



# Social Workers' Values and Child Protection Interventions in Kajiado North Sub County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *The study sought to explore the influence of social worker values on Child protection interventions in Kajiado North Sub-County. It was guided by eclectic theory and used mixed method design, specifically convergent parallel. Census was used for two categories while for the rest purposive and random sampling techniques were used. 223 respondents were selected; 9 administrators, 18 social workers, 183 Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVCs) sampled and 16 key informants. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides, focused group discussion guides and key informants guides. Quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS and presented by use of descriptive statistics while qualitative was done using thematic concepts and verbatim expressions. The results indicated that the major social work values (service, social justice, Dignity and worth of the child, Importance of human relationships, and Competence) influenced appropriate child protection interventions and social worker's attitude is key and compliments them. For OVCs social worker fighting for their rights, going an extra mile to help them, respecting their opinion and giving them room to decide on matters concerning themselves was very important to them. The recommendations include; social workers, need to make deliberate efforts to engage children, show them love, care, understanding and treat them like their own children; Employers should engage professional social workers since children are sensitive and require a social worker with the right training, experience, attitude, character and conduct; obtain regular feedback from OVCs and ensure they undertake background check to establish social workers suitability to work with children.*

**Keywords:** *Social workers, Social workers values, Social worker interventions, Child protection. Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVCs)*

## 1. Introduction

Social workers being the core professionals are ideally supposed to determine and provide appropriate child protection interventions and are supposed to be competent in dealing with child protection issues. This is the only way for them to effectively offer appropriate child protection interventions that include provision of basic needs, rescue services, counseling services, family strengthening and protection from violence. The Government of Kenya has made great efforts towards protecting children. They have put in place Laws like the Kenyan Constitution 2010, Article 53 and the Children Act 2001. It also includes the National Plan of Action for Children in Kenya, 2015-2022 which states priorities and interventions towards realization of rights of children in

Kenya as well as provides a framework to guide effective coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring programmes children. And also includes the Strengthening Child Protection in Kenya: Programme Strategy 2011-2014 whose goal was to strengthen Kenya's child protection system as well as improve the quality and access of services for children at risk or experiencing abuse, abandonment or separation, neglect or exploitation. Despite these efforts which also regulate agencies working with children like the Children Act, 2001, Part V among others. Many of these agencies are still handling children without being registered neither is it known the caliber of staff handling these children.

Globally children in need of protection receive insufficient services from professionals and continue to experience

poor outcomes (cited by Hope & Wyk, (2018). The total number of children in need of care and protection globally is unknown except for attempts based on specific categories. For example, Petrowskia, Cappaa, & Gross (2017) estimate that approximately 2.7 million children between ages 0-17 years could be living in residential and foster care across the world; UNICEF (2017) in their brochure on global statistics on children's protection from violence exploitation and abuse, state that as of 2014, there were 29 million children in Female Genital Mutilation/cut, 62 million children with child discipline issues, 120 million children with child marriage cases. In South Africa, as stated by Hsiao, Ward & Ganz. (2017), higher levels of violence are faced by South African children compared to the global trend where, for example, one in five children (19.8%) experienced sexual abuse, one in three (34.4%) physical abuse, and one in six (16.1%) emotional abuse. On the other hand, in Rwanda, as stated in the Violence against Children and Youth Survey (VACYS) of 2015-2016, 5 in 10 girls and 6 in 10 boys experience at least one form of violence – sexual, physical or emotional – before age 18.

In Kenya, as stated in the *Taking child protection to the next level in Kenya, case study report* (2015) by Government of Kenya, UNICEF & Global Affairs Canada, in terms of violence against children, 76% children have experienced at least one type of violence which includes sexual, physical or emotional before attaining 18 years. The report states that 2 in 3 girls and 3 in 4 boys have undergone at least one episode of physical violence. Some of these children find themselves locked up in cells with adults, others are placed in permanent alternative family care instead of tracing their parents or families, and others are removed from their local community in the name of sponsorship instead of receiving support while within their families and their communities. As stated by the Cabinet Secretary (CS) for Labour and Social protection, Kenya, about 40,000 to 45,000 children are in homes, shelters and orphanages placed there by their families. (Osen (2019, May 18-19)). All these establish the existence of a grave gap and sets pace for this study. In Africa, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Nigeria are currently the only African countries that have policies and legislation to regulate social workers and their competencies. In East African community (EAC) context, social workers legislation is not enacted neither are there any specific policies to guide their competencies for child protection intervention. This has led to abuse of the practice where people without social work training undertake social work responsibilities. There is further, no known research in

