



**Experience of Child Online Abuse among Secondary School
students: the case of Selected Private Secondary School in Addis
Ababa, Ethiopia**

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DECLARATION

I Hanan Sabir Mohammed, hereby declare that "Experience of Child Online Abuse among Secondary School students: the case of selected Private High School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia'' is entirely original to me, that all sources used are acknowledged, and that this work has not been submitted to any institution by another person.

Hanan Sabir

Signature

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Mr. Temam Helil. He was a father figure to our entire family. Sadly, I lost him in the last stages of my research. Even though he is no longer with us, his memory and legacy continue to guide and motivate me. This thesis paper is dedicated to his memory.

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Acronyms

UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
ACRWC:	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child
ECPAT:	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
UNODC:	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
IDIS:	In-Depth Interview with Student
IDIT:	In-Depth Interview with Teacher
KISC:	Key Informant with School Counselor
KIE:	Key Informant with Expert

Abstract

The rapid growth of the internet has revolutionized the way children interact and learn. However, this digitalization has also brought about new risks and challenges, particularly in the form of child online abuse. The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of child online abuse among secondary school students in Ethiopia, investigating the risks and opportunities associated with children's online activity, identify the different types of child online abuse, and examine potential intervention strategies to ensure the safety of children from online abuse. A qualitative research approach was adopted using non-probability purposive sampling. In-depth interview and key informant interview were conducted with 15 participants and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study findings revealed that high school students in Ethiopia have experienced various forms of child online abuse, including cyber bullying and exposure to inappropriate content. Participants also highlighted the risks and opportunities associated with their online activities, as well as the diverse manifestations of child online abuse. Emerging themes suggested the need for comprehensive strategies to address these challenges, including enhancing digital literacy, strengthening child protection policies, and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration. The insights gained from this study have significant implications for social work practice. Social workers can play a pivotal role in advocating for policy changes, developing educational programs, and collaborating with key stakeholders to create a safer online environment for children. By addressing the multifaceted challenges of child online abuse, social workers can contribute to the holistic well-being and protection of children in the digital age.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Our world has experienced major transformations, one of which was the evolution of internet. Since its birth, the internet has served as the main tool for connecting people, ideas, and civilizations, and growing rapidly over time. Sixty percent of people globally use social media, and 64.4% of people have internet connection, according to the Digital Global Report (Kemp, 2023). The report also indicates that seventy five percent of children aged 12 to 17 are thought to frequently use the internet, mostly for educational and recreational purposes, on a global scale. In our interconnected world, cyber security dangers, disinformation, and privacy concerns become critical challenges. The digital scenario in Africa, especially concerning children, is a complex landscape influenced by technological progress and socio-economic factors. As countries embrace digitalization, various opportunities and challenges shape the experiences of African children within this evolving environment (Singh & Power, 2021).

Children are the foundation of any community. According to the Digital Global Report 46.3% of the Ethiopian population falls within the age range of 0 and 17, with 11.5% specifically aged between 13 and 17 (Kemp, 2023). Childhood is the age group that is most basic for everyone's personal life. Since children are mentally and physically immature, they require extra attention and safeguards (Chambers et. Al., 2021). In Ethiopia children's rights are derived from The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution (1995), National Children's Policy (2017). All recognize the rights of children to be protected from any form of harm. Still children are vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, neglectful, and psychological/emotional abuse, although having all the rights acknowledged by both international and national organizations (Mulugeta, 2014).

Ethiopia, like many other countries, is facing both the opportunities and risks of digital era. The Digital Global Report showed that in Ethiopia 16.7% of the population used the internet, while 5.1% of the population used different social media platforms in early 2023 (Kemp, 2023). Children in Ethiopia are using social media more frequently (Mulisa & Getahun, 2018). Nowadays child abuse and neglect are recognized issue globally (World Health Organization, 2024). However, the rapid growth of internet creates opportunities for the emergence of another form of

child abuse, which is child online abuse. Even though there are different researches done globally, there is a huge gap in the existing knowledge base regarding child online abuse in developing countries, including Ethiopia. This research proposed to explore the experience of Child Online Abuse among High school student in selected private high school. According to Kardefelt-Winther et. al., (2022) older children aged from 16- 17 years have higher proportion of internet usage than younger groups. Thus, high school students are particularly more vulnerable to various forms of online abuse due to their age and online activities.

One of the motivations for conducting my thesis on this topic arises from personal observations I made during my internship experience at a high school. I specifically observed cases in which students were struggling with pornography addiction. These firsthand observations, along with other factors such as a discussion about the topic's significance with other experts serve as a motivation to look into this topic. By exploring their experience, this research aims to contribute a valuable insight to the development of a knowledge base and effective strategies for addressing the issues related with child online abuse.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Internationally, there are a number of studies (Kim, 2003; Ali et al., 2021; Barlett and Coyne, 2014) that have been conducted on usage of internet and its impacts on different aspects of human life. Different studies conducted on the impact of internet usage in academic achievement of high school students, relation of internet usage and normal interaction of children with their families, and also positive and negative outcomes of internet usage. There are also different studies (UNICEF, 2023; Resett, 2021; Mishna et al. (2014) that showed about child online abuse across the world.

According to National Sexual Violence Resource Center, children are exposed to different pornographic content due to easy accessibility of internet in this era (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2011). Today, Calvert (2015) said children use different media including internet, online gaming and smart phones for learning and relaxation purpose.

Smallbone, & Wortley (2017), define online sexual abuse by their study as broader concept of different problems which consists of online sexual harassment and bullying, unwanted sexting, exposure of children to age-inappropriate content of sexual material and the production, distribution and viewing of child pornography. Gewirtz-Meydana et. al., (2019) studied the relationship between child pornography victimization and the psychopathology in adulthood,

which focused on understanding the problem and evaluate the risk for child pornography. The study was conducted among 107 child pornography adult survivors with online survey and the result indicate survivor's emotional reactions of guilt and embarrassment at the time of the crime and shortly after were significantly associated with elevated psychopathology, above and beyond demographic characteristics and features of the crime.

In Africa, most of the researches are focused on child physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Only a few of studies were done in case of child online abuse and the protection of child online safety. Ali et. al., (2021) studied child sexual abuse and the internet. They showed the relationship of online communication and child sexual abuse. The result of the study showed online communication of children has significant impact on increasing the risk of sexual abuse. Gamundani et. al., (2015) also done a Preliminary Survey on Child Online Protection Initiative with a focus on Namibia, and they showed the importance of having legally binding laws which protect people specifically children from any harm. Additionally Mulugeta (2014) studied the media coverage of child protection of child abuse in Ethiopia, and they showed how the media failed to fulfill their role in creating child protection and child abuse as their major agenda.

Considering the current researches, there is knowledge, methodological and geographical gap in this particular area of research on child abuse, specifically in Ethiopia. According to UNICEF (2023) online sexual abuse including cyber bullying is a highly prevalent global issue, 80% of children worldwide are exposed to online sexual abuse and cyber bullying. Having a clear understanding and knowledge of child online abuse is mandatory to ensure children's safety with both online and offline activities because of the high prevalence of the issue. Thus, I can conclude that this study will be an eye-opener for the academic and practical aspects of child online abuse in Ethiopia. This study is also significant as it addresses a research gap within the Addis Ababa University research portal. Specifically, no prior studies have been conducted on the selected topic, making this research work unique and pioneering within the university's academic landscape, filling existing gap in understanding and providing a foundation for further scholarly exploration. Beyond the academia insight this research will have implications for social work practice, for child online abuse intervention and to advocacy of policy to create safer online environment for children

By exploring the experiences of high school students, the research aims to create valuable contribution for the gap of knowledge base. This study differentiates itself from prior research by specifically examining the experiences and perspective of high school students in relation to child

online abuse. By narrowing the scope to specific population, the research aims to create bridge to create understanding about the developing of support system and preventive measure for child online abuse. Additionally, this research will fill the methodological and geographical gap by employing culturally sensitive and contextually relevant approach to study child online abuse in Ethiopia.

1.3 General Objective:

To explore the experience of Child Online Abuse among High school students including the risks and opportunities available for a child associated with online activities, the different types of child online abuses and strategies to ensure the safety of children from online abuse.

1.4 Specific Objectives:

1. To explore the experience of Child Online Abuse among High school students.
2. To identify the different types of child online abuse
3. To explore the different risks and opportunities associated with children's online activities, specifically in the context of Ethiopia.
4. To examine possible effective intervention strategies for ensuring the safety of children from online abuse in order to put recommendations.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the experience of high school students with child online abuse?
2. What are the different types of online child abuse that the adolescents in Ethiopian High School face?
3. What risks and opportunities do Ethiopian Children face when they use Internet?
4. What strategies and measures can be implemented to effectively create a safe online environment for children in Ethiopia?

