

**EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS AND TEACHERS' ABILITY TO  
DETECT AND SUPPORT AFFECTED CHILDREN. A CASE STUDY OF KAMWENGE  
COLLEGE SCHOOL, KAMWENGE DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND  
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THE AWARD OF A BACHELORS DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL  
ADMINISTRATION OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY KAMPALA.**

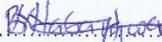
**OCTOBER 2019**

**DECLARATION**

I **NABAIGWA NYAKAKE BRIDGET**, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been presented for publication or award of a degree to any other institution of learning but is being submitted in partial fulfillment for the award in a bachelor's degree of Social Work and Social Administration from Makerere University.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with approval of;

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Date... Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 .....

Signature...  .....

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Mutalya for the unending support, encouragement and guidance.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank the Almighty God for the protection, guidance and wisdom that helped me successfully conduct this research. Am grateful to the Department of Social Work and Social Administration for giving me the opportunity to conduct my research. I whole heartedly would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Mugumya Firminus for the continued support, guidance and words of encouragement from the beginning of my research process until the end. May the good Lord bless you for me.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study was conducted at Kamwenge college school in Kamwenge district. The study was aimed to find out how teachers are able to identify learners with emotional challenges. The study also examined how the relationship between teachers and students helps to address their emotional challenges, and the measures that teachers take to help these students that have been identified with emotional challenges. The study adopted an exploratory and cross sectional research design and used qualitative methods based on a conveniently determined of eight teachers and a focus group discussion with students. The study found out that teachers did not deliberately care focus on the emotional challenges of the students. The teachers instead mainly focused on the behavioral-conduct of learners in the framework of school rules and regulations. They tried as much as they could to make sure that students are "well behaved". The study also recommends that the Ministry of Education and Sports ensures that every school has a Social Worker that would help address the emotional challenges of the students/learners.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
OCD	Obsessive compulsive disorder
UBOS	Uganda bureau of Statistics
HIV	Humane immune virus
VAC	Violence against children
WHO	World Health Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
AIDs	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction

The study seeks to understand emotional challenges of learners and the teachers' ability to detect and support these learners most especially in adolescents. A case study of Kamwenge college school in Kamwenge district will be used in this research. This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, justification and the significance of the study.

### 1.2 Background

In Uganda, most people including teachers have a perception that young children do not suffer from emotional challenges most especially those with both parents. They believe that they should have nothing to worry about since everything is provided to them. The majority of students with emotional challenges sit undetected in their classrooms Martin et al (2003)

Becton Loveless (Education corner 2009) defined emotional challenge as a condition of exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and marked degrees that adversely affect a child's education performance

- An inability to learn that can't be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors
- An inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers, teachers and family
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- A general pervasive mood or feeling of depression and unhappiness
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms of fear associated with personal problems or school problems

According to Diane T Marsh (2004, 443-448) approximately 4.5 to 6.3 million children and adolescents in the United States have a serious emotional disturbance that undermines their present functioning and imperils their future. Though there is a big number of a child faced with emotional challenges, many communities do not have services that can help better the lives of these children.

In this report, serious emotional disturbance encompasses certain diagnostic categories including autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder(ADHD), obsessive compulsive disorder(OCD) and other severe anxiety disorders, major depressive disorders, bipolar disorders, and schizophrenia. Some of the emotional disorders are typically diagnosed in childhood for example autism and ADHD. However, other emotional disturbances such as bipolar and schizophrenia are sometimes viewed as adult disorders despite their frequent onset in adolescence (Rapoport 2002). Therefore, sometimes these disorders are neglected in the literature concerned with child and adolescent psychopathology as well as professional training. When adolescents speak of their experiences with emotional challenges, they mention their suffering and desperation, their sense of being marked, invisible and very alone, their awareness of going crazy and of being such a disappointment Mowbray et al (2002). According to Reingeisen et al (2002), recent years have seen dramatic increase in our understanding of successful strategies for the identification and diagnosis of serious emotional disturbances disorders and for their treatment and service provision. In Reingeisen et al (2002) review noted the availability of a variety of efficacious interventions including psychosocial and psychopharmacological treatments, integrated community and prevention services and school based approaches. Children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances often experience problems in schools. Marsh et al (2002)

Serious emotional challenges or disturbance could result into functional impairment which sub sequentially interferes with the child's role or functionality in family, school or community activities (Federal register notice, 58FR29425, May 20)

In Uganda most teachers are not concerned with the emotional wellbeing of their learners since they believe their only role is to teach them. They tend to focus more on the behavioral disorders of the children and ignore their emotional needs and wellbeing. Most teachers believe that they are not in position to look after children with emotional challenges as they believe that it's a medical issue or rather for councilors

According to the workshop presentation by Merikangas (2015), it was asserted that female teachers are more concerned and easily acquainted with identifying children faced with emotional challenges compared to their male counterparts.