Kenya conducted specifically on social workers competence on child protection interventions and hence the reason this study was undertaken.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Social workers are the main professionals charged with making decisions on appropriate child protection interventions and should therefore have the right social work training values to perform their duties and responsibilities competently. This has however, not been the case based on the inappropriate child protection intervention decisions made for children. These inappropriate decisions include removing children from their families and local communities into children's homes for sponsorship purpose, locking up children in the same cell with adults and prioritizing placement of children in permanent alternative family (adoption) instead of tracing their families denying these children their right to be cared for by their families. These, among other children maltreatment, have been worsened by the fact that there are no laws specific to social worker's competence values in handling these children. In the absence of clear laws and policies, children are exposed to abuse and other forms of violence and miss out on appropriate child protection interventions. As a consequence, many of these children have ended up being sexually and physically abused, exploited as child laborers and even permanently separated from their families and communities, a state if not urgently addressed will rob this country of future happy and healthy adults. These and above all the fact that there was scanty information close to or relating to appropriate child protection interventions and the competence values of social workers providing these interventions led to this study. The study therefore, sought to address these gaps by undertaking it in Kajiado North Sub County, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study sought to explore social workers' values to establish if they influence child protection interventions in selected orphans and other vulnerable children and has made recommendations towards addressing the above gaps.

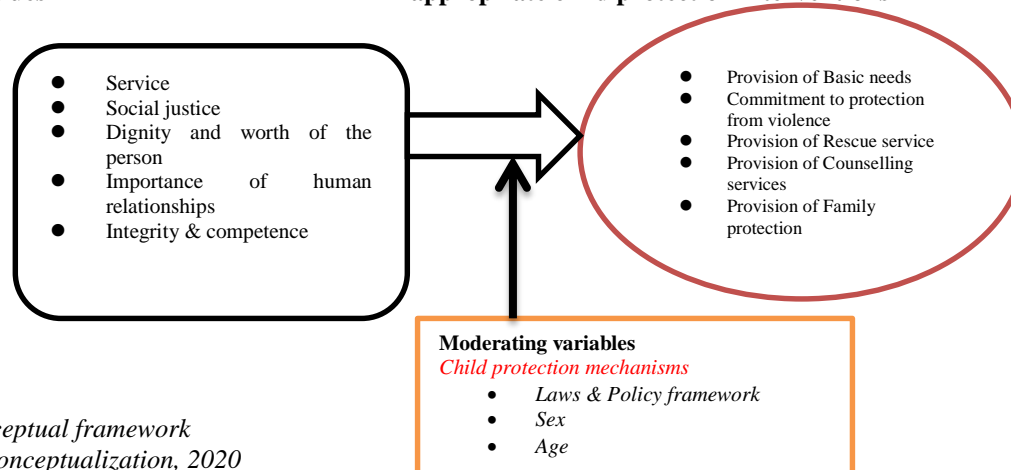
### **1.2.1 Research Question**

The study sought to respond to the question: To what extent does Social Workers' value influence child protection in Kajiado North Sub County, Kenya.

## **1.3 Conceptual framework**

**Independent variable**  
**Social work values**

**Dependent variable**  
**appropriate child protection interventions**



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**  
**Source: Own conceptualization, 2020**

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Social workers’ values that influence child protection interventions

According to Oyserman (2015, p.36) “values are internalized cognitive structures that guide choices by evoking a sense of basic principles of right and wrong , a sense of priorities, and create a willingness to make meaning and see patterns” In other words values influence behavior and choice. Social work profession’s commitment to its values is one of the profound differences to other professions and as stated in the NASW (1996) provide “the foundation of social work’s unique purpose and perspective.” The professions values are stipulated in the code of ethics out of which different countries domestic it in their specific social work laws and policies which Kenya does not have.

In absence of specific laws and policies and other guidelines that guide social workers on the specific competence values for providing appropriate child protection interventions, this study was carried out. This was informed by the fact that social workers response to their clients is partially determined by their fundamental professional values, ethical principles and policy. This illustrates how the maintenance of professional identity and values relate to practice. This was reported by Bergman & Werner, (2016) in their study which was aimed at exploring the applicability of the attribution model to social workers’ attributions towards clients with dual diagnosis of intellectual disability and psychiatric illness. 279 social workers in Northern Israel, participated by completing questionnaires. This study brought out the

importance of social work values as a part of the determinants to the interventions that a social worker provides to clients. However, there was a need to carry out the current research because their research was carried out among social workers dealing with mental illness and not OVCs. The method used in their study was convenience sampling which does not guarantee reliability of the findings. Also, the context was in Northern Israel which is different from the African context making it difficult to make the same inferences without the current study. In this study the researchers used census, random, snow ball and purposive sampling techniques which provided more reliable and comprehensive results.