1.6 Conceptual definition of terms

Children: In the context of this research, "children" typically refers to individuals below the age 18 years, adopting the same definition of a child as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Secondary School Student: For this research, "secondary school students" refers student who are attaining secondary education, which is from grade 9 up to grade 12, adopting the definition of Ministry of Education of Ethiopia (2009).

Online Abuse: The term "online abuse" describes intentional, negative acts or behaviors that are aimed against children via online networks. This can include various types of mistreatments, including cyber bullying, exposure to inappropriate content, online harassment, and exploitation, with the potential to cause emotional, psychological, or physical harm to the child ("Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children From Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse", 2016).

Intervention: An intentional action or procedure which aimed to have a positive change or resolve a situation or an issue is conceptualized as intervention (Cambon et. al.,, 2019).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the problem through examination of many important child online abuse topics, with an emphasis on definition, types, and impacts, experience of victims, risk and protective factors, and policy framework of online child abuse globally, specifically in Ethiopia. Online child abuse is becoming a global issue (UNICEF, 2023). Since this issue is a global problem, it needs effectively design policies and interventions to address this problem, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the different forms of online abuse, how common it is, and the risk and protective variables associated with it.

2.1 Conceptual Related Literatures

2.1.1 Definition and types of child online abuse

Child online abuse includes a wide range of negative online activities focused at children, including exposure to inappropriate content, sextortion, grooming and cyber bullying (Mishna, et. al., 2014). Online child abuse is any harmful or abusive behavior towards a child using digital or online platforms (Mishna et al., 2014). It is form of abuse that covers a wide range of activities, including purchases, online sexual exploitation and exposure to harmful content. Any harmful or exploitative activity directed at a child through digital media is an online child abuse (Turner et. al., 2023). It is the exploitation, harm or manipulation of minors for a known variety of reasons through the use of technology, including the Internet, social media and mobile apps (Resett & Mesurado, 2021).

UNICEF states that there are various forms of online abuse of children, such as sextortion, exposure to inappropriate content, cyber-bullying, sexual exploitation, online harassment and emotional abuse (UNICEF, 2022). Each strain has unique properties and can have lasting effects on the growth and well-being of children. Cyber-bullying is the deliberate and persistent use of digital communication tools to harass, threaten or intimidate a child (Islam et. al., 2024). Online grooming is another form of abuse in which an adult develops a trusting online relationship with a teenager with the goal of sexually abusing them (Resett, 2021).

The process of adults making online contact with children and young people consists of two components: on the one hand, advertising to adults and on the other hand, online sexual interaction with them (Resett & Mesurado, 2021). Abusing, coercing, or manipulating a child for

sexual purposes in online is known as child sexual exploitation (Martin & Slane, 2015). There are older people who take advantage of a child who is usually too young to give permission to make money or achieve sexual satisfaction. Grooming, child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, and any other non-consensual sexual behavior involving a child are some types of exploitation (Gamez-Guadix & Mateos-Perez, 2019). Sexual exploitation of children is illegal (Resett, 2021).

In the area of online child sexual abuse, two groups of people are involved: those who produce market and distribute explicit material involving children, and those who either purchase this type of content or seek out children who can be easily exploited online (Martin & Slane, 2015). It states that quick and easy access to the Internet makes it easier to recruit children for sexual abuse and act in anonymity. In addition to general human rights violations, this form of sexual exploitation on the Internet primarily violates children's rights because they can remain anonymous; those who sexually exploit children often avoid arrest and prosecution (UNICEF, 2016). This has led to a documented increase in online child sexual abuse activity worldwide, according to police records. It is fair to say that the prevalence of child sexual exploitation has increased due to technology-enabled online systems, with adverse consequences (ECPAT International, 2018). The African Union stated online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) as emerging continental issue in 2020, OCSEA is define as crimes committed by offenders who are using internet to sexually abuse children (African union, 2020).

2.2 Empirical Related Literatures

Studies have shown that child online abuse is a prevalent issue in today's world. As a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report shows approximately one in three internet users are children across a world, which is a risk for them to be vulnerable to different types of online abuse (Dubowitz, 2017). A meta-analysis of 109 studies shows that cyber-bullying perpetration was more common in boys than in girls (Barlett and Coyne, 2014). The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children estimate that approximately 20,000 indecent images of children are placed on the internet within a week at 2009, which grows up to 100,000 by 2021/2022 (Hamilton-Giachritsis et. al., 2017). According to Ali et al (2021) misuse of the Internet for pornography, cyber bullying, grooming and pedophilia has become a major issue of international concern. Because of the freedom and the anonymous environment offered by the

Internet, child molesters and pornographers are increasingly using the Internet to further their criminal activity."

As the result of quantitative investigation of UNICEF, Ethiopian children experience horrific experiences of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Last year alone, 10% of Ethiopian internet users between the ages of 12 and 17 reported being victims of serious cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse. These incidents included children being coerced into sexual activity through gifts or threats of money, having their sexual images shared without their consent, and/or being coerced into sexual activity through blackmail. Based on the population, this is an estimated 300,000 children in just one year (ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF, 2022). . According to Borka Balas et. al., (2023) cyber bullying victimization has become highly prevalent in which England, Australia, Canada and United States of America have 28.9% cyber bullying victimization rate where as China has 20.8% cyber bullying victimization rate

2.3 Impact of child online abuse

Online abuse towards children profoundly affects their overall health, encompassing their emotional, social, and physical growth. Different literatures put the main consequences of child online abuse. (Fisher, Goldsmith, Hurcombe, & Soares, 2017) put different consequences of child abuse. Psychological distress which includes conditions like PTSD, anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth are one of the impacts of child abuse. According to Carvalho, Branquinho, & De Matos (2018) cross sectional study showed girls are more involved in cyber bullying as cyber victims and they developed emotional symptoms like anxiety and regret.

Additional to the emotional impacts (Fisher et al., 2017) study showed the social consequences which abuse strains bonds with family, friends, and peers, fostering feelings of solitude. Some children might resort to substance misuse, self-inflicted harm, or other detrimental coping strategies. According to (Wolke et. al., 2013; and Hamm, Newton, Chisholm, et al., 2015) in extreme instances, online mistreatment can lead to tendencies towards self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Child abuse has also Long-Term impact (Landry, 2014). Child online abuse has the longer impact on sense of self and overall interpersonal relationships and also it has significant impact on victim's mental health (Schmidt, Varese, & Bucci, 2023). Additional research has uncovered metabolic changes in the way an addict's brain responds to signals associated with the particular addiction. In these functional MRI scans, the reward center of such brains fires far more strongly

than that of a non-addicted person. These responses have been observed in behavioral addictions such as gambling and pornography, as well as substance addictions such as cocaine (Sahai, Anjali & narang, rishibha, 2023).

2.4 Experience of Children as a victim of online abuse:

Different studies showed that the experience of children as a victim of online abuse can range from immediate impact to long-lasting trauma effects. In the study which was done in Romania among 313 teenagers 50% of them were experienced cyber bullying on different social media like Facebook and Instagram (Borka Balas et. al., 2023). As same study showed girls had two times more risk than boys of being cyber bullied and girls who were victim had higher risk of developing emotional symptoms like anxiety and regret. As (Schmidt et al., 2023) showed online abuse caused long lasting depression, anxiety and loss of self-esteem in children beyond the immediate emotional distressed it caused. According to American Psychological Association children who are victims of any kind of abuse can show aggressive behavior, sleep disturbance, low performance on school activities and /or eating problems (Schmidt et al, 2023). Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman (2017) showed cyber bullying had direct relation with low self- esteem, which cyber bullying victim children had relatively low self- esteem.

2.5 Risk factors and protective factors:

Different scholars study the risk and protective factors for child online abuse, and they put on different literature. Risk and protective factors play a crucial role in the development and prevention of online child abuse. Several studies have identified various risk factors that contribute to children's vulnerability to online abuse. These factors include age, gender, previous experiences of victimization, low self-esteem, and lack of parental monitoring and supervision.

Austin, Lesak, & Shanahan (2020) said increased vulnerability is observed in younger children and girls. According to Kids online, 2009 high risk is associated with excessive internet use, engaging in risky online behavior, and lacking cyber security awareness.

Children experiencing mental health issues like depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem are a risk higher susceptibility (Austin et al., 2020) Family conflicts and dysfunction also are risks for children for having child online abuse. Risks are elevated in the presence of domestic violence, parental substance abuse, and poor communication within the family (Islam et al., 2024). Inadequate parental supervision and monitoring or insufficiently monitored online activities

expose children to risks (Lau & Lee, 2021). Families with weak social networks lack the necessary resources and support to cope with challenges. (Islam et al., 2024).

UNODC, 2018 reported inadequate legal and enforcement measures as major risk factor. Weak laws against online child abuse and limited resources for enforcement expose children to increased vulnerability (UNODC, 2018). The widespread availability of such content facilitates perpetrators and heightens the risk of exposure for children to online abuse.