However, in the quest to collect information to measure children's serious emotional challenges, the survey was tied to the DMS system which was found out having limited predictive or biological validity. In addition to this, Merikangas noted that there is increased dissatisfaction with the DMS-5, in particular for certain applications because it's not particular for certain because it's not typically used outside the United States of America and other countries adopted to use the international classification of diseases which has created a rift in the method of classifying various disabilities including emotional challenges. (Merikangas, 2015)

Finally, the inconsistency in the reporting is dependent on the informant and the lack of data from teachers is a major limitation.

According to Becton Loveless (Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in the classroom), students that are diagnosed with emotional disorders are often included in general education classrooms. However, severe cases often require students to be taught in special education units or challenges.

According to current research, it is in kindergarten where a child's brain development occurs. These are the first 6 years of a child, therefore education during these years is very important and so anything that happens at children within this age can have a great impact on their lives. It is also said that children who receive education at an early age usually experience improved emotional development since they can interact with their peers and teacher

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Education is a very important aspect of the life of an individual and therefore it's vital that everybody acquires education. This is why Uganda set a law to ensure that all Ugandans get access to education article 34 of the 1995 constitution of the republic of Uganda states that children have a right to basic education. Therefore, children in school ought to be supported physically, emotionally and psychologically by their teachers. While teachers have tried to support their learners physically, they have done this in disregard for the emotional aspect of their learners' wellbeing.

In many schools it is noticed that many teachers do not put emphasis on the emotional challenges of learners since they believe that it is not their role to identify and address these challenges. This raises questions as to whether they understand that learners' outward behavior to which teachers

aim to correct may be triggered by emotional disturbances from other settings in school, at home or elsewhere in the surroundings of the children.

#### **1.4 General objective of the study**

To find out how and whether teachers are able to identify learners with emotional disturbances and what they do to address such problems.

#### **1.5 Specific objectives.**

1. To find out how teachers identify learners faced with emotional challenges.
2. To understand what teachers do to help the learners identified to have emotional disturbances.
3. To find out how the relationship between teachers and their learners stifles or helps to address emotional challenges learners are faced with.

#### **1.6 Research questions**

1. To what extent are learners affected by emotional challenges
2. What methods do teachers employ to identify learners with emotional challenges?
3. Do teachers understand what emotional challenges are?
4. Are teachers able to help their learners that have been identified to be having emotional challenges?

#### **1.7 Justification of the study.**

Most people do not believe that young children most especially those below the age of 6 years can also suffer from emotional challenges. They believe that they do not understand what is really going on around them. Even teachers themselves do not focus on the emotional part of the learners but rather on the behavioral part.

Therefore, this study will help teachers to understand that school going children can also suffer emotional challenges which can affect them for the rest of their lives if not handled with care.

### **1.8 Significance of the study.**

The information gained from the study may further more attract researchers to research about children's life in school and also come up with lasting solutions to improve the welfare of learners in schools.

The study may be used by policy analysts to come up with different policies and design programs and intervention strategies that can be used to help students with emotional challenges in schools.

It may also attract researchers to research about the wellbeing of learners in schools at other levels for example primary, secondary and universities so as to come up with different solutions to help them have a comfortable life while in school.

### **1.9 Scope of the study.**

This study sought to understand if teachers can identify learners with emotional challenges. The study was carried out to understand the forms of emotional challenges faced by learners. Are the learners able to know that they are not doing well emotionally? Are the children able to express themselves and talk about their challenges if approached? The study was conducted at Kamwenge College School in Kamwenge district. The study considered both girls and boys and also teachers since the learners spend a lot of their time interacting with their teachers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The main purpose of carrying out literature review is to find out what different researchers have found out concerning a particular topic that is going to be researched about. It identifies the gap that has not yet been covered or where information about a topic is lacking. Literature review helps give the researcher an insight about what information has been gathered by different researchers about a particular topic. It also introduces and guides the reader about what to expect in the study that has been carried out. Therefore, this literature review presents related information about how teachers are involved in the emotional lives of their learners.

#### 2.2 causes of emotional challenges in young learners

Violence against children survey (2015) stated that if children are exposed to violence in school and home environments, the goal of properly educating all Ugandan children will be compromised Janet b Mukwaya (2015). It's therefore important to protect learners from all forms of abuse, deprivation that could translate into emotional disturbance in the long or short run

One in every three girls suffered sexual violence during childhood. 7 and 10 boys suffered physical abuse which could have effects like contemplation of suicide, sexual violence and mental distress which can all be enrooted to the emotional challenges these learners failed to address with the influential help of older people in the society who are charged with the responsibility of looking after these little ones.