Values are significant to a social worker understanding who they are as professionals and therefore very important for them to have grounding in social work values for their everyday professional practice. This was stated by Fossetol (2018) in his study on *Ethics, Knowledge and Ambivalence in Social Workers’ Professional Self-Understanding*, conducted among eighteen social workers in Norway. The study used qualitative in-depth interview to examine professional self-understanding among them.. These findings brought out the importance of social work values in the profession and were significant in investigating values as significant part of competence. Having used qualitative method, the study was limited in transferability, whether the interpretations of the findings were transferable to other contexts as well as concerns about validity of these interpretations. This also could have led to the findings of the study missing out on comprehensive findings that would have been obtained had the researchers used mixed method. In addition, the study was based on social workers as the only respondents without any other respondents as comparison which limits it. The current study the researchers used mixed method and also incorporated various respondents, including OVCs, social workers, social work employers and key informants to address this limitation.

According to Bradley, Maschi, O'Brien, Morgen & Ward, (2013), the specific values that motivate social workers in their practice include a commitment to being of service and to helping others, a desire as well as an interest in social justice and values consistent with a belief in the importance of social justice. They further stated that other factors that influence the selection of social work as a career path include the other core values of the profession. This was based on their study which aimed to describe licensed clinical social workers' (LCSWs) professional motivation to pursue a social work career and their decision to enter clinical practice. It used a probability sample of 245 New Jersey LCSWs and the Social Work Values Survey as part of an anonymous self-administered mail survey. This study brought out the importance of the values to social work practice as the social workers stated the use of social justice as a major motivation to practice. However their study seemed to have focused on one social work value. In addition, their study was based on clinical social workers as the only respondents, and may not have represented non clinical social workers.

As stated by Tartakovsky (2015), social work as a profession, emphasizes the self-transcendence and openness to change values, and deemphasizes the self-enhancement and conservation. This differs with her citation that social justice, dignity, individual freedom, and personal worth are the major social work values that need to be emphasized (Banks, 2008; Reamer, 1998). The findings of this study indicated that in order to increase the social workers psychological well being and quality of their services to clients value-focused interventions may be used. These value focused interventions may also be applied in the process of selecting, educating, and providing on-the-job training for social workers. These results were obtained from their study which examined the connection between the personal value preferences of social workers and their burnout, in which a total of 512 Israeli social workers participated in the study. This information was useful in this study because it affirmed the importance of values in social workers provision of quality services. However, the study was on personal value preferences in regard to burn out and may not have yielded the same result if subjected to values in regard to child protection interventions. In addition, the study used self-report anonymous questionnaires that were distributed by students participating in a senior thesis seminar. They could have been distributed to non social workers since the distribution was done by students.

## **2.3 Theoretical review**

### **2.3.1 Generalist –Eclectic Social Work Intervention Approach**

Tracy & DuBois, (1987) detailed that the Generalist social work intervention approach provides an integrated and

multileveled approach for meeting the purposes of social work. Its tenets include; human behavior inseparable connection to social and physical environment and this link, provides an opportunity to enhance the functioning of any human system by changing the system itself, modifying its interactions with the environment, and altering other systems within its environment. Further, work with all levels of a human system, from individual to society utilizes the same social work processes. This means that social work intervention with all human systems requires an exchange of information through some form of dialogue, a process of discovery to locate resources for change, and a phase of development to accomplish the purposes of the work. Finally, the approach believes that social workers have responsibilities beyond direct practice to work toward just social policies as well as to conduct and apply research.

The generalist approach goes beyond practice that is individually focused to the expansive sphere of intervention at multiple system levels where all social work methods both traditional and innovative are utilized, singly or in combination, to meet reality needs and to alleviate stresses in ways that enhance or strengthen the inherent capacities of client systems (Brown, 1982). "The generalist perspective requires that the social worker be eclectic (that is., draw ideas and techniques from many sources)" (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2006). In addition, "Single model practitioners do a disservice to themselves and their clients by attempting to fit all clients and problems into their chosen model" (Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 2002). In this regard as Brown (1982) explains that the social worker does not adhere to a particular method but instead considers the nature of presenting situations, the particular systems involved, and potential solutions to holistically shape the appropriate interventions. Social workers assess their clients in the backdrop of their settings, and interventions unfold with an eye to outcomes at all system levels. This means the clients are considered on a scale ranging from micro to mezzo to macro level interventions.