At the individual level, providing education about digital literacy, responsible online behavior, and cyber- security awareness can help children navigate the online world safely (Livingstone et. al., 2017). At the family level, encouraging open communication between parents and children, along with active monitoring of online activities, helps create a supportive environment and reduce risks. According to (Livingstone et al., 2017) both individuals and families can improve online safety for children by implementing and using parental control tools, privacy settings, and age-appropriate content filters. At the community level, promoting communities and online platforms that promote positive interactions and prevent abusive behavior contribute to a safer digital environment (Ramiro et. al., 2019). According to UNICEF (2023) mental health support which is treating mental health issues in children, such as depression or anxiety, on an individual level can increase resilience and reduce vulnerability to online abuse building strong social networks and support systems within communities provides additional resources for families and children experiencing challenges at the community level. At the societal level, strengthening the legal framework against online child abuse and providing resources for effective law enforcement as a deterrent and protective measure (UNODC, 2018).

2.6 Legal frameworks for Child online abuse

International conventions, treaties and resolutions that establish obligations and policies to protect children in the digital sphere are part of the global legal framework against online child abuse. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Article 34, which affirms the right of children to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, is one such important piece of legislation (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989). In addition, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000) sets out concrete steps to prevent child pornography, including online exploitation of children, the Protocol places great emphasis on making the creation, distribution and possession of child pornography illegal

In addition, regional agreements such as the Budapest Convention on Cyber-crime, also known as the European Convention against cyber-crime, provide a framework for international cooperation between participating nations in the fight against cyber-crime, which includes crimes against minors committed online (Budapest Convention on Cyber-crime, 2001). With regard to the international legal framework on online child abuse, it is crucial to take into account the regional context, including Ethiopia as a nation and Africa as a continent. To protect children from harmful content, materials and online exploitation, states must adopt the necessary laws, regulations and educational initiatives (African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990).

In Ethiopia, the legal framework for addressing sexual crimes, including OCSEA, is primarily based on the Crime Code of 2005 and the Computer Crime Proclamation of 2016. The country has also made agreements with regional initiatives that strengthen these legal provisions. The Computer Crime Proclamation of 2016 specifically addresses actions related to visual materials depicting minors or individuals who appear to be minors engaged in sexually suggestive behavior (ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF, 2022).

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks

2.7.1 Ecological systems theory

Ecological systems theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, provides a framework for understanding how various environmental factors interact and influence an individual's development (Crawford, 2020). Applied to the context of online child abuse, this theory examines the multiple levels of influence that shape a child's experience in the digital environment. Micro system (individual level) focuses on the immediate environment in which the child directly interacts and these include family, peers, school and the child's own characteristics. The meso system refers to how the family, school, and peer environments collectively impact the child's online activities. Exo system considers community norms, resources, and support networks that may influence how the child resist the digital world and it also shows how social values affect online behavior. Macro system (cultural and societal level) examines the cultural attitudes toward technology, privacy, and online interactions shape the child's understanding and experience of the digital environment. Ecological systems theory helps researchers and practitioners to understand the dynamic interplay of online child abuse.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The Research method to be employed in this study was qualitative research method. Qualitative studies help to give subjective meaning through naturalistic observation and interviewing. Qualitative method typically involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis (Busetto, Wick, and Gumbinger, 2020). This method aims to uncover the experiences, perspectives, and meanings attributed by participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue (Creswell, 2014) In this study this approach used to explore the experience of child online abuse among secondary school students. It helped to understand how participants attach meanings to child online abuse and to investigate the realities and meanings of individuals to this specific area. Qualitative method is helpful for researching intricate social phenomena, looking in taboo subjects, and formulating and testing theories (Fortune, Reid, & Miller, 2013). In the context of this study, qualitative research techniques used to analyze the experiences and viewpoints of students about child online abuse.

A research design for this qualitative study was case study analysis. A case study is a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth examination of a particular individual, group, or phenomenon within its real-life context. It helps to understand the complexities of the case by investigating rich and detailed data from different sources (Priya, 2021). In the context of this study, employing a case study allowed me to deeply look into providing rich and detailed insights into the experiences of individual students. By focusing on real-life situations within their natural context, I captured the complexities and emotional dimensions of online abuse. Findings from case studies helped to have practical implications for intervention, prevention, and policy-making efforts which aimed at addressing child online abuse.

The study was conducted with the researcher's social constructivist view of the world. In the social constructive paradigm, the subjective meanings the research participants provide will make the researcher to try to find different perspectives to understand the responses rather than have a narrow understanding of the whole situation (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). In the context of this study, the researcher expected the research participants to provide subjective meaning of their experiences towards their experience of child online abuse, risks and opportunities that internet bring for them and the safety of the online environment for them.

3.2 Study Setting

The study was conducted on Spring of Knowledge Academy at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is the capital and largest city of Ethiopia. It is located on a well-watered plateau surrounded by hills and mountains in the geographic center of the country. Spring of Knowledge Academy is one of the secondary schools found in Addis Ababa. The school has different branches; this study conducted at Jemo branch which is located at Nifas Silk sub-city. The school was legally established as private school in 2006 to contribute its part in the human capital development program of the country. The school was established by seven mothers who are committed to contributing towards access to quality education for children and young adults in the country. The School owns two Kindergartens, and two Primary and Secondary Schools in Addis Ababa

The school has a workable organizational structure which has its own high-level decision-making body the board of directors and its operational business is headed by a general manager. Horizontally the company has an executive management committee for the company and a senior management committee for the branch. The schools have school counselors, school nurses, and training officers in addition to academic staff. Currently, the school has more than 360 full-time employees and more than 3000 students in different branches

3.3 Participants of the study

In this study focusing on the experience of child online abuse among secondary school students, potential participants were secondary school students. Since the major objective of the study is to explore the experience of students focusing on understanding the risks and opportunities of a child associated with online activities, different types of child online abuse and strategies to ensure the safety of children from online abuse, both students who experienced online abuse and who don't experience online abuse was participants of the study.

These participants were students who have witnessed instances of online abuse directed at their peers but may not have been directly involved. By standers can provide insights into the prevalence of online abuse, peer dynamics, and by stander responses within the school community. Teachers, who interact with secondary school students on a daily basis, were the participant of the study to understand their perspectives on identifying, addressing, and preventing online abuse within the school setting, as well as their experiences in supporting affected students, can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. School counselor and child online safety advocates, as they work to develop and implement policies, programs, and

interventions related to online safety and well-being in schools, were also participated in the study. Their insights into the institutional response to online abuse, resource allocation, and collaboration with external stakeholders can inform recommendations for school-based interventions and support services.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size determination

The sampling strategy was involve non- probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a technique for choosing a sample from a population where not every member has an equal or known chance of being chosen. Non-probability sampling approaches focus on convenience and subjective judgment rather than random selection (Campbell et. al., 2020). Purposive sampling is the purposeful choice of particular people or instances to be included in a study based on their applicability to the research topic or the study's goals. It makes it possible to choose subjects in a more strategic and concentrated manner that might offer useful information or represent important facets of the research issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Purposive sampling was a suitable approach for this research because the topic requires targeted participant selection to ensure that participants with direct experience or relevant insights about the issue. Additionally, child online abuse is a sensitive topic which needs to establish rapport with the participants, purposive sampling allowed researcher to select participants with specific knowledge, expertise, or experiences related to child online abuse and online safety. This strategy involved selecting students who have been directly affected by child online abuse and expertise like teachers, school counselors, and child online safety advocates. The students who have been directly affected were selected by the school's counselor who knew their case and before the researcher met them the school counselor accepted their consent from them to participate in this study concerning confidentiality.

3.5 Data collection methods

The data collection methods for this qualitative investigation of experience of students of child online abuse was primarily consist of in-depth interview, key informant interview and document analysis.

3.5.1 In-depth Interview

In-depth interview allow researcher to explore complex topics in depth (Jamshed, 2014). Interviews conducted with various stakeholders including children, teachers, professionals

working in the field of child protection, and representatives from law enforcement agencies. This provides a comprehensive understanding of the different perspectives and experiences related to child online abuse in Ethiopia. In order to learn more in-depth information about participants' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, open-ended questions are asked during interviews.

3.5.2 Key informant

The key informant interview involved that have relevant expertise or experience with child online abuse, such as school counselors and child online protection advocates. These individuals had firsthand knowledge of online abuse cases, intervention strategies, support services, and policy initiatives within the school and community context.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

Analyzed documents and records were relevant to the case, such as incident reports from the school, school policies, and legal documents. Document analysis provides supplementary information, context, and background about the case, helping researchers understand the timeline, circumstances, and responses to online abuse within the school and community settings.