Over 55% of Uganda's population is comprised of young people who are under the age of 18(UBOS, 2014) yet 8% of these children are orphaned due to the high prevalence of mortality caused by HIV (CDC, 2010) and this forces many of them to get engaged in child labor in order to be able to sustain their lives by earning a living in agriculture and as domestic workers (UDHS, 2011). This also creates one of the major problems in the country which is school dropouts (UBOS, 2014)

Despite efforts by the government of Uganda to protect children and other vulnerable groups from any kinds of abuse, harassment and safeguard them from social or economic exploitation, there is still continued disrespect to children's rights and such abuse has led to emotional distress of young learners

Per the Uganda children Act (amendment 2016) , violence means any form of physical emotional or mental injury or abuse neglect, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse, intentional use of physical force, or power, threatened or actual, against an individual which may result into high likelihood of resulting into injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

Sexual violence is defined as including all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. This encompasses a range of acts including completed nonconsensual sex acts, attempted nonconsensual sex acts and abusive sexual contact. This also included the exploitive use of children for sex. In this survey questions were posed for various types of sexual abuse as well as sexual exploitation and how they emotionally affect young children (Uganda violence against children survey,, 2015).

#### Sexual abuse

##### Attempted forced or pressured sex

Has anyone ever tried to make you have sex against your will but did not succeed? They might have tried to physically force you to have sex or they might have tried to pressure you to have sex through harassment, threats or tricks. This negatively impairs a child's thinking and trails of trauma follow the young learners for a long duration of their lives emotionally when such instances are recalled

##### Physical violence

It is defined as the intentional use of physical force with the potential to cause death, injury, or harm. VACS Uganda indicators of physical violence include punching, beating, kicking, whipping, strangling, suffocating, attempted drowning, intentional burning, using or threatening with a knife, gun or any other weapon. This reduces concentration ability of pupils, students and

other groups of young people. It brings about constant fear about what might happen to them in case they are in contact with the perpetrators.

### Emotional violence

It is defined as a pattern as verbal behavior over time or an isolated incident that is not developmentally appropriate and supportive and that has a high probability of damaging a child's mental health or his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. In the Uganda violence against child survey (2015) we specifically asked about emotional acts of violence perpetrated by parents, adult care givers or other adult relatives.

Puberty is accomplished by physical, psychological and emotional changes adapted d to ensure reproductive and parenting success (The lancet, 2007). Human puberty stands out in the animal world for its association with brain maturation and physical growth. Its effects on health and wellbeing are profound and paradoxical. On the other hand, physical maturation propels an individual into adolescence with peaks in strength, speed and fitness. Clinicians have viewed puberty as appoint of maturing out of childhood onset conditions to adulthood. However, puberty relevance for health has shirtd with a modern rise in psychosocial disorders of young people. It marks a transition in risks or depression and other emotional challenges for learners undergoing such a phase in their lives. When bodily changes such as deepening of the voice in males, growth of pubic hair and facial hair starts among the boys, they may feel out of place from the rest of their peers causing emotional distress as they try to always prevent being among other people, try to hide these changes by cutting off beards among others .the females start to grow breasts, and start menstruation which may be traumatizing because other classmates and peers find such people who have started experiencing such changes at an early age as having a problem ,sometimes ,such learners may be made fun of while in group conversations, used as examples in class and this affects such children by negatively influencing their self-esteem among peers

The lancet (2007) also describes adolescence as a phase in which the opportunities for health are great and future patterns of adult health are established

The age of onset adolescence and puberty is decreasing and the age at which mature social roles are achieved is rising. New understandings of the dynamic effects on adolescent health include insights of how puberty affects brain development together with social media. A focus on

adolescents is central to the success of many public health agendas and its part of the millennium developmental goals aiming at reducing child and maternal mortality as well as protecting the rights and freedoms of children an article in the media publications adolescence, A foundation for future health's sawyer, (Afifi et al 2012)

Psychosomatic syndromes, substance misuse and antisocial behaviors also contribute to the distortion of a child's wellbeing g at this stage of their lives.

For the global the global burden of diseases, injuries and risk factor study of 2015(GDB, 2015), we estimated the incidence, prevalence and years lived with disability for diseases and injuries at the global, regional and national scale over the period of 1990 to 2015 non-fatal outcome of disease and injury increasingly detract from the ability of the world's population to live in full health. A trend largely attributed to epidemiological transitions in many countries from causes affecting children to non-communicable diseases more common in adults. Chronic illnesses that cause learners to always be prone to falling sick and sometimes being sent out of the learning environments to seek further medical treatment because of inability of the school's administration to handle their cases. Some children always attract public pity as they are constantly bed ridden or sometimes miss classes due to these illnesses. Taking in case children with sickle cell disease find it hard to blend into the school environment. These children who had a history of repeated hospitalization are at an increased risk of developing behavioral problems. (Saudi J anaesth 2014). This could be because they are always subjected to painful medical procedures and they feel like a burden to society and they tend to want to be away from the crowd which affects them emotionally because they feel lonely.

