

**CAUSES OF SUICIDAL ACTS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS' STUDENTS IN  
CHUKA IGAMBANG`OMBE CONSTITUENCY, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY-  
KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN  
PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS DEGREE IN  
EDUCATION (ARTS) AT GRE TSA UNIVERSITY-THIKA**

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## DECLARATION

Student`s declaration.

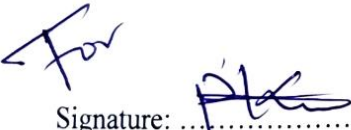
This research project is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree or for any other similar purpose in any other institution.

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Sincere gratitude to my loving father; Mr. Hamazon Gitari for his full support in order sees me through my academic journey. My sincere gratitude to my loving mother; Catherine Njeri for also giving me motivation in my studies and always being there for me and also my supervisor Professor George N.Reche for guiding me through the project and being very instrumental to me.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to my mother Catherine Njeri and my father Hamazon Gitari for supporting me throughout my academic period.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**S.P.S.S- Statistical Packages for Social Sciences**

**W.H.O- World Health Organization.**

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

**Suicide** refers to the act of intentionally ending one`s own life.

**Suicide attempt-** This is an action intended to deliberately end one`s own life.

**Suicide death-** This is a fatal action that results from suicide ideation and attempt.

**Suicide Ideation-** This is the desire to end one`s own life.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research project focuses on the various causes of suicide among the secondary students in Tharaka Nithi County. Suicide has been continuously witnessed all over the country with the victims being mostly the adolescents. The researcher used Tharaka Nithi county, Chuka igambangombe Constituency as the preferred case study. Many researchers on the same state that; suicide is the leading cause of death among the adolescents and the young adults. The research focuses on what influences the secondly students into committing suicide, both from the suicidal ideation, suicide attempt and suicide death. The specific objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of suicide among secondary students, to explore the various causes of suicide among the young adults who are mostly secondary students and to assess the major causes of suicide in the area of study. The researcher targeted four secondary schools in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency. The schools had a total of 600. The researcher settled at a sample of 10% of the target population which was 60 respondents. The researcher used 15 questionnaires in each of the four schools to obtain the required information from the targeted respondents. After coding the data obtained from the sampled respondents, results showed that harassment; physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence and childhood abuse and poor performance were the major causes of suicidal acts with the percentage of 75%, 60%, and 61% while social loss least contributed to suicidal acts with a percentage of 51%.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This research was aimed at determining the various causes of suicidal acts among secondary school students. this chapter gives the background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, conceptual framework, research questions and the objectives of the study; both the general and specific objectives, this chapter; also involve delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and assumptions of the researcher.

### **1.2 Background to the study.**

The word suicide originated from Latin words SUI (of oneself) and CAEDERE (to kill) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was first used by Thomas Browne who was an English physician and philosopher in 1642 in his book "Relegio Medici".

Suicide refers to an act of intentionally ending one's own life it refers to death arising from an act inflicted upon oneself with the intent to kill oneself. Suicidality refers to all suicide-related behaviors and thoughts including completing or attempting suicide, suicidal ideation or communications. For one to commit suicide, they must have had the thought and idea of killing themselves. However, the earlier the exposure of children to traumatic experiences the higher the probability of the children committing suicide. Domestic violence for example greatly contributes to the various thoughts and behavior of adolescents. Secondary students who study in day schools are mainly affected by domestic violence. Whenever the parents or guardians are rude and extremely harsh to each other, or to their adolescents to an extent of engaging in serious and dangerous fights and causing physical harm to each other, the adolescents, who in this case are the secondary students, may feel at fault. Aiming at solving the conflict between the parents, the students end up committing suicide since they are not in the position to handle the issue. Also, domestic violence may induce depression among the students in the secondary schools that instills suicide ideation, thoughts and suicide death. In Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency, suicidal cases among the secondary school students have been occasionally reported. Most of the cases revolve around family setting which include misunderstanding among the parents, the feeling of isolation and also due to drug and substance abuse. The Location consists of at least thirty-four schools. Each school has at least two streams of classes and this shows that the constituency is densely populated in terms of the number of secondary schools in the area and also the number of students. Chu and

Nock (2009) states that; one out of two secondary school students receiving grade “Ds” “mostly felt sad and helpless and two out of five students receiving grades of mostly “Ds” and “Fs” attempted suicide. Comparatively, only one out of twenty-five students earning mostly “A” attempted suicide. The research by the two shows evidently that the secondary school students are at a high risk of committing suicide due to their academic performance.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