This model was significant for its emphasis on the importance of multiple approaches to addressing client issues and has the advantage of holistically addressing the client problem and successfully assisting a client. Furthermore, despite these benefits and despite the generalist perspective's support of eclecticism, many social workers do not seem to be conscious of it, or at least did not accept it (Lehmann & Coady, 2016). Some scholars believe the eclectic approach means "jack of all trades and masters of none, results of incompetence in education." The concept of appropriate child protection interventions as a dependent variable was guided by this model and hence its significance to the study. In this framework, this dependent variable is assumed to be influenced by social workers demonstrated ability to consider several integrated social work methods to meet

the needs of the OVCs based on the presenting situation, the OVCs environment among others.

### 3. Methodology

The study used the convergent parallel mixed methods approach which provides a comprehensive analysis of the research problem by merging or converging both quantitative and qualitative data. The researchers collected both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time after which the researchers integrated the information in the interpretation of the overall results. This method was suitable in the study because the study sought to establish whether social workers values influenced child protection interventions and therefore used triangulation to effectively collect, analyse and interpret data that is holistic, valid and reliable.

#### 3.1 Study Population and Target population

According to the National Directory of Children’s Services, 2015, Kajiado County had a total of 45 non-governmental children services agencies out of which 10 of them were located within Kajiado North Sub County. The researchers targeted these ten agencies since they were the existing ones as per the above directory. When the study was being conducted, the researchers established that additional 12 agencies were in existence. The researchers therefore, used purposive sampling technique to sample 10 agencies. The researchers had targeted 224 respondents and the researchers interacted with a total of 223 respondents who included 9 administrators (employers), 18 social workers and 180 OVCs from the OVC centres/agencies. In addition, the researchers interacted with key informants that included representatives of the two National Government agencies providing children services and working within these areas, four representatives from the KNASW and seven representatives of Lecturers/educators teaching social work.

#### 3.2 Sample size

The researchers through criterion purposive sampling, sampled 10 agencies which participated in the study. In addition, the researchers interacted with one state agency and one Government Department located within the county which deals with children issues. In determining the sample size the researchers used census for the social workers and administrators/employers and the Yamane (1967) formula for the OVCs out of which 180 OVCs were randomly sampled. In sampling the 10 OVCs centres, the researchers used the criterion purposive sampling based on the registration status and year of establishment for the agencies/OVCs centres. In the study the researchers censured 18 social workers and 9 administrators. For sampling the OVCs respondents the researchers used

cluster and random sampling techniques, where the OVCs were sampled based on their ages and then randomly sampled. For the rest of the respondents, the KIs the researchers used purposive as well as snow ball sampling techniques. The researchers used Yamane formula;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

*Source of image Smith (2017)*

n= Corrected sample size

N=Population size

e=Margin of error

In the study

N=300(number of OVCs within the ten centres)

e =0.05

Hence

$$n = \frac{300}{1+300(0.05)^2} = \frac{300}{1+300(0.0025)} = \frac{300}{(1+0.75)} = \frac{300}{1.75}$$

$$n = 171.43 = 180 \text{ to the nearest } 10$$

#### 3.3 Sampling Procedure

Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used. Probability sampling was used because it provided every unit in the population an equal chance of selection. Cluster sampling was used where the researchers selected a group of OVCs of the same age group in the first stage. Specifically in sampling the OVCs in each centre groups were selected based on their age group that is, below 14 years and above 14 years. After the groupings the researchers randomly sampled the respondents within the selected clusters. Non probability sampling was also used because it is a method in which there is no known way of estimating sampling errors and also this was based on the objectives of the study. Specifically Purposive sampling was used to sample the key informants that included Government Department and Agency, higher learning institutions or universities and colleges, and Kenya National Association of Social Workers (KNASW) representatives that were involved in the study. The researchers visited the respective agencies and departments and requested specifically for social workers and or their supervisors/employers out of whom the questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted with them.

#### 3.4 Data Collection procedures

The study used methods of data collection that enabled the researchers to collect information which provided answers to the research questions. This also made it possible to capture quality evidence that allowed effective analysis which led to the formulation of convincing and credible answers to the research questions. This also enabled the

researchers to evaluate outcomes and predict about future probabilities and trends. The methods of data collection that were used included questionnaires, interview schedule, focus group discussion and Key informants guides. The researchers before embarking on data collection obtained clearance letter from Catholic University of Eastern Africa(CUEA) which stated that the researchers had been cleared to move to the field for data collection. Using the clearance letter from CUEA the researchers applied for research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which is the Kenya Government agency mandated to give license for research to be conducted. The permit was granted and the researchers proceeded to the field to collect data.