However psychological support, social support and proper pain management could minimize these appalling consequences

Young people represent 27% of the world's population and these are in the age bracket of 10 to 14 years of age yet this age carries a large number of the global burden of diseases arising in young people and the contribution of risk factor to that burden. (WHO's global burden of disease study, 2004)

In 2015, a total of 107.7 million children and 603.7 million adults were obese, since 1980, the prevalence of obesity has doubled in more than 70 counties and has continuously increased in other

countries. Although the prevalence of obesity amongst children has been lower than that among adults, the rate of increase in the number of obese children today is at an alarming rate. This means that many children today weigh much more than what an average healthy child is supposed to weigh. (New England journal of medicine, 2017), (GDB, 2015 obesity collaborators)

Young people are sleeping less. Short durations of sleep have a range of negative consequences including a hypnotized link with psychological distress which is yet to be studied (oxford university press).

(Short sleep duration in prevalent and persistent psychological distress in young adults, 2010) highlighted that shorter sleep durations were linearly associated with prevalent psychological distress

Although the association between marital conflict and child adjustment problems has been well documented, there is no empirical evidence that conflict actually causes maladjustment. The investigation of causation requires theoretically and empirically informed longitudinal research. Two topics are addressed to facilitate such research. First how marital conflict may lead to adjustment problems with a focus on constructs that is likely to be critical to any theory on this topic. Secondly, several issues are identified that need to be addressed in longitudinal research on the mechanisms underlying the link between marital and child problems. (Journal of family psychology8 (2), 128, 1994

Stress is a function of demands placed on us and our ability to meet them. These demands are often from outside sources like friends, family, jobs, school, but it can come from within, often related to what we think should be doing verses what we are actually able to do

Stress can affect anyone who feels overwhelmed, even children. In preschoolers, separation from parents can cause anxiety. As kids get older, academic and social pressures (especially from trying to fit in creates stress) Many children are too busy to have play creatively, or even relax after school. Kids who complain about their activities or who refuse to go to school might be overscheduled. When children hear their parents talk about troubles at work, or at home, or financial issues, children tend to pick up parental anxieties and start to worry about them on their own.

### **2.3 How teachers able to identify learners faced with emotional challenges**

Emotional challenges are among the most common health issues that affect school age children which are likely to affect their academic performance. Tasha Rube (April 2008). Therefore, failure to identify these challenges can lead to lifelong problems. It is very vital for teachers to understand how to work effectively with their students that are faced with emotional challenges. According to a research carried out in South Africa by the United Nations in April 2014, it is said that over 12million children orphaned in sub Saharan African that lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS are at a risk of suffering from emotional challenges that may include stress and anxiety. Carla Sharp (2014) it is not easy to identify children with emotional challenges especially in Africa. This is because most people and care givers are not culturally aware of the emotional and behavioral disorders. Through the report conducted by Carla Sharp, substance abuse among care givers and poverty and violence are the leading causes of emotional challenges amongst children. She also notes that it is very difficult for teachers to identify and deal with children that are emotionally challenged and therefore it is important to include the parents and community members.

In Uganda poor emotional and behavioral outcome of children are related to them having HIV/AIDs (June 2015).

Terry. J. Tibbelts (2013) students that present a significant danger to self or others and if they are actively suicidal or homicidal then they can be taken as those emotionally challenged. Teachers can identify learners with emotional challenges by asking their fellow teachers about the behavior of particular learners. According to UNICEF 2014 children that have been affected by sexual violence, physical violence is more likely to suffer from emotional challenges.

Emotional Disturbance (2017) gives characteristics that children who are emotionally challenged may possess. Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness), aggression or self-injury behavior (acting out, fighting), withdraw (not interacting socially with others, exercise fear or anxiety), immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills) and learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level). Many children may exhibit one or more of the above characteristics but it does not mean they are emotionally challenged, but those that display them for over long periods of time.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research design, study area, study population, data collection methods, tools, challenges faced during the research process and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study was a cross sectional study which employed an exploratory qualitative approach to generate in-depth information about emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children. In addition, the combining of two data collection methods that is to say structured interviews and focus group discussions enriched, explained, and triangulated data which ensured more understanding of the topic of study.

#### **3.3 Study Area**

The study was conducted at Kamwenge College School in Ganyenda Parish which is about 4km from Kamwenge town in Kamwenge district. The school has approximately 400 students and 40 members of staff. Students in the school are mostly from low income families and the school has both a boarding and day section.

The study particularly focused on emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children at Kamwenge College School. And the researcher chose Kamwenge College School as her study area because of her past experience in the school where she worked as an intern; the researcher identified a gap on whether teachers are able to identify emotional challenges among their learners thus deciding to carry out research on it.