3.6 Method of data analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis started with field data collection, where notes taken and initial interpretations are produced, among other things. In order to perform a data analysis, the data was first prepared and organized for analysis, then reduced into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and then shown in figures, tables, or in a discussion form (Braun and Clarke, 2020). This research followed the six phases of qualitative thematic data analysis produced by Braun and Clarke (2006), (a) becoming familiar with the data you have; (b) creating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and labeling themes; and (f) preparing a report. Since the research report must be presented in English, transcription of field data done after the field data translate into English from Amharic.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher received a letter of support from Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work, prior to data collection. Furthermore, the researcher follows the basic ethical considerations as well. One of the primary ethical considerations in this research on the experience of child online abuse among secondary school students was obtaining informed consent. As this study involved children, I took great care to ensure that the appropriate legal and ethical protocols were followed. Before the data collection, I obtained informed consent from the parents and legal guardians of the

participating students. The informed consent was sent to their parents via telegram from the school counselor as the legal system of the school permits. The consent elaborated on the objective and advantages of the research project for the parents. After granting permission for their child to take part in the research study I also obtained assent from the participants themselves by recognizing the importance of respecting the autonomy and voluntary participation of the students. Researchers clearly explained participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any time without facing negative consequences. A safe and non-judgmental space for participants created to share their stories, to ensure that they feeling is respected and supported. Researchers used appropriate language and avoid stigmatizing or victim-blaming narratives. Furthermore, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was respected, which means that research findings and publications will not reveal participants personal information.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the key findings from the qualitative data collected for the study exploring the experience of child online abuse among secondary school students in a selected private school in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

4.1 Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

The study employed, multiple data sources, including in-depth interview with 11 high school students between the age of 14 and 18 years old from the selected school. The researcher also conducted two in depth interviews with teachers. The key informant interview conducted with one school counselor, one school nurse and one child online safety advocate. For the purpose of this research the students and teachers are given codes that identify them in data presentation. From the 11 students 7 of them are male and the rest 4 are female.

4.1.1 Background Information of Students

Participants Code	Sex	Age	Grade
S1	F	18	12
S2	F	18	12
S3	M	16	10
S4	M	15	9
S5	F	17	11
S6	M	14	9
S7	M	15	9
S8	M	18	12
S9	F	17	11
S10	M	17	11

S11	M	18	11
T1	M	30	High school teacher
T2	M	32	High school teacher

4.1.2 Background Information of Key Informant

Mr. Muhedin is school counselor for more than 5 years and had experience in research regarding child online abuse in street children. Dr. Seyoum, who is a general surgeon by profession and additional works with issues related to sexuality for the past 16 and more years and cofounder of United Life for Ethiopia which advocate mainly the safety of online activity from inappropriate sexual activity.

The main themes that emerged from the analysis are experience of students about their internet usage, impact of online abuse and strategies for online safety.

4.2 Experience of Students in Internet

4.2.1 Common online activities of students

Based on the information provided by the participants; mostly their online activities are either for educational purpose or entertainment purpose.

I used internet for my education purpose like to Google and to watch YouTube lectures to do assignments. (IDIS, 1)

.... I and most of my friends usually use internet for either to study or to entertainment like TikTok or Snapchat. (IDIS, 2)

Most of the students claimed TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram and YouTube are the most commonly used social media applications. Some students choose to watch movie and to play online game rather than using social media.

I usually use internet to play online game. I limited the time I spent in social Medias due to the disadvantages they have. (IDIS, 3)

..... *I watched Korean movies most of the times on YouTube (IDIS, 1).*

Students used some online abusive contents as entertainment due to the lack of awareness about online abuse.

My classmates and friends, most of them used pornography videos for entertainment purpose, I also used to do until I heal from the addiction (IDIS, 7)

Social Medias like TikTok and Instagram have too many inappropriate contents to watch, thus students spend too much time on it, and even they become addicted.

I used to spend more than 4 hours per day on social medias especially TikTok and online game when I was at grade 9 and 10. I couldn't even sleep without watching phone ... (IDIS, 10)

I play online game with my friends after school and at weekends just to relax... (IDIS,11)

The data also highlights the presence of online building within the student commonly as one way of entertainments. Some students screenshot other students posted photo and edited in funny way and then they posted it again without the consent of the photo owner.

We as a student have different groups like telegram group, Instagram group. So some students posted the funny pictures of other students in these groups to bully them online (IDIS,2).

These findings underscore the need for comprehensive digital literacy to help students use the online environment more responsibly and safely, because the students themselves are becomes part of online abusers.

4.2.2 Opportunity of internet for students

According to the study result internet brings good opportunity which make their academic journey easier. As the data states the students use the internet as a main resource to support the learning teaching process.

These days most students don't want to spend time on reading books or listening long lecture videos rather they choose just to open google and search what they want. (IDIT, 1)

..... *currently students even start to do their assignments by AI especially grade 11 and 12 students (IDIT, 2)*

The engagement of students on internet helps them to high light the digital world and to make them close with the world.

4.2.3 Risk of internet for students

All participants of the study claimed that internet bring a lot of risks for the high school students. The students, most of them, joined the online world without appropriate digital literacy.

The risks of internet for students expanded to serious complications like suicide and severe mental health problems. The major contributing factor for the expanding risk of internet is that the lack of awareness of parents about online world and failed parenting skill about controlling their children online activity.

Most parents are unaware of the potential risks and external issues that come with using the internet, ever less how to use it responsibly. The generation gap is very high in most cases so that they can't control us in online activity. (IDIS, 4)

Our life style is one of the contributing factors for improved risks of internet because these days children from high income families had their own room with phone and open Wi-Fi which is comfortable for the spread of inappropriate online activities (KISC)

Even though internet has good opportunities to teaching learning process, it is also become one of the problems in other side. Internet addiction leads students to have less time for their study time.

My best friend was distinction student before he had cell phone, but after his parents bought for him, his academic achievement decreases significantly. I have no phone currently because I afraid not to become like him. (IDIS, 6)

Reading habit of students significantly decreased of course ours also decreased after we got Wi-Fi easily. (IDIT, 1)

Before children got cell phones, they should be trained about the usage of it for increased advantages and limited the risks otherwise maybe the risks and damages cause by internet may be higher than its opportunity.

..... the damaged we experienced by internet lead me to say internet has no opportunity even though it has (IDIS, 1)

4.2.4 Awareness about child online abuse

Almost all the participants (the students) don't know the term online abuse even though they experienced it.

My brother is a trainer in child online safety and he also trained me so that I knew it about this issue, otherwise no one told me about this. (IDIS, 6)

Students who experienced cyber bullying, pornography addiction also doesn't know that are forms of online abuse.

..... but unfortunately, most students don't even know about what online abuse is and the impact of online abuse. Sometimes even the abused students don't know they experienced online abuse. (KISC)

I heard about this term when I met the school counselor after 3 years of struggles in porn addiction (IDIS, 7)

..... no one told us about this term even the trainings are mostly about how to manage time for social media or internet and education. (IDIS, 7)

Is there online abuse? What I know about abuse is physical, sexual or verbal abuse. He replied when I asked him about child online abuse. (IDIS, 11)

..... It (child online abuse specially pornography addiction) is now epidemic (KIE)

The findings of this study showed the students don't have awareness about the issue, whereas the experts claimed the highly prevalence of the problem. Due to cultural and religion beliefs as a nation we afraid the openly discuss about online abuse but we are losing the young generation with this problem. The lack of awareness highly leads to lack of appropriate parenting skill over online activity.

4.2.5 Forms of online abuse encountered

Even though the participants of this study don't express the types of online abuse by their names due to their lack of awareness they explained what they experienced. As the data indicated cyber bullying exposure to inappropriate content, online harassment are the different types of child online abuse experienced by the participants. Easily accessibility of phones, tablets or pcs and

internet access especially Wi-Fi makes the spread of inappropriate contents easy. As the participants claimed their exposure for inappropriate contents like pornography was in elementary grades.

I got pornographic video content videos via telegram from unknown contact when I was at grade 8. (IDIS, 1)

Students hacked another student's telegram account and then they spread inappropriate contents to other students by the hacked number then sent for elementary students also (IDIS, 5)

I was exposed to pornography when I was at grade 6 immediately after I moved to Ethiopia from Saudi Arabia. Two of my classmates told me the websites that spread porn contents and since that time, I was addicted for three years. I struggled a lot with this addiction. (IDIS, 7)

My first exposure to pornography was when I was grade 8. My friends told me to search the websites and watch the movies. Prior to this I never know about this thing. (IDIS, 8)

So, the analysis of these findings showed how students become fully mature to protect themselves from that. In the context of this school, the school does not allow using any electronic devices in the school compound, but that cannot be preventive for the students.

..... Pornography coming through social media, films and different forms of entertainment like for example, pop music and so on. (KIE)

Not only pornography content, but abusive words and like for example, through rap and so on. This is also one form of online child abuse that has been prevalent among children and adolescents in Ethiopia, (KIE)

Students who are under the age of 18 should be protected from any form of harm. But, unfortunately in our country context the unsafe online environment become so comfortable to harm them. Pornography and other inappropriate contents are highly addicted without even letting them about this addiction the websites become one click away.

Similarly, mainly female students become easily attacked by cyber bullying. Students post edited photos of their peers to bully them with their telegram group and snapchat.