After the permit was granted the researchers commenced with a visit to the County Commissioner, Kajiado and

County Director of education who also gave authority through official letters to proceed to the field to collect data. The researchers then proceeded to visit the agencies/ centres where approval was sought from the management to collect data. For some of the centres the researchers had to do a formal request while for others the letters from the County Commissioner were adequate. The researchers followed the required procedures which were different in each agency and acquired all the necessary approvals. After getting the approval to access the respondents the researchers proceeded to collect data as per the respondents' convenience. The researchers collected data concurrently from all the respondents based on their availability. The data was collected by administration of questionnaires, face to face and telephone interviews, and through focus group discussions.

## 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Most important/Most appropriate social work values when making decisions for appropriate child protection intervention**

Values	Social workers(N=18)			Administrators(N=9)	
	Neutral	important	Very important	appropriate	Most appropriate
Service to children	1(5.6)	1(15.6)	16(88.9)	-	9(100.0)
Social justice for children	1(5.6)	4(22.2)	13(72.2)	-	9(100.0)
Dignity and worth of the person	2(11.1)	4(22.2)	12(66.7)	-	9(100.0)
Importance of human relationships for children	2(11.1)	4(22.2)	12(66.7)	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
Integrity while handling children	1(5.6)	-	17(94.4)	-	9(100.0)
Competence for handling children	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)	-	9(100.0)

The findings indicated that all the core social work values are very important when providing appropriate child protection interventions. This observation is because majority of the social workers stated that service to children 16 (88.9 %), Social justice for children 13 (72.2%), Dignity and worth of the person 12 (66.7%), Importance of human relationships for children 12 (66.7%), Integrity while handling children 17 (94.4%) and Competence for handling children 16 (88.9%) were all important. This was also corroborated by the administrators whose response also indicated that service to children 9 (100.0%), Social justice for children 9 (100.0%), Dignity and worth of the person 9 (100.0%), Importance of human relationships for children 8(88.9%), Integrity while handling children 9 (100.0%), and

Competence for handling children 9 (100.0%) were all important.

These findings agreed with Fossetol (2018) who indicated that it was most important for social workers to have a grounding in social work values for their everyday professional practice. This also corroborated Papouli, (2017), who stated that, maintaining social work values and ethics was the same as having an ethical practice and helped in order to keep social work values and ethics alive and active during practice. These findings were corroborated by the results of the OVCs. The researchers asked specific questions to assess the value base of the social workers guided by the six core social worker values. Table 2 below indicates the responses for three of the social work values. The results indicated that half of the social workers applied the inherent human dignity value.

It was observed that indeed most of the social workers went out of their way to help clients including working past official working hours.

**Table 2: For each of the questions below, circle the response that best characterizes how the statement applies to you in providing child protection interventions**

<b>Social workers</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometime</b>	<b>Oftenly</b>	<b>Very oftenly</b>
<b>Inherent human dignity and worth</b>					
How often do you apply the Inherent human dignity and worth	-	-	-	9(50.0)	9(50.0)
<b>Service</b>					
How often do you go out of your way to help clients	-	-	-	6(33.3)	12(66.7)
How often do you work beyond 5 pm/over the weekends, public holiday	-	-	3(16.7)	4(22.2)	11(61.1)
<b>Importance of human relationships</b>					
How often do you get assistance from other places other than the organization	2(11.1)	3(16.7)	-	9(50.0)	4(22.2)
How often do you connect clients with their family	-	-	4(22.2)	8(44.4)	6(33.3)
How often do you assist children you serve to work out relationships with other children	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	3(16.7)	13(72.2)
How often do you assist children you serve to work out relationships with other staff	-	1(5.6)	2(16.7)	3(16.7)	12(66.7)

Majority of these social workers indicated that they occasionally connected their clients with their family, assisted children they work with to work out relationships with other children as well as other staff. It was also

observed that they also got assistance from other organizations pointing out to the fact that they network with other organizations.