#### **3.4 Study Population**

The study comprised of students from the school who participated in the focus group discussions. The students who participated in the focus group discussions were from lower secondary (form 2 class) and upper secondary (form 5 class) and the researcher used the two classes to have a representation from both lower and upper secondary. The study also included teachers from the

school who were interviewed to gain more information about the topic of study and these were regarded as my key informants.

### **3.5 Sampling techniques**

The researcher used both random and purposive sampling. Random sampling was used to select students who participated in the focus group discussions where the researcher went to the classes of S.2 and S.5 and selected randomly 10 students from each class and they discussed about the topic of study while purposive sampling was used to select teachers to participate in the interviews.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

Data was collected through personal interviews; the researcher used open ended questions which she had designed in an interview guide. The personal interviews were conducted up on fixed appointments with the teachers who participated in the study.

The researcher also used focus group discussions to collect data about her topic of study from students where the study topic was discussed by use of themes that were designed in a focus group discussion guide. The themes of the focus group discussions were “what have teachers done to help learners better their emotional wellbeing” and “how would the relationship between a teacher and student help to improve on their emotional wellbeing”

Data collection was conducted for 6 days and I conducted each interview for about 30 minutes while the focus group discussions were conducted for about 1 hour. Both responses from the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded on a device with consent from the respondents. I also took some interview notes where I recorded responses from the key informants (teachers).

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was preceded by transcribing the interviews and focus group discussions which is transformation of recorded information from a device into written format. After transcribing, I carefully read through my work to identify key themes emerging through the transcribed data.

I organized my work into themes basing on my different objectives.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

My study applied research ethics by first preparing a proposal and acquiring of an introductory letter from the department that acted as an informed consent while in the field.

During data collection, I sought for permission from the school administration to interview teachers and also to engage students in the focus group discussions. I also sought permission from the participants that is to say the students and teachers. I ensured privacy and confidentiality of the respondents that is protecting the respondent's initials and personal information from the public during and after data collection.

### **3.9 Challenges during the study**

A number of challenges arose during the process of data collection.

Inadequate resources in terms of finances, this was a limitation to the research process.

It was also hard to access printer services which increased on my expenses as well as it increased on the time spent during data collection.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, INTERPRENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter shows characteristics of respondents, study findings and discussions of the study. The study was conducted at Kamwenge College School in Kamwenge district with the main purpose of finding out emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children. The study was organized around three specific objectives that were set up to explore emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children. The exploratory study included eight (8) teachers and twenty-two (22) students through a random sampling technique from within the area of the study. The data was collected through a structured interview with open ended questions for teachers and held group focus discussions which were recorded on a device with the consent from the respondents. The information collected from the group focus discussions was also recorded on a device.

#### **4.2 Characteristics of key respondents**

The exploratory qualitative study comprised of eight (8) key respondents who were the teachers. Four science teachers who included two females and two males. Four (4) art teachers of which 4 were male and 4 were females. All the participants of the study were from within the school. The other respondents (students) these participated in the focus group discussion, twelve students were from the lower level while ten (10) students were from the upper level.

### **4.3 Are teachers able to identify students faced with emotional challenges?**

This was the main objective of this study. To achieve this objective a number of questions were asked to obtain whether the respondents were really able to identify emotional challenges or not. This section was arranged under the following themes,

#### **4.3.1 What respondents understand by emotional challenges?**

##### **4.3.1.1 What teachers understand by emotional challenges**

According to Loveless (2019), emotional challenges can be defined as a general pervasive mood or feeling of depression and unhappiness or a tendency to develop physical symptoms of fear associated with personal problems or school problems.

From the findings it shows that most of the teachers did not understand what emotional challenges were. Most teachers did not know what emotional challenges were, instead they defined them as behavioral changes that individuals present due to problems faced both at home and school. For example one of the teachers said that

*"I cannot really explain what emotional challenges are but I think they are associated with the way students behave. Most especially those that cannot abide by the school rules, they are always caught doing wrong and are very stubborn."*

This justifies as to why most of the help provided in the counseling and guidance department at the school relies on the social aspects of life like drug abuse, relationships and academic performance so that students can change from negative behavioral practices to positive behavioral practices. This is correspondent to Mundasad (2015) who argued that most teachers focus more on conduct and behavioral issues as these tend to disrupt classrooms.

Another teacher described emotional challenges as,

*"[Emotional challenges] are emotions that students may face and disrupt their minds or this is how someone behaves when they are faced with a [challenge]"*

From the response above, it shows that most teachers do not actually understand what emotional challenges are as they look at them as behavioral and conduct issues which bring about poor behavior in and outside the classrooms.