#### **1.3.1 Tendency of students` suicide.**

The death of a secondary student penetrates the entire society with a sense of loss and extreme pain. However, suicide cannot be handled alone rather, the causes, suicidal behavior, suicide threats and attempts which steps up into a successful suicide if no action is made. Mitchell (2000) states that; suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-24 years old worldwide. Moreover, he adds that approximately 40percent of high school students have contemplated suicide by the time they complete their four years of study. The social media often reports cases of students` completed suicide that is mostly related to academic performance. In South Korea, Kim and Kim (2008) found out that the youth who are exposed to adverse dysfunctional and abusive childhood environments are of a greater risk for subsequent suicidal behavior. Onyango (2012) states that in 2012 alone, seven students who were supposed to join the secondary schools committed suicide in Kenya for only not obtaining their desired scores to join the secondary school of their choice. Williamson (2010) and Heitkamp (2011) carried out a study in US in the same area of interest. Shalley and Nerina (2009) carried out the same study in Australia. Generally, all the above mentioned researchers` findings revealed a shortage of knowledge on the causes of students` suicide. The researcher thus aims at filling the knowledge gap in the study and finds it important to have a similar study in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency, Tharaka Nithi County- Kenya where suicide has taken place repeatedly among secondary students. The present research acknowledges the prevalence of secondary school students` suicidal acts in institutions of learning and seeks to understand the cause of the suicidal acts.

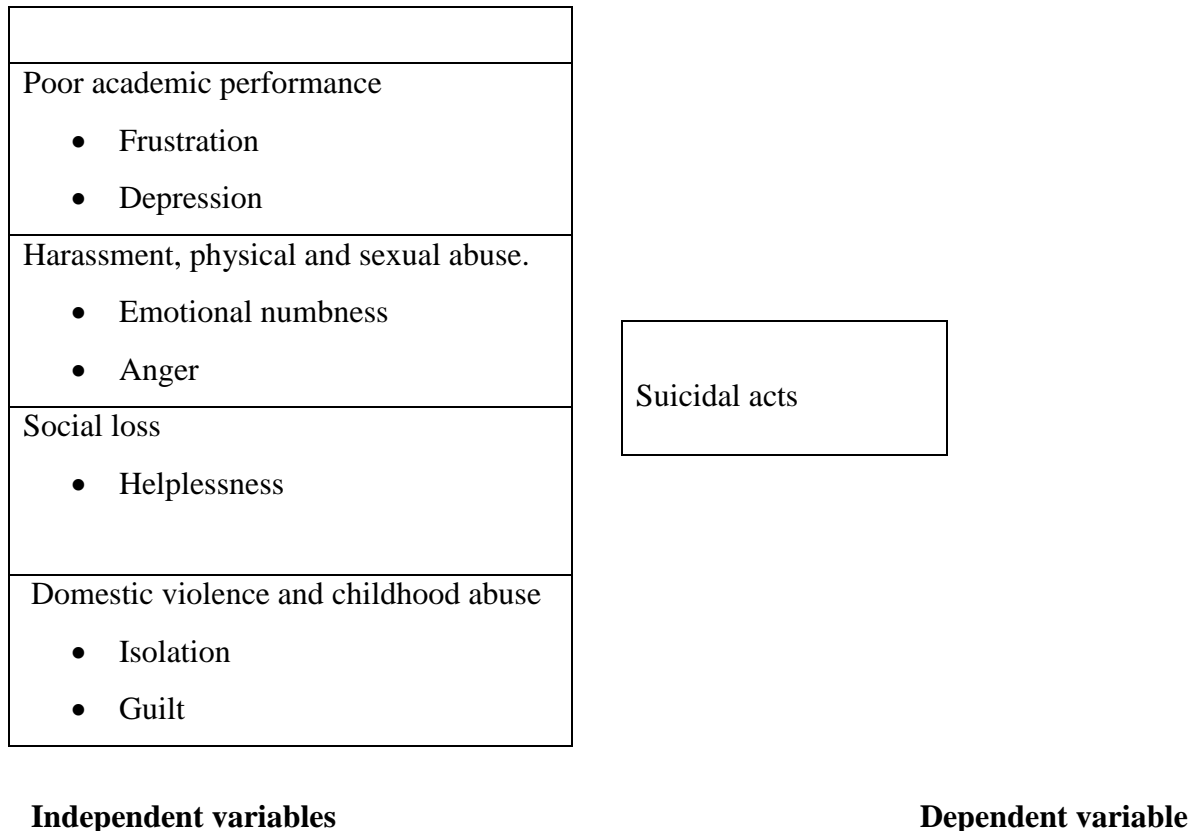
#### **1.4 Purpose of the study.**

This study sort; to investigate the causes of suicidal acts among the Secondary School Students in Chuka Igambang`Ombe Constituency. This research will enhance the general understanding of the perspective of the participants within Tharaka Nithi County, Chuka

Igambang`ombe Constituency. The study will also be helpful to the future researchers who will venture into the same area of interest.

### 1.5 Conceptual framework.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework and the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables



**Figure 1.1 Study conceptual frameworks**

Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between the dependent variable (suicidal acts) and the independent variables (poor performance, harassment, physical and sexual abuse, social loss and domestic violence and childhood abuse). The first independent (poor academic performance) variable was measured using two items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree(1) to Strongly Agree(5).

Harassment, physical and sexual abuse was measured using two items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree(5). Social loss was measured using one item on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The dependent variable (Suicidal acts) was measured using three items on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

## **1.7 Objectives of the study**

### **1.7.1 General objective**

To assess the various causes of suicidal acts among Secondary School Students in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency, Tharaka Nithi County- Kenya.