**Table 1: For each of the questions below, circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about the statement in providing child protection interventions**

<b>Social workers</b>	<b>strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>strongly agree</b>
<b>Social justice</b>					
A social worker should treat clients(children) equally	-	-	-	2(11.1)	16(88.9)
A social worker should fight for the rights of their clients(children)	-	-	-	3(16.7)	15(83.3)
<b>Integrity</b>					
A social worker can take money/in-kind items from their client as appreciation	11(61.1)	4(22.2)	1(1)	2(11.1)	-
A social worker should admit to their fellow colleagues and coworkers if they do a mistake	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	6(33.3)	10(55.6)
Social workers should be trust worthy, honest and set good example	-	-	-	1(5.6)	17(594.4)

These results clearly pointed out to the importance of Inherent human dignity and worth, Service and Importance of human relationships values when providing

appropriate child protection interventions. This meant that social workers cannot effectively work without applying these values and hence it is important to assess these

values when engaging social workers to work with children. These findings agreed with the results of the OVCs which indicated that to OVCs it was important for the Social worker to go an extra mile to help them 64(68.8%) as well as social worker working beyond 5 pm, or over the weekends and public holiday to help them 50(53.8%). These findings also pointed out that, human relationships are key to the OVCs and particularly that it was very important for the Social worker to help them in issues affecting them and their family 59(63.4%). It also meant that it was important for the social worker to help in issues affecting the OVC friends or other children 54(58.1%). The results also agreed that the social worker should be honest/ trustworthy, 75(80.6%) and set a good example to OVCs 75(80.6%) as a measure to integrity. The researchers further in assessing the value base of the social workers asked additional specific questions on social workers values to respond to the response that best characterized how the statement applied to them. The results indicated that the social workers strongly agreed,

16(88.9) that a social worker should treat clients (children) equally and should fight for the rights of their clients (children). The results further established that the social workers strongly disagreed, 11(61.1) that a social worker can take money/in-kind items from their client as appreciation. On the other hand the social workers strongly agreed, 10(55.6) that a social worker should admit to their fellow colleagues and coworkers if they did a mistake. They further strongly agreed, 17(59.4) that Social workers should be trust worthy, honest and set good example.

### On whether the social worker is able to communicate effectively to OVCs

The researchers sought to establish if social workers were able to effectively communicate with the OVCs as shown in the figure below.

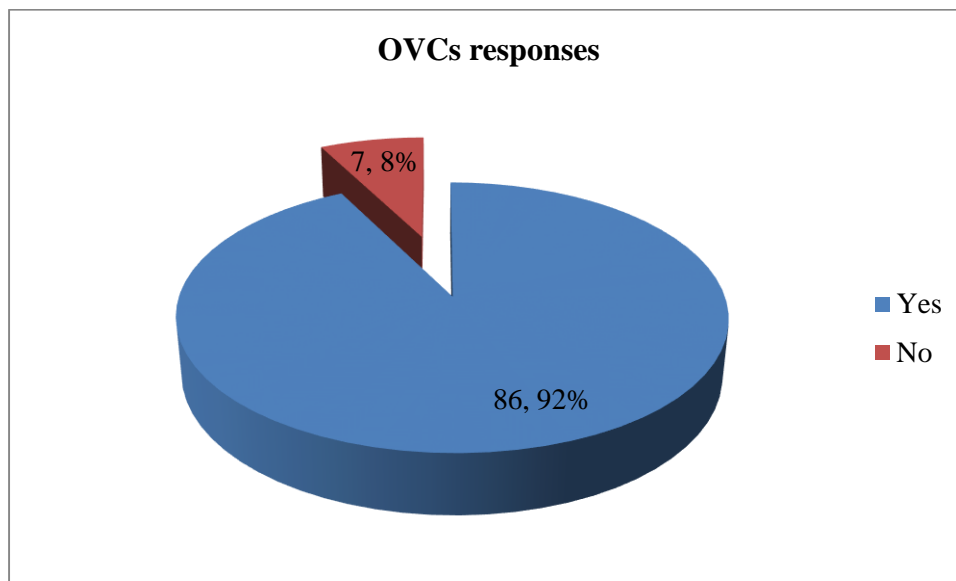


Figure 1: Whether social workers are able to effectively communicate with the OVCs