#### **4.3.1.2 What students understand by emotional challenges**

The findings showed that the students could not understand emotional challenges Most of them linked it to conduct issues. For instance one of the students defined it as follows

*"This is when one does not feel well. The person does not feel like leaving the dormitory, they want to sleep all the time.*

Another student said that

*"Students who are stubborn and are always caught escaping, [drinking alcohol] and breaking school rules are the ones that are challenged."*

#### **4.3.2 What emotional problems afflict the students?**

From the study findings it is indicated that girls are more affected by emotional challenges than boys. This is because they are more exposed to problems that bring about emotional challenges like sexual violence, menstruation, domestic violence and poverty. This makes girls more vulnerable to emotional challenges.

##### **4.3.2.1 Problems related to menstruation**

This challenge was related to girls since they are the ones that go through this stage. Most teachers related most of the emotional challenges to girls that are under this stage since it is a very challenging stage.

For example, one of the teachers said that;

*"Girls are more affected by emotional challenges compared to the boys since they are faced with many issues that could cause the emotional challenges. For example, they*

*have relationship problems from the opposite sex, go through adolescence stage like menstruation since they do not have people to guide them on how to take care of themselves. Most girls in this school cannot even afford sanitary towels. In most cases they are forced to stay at home during this time. This causes a lot of stress to them since their other colleagues are at school, while they are at home and yet have to catch up on the school work.”*

Another teacher said that

*“When girls start menstruation, they are normally attracted to boys. They tend to take care of themselves more. They easily get lied to and hence brings them a lot of challenge most girls engage in sexual intercourse when they start menstruating which may lead them to get pregnant. When they get pregnant, they end up dropping out of school or aborting which does not leave their lives the same.*

This is correspondent to Mundasad (2015), who highlighted that girls are more vulnerable to emotional challenges due to increasing sexualisation of young women and the drive to achieve unrealistic body images perpetuated by social media

#### **4.3.2.1 Other problems related to emotional challenges.**

In addition, study findings show that most of the students who are affected by emotional challenges in the school have problems like inadequate school requirements, lack of school fees, sexual violence, teenage pregnancies and drug abuse which lead to anxiety, stress and depression. For example, one of the teachers said that;

*“These students come from poverty stricken homes. Their parents cannot afford school fees and other requirements. Therefore, they are affected with stress whenever they are chased for school fees and yet their other colleagues are in school learning.”*

Another teacher said that,

*"There is a lot of alcohol abuse in this area. This is why most students that are suspended from school are caught under the influence of drugs. Most of the students abuse drugs*

*because they lack guidance from parents and are always with bad groups. When they are suspended from school, they are always laughed at by their friends and punished by their parents which results into social withdrawal."*

#### **4.3.3 How do teachers identify learners with emotional challenges?**

According to the available research, it is not easy for teachers to identify students faced with emotional challenges, most especially in the third world countries. This is because most people including teachers have a perception that young people or students are not supposed to suffer from emotional challenges since they are still young (Henley et al, 2003) .The authors further highlighted that most teachers are not able to identify learners with emotional challenges because most teachers themselves do not understand what emotional challenges are," majority of the students with emotional challenges sit undetected in their classrooms."

From the study findings, the teacher's responses to questions about if they are able to identify students faced with emotional challenges show that teachers are able to identify students faced with emotional challenges. All of the key respondents (teachers) agreed that they are able to identify students with emotional challenges and this is through looking at how students present themselves, the way they behave and the way they react to different situations. For example, one of the respondents said that;

*"During classes when I am teaching students and I ask a question, students that are absent minded do not answer to the question asked. I call these students emotionally challenged."*

Another teacher said,

*"I am able to identify my students who are faced with emotional challenges by looking at the way they present themselves both inside and outside class. These students tend to be socially withdrawn, they are moody, they perform very poorly in class and they are misbehaved."*

The senior woman who is also a teacher noted that

*"I am able to identify a learner who is emotionally challenged when they approach me and confide in me. For example, a student once wrote me a letter asking for my help to*

*stay in school. She wanted to continue with school but her parents could not afford financially. When I talked to her, I found out that this was causing her a lot of stress which could result into [emotional challenges]*

She continued to say,

*"Even when am in class teaching, I am able to notice some students who are socially withdrawn. You will never see them talk to other classmates; they do not participate in any activities willingly. The most shocking thing is that they never laugh even at funny jokes. [These students definitely have issues affecting them]"*

Findings also show that teachers who have taught in the school for a long time that is to say five (5) years and above are abler to identify learners faced with emotional challenges because they have more experiences with learners and the environment as compared to their counterparts (teachers who have taught for less than 5 years in the school). In addition, the study findings also show that teachers who are full time teachers are able to identify students with emotional challenges since they spend more time with them as compared to the part time teachers.

However, this is contrary to what is on ground, as part of observation, I identified that actually most of the teachers do not understand what emotional challenges are. This is because they rely more on the social and behavioral aspects of the learner's life and tend to ignore their emotional wellbeing. This is to say, they focus on counseling and guiding learners on social aspects like health, drug prevention among others. (Zins et al, 2007).