My best friend experienced online bullying when her ex-boyfriend posted her nude pictures (IDIS, 5)

4.3 Impacts of Child Online Abuse

The main impacts of child online abuse especially exposure to inappropriate contents is it cause serious addiction. As the participants explained they don't even remember when they become addicted to these movies.

..... for the past three years, because of the porn addiction, I lost my self. I become another person with aggressive behavior not only that I had tendency to practice sexual activities that I saw on those movies to my cousin who was grade three and boy. (IDIS, 7)

Pornography steals three years of my life. (IDIS,8)

My friend who was an addicted like me made suicide last year. (IDIS,8)

..... So, it causes serious addiction. And this addiction manifests itself in various forms. For example, these addicted children or young people will have depression. That's a very common form of expression of this situation. They get depressed and they become also aggressive and you usually find them very abusive in words, and they may even be violent at times, physically. But anger is a very common form of expression of this situation. And they may even be suicidal. Well, it's not they may even be, but usually in most cases I've come across the presence of suicidal ideation. Because once they get addicted, the degree of addiction increases by the day, meaning the number of hours they spend on these contents increases and that eventually leads to depression and shame and guilt and also fear. And this will lead to suicide in many cases. And in some cases, they may even attempt to inflict bodily pain and physical damage to their partners. Because once they get involved in pornography, the tendency is for them to have someone whom they will I mean, partner with, meaning they will start a sexual debut very early. And eventually, they will be a part of an abusive relationship, where they will be abusing the other partner sexually. So that's something I have observed. And also, yeah, the other thing that happens is they can even sexually abuse their brothers or sisters. I mean their close siblings. This has been a case which I have come across, not very frequently, but I have come across cases where a young boy has abused his own sister, or a sister abusing a sister, or a small child. I mean, having some kind of sexual activity, like for example, touching the private parts of there I mean, peers. So, these are the different forms

of expression. The other is, they will be very poor in their education, in their performance in their education. And even students, who had very good results previously, will eventually decline in their performance. Why? Because of the serious brain damage, they get from that kind of addiction. And as a medical doctor why? Because of the serious brain damage, they get from that kind of addiction. And as a medical doctor, I have done my own research, meaning through studying different research results, and I have seen that this kind of addiction causes a major brain damage, and even far greater than that caused by drug addiction, because pornography and the like, cause brain damage which is more severe than the one caused by drugs. So, this is the reason for these children performing very badly in their studies. And some may even fail and stop going to school altogether. (KIE)

The findings highlight the profound and far-reaching impacts that online abuse can have on the lives of students. Online bullying, harassment and also exposure to inappropriate content can take a student's mental health. In the case of IDI5's best friend, her ex-boyfriend violates her privacy and consent. Furthermore, the data also elaborated the potential risk that child online abuse had for their academic journey.

Generally, child online abuse is a problem which needs immediate comprehensive strategy to fight it. Child online abuse is killing children not physically but emotionally and mentally which means it is killing generation so is our country.

4.4 Existing policy to child online protection and Recommendations of study participants child online safety

One of the integral aspects of existing child online protection policies is the development and enforcement of robust legal frameworks. Governments around the world have enacted legislation to address various forms of online exploitation and abuse, such as cyber bullying, the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material, and the grooming of minors for sexual purposes. These laws often include provisions for law enforcement intervention, victim support services, and penalties for perpetrators. Furthermore, international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union, have developed comprehensive conventions and directives to guide national policymaking and promote cross-border cooperation in combating online child exploitation.

One of the key pillars of child online protection policies is the promotion of digital literacy and media awareness. Many countries have incorporated digital citizenship and online safety curricula into their educational systems, empowering children and young people with the knowledge and skills to navigate the internet responsibly. These programs often cover topics such as privacy, cyber bullying, misinformation, and the responsible use of social media and other digital platforms. By equipping children with the necessary critical thinking skills, they are better equipped to identify and avoid potential online risks.

Parallel to these legislative efforts, collaborative initiatives involving the private sector have also emerged as a key component of child online protection policies. Technology companies, in partnership with governments and civil society organizations, have implemented a range of measures to enhance the safety and security of their platforms. These include the development of content moderation systems, the deployment of age-verification tools, and the provision of reporting mechanisms for users to flag concerning content or behavior. Additionally, industry-led initiatives, such as the We Protect Global Alliance and the Technology Coalition, have brought together stakeholders to share best practices, pool resources, and drive innovation in the field of online child protection.

All participants of the study recommend implementing a policy that protects them from online abuse.

I recommend the government to blocked all the websites that spread pornographic content (IDIS 7)

I recommend that the Ministry of Education of the country study the prevalence of the issue in schools and start curriculum-based digital literacy (IDIS 10)

I recommend that parents should be trained in online activities harm and preventive measures to protect their children (IDIS 11)

The recommendations presented in this data reflect a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to addressing the critical issue of online abuse and protecting the safety and well-being of students. The recommendation to implement a policy that protects students from online abuse is a crucial and much-needed initiative. By establishing clear guidelines, reporting mechanisms,

and accountability measures, educational institutions can send a strong message that online harassment, exploitation, and other forms of abuse will not be tolerated. The proposal to block websites that spread pornographic content is a bold and necessary step in curbing the proliferation of inappropriate and potentially harmful material that students may be exposed to online. While the internet provides a wealth of educational and informative resources, the ease of access to explicit content can have detrimental effects on the psychological and social development of young people. The final recommendation to train parents in understanding the harms of online activities and implementing preventive measures is equally essential. As the primary caregivers and role models for young people, parents play a vital role in shaping their children's online behaviors and attitudes. By equipping parents with the necessary knowledge and resources, they can become more engaged, vigilant, and better equipped to guide their children through the complexities of the digital landscape.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

This section the paper discusses the key findings of the study findings of the study with that of the existing literatures. The discussion present according to the identified themes in the data presentation answering the research questions of the study. Additionally, the limitations of the study and challenges face during the study are also presented.

5.1 Limitation of the Study

One of the key limitations of this study is its study setting, which is focused solely on one private high school. It may limit the generality of the findings to other contexts because the experience and risks related to child online abuse can vary across different cultural, socioeconomic and technological environments. Another limitation is the potential for sampling biases, since it is conducted by a qualitative methodology the research involves a relatively small sample size of high school students, which may not be representative. Additionally, the study primarily focused on the experience and perspectives of the students themselves, it may not capture the insights of other stakeholders like parents and technology companies.

5.2 Challenges of the Study

The researcher faced different challenges while working on this study. The first challenge was the long process with different schools to get consent to conduct the study due to the sensitivity of the topics. Different schools refused to conduct the study.

The second challenge faced during the data collection process was the student's unwillingness to be interviewed and recorded. After a long explanation of the research objectives and the importance of their involvement in the research, some students refused to be interviewed. Even after agreeing to interview some students refused to be recorded.

The other significant challenge during the data collection time was participants were afraid of telling their personal experiences openly because they were afraid of being exposed since the questions were highly sensitive to our cultural context.

5.3 Experience of Students in Internet

According to the findings of this study, all the participants claimed that they use internet for both educational and entertainment purpose. They said they use different social medias like Instagram, Tik-Tok, Snapchat, telegram and youtube more frequently. The finding showed they

experienced online abuse more on those social medias. Similarly, in the study which was done in Romania among 313 teenagers 50% of them were experienced cyber bullying on different social media like Facebook and Instagram (Borka Balas, Melit, Sarkozi, Ghiga and Marginean, 2023). Regarding the risk factors of online abuse the finding of this study revealed lack of digital literacy among parents is the major risk factor for child online abuse. Almost all participants of the study stated their parents are not aware about their children online activities. Similarly the findings of this study also revealed that students lack support system after their first exposure for online abuse, so that they ended up to severe addiction. Most of the participants were exposed for online abuse for the first time when they were at elementary school ages. Same goes for the finding of Austin, Lesak, & Shanahan (2020) said increased vulnerability is observed in younger children and girls. According to Kids online, 2009 high risk is associated with excessive internet use, engaging in risky online behavior, and lacking cyber security awareness. This study results also indicated that children spent too much time in social Medias like YouTube and TikTok, which increase the risk to being exposed to inappropriate contents.

The current study highlighted that a lack of awareness about child online abuse among students themselves is a key factor that increases their vulnerability to online abuse. This research uncovered that many students do not fully understand the risks and warning signs of online exploitation, making them more susceptible to becoming victims. The findings of this study tended to focus more on parental awareness and school-based education programs as the primary means of addressing this issue. This work sheds new light on the critical need to improve students' knowledge and ability to identify potentially harmful online situations. This suggests that any comprehensive strategy to protect children from online abuse must include a strong emphasis on empowering students with the right information and skills to keep themselves safe.

