the aforementioned literature on the subject, the researchers identified a diversity of methodologies, study designs, geographical locations, and thematic areas. Moreover, the literature neglected to integrate the ecological model of human development into its analysis of the community's role in alleviating violence against children. Enhancing awareness of the issue is a primary objective of every community involvement initiative. Individuals oblivious to societal violence, without understanding its repercussions, and uncertain about where to seek assistance are less inclined to engage in or denounce the intolerable nature of violence (FVPPF, 2002).

Plan International (2013) asserted that merely increasing awareness of the issue does not ensure the cessation or elimination of violence against children; it necessitates the active involvement of families and communities in reporting such occurrences to the relevant authorities. Notwithstanding the significance of community understanding and involvement in safeguarding children from abuse, there is a dearth of information in Ethiopia regarding community engagement in this domain. Therefore, the researchers conducted this study in the Hawassa city administration to partially fill the existing gaps.

Objectives of the study

General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine community insights on violence against children:

awareness, engagement, and predictive variables in the context of Hawassa city administration.

Specific objectives:

- To describe the level of community members' awareness about violence against children.
- To investigate the extent of community members' engagement in child violence protection.
- level of community engagement in community-based child protection structures
- To explain the major Predictor variables of community engagement

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study design

The research employed a cross-sectional explanatory design with a mixed-method approach. Data were collected from selected households in Hawassa City. The researchers employed this approach to achieve a superior understanding of the research problems compared to utilizing either method independently.

Sample size determination and Sampling technique

The researchers determined the sample size using a single population proportion formula from the study population.

$$n = \frac{\left(Z\alpha \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Whereas,

$$Z\alpha \frac{1}{2} = 1.96$$

n = sample size

$p = 0.5$ assuming 50% of level of the community engagement on violence against children

$$1 - p = 0.5$$

$d = 0.05$ Confidence level (twice the margin of error)

$$\text{Therefore; } n = \frac{(1.96)^2 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.8416) 0.5(0.5)}{0.0025} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384$$

Table 1: No. of Sample Households and Sampling Interval in Each Kebele

No.	Selected Kebeles	No.of Hhs	No. of Sample HHs $Nk = (xk/N)$ n	Sampling Interval $I = xk/Nk$
1.	Tilte	2115	$423 * 2115 / 12,178 = 74$	$2115 / 74 = 29$
2.	Dume	2568	$423 * 2,568 / 12,178 = 89$	$2568 / 89 = 29$
3.	Hiteta	3840	$423 * 3,840 / 12,178 = 133$	$3840 / 133 = 29$
4.	Hogane Wacho	3655	$423 * 3,655 / 12,178 = 127$	$3655 / 127 = 29$
Total		12,178	Total = 423	

With a ten percent contingency or expected non-response rate, the total sample respondents were 423. However, from the determined sample size (i.e. 423) the response rate was **391**(92.43%) and the study relied on the responses of these participants.

Sampling technique

Sampling helps to methodically choose a smaller, representative subset of goods or individuals from a defined population for observation or

experimentation aligned with the study's aims (Sharma, 2017). A probability sampling method allocates a known, non-zero likelihood of selection to each member of the sampling frame, facilitating the extrapolation of survey findings to the full target population (Dillman, 2014). The researchers employed multistage sampling methods to obtain representative samples. Tabour sub-city, one of the eight sub-cities of Hawassa, is purposively selected because of its large number of kebeles. The

researchers then selected four kebeles from the Tabour sub-city (Hitteta, Tilte, Dume, and Hogane Wacho) utilizing a lottery approach. The chosen four Kebeles comprise around 12,178 households. The researchers proportionally distributed the sample size to the selected kebeles based on the total number of eligible households in each kebele. At last, a systematic sampling technique was utilized to pick participants.

Methods of data collection

Survey method

The researchers used the sample survey method to collect quantitative data. The researchers selected enumerators who helped administer the questionnaires to the chosen households. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended items, largely relying on Likert scale types.