As seen above majority OVCs, 86 (92.0%), stated that the social worker was able to communicate to them. The OVCs further stated that the best way to communicate to them was; “Through correction and advising”. (OVC04, personal communication, August 6, 2019). “Aniongeleshe vizuri, ukimwambia mashida akuskie akujibu”. (OVC20, personal communication, August 7, 2019). In translation, “talk to me politely when you tell them your problems to listen to you and respond”, “Face to face and in a honest way”. (OVC02, personal communication, August 6, 2019). “Through eye to eye in private when we are alone”. (OVC32, personal communication, August 13, 2019). “Speaks words of encouragement”. (OVC40, personal communication, August 16, 2019). “Sitting down with her and pointing out my mistakes and correcting me”. (OVC44, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Children want social workers to communicate to them in

a polite manner as well as to be advised and corrected. This could also imply that some of the OVCs felt their social workers communicated to them in a harsh way. In deed it is clear that children do not want a social worker who communicates to them in a harsh manner as clearly stated by one of them, “By not shouting but being polite” (OVC54, personal communication, August 20, 2019), and another who stated” he is harsh and very short tempered. He should be polite”. Children are sensitive to how they are handled and how they are treated as observed in these findings. The findings agree with Toros & LaSala, (2018), who in their study emphasis on the need for social workers to have skills to be able to engage in trusting relationships with children which can only be attained if they can effectively communicate with children. This is also consistent with Zhang, et al., (2018) who stated that social



workers in practice require having professional competence which includes communication skills.

### Social worker abilities when providing appropriate child protection intervention

As revealed by the study and indicated by Table 4 below, majority of social workers strongly agreed that communicating with children was a significant attribute where almost all 17(94.4%) of the social workers strongly agreed. The results also showed that majority of the social workers, 16(88.9%) strongly agreed that being able to engage children through encouraging their participation was important.. Ability to facilitate children to play was also a significant attribute as strongly agreed by most 12(66.7%) of the social workers. Building trusting relationships, decision making and problem solving attributes were stated as significant as strongly agreed by most, 16(88.9%) of the social workers. In addition,

Analytical, interviewing and observation attributes were also key in providing child protection interventions as indicated by the above results which show that majority of the social workers 15(83.3%) strongly agreed. These results also show that assessment and intervention attributes were significant with majority of the social workers 16(88.9%) strongly agreeing. Lastly majority of the social workers, 15 (83.3%) strongly agreed that documentation and report writing were key attributes. These results agreed with Zhang, et al., (2018) who stated that in practice social workers require to have professional competence. Which includes problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, analytic capacities, mental alertness, emotional and social intelligence, have self-awareness, and ability to reflect on practice among others as stated by Bogo (2010). This agrees with Karani, Mavole & Ngendo, (2017) who established in their study that social workers skills relevant for practice include presentation skills and report writing among others.

**Table 4: For each of the questions below, circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about the statement in providing child protection interventions**

<b>A social worker should have the following abilities:</b>	<b>strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>strongly agree</b>
Communicate with children	-	-	1(5.6)	-	17(94.4)
Engage children through encouraging their participation	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Facilitate children to play	-	-	3(16.7)	3(16.7)	12(66.7)
Build trusting relationships	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Decision-making	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Problem solving	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Analytical	-	-	1(5.6)	2(11.1)	15(83.3)
Interviewing	-	-	1(5.6)	2(11.1)	15(83.3)
Observation	-	-	1(5.6)	2(11.1)	15(83.3)
Assessment	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Intervention	-	-	1(5.6)	1(5.6)	16(88.9)
Documentation and report writing	-	-	1(5.6)	2(11.1)	15(83.3)

These findings are corroborated by the results obtained from the OVCs where they stated that they knew their social worker understood them “Because he will use all ways to solve the problem’ and also “Because he solves all the problems and uses wisdom and fairness”, affirming

the significance of the problem solving attribute. The same findings were corroborated by the administrator’s results, which indicated that the majority of them strongly agreed on all the above attributes as indicated in the table 5 below.

**Table 5: For each of the attributes below, circle the response that best characterizes the attributes that should be used to measure social workers' competence in providing appropriate child protection interventions**

Attributes	strongly disagree	Disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
Communicating with children	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
Engaging children through encouraging their participation	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
Facilitating children to play	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
Building trusting relationships	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
-making	-	-	-	2(22.2)	7(77.8)
Problem solving	-	-	-	2(22.2)	7(77.8)
Analytical	-	-	-	3(33.3)	6(66.7)
Interviewing	-	-	-	3(33.3)	6(66.7)
Observation	-	-	-	2(22.2)	7(77.8)
Assessment	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)
Intervention	-	-	-	-	9(100.0)
Documentation and report writing	-	-	-	1(11.1)	8(88.9)