The research discovered that the two of the most common types of online abuse impacting children are exposure to inappropriate content such as pornography, and cyberbullying. This fits the typology developed by earlier studies in the field. UNICEF states that there are various forms of online abuse of children, such as sextortion, exposure to inappropriate content, cyber-bullying, sexual exploitation, online harassment and emotional abuse (UNICEF, 2022). Among the different types of child online abuse, according to this study finding, almost all the participants of the study experienced cyber-bullying and pornography addiction.

5.4 Impacts of Child Online Abuse

The present study examined in detail the several ways that child abuse on the internet can affect children who are victims. The results showed that the effects may extend to one's mental and physical well-being. This is in accordance with the more comprehensive body of research on the subject, which has shown the wide-ranging and varied impact that online threats can have on children and adolescents. According to this study on of the impacts of online abuse specially exposure to pornography is higher chance of being addictive, since the children had low awareness about the issue they become vulnerable for the addiction without even recognizing it.

In particular, earlier research has discovered that mental health issues like sadness, anxiety, and low self-esteem might arise as a result of experiencing cyberbullying or being exposed to improper internet content. Similarly, (Fisher et al., 2017) put different consequences of child abuse. Psychological distress which includes conditions like PTSD, anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth are one of the impacts of child abuse. In addition, it also the study also showed the social consequences which abuse strains bonds with family, friends, and peers, fostering feelings of solitude. Some children might resort to substance misuse, self-inflicted harm, or other detrimental coping strategies. According to (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013; and Hamm, Newton, Chisholm, et al., 2015) in extreme instances, online mistreatment can lead to tendencies towards self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

According to Carvalho, Branquinho, & De Matos (2018) cross sectional study showed girls are more involved in cyber bullying as cyber victims and they developed emotional symptoms like anxiety and regret. One of the participants of the current study also mentioned the psychological impact like depression and anxiety that her friend had because of cyber bullying. Furthermore, this study identified one of the impacts of pornography addiction is leading the victims to unhealthy and harmful sexual activity. Also, the addiction can lead them to have illegal sexual activity with even their family members which may also affect family relationship.

5. 5 Child Online Protection Polices and Interventions

The current study also looked at the situation of Ethiopian child protection laws and intervention initiatives. The results of the study suggest that there are notable gaps in the current frameworks and policies designed to protect children online. This is consistent with earlier global studies that have repeatedly shown how little systematic, coordinated measures have been made

to counter the growing risk of online abuse. The analysis revealed that the policies in place were generally disconnected and did not foster cross-sector collaboration among beneficial organizations such as government agencies, educational institutions, and technology companies. This is similar to issues found in other nations where the creation of efficient preventative measures has been restricted by the lack of a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. The current study additionally looked at the lack of specialized intervention programs, which leaves many children and their parents without the resources and support they need to manage online risks. When these results are compared to the global situation, it is obvious that the problems Ethiopian children face is not unique but rather representative of a larger pattern. Research conducted in different contexts has highlighted the pressing necessity for legislators, instructors, and business executives to collaborate and create strong, empirically-supported frameworks for safeguarding children online. By concentrating on this crucial area, the current study offers insightful information that can guide the creation of more comprehensive and adaptable interventions, thereby helping in protecting the wellbeing of children in today's digital world.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATION

6.1 Conclusion

This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of child online abuse among high school students in Ethiopia, the risks and opportunities associated with children's online activities, the different types of child online abuse, and potential intervention strategies to ensure the safety of children from online abuse. Regarding, the findings revealed that high school students in Ethiopia have experienced various forms of child online abuse, including cyber bullying, online sexual exploitation, and exposure to inappropriate content. Participants shared their personal experiences, highlighting the significant emotional and psychological impacts of these abusive behaviors.

Also, the study identified a range of risks and opportunities associated with children's online activities in the Ethiopian context. On the one hand, the internet provided students with access to educational resources, opportunities for social interaction, and avenues for self-expression. However, the lack of digital literacy and the prevalence of unmonitored online activities exposed children to risks such as online predators, the spread of misinformation, and the potential for cyberbullying and harassment. The findings demonstrated that students encountered a wide range of abusive behaviors, including sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, identity theft, and exposure to harmful or illegal content. These experiences highlighted the need for comprehensive strategies to address the diverse manifestations of child online abuse.

The study examined potential intervention strategies to create a safer online environment for children in Ethiopia. Participants suggested a multi-faceted approach, including enhancing digital literacy and online safety education for both children and their caregivers, strengthening child protection policies and legal frameworks, and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, such as schools, technology companies, and law enforcement agencies.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by Ethiopian high school students in different online activities and the urgent need for comprehensive, context-specific interventions to safeguard children from online abuse. The recommendations emerging from this research can inform policymakers, educators, and child protection organizations in developing effective strategies to promote a safer and more inclusive online environment for children in Ethiopia.

6.2 Implication for Social Work

6.2.1 Implication for Social Work Practice

The finding of the study implies that there is a need for more school social workers in both elementary and high school. As the finding indicates the first exposure of high school students to online abuse was on their elementary school years. So, we need school social workers who can provides initial assessment, identifying the cases according to the typology of child online abuse and provides individual and group counseling for both elementary and high school students who affected by online abuse.

Social workers should collaborate with ICT professionals, school counselors and teachers to implement peer support programs and psycho educational workshops to teach students about healthy coping mechanisms and digital literacy skills. Social workers who work at both communities, family and child level should make partnership with mass-medias to create awareness about the prevalence and the impact of online abuse on generation.

6.2.2 Implication for Social Work Policy

The findings of the study showed the need to advocate for the development of a national policy on child online protection in Ethiopia, which address issues like inappropriate (pornographic) content restriction. The existing cyber crime and digital right should be reviewed and strengthen to better address the unique challenges of child online abuse.

6.2.3 Implication for Social Work Education

This research can inform the curriculum development in social work programs, particularly in the areas of child and adolescent welfare, digital technology and social justice. Social work students can be exposed to case studies and field placements that focus on online safety and digital literacy interventions. Interdisciplinary collaboration with fields like computer science, media studies and psychology can be encouraged to strengthen the social work response to child online abuse.

6.2.4 Implication for Social Work Future Research

Further research can explore the specific challenges and vulenereblities faced by different demographic groups of Ethiopian children, such as rural vs. urban, gende-based differences, and marginalized communities. Longitudinal studies can also investigate the longterm impacts of child online abuse on mental health, academic performance and social development. Evaluative research

can assess the effectiveness of intervention strategies and inform the development of evidence-based practices for ensuring child online safety.

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Annexs

Annex 1

Consent form is prepared for the research titled: Experience of child online abuse among secondary school students; the case of selected private high schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Purpose of the study- the main purpose of the study is to explore the experience of Child Online Abuse among High school students including the risks and opportunities available for a child associated with online activities, the different types of child online abuses and strategies to ensure the safety of children from online abuse.

Procedures to be followed- the researcher request that you answer a number of in-depth questions forwarded by the researcher during the time of interview. The interview is expected to last approximately 30- 45 minutes. You have the right to withdraw from the interview process at any particular point of time.

Discomforts and risks- the possible discomfort you might experience from participating in this research could be because of uncomfortable and sensitive questions that could cause stressful memories and emotional disturbances. For this reason, you have the right to decline any or all of the questions provided to you.

Confidentiality- this study is guided by the ethical considerations of Autonomy and confidentiality. The information you provide will be disseminated for the purpose of the research. But the personal information is to be kept confidential. Your participation in this study will be confidential and your personal information will not be transferred to third party without your consent.

Right to ask questions- you have a full right to ask any questions you have regarding the research process that you need to be clear with. The researcher is more than willing to provide clear answer to your questions.

Voluntary participation- Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may end your participation at any time without penalty by letting the researcher know.

Thank you in advance for participation in this study.

Annex 2

In -depth interview guideline to the students

- **Risks and Opportunities with Children's Online Activities**
 1. What are some of the common online activities that high school students engage in?
 2. In your opinion, what are the specific risks or challenges that Ethiopian children specifically secondary schools students face when they use the internet?
- **Experience of Child Online Abuse**
 1. What do you know about child online abuse?
 2. Can you share any personal experiences where you or someone you know has encountered child online abuse? How did it happen, and what were the consequences?
 3. How did the experience of child online abuse affect you or the individuals involved? Did it have any emotional, psychological, or social impacts? How did you or they cope with it?
- **Types of Child Online Abuse**
 1. Can you provide examples or instances of different types of child online abuse that you are aware of or have encountered? (Examples may include cyber-bullying, online grooming, exposure to inappropriate content, etc.)
 2. How do you think different types of child online abuse impact the well-being and safety of children? Are there any particular types that are more prevalent or concerning in the context of Ethiopia?
- **Intervention Strategies for Ensuring Online Safety**
 1. Based on your experiences and observations, what strategies do you think can be effective in creating a safe online environment for children in Ethiopia? Are there any specific measures or initiatives that you believe should be implemented?

Annex 3

In -depth interview guideline to the teachers

- **Understanding the School Environment and Policies**

1. Can you provide an overview of the school's current policies or guidelines related to child online abuse and online safety? How are these policies communicated and enforced within the school?