In-depth interview

In-depth interviews were used with selected experts/practitioners from the concerned offices. Seven interviews were held until data saturation was ensured. In order to gather insightful information from the interview, participants were meticulously and strategically from relevant entities such as Women and Children Affairs, Police, Court, NGOs, community religious leaders, and leaders of community-based structures (Idir).

Focus group discussions

A focus group discussion was held with the community members to gather valid and empirical data. Two focus group discussions, each comprising eight participants were held.

Data analysis

All quantitative raw data from respondents were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 28.0. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were employed, and from inferential statistics, multiple regression was utilized. The qualitative data was analyzed by thematic method.

Ethical consideration

To get the necessary data, adhering to the legal way and considering the research ethics is mandatory. Accordingly, a formal letter was written from Hawassa University College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Sociology to the concerned bodies. The researcher had prepared oral and written consent for the survey questionnaire and key informant interview participants respectively. During the data collection, each respondent was informed about the purpose, scope and expected outcomes of the research.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Level of community awareness about violence against children

Table 2: Respondent's exposure to information about violence against children

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Heard about violence against children	Yes	391	100
	No		
	Total	391	100

Table 2 above illustrates that 391 (100%) of the survey respondents are aware of violence against children. FGD participants elaborated on their awareness of this issue, stating that they are aware

of violence against children and obtain information about violence against children from various sources, with mass media and government structures being the primary sources.

Table 3: Respondents' awareness about the type of violence against children and the perpetrators

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Which of these comes to your thought first when you think of violence against children	Corporal Punishment by	76	19.4
	Family/Teacher	-	-
	Sexual Abuse	224	57.3
	Insulting/Blaming	41	10.5
	Labor abuse	50	12.8
	Total	391	100.0
Who are mostly susceptible to violence against children in your community	Boys	7	1.8
	Girls	384	98.2
	Total	391	100
Most of the time who commit violence against children in your local community	Father	80	20.5
	Mother	26	6.6
	Teacher	40	10.2
	Stranger	18	4.6
	Friends/Peers	227	58.1
	Total	391	100

Table 3 above shows that, most of the time when the respondents think about violence against children, 224 (57.3%) of the respondents said that sexual abuse/assault comes to their thought first; secondly, 76 (19.4%) of the respondents, corporal punishment comes to their mind; for 50 (12.8%), overload work; and finally, for 41 (10.5%) of the respondents, insulting/blaming comes to their mind when they think about violence against children. Regarding exposure to violence 384 (98.2%) of the respondents responded that girls are mostly susceptible to violence, and only 7 (1.8%) of the respondents argued that boys are more exposed to violence than girls.

The perpetrators of violence against children include Peers 227 (58.1%), Fathers 80 (20.5%), Teachers 40 (10.2%), Mothers 26 (6.6%), and Strangers 18 (4.6%). This suggests that the community fully understands the existence of all

types of violence against children (VACs), exposing girls to them more frequently than boys. However, the community prioritizes sexual abuse over other forms of VACs. The community knows that VAC perpetrators are often the closest to the child; the child should feel safe.

A key informant from the Tabour Sub-City Police Office added that:

“The community primarily obtains information about the issue from broadcast services such as Debub FM Radio (100.9) and Sidama Media Network. The Tabour sub-city WCYAO occasionally conducts awareness-raising activities during meetings, while nearby NGOs also provide training to their community stockholders. The mass media serves as the primary source of information for the community when it comes to addressing violence against children.”