#### **4.4 How the relationship between learners and teachers helps to reduce on their emotional challenges**

Baker et al (2008) highlighted that the qualities of the teacher-student relationships predict children's successful school adjustments. Having a relationship with a teacher characterized by trust, warmth and low degrees of conflict are associates with positive school outcomes. Positive relationships help to reduce emotional challenges like distress. Hoge Kamp et al (2016) further argue that that an effective quality of teacher-student relationship improves students emotionally

wellbeing, this is because it involves teachers being emotionally positive towards students and setting clear social rules while allowing students to develop their own social norms.

#### **4.4.1 Are teachers interested in helping students identified to have emotional challenges?**

Most of the teachers said they would be glad to offer help to the students that they notice are socially withdrawn from others, those that are aggressive and perform poorly in class and those that are caught in the wrong. For instance one of the teachers said,

*"There are many students that I have been able to help when I noticed they did not act in the (normal) way like others. For example there is one of my students who used perform very poorly in class. He was always the last. I got concerned and invited him to talk to me instead of punishing him like we usually do. I found out that he does not have time to concentrate on his books since he always doing house chores and handling the family business. I talked to his parents and they boy was put in boarding section. I am now happy to announce that he has greatly improved on his performance."*

However, according to the findings, majority of the respondents (students) prefer to approach their parents rather than their teachers due to the strained relationship between them and their teachers. For example, one of the students said that;

*"When I am feeling emotionally challenged, I talk to my parents about it because they listen to me and we find a solution to the challenge that I am facing. Teachers are less helpful because they are tough and always busy"*

Nevertheless, the students agreed that teachers offer help when they are approached with any challenges which also include emotional challenges but students prefer talking to either their parents or friends as compared to their teachers.

This was correspondent to the responses of the key informants (teachers) who agreed that they offer help to students who approach them with their challenges which at times are emotional. For example, one of the teachers said

*“the school has the program for guidance and counseling where students are taught about important topics that could be of use to their lives and students sometimes approach different teachers in case they have a problem most especially the senior woman. Therefore, I always refer students with disturbing issues to the senior woman or man.”*

According to the findings, teachers agreed that positive relationships between teachers and students can help reduce on their emotional challenges. This was mainly from teachers who taught Arts subjects. it was noted that they were more caring to the students’ needs and wellbeing compared to the science teacher. For example one of the science teachers said,

*“Most of the time I have is to teach and make sure that I finish the syllabus and also do other activities like setting of examinations and marking. It is the parent’s role to ensure the emotional wellbeing of their child.”*

Another science teacher said

*"It is important to have social workers like you working with us in schools. It would be you to handle such issues as we the teachers concentrate on teaching"*

#### **4.5 Measures that teachers take to help learners identified to have emotional challenges**

According to Karungi (2008), she highlighted that most schools in Uganda have counseling departments. However, counseling in schools has been ignored due to the fact that schools tend to concentrate more on their academic performance and behavior.

From the findings, it is indicated that the school has counselors that is to say a senior man and a senior woman who provide counseling and guidance to students faced with emotional challenges. However, the counseling and guidance department concentrates more on social aspects of life like drug abuse, relationships ignoring emotional challenges faced by learners.

Tibbett (2013) argues that individual and group counseling are the major measures that teachers provide to students that are faced with emotional challenges and also he suggests that most

institutions offer this expertise to teachers. Counseling is very helpful to students because it helps them to make productive life choices. This is correspondent to the study findings which show that the school mainly offers guidance and counseling to students who are faced with emotional challenges. For example, one of the respondents said that;

*“The school has a counseling and guidance department comprised of a senior woman and a senior man for girls and boys respectively. The school also arranges class meetings where several problems of students are raised from the students to the administration and hence getting solutions for their challenges.”*

Findings also show that teachers suggest that in order to address emotional challenges faced by students, parents should work hand in hand with teachers so that they improvise on how to help students with emotional challenges. For example one of the respondents said;

*“It is important for teachers to work hand in hand with parents to help students with emotional challenges since most of the issues that cause these challenges are from home and also parents understand their children more as compared to teachers.”*

This is in accordance to Mental Health America (2019) where it is highlighted that teachers keeping open lines of communication with parents will create consistency in working with students who have emotional struggles; this is because parents are able to see behaviors at home that teachers are not able to see at school. This therefore suggests that combined efforts between teachers and parents can help to solve emotional challenges faced by learners.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

This study was set to find out emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children. It was conducted at Kamwenge College School in Kamwenge district.

#### **5.2 Summary of key findings**

The findings showed that most teachers are not able to identify learners with emotional challenges. This was because most teachers do not understand what emotional challenges are. They focused more on conduct and behavior issues.