2. How is the school equipped to address incidents of child online abuse? Are there designated staff members or resources available to support students who experience online abuse?

- **Perceptions and Awareness of Child Online Abuse**

3. In your opinion, what is the level of awareness among teachers and staff regarding child online abuse? How knowledgeable do you feel the teachers are about the risks and consequences associated with children's online activities?

4. Have there been any instances of child online abuse reported or identified within the school? How were these incidents handled, and what support was provided to the affected students?

- **Identifying and Responding to Child Online Abuse**

5. How do teachers and staff identify or recognize signs of child online abuse among students? Are there any specific indicators or behaviors that you have observed or that are commonly associated with online abuse?

6. What steps or procedures are in place for reporting and responding to incidents of child online abuse? How are parents or guardians involved in the process, and what support is offered to the affected students?

- **Collaboration and Intervention Strategies**

7. How does the school collaborate with parents, guardians, and external stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, child protection agencies) to address child online abuse? Are there any partnerships or initiatives in place to promote online safety?

8. In your experience, what intervention strategies or programs have been effective in creating a safe online environment for students? Are there any specific educational or preventive measures that are implemented within the school?

Annex 4

Key informant guideline to the expertise (child online protection advocates)

- **Background and Experience**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your role and responsibilities in relation to child protection and online safety?
2. How long have you been working in this field, and what experiences or qualifications have prepared you to address child online abuse?

- **Understanding Child Online Abuse**

3. How would you define child online abuse? What are the various forms or types of online abuse that you commonly encounter in your work?
4. What is the impact of child online abuse ? Why should we need to advocate for the protection of online safety?
5. Based on your experience, what are some key risk factors or indicators that suggest a child may be experiencing online abuse? Are there any specific patterns or behaviors that you look for?

- **Current Approaches and Challenges**

6. What current approaches, interventions, or strategies are being used to address child online abuse? Are there any specific programs or initiatives that have proven to be effective?
7. In your opinion, what are the main challenges or barriers that professionals face in addressing child online abuse effectively? Are there any gaps in resources, training, or policies that need to be addressed?

- **Reporting**

8. What are the key steps or protocols involved in reporting and responding to incidents of child online abuse? How do you ensure the safety and well-being of the child throughout the process?

- **Prevention and Education**

9. What preventive measures or educational programs are in place to raise awareness about child online abuse and promote online safety? Are there any specific initiatives targeting parents, educators, or children themselves?

10. In your experience, what are the essential components of an effective prevention program or educational campaign focused on child online abuse? What topics or skills should be covered?

- Recommendations and Future Directions

11. Based on your expertise and experiences, what recommendations would you provide to improve the response to child online abuse? Are there any specific actions, policies, or resources that you believe would be beneficial?

12. Looking ahead, what do you see as the key trends or emerging challenges in the field of child online abuse? How can professionals and organizations adapt to address these challenges effectively?

Annex 5

እኔ ሀፍ ንሳቢር እባላለሁ። በአሁኑ ሰአት የአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የማስተርስ ተመራቂ ተማሪ ሲሆን በአሁኑ ሰአት ትምህርቴን እጨርስ ዘንድ የሚረዱኝን የመመረቂያ የጥናት ፅሁፍ በመስራት ላይ እገኛለሁ። ይህ የጥናት ፅሁፍ የሚያተኩረው በአዲስ አበባ ውስጥ በሚገኙ በተመረጡ የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች በተማሪዎች ላይ በአንላይን የሚደርስ ጥቃት ላይ ነው። በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ እስካሁን ድረስ በዚህ ጉዳይ ላይ የተሰሩ በቂ ጥናቶች ስለሌሉ ይህ ጥናት በርካታ በመሆን ያገለግላል ፡፡

በዚህ ጥናት በሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት ተማሪዎች መካከል የህጻናትን የአንላይን ጥቃት ልምድ የሚዳሰስ ሲሆን ይህም ከአንላይን ተግባራት ጋር በተያያዙ ህጻናት ላይ ሊደርስ የሚችለውን አደጋ እና እድሎች ፣ የተለያዩ የህጻናት የአንላይን ጥቃቶችን እና የህጻናትን የአንላይን ደህንነት ለማረጋገጥ የሚረዱ ስልቶችን ይጨምራል።

እርስዎም የዚህ ጥናት አካል መሆንዎ ትልቅ ጠቀሜታ ሲኖረው በቅድሚያ ከልብ ላመሰግንዎት እፈልጋለሁ ፡፡ ከእርስዎ ጋር የምናደርገው የቃለ መጠይቅ ቆይታ ከ30-45 ደቂቃ ይፈጃል ተብሎ ይገመታል ፡፡ ቃለመጠይቁን ወይም ውይይቱን የምናደርገው በእርስዎ ፍቃደኝነት ላይ ተመስርተን በድምፅ መቅረጫ በመታገዝ ሲሆን ይህም ፅሁፍን በምፅፍበት ጊዜ እንዲያግዝኝ በማሰብ ነው ፡፡ በውይይታችን ወቅት የምናነሳቸው የእርስዎ የግል ሚስጥሮች በሙሉ በኛ መሀል የሚቀሩ ሲሆን የሚስጥሩን ተጠባቂነት ከወዱሁ ላረጋግጥልዎት እችላለሁ ፡፡

ቃለ መጠይቁ ወይም ውይይቱ የሚካሄደው በእርስዎ ሙሉ ፍላጎት ላይ ብቻ ተመሥርቶ ሲሆን መመለስ የማይፈልጓቸው ወይም ምችትዎን የሚነሱ ጥያቄዎች ካሉ ሳይመልሱ ማለፍ ይችላሉ ፡፡ ከዚህም በተጨማሪ በምትፈልጉበት ሰአት ውይይቱን ማቆም ይችላሉ ፡፡ በቃለ መጠይቁ ወቅት ግልጽ ያልሆኑ ጥያቄዎች ካሉ ማብራሪያ መጠየቅ ይችላሉ ፡፡

ስለዚህ የጥናት ፅሁፍ ተጨማሪ ማብራሪያ ከፈለጉ 09 09 98 81 32 ማነጋገር ይችላሉ ፡፡

Annex 6

ጥልቅ የቃለ መጠይቅ መመሪያ ለተማሪዎች

- በልጆች የአንላይን አጠቃቀም ላይ አደጋዎች እና እድሎች

1. የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ተማሪዎች የሚያካሂዷቸው አንዳንድ የአንላይን እንቅስቃሴዎች የትኞቹ ናቸው?

2. በአንተ/ቺ አስተያየት ኢትዮጵያውያን ታዳጊዎች በተለይም የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ተማሪዎች ኢንተርኔት ሲጠቀሙ የሚያጋጥሟቸው የተለዩ ተግዳሮቶች ወይም ፈተናዎች ምን ምን ናቸው?

- የታዳጊዎች የአንላይን ጥቃት ተሞክሮ

1. ስለ ሕጻናት የአንላይን ላይ ጥቃት ምን ያህል ታውቃለህ/ሽ?

2. አንተ/ቺ ወይም በቅርብ የሚያውቁት ሰው በአንላይን የልጆች ላይ ጥቃት የምታውቀው/የምታውቁው ማንኛውንም የግል ተሞክሮ አለ? እንዴት ሊከሰት ቻለ? ውጤቱስ ምን ነበር?

3. በአንላይን በልጆች ላይ የሚፈጸም ጥቃት ተሞክሮክ/ሽ እንተን/ቺን እና በጉዳዩ ላይ በሚመለከታቸው ግለሰቦች ላይ ምን ተጽዕኖ አሳድሯል? ስሜታዊ፣ ስነ-ልቦናዊ ወይም ማህበራዊ ተጽእኖዎች አሉት? እንተ/ቺ ወይም ጥቃቱ የደረሰበት የቅርብ/ሽ ሰው እንዴት ተቋቋሙት?

Annex 7

- የልጆች የአንላይን ጥቃት ዓይነቶች

1. እንተ/ቺ የምታውቀው/ቁው ወይም ያጋጠሙክ/ሽ የተለያዩ የህጻናት የአንላይን ጥቃት ምሳሌዎችን ወይም ምሳሌዎችን ማቅረብ ትችላለህ/ትችያለሽ? (ምሳሌ አግባብ ላልሆነ ይዘት መጋለጥ፣ ወዘተ ሊያካትቱ ይችላሉ።)

2. የተለያዩ የህጻናት የአንላይን ጥቃት በልጆች ደህንነት ላይ እንዴት ተጽእኖ የሚያሳድሩ ይመስሉካል/ሻል? በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ በተለየ ሁኔታ በጣም የተስፋፉ ወይም የሚመለከቱ ዓይነቶች አሉ?