Table 4: Attitude of respondents on violence against children

No	Statement	N	Response summation	Response
1	In the absence of corporal punishment, discipline has become worse at home	391	2.71	Agree
2	Humiliating comments or blaming the child is normal.	391	2.64	Agree
3	Children should have more time to work rather than play.	391	2.97	Agree
4	Children can grow up by their chance/negligence	391	2.83	Agree
5	Children can perform overload work to get income in order to fulfill their needs is normal	391	2.95	Agree
6	Children can have consensual sexual conduct with an adult	391	1.22	Strongly disagree
7	Fondling the child for sexual desire by an adult (kissing, caressing etc.) is acceptable in the community	391	1.75	Strongly disagree
8	It is normal to threaten the child with sharp material, or fire in order to respect their older	391	1.55	Strongly disagree
9	Refusing the child to take to medical treatment is acceptable	391	1.67	Strongly disagree
10	Hitting the child with the stick is allowed to maintain discipline in schools	391	1.71	Strongly disagree
Average mean		391	2.2	Disagree

The data presented in Table 23 shows that the attitude of the respondents on VACs indicated that even if the average mean for the attitude of respondents towards violence against children is 2.2 indicating disagreement with violence against children, indeed the 391 respondents agreed to VAC practices that are considered culturally

normal/tolerated while strongly disagreed to VAC practices other than those VAC practices culturally considered as normal/tolerated.

Level of the Community's engagement in addressing violence against children

Respondent's awareness of measures to address violence against children

Table 4: Respondents' awareness of measures to address violence against children

Knowledge of measures taken in addressing violence against children	Option	Frequency	Percent
Do you know what measures you can take to protect a child from violence?	Yes	279	71.4
	No	112	28.6
	Total	391	100
Did you have any experience taking measures to protect a child from violence?	Yes	132	47.3
	No	147	52.7
	Total	279	100
What measures/precautions did you take to protect the child from violence?	Negotiate the child with the perpetrator	98	74.3
	Reported to Police	16	12.1
	Reported to Women and Child Office	-	-
		11	8.3

Knowledge of measures taken in addressing violence against children	Option	Frequency	Percent
	Other	7	5.3
	Total	132	100

The above table illustrates the level of community awareness and engagement in addressing violence against children. Among 391 respondents, 279 (71.4%) are well informed on what measures they can take to protect a child, while 112 (28.6%) of the respondents do not know. As far as community engagement in addressing violence against children is concerned, out of the 279 (71.4%) respondents who are aware of the measures they can take, 132 (47.3%) of them have responded that they have the experience of taking measures to address violence against children, whereas 147 (52.7%) of them have responded that they have no experience of engagement to address violence against children. Concerning the measure they took to safeguard children from violence, of the 132 (47.3%) of the respondents who said that they have the experience of being engaged to address violence against children, 98 (74.3%) of them responded that they negotiated or arbitrated the child with the perpetrators, 16 (12.1%) of them reported the incident to police, and 11 (8.3%) of them reported the offence to the women, children, and youth affairs office, whereas 7 (5.3%) took other measures. This indicates that the majority of the community understands the necessary steps to prevent and deal with child abuse.

The FGD participants also repeatedly mentioned that the community knows what measures to take to protect children from the horrors of violence. The community understands the need to report violence

against children to the police, just like any other crime.

The key informants from the Hawassa city court said:

“Even though there is a significant gap in the community's reporting of all forms and subtypes of violence against children as criminal activity, there is a simple procedure to impeach the offender. Any community member who witnesses violence against children should report the incident to the nearby police office. The police will then gather and review the necessary supporting evidence, present the cause to the prosecutors, and open a case to ensure justice prevails and deters further violence.”

We can infer from the key informant interview and the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that the community often fails to report all instances of child abuse. Even families themselves consider most acts of violence against children as normal and harmless due to the fact that most parents themselves have gone through the same experiences during their childhood. The community commonly accepts violence against children, such as slapping, pinching, beating, kicking, and intimidating, as appropriate forms of discipline.

Community Engagement when witnessing violence against children

Table 5: Reasons for Community's engagement in addressing violence against children.