The findings above show that almost all, 8(88.9%) of the administrators strongly agreed that the important attributes for a social worker when providing appropriate child protection interventions included communicating with children, engaging children through encouraging their participation, ability to facilitate children to play and building trusting relationships. Further, decision making, problem solving and observation attributes were significant where most of the administrators, 7(77.8%) strongly agreed. In addition, Analytical and interviewing attributes were key in providing child protection interventions as indicated by the above results which show that majority of the administrators 6(66.7%) strongly agreed and 3(33.3%) agreed. These results also show that assessment, documentation and report writing attributes were identified as significant with majority of the administrators 8(88.9%) strongly agreeing. Lastly all the administrators, 9(100.0%) strongly agreed that intervention was a major attribute in providing appropriate child protection interventions. This means that it is important for all social workers handling children or in child protection sector to have the above attributes in order for them to provide appropriate child protection interventions. The results agree with Benbenishty, et al., (2015) who stated that it was important to understand how decisions regarding children are made by child welfare professionals as well as how these decisions impact on the children. Meaning that decision making is key in child protection interventions.

## Appropriate Child Protection Interventions provided to OVCs

The researchers sought to establish the child protection interventions offered to OVCs. The results indicated that OVCs are provided with; i)basic needs(shelter, education, clothing, health and sanitary towels); ii)protection from violence (through provision of rescue and secure environment; empowering the child and guardians, training parents, through referrals and establishing linkages & provision of legal documents for example birth certificate); iii)provision of rescue services; iv)provision of counseling; and v) provision of family strengthening( through economic empowerment and livelihood training, provision of psychosocial services; counseling, support groups and reconciliation, family tracing, family conferencing and family Reintegration).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The researchers sought to establish whether social workers values influenced the child protection interventions they provided. The findings indicated that in deed social worker values influenced the child protection interventions they provided. The study verified that the core social work values including service to children, social justice for children, Dignity and worth of the child, Importance of human relationships for children, Integrity while handling children and Competence for handling children were all important. This was confirmed by almost all respondents in the study, as they stated that these values indeed influences social workers ability to provide appropriate child protection intervention. The means score

for all the six values were between 4.56 and 4.89, where the highest was 4.89 while lowest was 4.56 out of 5 when assessing the values that social workers use in their day to day activities. All of the social workers strongly agreed that all the six social work values were important. This significance was also supported by OVCs who stated that social worker fighting for their rights, respecting their opinion and giving them room to decide on matters concerning themselves was very important to them. The OVCs indicated that social worker going an extra mile to help them was very important to them which confirm the importance of the service value. This made them feel that they were valued and that the social worker prioritized each one of them as individuals. Human relationships were very important to the OVCs like social worker helping them in issues affecting themselves and their family. OVCs looked up to social workers as their mentors and would want them to be a good example, as well as honest and trustworthy to them.

## 5.2 Recommendations

*To the social worker:* It is important for social workers to collaborate, consult and network to expand their knowledge and understanding and to effectively provide appropriate child protection interventions; It is important for social workers to make deliberate efforts to engage children through child participation which can be done through allowing them to give their opinion; through forums like Bunges, FDGs, meetings, Barazas, in decision making. For example, in making rules and also through child protection clubs and mentorship programs and Above all the social workers working with children need to know that the OVCs and other children should be shown love, care, and understanding and treated politely not harshly. Actually, using one of the OVCs words, “atutreat kama watoto wake”, meaning treat the children as they treat their own children.

*To social work employers:* It is important for them to engage the right social worker to work with relevant

knowledge level, skills and values to handle children since children are sensitive and require a social worker who is competent to handle them.

*To Commission of University Education (CUE) and Association of Social Work Educators Kenya (ASWEK):* It is imperative to standardize the content of social work training in all institutions offering social work. To this effect it is also imperative to frequently evaluate adherence to these standards once they are put in place; and it is also important to develop curriculum specific to child protection or specific specialization area to bridge the gap between training and practice. In this regard develop a curriculum specific to child protection which should be developed in consultation with the State Department and State Agency charged with protection of children as well as other stakeholders in order to bridge the gap between social work training and practice.

*To the policy makers:* The National Assembly: It is extremely imperative for the social workers act to be enacted. This is because social workers play a vital role in the society which no other profession can effectively play and need to be given the legal framework within which to practice.

*Ministry of labor and social protection:* There is need to put in place mechanism (like a database) for reporting professional misconduct in case a social worker is involved in malpractice in child protection to act as reference point for anyone engaging a social worker. This would protect children and other clients in case a social worker was involved in malpractice and moved to a different area. The Ministry of Labour and social protection should in the short term, have an administrative directive that for any social worker undertaking child protection interventions or any other staff working in child protection should have the relevant training, experience, attitude and have undergone a background check to establish their suitability to work with children.

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