- የአንላይን ደህንነትን ለማረጋገጥ የጣልቃገብነት ስልቶች

1. በአንተ/ቺ ተሞክሮ እና ምልክታ መሰረት በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ለህጻናት ደህንነቱ የተጠበቀ የኦንላይን ከባቢን ለመፍጠር ምን አይነት ስልቶች ውጤታማ ይሆናሉ ብለክ/ሽ ታስባለህ/ታስቢያለሽ? መተግበር አለባቸው ብለህ/ሽ የምታምንባቸው/ የምታምኝባቸው የተወሰኑ እርምጃዎች ወይም ተነሳሽነቶች አሉ?

Annex 8

ለአስተማሪዎች ጥልቅ የቃለ መጠይቅ መመሪያ

- የትምህርትቤቱን አካባቢ እና ፖሊሲዎች መረዳት

1. ከልጆች የኦንላይን ጥቃት እና የኦንላይን ደህንነት ጋር የተያያዙ የትምህርት ቤቱን ወቅታዊ ፖሊሲዎች ወይም መመሪያዎች አጠቃላይ እይታ ያቅርቡ? እነዚህ ፖሊሲዎች በትምህርት ቤቱ ውስጥ እንዴት ወደ ሌሎች ይተላለፋሉ እንዲሁም ይተገበራሉ?

2. ትምህርት ቤቱ በልጆች ላይ በኦንላይን የሚደርሱ ጥቃቶችን ለመፍታት እንዴት ተዘጋጅቷል? በኦንላይን ጥቃት ለሚደርስባቸው ተማሪዎች ድጋፍ ለመስጠት የተመደቡ የሰራተኞች አባላት ወይም ግብዓቶች አሉ?

- የልጆች የኦንላይን ጥቃት ግንዛቤ

3. በእርስዎ አስተያየት በህጻናት የኦንላይን ጥቃትን በተመለከተ በመምህራን እና ሰራተኞች መካከል ያለው ግንዛቤ ምን ያህል ነው? ከልጆች የኦንላይን እንቅስቃሴዎች ጋር ተያይዘው ስለሚመጡ አደጋዎች እና ችግሮች መምህራኑ ምን ያህል እውቀት አላቸው ይላሉ?

4. በትምህርት ቤቱ ውስጥ በህጻናት በየኦንላይን ጥቃት የደረሰቹ ጥቆማ ወይም ተለይተው የታወቁ አጋጣሚዎች ነበሩ? እነዚህን ክስተቶች እንዴት ተስተናገዱ? ጥቃት ለደረሰባቸው ተማሪዎችስ ምን ድጋፍ ተደረገ?

- በኦንላይን በልጆች ላይ የሚደርስ ጥቃትን መለየት እና ምላሽ መስጠት

5. መምህራን እና ሰራተኞች በተማሪዎች መካከል የህጻናትን የኦንላይን ጥቃት ምልክቶችን እንዴት ለይተው ያውቃሉ? እርስዎ የተመለከቷቸው ወይም በተለምዶ ከኦንላይን ጥቃት ጋር የተያያዙ የተወሰኑ ጠቋሚ ምልክቶች ወይም ባህሪዎች አሉ?

6. በኦንላይን በልጆች ላይ የሚደርሱ ጥቃቶችን ሪፖርት ለማድረግ እና ምላሽ ለመስጠት ምን እርምጃዎች ወይም ሂደቶች አሉ? በሂደቱ ውስጥ ወላጆች ወይም አሳዳጊዎች እንዴት ይሳተፋሉ? ለተጎዱ ተማሪዎችስ ምን ድጋፍ ተሰጥቷል?

- የጥምርስራእናየጣልቃገብነትስልቶች

7. የልጆችን የኦንላይን ጥቃት ለመቅረፍ ትምህርት ቤቱ ከወላጆች፣ አሳዳጊዎች እና የውጭ ባለድርሻ አካላት (ለምሳሌ የህግ አስከባሪ አካላት፣ የህጻናት ጥበቃ ኤጀንሲዎች) ጋር እንዴት ይሰራል? የኦንላይን ደህንነትን ለማስተዋወቅ ምን አይነት ትብብር ወይም ተነሳሽነት አለ?

8. በተሞክሮው ለተማሪዎች ደህንነቱ የተጠበቀ የኦንላይን አካባቢን ለመፍጠር ምን አይነት የመከላከያ ስልቶች ወይም ፕሮግራሞች ውጤታማ ሆነዋል? በትምህርት ቤት ውስጥ የሚተገበሩ ልዩ ትምህርታዊ ወይም የመከላከያ እርምጃዎች አሉ?

Annex 9

ለሙያው ቁልፍ የመረጃ ሰጭ መመሪያ (አማካሪዎች፣ ወጣቶች ሰራተኞች፣ የህጻናት ጥበቃ ባለሙያዎች፣ የህግ አስከባሪዎች)

- ዳራእናተሞክሮ

1. ከልጆች ጥበቃ እና ከኦንላይን ደህንነት ጋር በተገናኘ የእርስዎን ሚና እና ኃላፊነቶች አጭር መግለጫ ይስጡ?

2. በዚህ መስክ ለምን ያህል ጊዜ ሰሩ? እንዲሁም በህጻናት የኦንላይን ጥቃትን ለመፍታት ምን አይነት ልምዶች ወይም ብቃቶች አለዎት?

- የልጆችንየኦንላይንጥቃትንመረዳት

3. በኦንላይን የልጆች ጥቃትን እንዴት ይገልጹታል? በስራዎ በብዛት የሚያጋጥሙ የተለያዩ አይነት የኦንላይን ጥቃቶች ምን ምን ናቸው?

4. በተሞክሮዎ መሰረት አንድ ልጅ በኦንላይን ጥቃት ሊደርስበት እንደሚችል የሚጠቁሙ አንዳንድ ቁልፍ የአደጋ ምክንያቶች ወይም ጠቋሚዎች ምንድን ናቸው? የሚያስተውሉት የተለዩ ዘዴዎች ወይም ባህሪያት አሉ?

- ወቅታዊአቀራረቦችእናተግዳሮቶች

5. በልጆች ላይ በአንላይን የሚደርስባቸውን ጥቃት ለመፍታት ምን አይነት ወቅታዊ አቀራረቦች፣ ጣልቃ ገብነቶች ወይም ስልቶች ጥቅም ላይ ይውላሉ? ውጤታማ መሆናቸው የተረጋገጡ ልዩ ፕሮግራሞች ወይም ውጥኖች አሉ?

6. በእርስዎ አስተያየት፣ በልጆች ላይ በአንላይን የሚደርሱ ጥቃቶችን በብቃት ለመፍታት ባለሙያዎች የሚያጋጥሟቸው ዋና ዋና ተግዳሮቶች ወይም መሰናክሎች ምንድን ናቸው? በግብአት፣ በስልጠና ወይም በፖሊሲዎች ላይ መስተካከል ያለባቸው ክፍተቶች አሉ?

- ሪፖርትማድረግ

7. በልጆች ላይ በአንላይን የሚደርስ ጥቃትን ሪፖርት ለማድረግ እና ምላሽ ለመስጠት ዋና ዋና ነጥቦች ወይም ፕሮቶኮሎች ምንድን ናቸው? በሂደቱ ውስጥ የልጁን ደህንነት እንዴት ማረጋገጥ ይቻላል?

- መከላከል እና ትምህርት

8. ስለ ህጻናት የአንላይን ጥቃት ግንዛቤን ለማሳደግ እና የአንላይን ደህንነትን ለማስተማር ምን አይነት የመከላከያ እርምጃዎች ወይም ትምህርታዊ ፕሮግራሞች ተዘጋጅተዋል? ወላጆችን፣ መምህራንን ወይም ልጆችን ትኩረት ያደረጉ ልዩ ተነሳሽነቶች አሉ?

10. በተሞክሮዎ፣ በልጆች ላይ በአንላይን ጥቃት ላይ ያተኮረ ውጤታማ የመከላከያ ፕሮግራም ወይም ትምህርታዊ ዘመቻ ዋና ዋና ክፍሎች ምንድናቸው? ምን ምን ርዕሰ ጉዳዮች ወይም ሀሳቦች ላይ ትኩረት ማድረግ አለባቸው?

- ምክሮች እና የወደፊት አቅጣጫዎች

11. በእርስዎ ሙያ እና ልምድ ላይ በመመስረት ለልጆች በአንላይን ጥቃት ምላሽን ለማሻሻል ምን ምክሮችን ይሰጣሉ? ይጠቅማሉ ብለው የሚያምኑባቸው የተወሰኑ እርምጃዎች፣ ፖሊሲዎች ወይም ግብዓቶች አሉ?

12. ነባራዊውን ሁኔታ በመመልከት በልጆች የአንላይን ጥቃት መስክ እንደ ቁልፍ አዝማሚያዎች ወይም ብቅ ያሉ ተግዳሮቶች ምን ያይታል? እነዚህን ተግዳሮቶች በብቃት ለመፍታት ባለሙያዎች እና ድርጅቶች እንዴት መላመድ ይችላሉ?