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percent
Witnessed someone committing violence against children	Yes	388	99.2
	No	3	0.8
	Total	391	100
Did you ever try to intervene in any way	Yes	144	37.1
	No	244	62.9
	Total	388	100
The main reason that you intervened?	I wanted to stop violence on the spot	79	54.9
	I was afraid for the victim's safety	34	23.6
	I thought what was happening was wrong	27	18.8
	Other	4	2.7
	Total	144	100
The main reason that you did not intervene	It was none of my business	80	32.8
	I was frightened for my own safety	116	47.6
	I did not think I could help the situation	41	16.9
	Other	7	2.7
	Total	244	100

Table 5 shows that from the 391 respondents, 388 (99.2%) of the respondents did witness someone committing violence against children, while 3 (0.8%) of the respondents responded that they did not witness violence against children. Of the 388 (99.2%) of the respondents who witnessed violence against children, 144 (37.1%) of them tried to intervene, whereas 244 (62.9%) of them never tried to intervene. Out of the 144 (37.1%) respondents who intervened in the violence, 79 (54.9%) did so solely to stop the violence immediately, 34 (23%) did so out of fear for the victim's safety, 27 (18.8%) did so because they believed that violence against children is wrong, and 4 (2.7%) intervened for other reasons, such as children wellbeing or noise disturbance.

Similarly, an attempt was made to pinpoint the reasons why respondents chose not to intervene while witnessing violence against children. Out of the 244 (62.9%) respondents who chose not to intervene when witnessing violence against

children, 80 (32.8%) stated that it was not their responsibility, 116 (47.6%) expressed fear for their own safety, 41 (16.9%) believed they couldn't assist the children, and 7 (2.7%) cited other reasons such as family issues or the child's misbehaviour warranting such action.

Despite the community's awareness and understanding of violence against children as a criminal offence, they seldom report such incidents to the relevant authorities.

The female key informant in the Women, Children, and Youth Affairs Office stated:

“The community responds more effectively to acts they consider to be fatal, such as sexual abuse, and to physical harm such as body burning and stabbing. If not, the community doesn't report all forms and subtypes of violence against children, but most of the community members are well informed about violence against children and where to report.”

An officer from the first instance court office also confirmed that:

“Generally, courts do not consider appeals for all subtypes of violence against children equally. Typically, the community reports sexual assault and physical violence against children as crimes, but rarely does it report emotional or psychological abuse of children, often perpetrated by relatives, neighbours, and those closest to the child. Obtaining evidence to implement corrective measures on offenders can be challenging.”

Like the survey respondents and key informants, the FGD participants also revealed that they know the different forms and subtypes of violence against children, but they reflected that they perceive some acts of violence against children as normal and unavoidable. They understand that emotional and psychological forms of violence against children can have just as severe an impact on their future and confidence as sexual and physical forms.

FGD participants said:

“We witness a variety of forms and types of violence against children, but the incidents that truly shock us and prompt us to report to the relevant authorities are those that involve

sexual abuse and physical harm to the children. While our community culturally accepts other forms of violence, like insult and neglect, as part of daily life, we do not observe any noticeable harm to our children as a result of insult; instead, the child learns from the mistake that led to the insult or humiliation.”

Despite the community's comprehensive awareness of forms and types of violence against children, they rarely report certain forms of violence, which they view as normal or lack immediate physical harm, to the relevant authorities, thereby discouraging its occurrence. The community's perception of some subtypes of violence against children as normal or harmless influences their level of concern and engagement in addressing all forms and subtypes of violence against children. Therefore, it is important to examine the community's involvement in addressing violence against children.

Level of Community engagement in addressing violence against children

To measure respondents' level of engagement in addressing violence against children, the participants were provided with predetermined responses in which they were expected to indicate whether they were 1) Never engaged, 2) Rarely engaged, 3) Often engaged 4) Always engaged.

Table 6: Scale and range of responses.