The study findings showed that positive relationships between teachers and their learners help to improve on the emotional challenges of students. The reason for this is that students are comfortable with their teachers and they can easily open up to them. This was in line with the literature review that agreed that positive relationships between learners and their teachers improve on their emotional challenges.

Literature review showed that most schools give counseling and guidance to their students, this was in contrary to my findings since they showed that schools focus more on guidance and disciplining students rather than counseling. However, the school had a senior woman and man who are responsible for guidance and counseling.

#### **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study was to find out emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support affected children in schools. The study was able to fulfill the objectives that were set. It was also able to answer the research questions on how the positive relationships between teachers and their learners help to reduce on the emotional challenges that the students face. From the findings, teachers said they able to identify students with emotional challenges. However, from my observation and literature review, it shows that teachers are not able to identify students with emotional challenges and this is because they do not know the true definition of

emotional challenges. The findings showed that the teachers looked at the behavioral and conduct issues and these are the ones they referred to as emotional challenges. So where does this leave the students with critical emotional challenges in schools since teachers are not able to identify them? The question is, will these students be able to function normally like the other students who do not have emotional challenges? How will their social, academic and emotional life be like since they do not get help from the teachers to address their emotional challenges?

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

From the study, it is indicated that teachers are not able to identify emotional challenges faced by students and this is because they do not know the definition of what emotional challenges are. Therefore, I call upon the Ministry of Education and Sports to design a policy where social workers are a necessity for a school to operate. This is because social workers are trained to understand and find solutions to people who are faced with emotional challenges; this will greatly improve the academic performance of learners as well as enhance their wellbeing.

From the interactions with learners, I found out that most of the challenges that make them emotionally challenged stem from home, therefore I recommend that parents should work hand in hand with teachers to address these challenges so that students can function normally without emotional disruptions.

According to this study, most schools have the guidance and counseling department; however, the counselors that work in the department are not qualified. Therefore, I call up on schools to put more emphasis on the Guidance and Counseling department through employing trained counselors who can help address emotional challenges faced by learners.

I also call up on the Department of Social Work and Social Administration to encourage students to do their field work in schools. This is because schools are faced with many challenges which teachers and the school administration cannot entirely handle but social workers can.

The study raised a number of questions which were not answered by my findings like will students whose emotional challenges are not addressed be able to function normally like the other students who do not have emotional challenges? How will their social, academic and emotional life be like since they do not get help from the teachers to address their emotional challenges? Therefore, I call up on other researchers to carry out studies to address the questions raised in my study.

I call up on the University to provide financial support to students so as to facilitate them during their research which will help them to better their dissertation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: methodology matrix table

objectives	What am in interested in per each objective	Sources of data or information	Methods of data collection.
To find out if teachers are able to identify learners faced with emotional challenges and how they identify them.	Are teachers able to identify their learners that have emotional challenges? And if yes, how do they identify them?	Teachers	Personal interview Observation
To understand what teachers do to help learners identified to have emotional challenges.	How do teachers support these learners identified to have emotional challenges	Teachers Students	Structured interview Questionnaire Story telling Observation
To find out how the relationship between teachers and learners helps to reduce on their emotional challenges.	Do positive relationships between students and their teachers help to reduce on their emotional challenges?	Teachers Students or friends Parents.	Questionnaire Personal interview Structured interviews Story telling.

**Appendix II: Interview guide.**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

My name is Nabaigwa Nyakake Bridget, a student of Makerere University pursuing a bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration. I am on an academic purpose to collect data about a research concerning emotional challenges of learners and teachers' ability to detect and support children in schools. This information will be used in my dissertation which is in fulfillment for the requirements so as to attain a bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration.

I therefore would like to seek your permission to take part of this study. Whatever we discuss shall be between us and the information will not be shared with any other party. Your name and identity will be of outmost privacy. A number of questions will be used as a guide for this research, I therefore ask for your permission to record this conversation.

You are free to ask any questions. Thank you so much for your time and support.

1. For how long have you been teaching in this school?
2. What subjects do you teach?
3. Are you a part time or full time teacher?
4. Basing on your knowledge and current interaction with students, how would you define emotional challenges?
5. During your interaction with students in the classroom and during co curricular activities, have you identified learners with emotional challenges?
6. If yes, how were you able to identify them
7. How would you handle a scenario where a student approached you any challenge?
8. According to your experience, which category of students is affected most with emotional challenges?
9. What are the common signs that students with emotional challenges portray that you are able to identify and deduce that they are emotionally challenged
10. As a teacher, do you think positive relationships between teachers and students would help reduce on the challenges that they face while at school?

11. Does the school administration provide for guidance and counseling sessions away from the normal curriculum?
12. What do you think could be the main causes of emotional challenges among learners?
13. What is your say about schools having qualified school social workers as part of the school team?
14. Among teachers and parents, whom do you think should have the largest responsibility to see that students are doing well?
15. Would you consider this research helpful?

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.**