Scale on the Likert	Range	Response	Verbal interpretation
4	3.26 – 4	Always engaged	High engagement
3	2.51 - 3.25	Often engaged	Medium engagement
2	1.76 - 2.5	Rarely engaged	Low engagement
1	1 - 1.75	Never engaged	Very low engagement

The data obtained is summarized below

Table 7: Respondents' level of engagement in addressing violence against children

No	Statement	N	Response summation	Response
1	How often do you engage in addressing physical punishment against children	391	1.79	Rarely engaged
2	How often do you engage in tackling emotional violence against children	391	2	Rarely engaged
3	How often do you engage in giving your children/child a time to play with other children	391	2.7	Often engaged
4	How often do you engage in reducing sexual harassment against children	391	2.64	Often engaged
5	How often do you engage in lessening labour exploitation against children	391	2.12	Rarely engaged
6	How often do you engage in reducing children's exposure to indecent behaviours	391	1.8	Rarely engaged
7	How often did you engage in giving advice to family who neglect their children to send to school	391	2.4	Rarely engaged
8	How often did you engage in giving advice to a family who neglects their children to feed them adequate food	391	2.16	Rarely engaged
9	How often do you engage in working with government bodies to reduce any kind of violence against children	391	2.11	Rarely engaged
Average mean		391	2.19	Rarely engaged

The data presented in Table 7 reveals that, based on the total response from 391 respondents regarding their level of engagement, with an average mean of 2.19, the community either rarely engages or has low engagement in addressing violence against children. This is because the community's engagement in addressing violence against children is influenced by the cultural perception of the severity of the violence. The community engages to address those VACs that are culturally perceived as more serious, and it rarely engages to address those VACs that are culturally perceived as less serious.

Level of community engagement in community-based child protection structures

There are various types of formal and informal structures and organizations within the community.

These community-based structures and organizations are operating at the grassroots level inside the community to lubricate and maintain its day-to-day undertakings. Most community-based structures and organizations can play a significant role by raising awareness, fostering a favourable environment, and even actively participating in the process of addressing violence. Community members who are willing and able to participate in these settings stand a greater chance of gaining awareness and enhancing their ability to actively address violence against children (Child Frontiers 2012).

Table 8: Respondents' participation and role in existing community structure

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Do you participate in existing community structures in your locality?	Yes	269	68.8
	No	122	31.2
	Total	391	100
Role in the organization?	Member	244	90.7
	Leadership role	25	9.3
	Total	269	100

From the above table, we can infer that out of the total 391 respondents, 269 (68.8%) reported participating in the existing community structures in their locality, while 122 (31.2%) did not participate. Of the 269 (68.8%) of the respondents who are participating in the existing community structures in their locality, 244 (90.7%) are members, and 25

(9.3%) of them are leaders in the community structures. This suggests that as community members participate in various community-based structures, their inclination to acquire relevant knowledge and experience about addressing violence against children is high.

Table 9: Respondents participation in community policing to protect violence against children

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Know community policing found in the community	Yes	337	86.2
	No	54	13.8
	Total	391	100
Experiences of working with community policing	Yes	19	5.6
	No	318	94.4
	Total	337	100

Table 9 reveals that out of 391 respondents, 337 (86.2%) were aware of the presence of community policing in their community, while 54 (13.8%) were unaware of its existence. Out of the 337 (86.2%) respondents who were aware of the presence of community policing in their community, 19 (5.6%) reported having worked with it, while 310 (95.1%) did not have any experience with community policing in relation to violence against children.

Police are the immediate responsibility of the government structures to prevent and manage crime in general and violence against children in particular. However, unless the community is willing and committed to cooperating and working with the police structures, it can be difficult and even tiresome to prevent and manage crime in general and violence against children in particular. It is obvious that the purpose of availing community policing services close to the community is to

prevent and manage any crime in general and violence against children in particular that occurs in the community. Consequently, as the community closely works with community policing services, it is possible to protect children against violence and thereby enhance the community's awareness and engagement to address violence against children; nevertheless, the community's experience of working with community policing services is not pleasing.

An officer from the Hawassa City Women, Children, and Youth Affairs Office said:

"To dismantle violence against children from the community, the community must be in the position and commitment to work with all the stakeholders working on the issues of children, especially with those community policing

services that are working down in and with the community.”

An officer from the Hawassa City Court said:

The police initiate the legal process to open a case file for any crime. The police gather preliminary information about a suspected violent crime and gather supporting information and tangible evidence from the community. Therefore, to ensure the serving of justice, the community must increase its willingness to collaborate with these police structures.

An officer from the police said that:

“Since we as a structure have no enough personnel and resources to raise the awareness of the community in all forms of crime

prevention and management mechanisms, including the unreplaceable part of community participation to the prevention of any criminal activity in general and violence against children in particular, we usually use local self-help associations like iddir, ekub, maheber, and meetings to convey our message.”

Unquestionably, the findings showed that although the community is aware that local community policing services exist to prevent and manage crime in general and violence against children in particular, the community does not collaborate closely with these police structures to address violence against children.

Predictor variables of community engagement

Bivariate analysis

Table 10: Correlation between community engagement and determining factors of engagement

Correlations								
	Age Of the respondents	Average monthly Income	Participation in Community Structures	Role in existing community structures	The habit of working with Community	cultural view on VACs	Community Engagement to Address Violence Against Children	
Age Of the respondents	Pearson Correlation	1	-.046	.024	-.038	-.009	-.047	-.110*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.368	.636	.546	.866	.351	.030
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	51659.038	-262979.944	50.458	-32.333	-15.634	-1152.430	-1980.199
	Covariance	132.459	-674.308	.129	-.124	-.040	-2.955	-5.077
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
Average monthly Income	Pearson Correlation	-.046	1	-.001	-.043	.030	-.037	.129*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.368		.986	.489	.558	.471	.011
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	262979.944	641290829.816	-203.862	4216.628	6024.803	-99313.230	259141.107
	Covariance	-674.308	1644335.461	-.523	-16.218	15.448	-254.649	664.464
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
Participation in	Pearson Correlation	.024	-.001	1	.095	-.001	.012	-.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.636	.986		.127	.978	.816	.087
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	50.458	-203.862	85.396	2.268	-.102	11.673	-63.581

	Covariance	.129	-.523	.219	.009	.000	.030	-.163
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
Role in existing community	Pearson Correlation	-.038	-.043	.095	1	-.008	-.181**	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.546	.489	.127		.897	.003	.000
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	-32.333	-4216.628	2.268	20.973	-.230	-74.349	67.023
	Covariance	-.124	-16.218	.009	.081	-.001	-.286	.258
	N	269	269	269	269	269	269	269
The habit of working with Community	Pearson Correlation	-.009	.030	-.001	-.008	1	-.060	-.109*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.866	.558	.978	.897		.237	.031
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	-15.634	6024.803	-.102	-.230	64.220	-51.496	-69.302
	Covariance	-.040	15.448	.000	-.001	.165	-.132	-.178
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
cultural view on VACs	Pearson Correlation	-.047	-.037	.012	-.181**	-.060	1	-.268**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.351	.471	.816	.003	.237		.000
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	-1152.430	-99313.230	11.673	-74.349	-51.496	11481.212	-2279.366
	Covariance	-2.955	-254.649	.030	-.286	-.132	29.439	-5.845
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
Community Engagement in	Pearson Correlation	-.110*	.129*	-.087	.226**	-.109*	-.268**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.011	.087	.000	.031	.000	
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	-1980.199	259141.107	-63.581	67.023	-69.302	-2279.366	6307.437
	Covariance	-5.077	664.464	-.163	.258	-.178	-5.845	16.173
	N	391	391	391	269	391	391	391
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

Table 10 demonstrates a significant correlation between community engagement in addressing violence against children and the age of the respondents, their average monthly income, and their habit of working with community policing services, all at the 0.01 level of correlation significance. Additionally, there is a significant

correlation at the 0.05 level between participation in community structures, a role in existing community structures, and the community's cultural view on VACs.

Multivariate analysis (stepwise linear regression)

Table 11: Predictor variables of community engagement

Coefficients					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	22.157	.870		25.454
	cultural view on VACs	-.176	.044	-.243	-4.037
2	(Constant)	25.508	1.195		21.346
	cultural view on VACs	-.185	.043	-.255	-4.341
	Age	-.080	.020	-.233	-3.973
3	(Constant)	28.572	1.410		20.259
	cultural view on VACs	-.200	.042	-.276	-4.797
	Age	-.082	.020	-.238	-4.164
	The habit of working with Community Policing services	-2.288	.594	-.221	-3.849
4	(Constant)	25.329	1.763		14.365
	cultural view on VACs	-.177	.042	-.244	-4.233
	Age	-.079	.019	-.230	-4.080
	The habit of working with Community Policing services	-2.242	.586	-.216	-3.828
	Role in existing community structures	2.423	.811	.171	2.987
5	(Constant)	24.445	1.774		13.779
	cultural view on VACs	-.177	.041	-.244	-4.286
	Age	-.077	.019	-.223	-3.997
	The habit of working with Community Policing services	-2.276	.579	-.220	-3.931
	Role in existing community structures	2.516	.802	.178	3.135
	average monthly Income	.000	.000	.148	2.658

a. Dependent Variable: Community Engagement to address violence against children.

The researchers looked at the relationship between predictors (attitude toward VACs, age, working with community police, and role in the current community structure) and the outcome variable (community engagement). To see if the link was statistically significant, we found that Community engagement, with a cultural view on VACs (attitude) ($\beta = -.244$, $t(-4.286)$, $p < 0.05$, or $p = 0.000$), the greater the community perceives violence against children as harmful, the higher the level of community engagement in addressing VACs, age ($\beta = -.223$, $t(-3.997)$, $p < 0.05$ or $p =$

0.000). The younger the majority of community members, the higher the level of community engagement in addressing VACs and the habit of working with community policing ($\beta = -.220$, $t(-3.931)$, $p < 0.05$, or $p = 0.000$). The greater the involvement of the community in community policing services, the higher the level of community engagement in addressing VACs. Role in existing community structure ($\beta = .178$, $t(3.135)$, $p < 0.05$ or $p = .002$) and as the role of the community member in community structures increased, the engagement also increased. This suggests that the four hypotheses outlined in this relation hold true; the major predictors of community engagement in

addressing violence against children are the attitudes towards violence against children, age, involvement with community police, and the role in the existing community structure.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings showed that, when asked about the measures they took to protect children from violence, 74.3% of those who responded said they negotiated or arbitrated the child's case with the perpetrators. The findings align with Fantahun (2018) study, which demonstrated that while 69.8% of the community recognizes the potential measures to safeguard children from violence, only 46.9% have actually implemented these measures. The governmental, nongovernmental, and community-based structures that are working on the issue of addressing violence against children also agreed that even if the community is well aware of violence against children and the measures to take to protect children from violence, due to different personal and societal reasons, the majority of the community are not committed and even willing to engage themselves to support the efforts of the stakeholders in addressing violence against children.

This finding is also similar to Mulugeta and Mekuriaw's (2017) research titled *Community Policing: Practice, Roles, Challenges, and Prospects in Crime Prevention in East Gojjam Administrative Zone*. The result shows that the knowledge and commitment of community members to engage in working cooperatively with community policing services in crime prevention is one of the essential elements affecting the implementation of community policing in any area.

When it comes to the factors that determine the level of community engagement, community members who are willing and able to participate in these structures stand a greater chance of gaining awareness and enhancing their ability to engage in addressing violence against children (Child Frontiers, 2012). Indeed, 68.8% of the respondents reported participating in the existing community

structures in their locality, with 90.7% of them being members of structures such as idir, ekub, tsewa, maheber, and religious institutions that provide community policing services. Only 5.6% of the respondents, out of 86.2%, had experience working with community policing, while the majority, 95.1%, had no such experience.

The finding coincides with the findings of Andualem (2017), which showed that children are facing violence in places where they ought to feel safe and protected by their close family and parents. For a child, loss of confidence and trust in the closest circles to the child can instil feelings of fear, suspicion, uncertainty, and emotional isolation in the child. A non-attentive parent may withhold attention from a child, which, in turn, escalates the attention-seeking behaviour.

The findings align with Daniel's (2018) findings, demonstrating the importance of parents' participation in existing community structures, their involvement with community police, their attitudes towards violence against children, their age, their role in existing community structures, and their income.

CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of the study is to assess community engagement in addressing violence against children and its associated factors in Hawassa City. This study's findings reveal that children are exposed to violence in a variety of settings, including neighbourhoods, schools, and their own homes and families, where they should feel safe. Violence is a multifaceted marvel resulting from social inequality, cultural values, and historical factors, and undertaking this problem requires the pledge of both governments and the wider public, so addressing violence against children can't be achieved through a unidimensional engagement approach; rather, community awareness, community mobilization, community-based stakeholders, and supporting legal frameworks are also vital.

Despite the increasing condemnation of violence by the international community and a growing body of legislation, policies, and institutions to protect it, it remains a harsh reality in the daily lives of many children throughout the world.

Contextual factors such as attitude towards violence against children, age, involvement with community police, role in the existing community structure, and income influence engagement to address violence against children and the violence itself. Accordingly, the finding shows that the community is well aware of both the types of violence against children and ways of preventing children from that violence.

One of the major factors influencing the community's engagement in addressing violence against children is its attitude towards various forms of violence. The way the community views VACs that are culturally accepted as normal still poses a challenge to the community's ability to effectively address violence against children. The community's silence about some forms of violence against children stems from its attitude towards various forms of violence, which leads to a high prevalence of violent actions and thoughts perceived as normal, despite erroneous cultural narratives. However, if the community condemns and exposes all violent actions and beliefs that put children at risk of violence, the frequency of violence against children can decrease.

Community-based structures play a crucial role in empowering the community to independently address their problems. Community members who are willing and able to participate in these settings have a greater chance of gaining awareness and enhancing their ability to engage in addressing violence against children.

Generally, the community is well aware of the types of violence against children and the methods to prevent them, but it is not actively addressing the issue to the best of its ability. Attitude towards violence against children, age, working with

community police, and role in existing community structure are the major predictors of community engagement in addressing violence against children. Religious institutions, educational institutions, community policing services, community-based associations, NGOs, GOs, and legal frameworks are among the various opportunities and settings available in the community to address violence against children.

Recommendation

First and foremost, governmental and nongovernmental organizations must coordinate and organize their efforts, ensuring they have the necessary personnel, resources, and budget. Particularly, governmental organizations should cease focusing solely on campaigns for political purposes and instead adopt a strategy of planned activities that align with their strategic vision.

Second is the proper enforcement of law using approaches like the practical interpretation of laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers, or other caregivers and developing an overarching document that holds Ethiopia's all signed conventions, charters, and laws criminalizing violence against children.

Third, develop culturally and age-appropriate messaging to reinforce positive behaviours and discourage negative ones, and disseminate these messages through context-appropriate low- and high-tech media such as online, text messaging, local radio stations, and loudspeakers. We collaborate with community and religious leaders to increase awareness and foster positive behaviour. We incorporate information on protecting children from violence, abuse, and neglect into general public health messaging, educational platforms, and existing programs. We offer a range of easily accessible resources to parents and caregivers, promoting positive parenting, non-violent discipline, and effective coping and stress management techniques; we also educate various professionals and community leaders about their

responsibilities in recognizing and reporting indications of abuse or neglect.

Fourthly, we can support the income and economic strength of families in distress by assisting community-level child protection workers in delivering child protection services in fragile contexts, adapting and continuing the delivery of services that mitigate risk factors for violence, abuse, and neglect, and strengthening the capacities of the social service workforce to support children and families facing special challenges, such as a caregiver's mental illness, disability, drug dependency, and/or domestic violence.

Fifth, it is better for programs or interventions designed to address violence against children to use the social-ecological model, which serves a dual purpose in this regard, as each level in the model represents a dimension where both risks and opportunities for prevention co-exist.

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