### **1.7.2 Specific objectives**

1. To determine the prevalence of secondary students` suicide in Chuka Igambang`ombe constituency.
2. To explore the causes of suicide among secondary school students in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency
3. To assess the major causes of suicide among secondary school students in Chuka Igambangombe Constituency.

## **1.8 Research questions**

1. What are the causes of suicidal behavior and acts among the secondary school students in Chuka igamba ng`ombe Constituency?
2. How is students` suicide prevalent in Chuka Igambang`ombe constituency?
3. What are the main causes of suicide in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency?

## **1.9 Significance of the study**

This study was based on the fact that there is a large gap with regard to the causes of suicide among the secondary school students. It therefore aimed at filtering the existing literature in a systematic manner in order to identify where future research is needed. It would also aid in the development and implementation of interventional programs aimed at dealing with the causes of suicide among secondary school students. The study also gave a clear and better understanding of how the world is like for a student who has attempted suicide due to exposure to domestic violence. Incorporating the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide by Thomas Joiner also aids in students` suicidal behavior and acts in all spheres of life such as the immediate parent` environment, school and association of friends in the external environment.

## **1.10 Delimitation of the study.**

This study was only confined to the four causes of suicide among secondary schools. The study participants were among the thirty percent of the schools in the area of study during the time of research. Moreover, the study was carried out in Chuka Igambang`ombe

Constituency- a region that is home to the target population.

### **1.11 Limitations of the study**

This study was limited to Tharaka Nithi County, Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency. Thus, one should be cautious when generalizing the study findings to other areas. For example, results should not be interpreted to apply to Kenya in general or other regions. This is because the causes vary in terms of context, situation and way of life as well as in different regions.

### **1.1.2. Assumption of the study.**

There is an assumption that, the targeted secondary schools have at least one stream of classes each.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter is a brief overview of the literature that is currently available in the field of secondary school students' suicide. A comprehensive review and discussion based on the various previous studies done by the past researchers has been done in this chapter. This chapter has also discussed the prevalence of suicide among students, explore the causes of suicidal acts among the secondary students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency, determine the preventive measures on suicide among students, the theoretical framework on the area of study and the summary of the identified gap in the reviewed literature.

#### **2.2 Review of literature**

Santrock (2013) reports that, the childhood experience and exposure to traumatic incidence can have detrimental effect to an individual both in childhood and also throughout their life. Emotional, psychological and physical development is a continuous and long life process. Beyond the question of whether a student attempted and committed suicide or not, one must also determine the prevalence of suicide, how, why and when it occurs. WHO (2017) states that in each year, approximately 800,000 people die by suicide worldwide. Although suicide ideation, thoughts and behavior among the adolescents are of great concern. Nock, Borges, Bromet, Alonso et al. (2008); WHO (2017) reports that the highest increase in the number of suicide death throughout the life span occurs between early adolescence and young adulthood. CDC (2017) reports that suicide as a cause of death during adolescence ranks higher compared to other age groups. It is the second leading cause of death during childhood and adolescence, whereas, it is the tenth leading cause of death among all age groups. Miranda, Ortin, Scott (2014): Nock, Prinstein and Sterba, (2009) demonstrates that, community based adolescents who experience suicidal ideation typically do so at a moderate frequency. Kessler, Borges and Walters (1999) reports that many people who have attempted suicide first did so during their youth since the lifetime age of onset for suicidal ideation and attempts typically occurs before the mid- twenties.

##### **2.2.1 The process of suicide.**

In this, the researcher gave the various happenings in the mind of the victims that leads to them committing suicide and having a successful suicide death

### **2.2.1.1 Suicide ideation**

This refers to the desire to end one's own life. It ranges from relatively passive ideation like wanting to be dead to active ideation like wanting to kill oneself or thinking of the method to use in killing one self.

### **2.2.1.2 Suicide attempt**

This is an action intended to deliberately end one's own life. The method that is most common among the adolescents, who in this case are the secondary school students, is overdose, hanging, suffocation and also by the use of a sharp object like a knife to cut oneself. Cloutier, Martin, Kennedy, Nixon and Muehlenkamp (2010); Paralleda et al, (2008) Suicide attempts among the secondary students often occurs in the context of a plan, though a portion of some adolescents between 20 percent to 40 percent attempt suicide in the absence of a plan. Nock, Borges, Bromet, Cha et al, (2008)

### **2.2.1.3 Suicide death**

This is a fatal action to intentionally end one's own life. The most common method among the secondary students may include hanging.

## **2.3 Prevalence of students committing suicide.**

According to WHO (2017), suicide is the leading cause of death among young adults and it accounts for 85% of the deaths among the adolescents and youths of between 15-17 years around the world. According to Mitchell (2000), approximately 40% of high school students have contemplated suicide within their four years of study. However, in Chuka Igambang`ombe constituency, at least two secondary students commit suicide every year.

## **2.4 Causes of suicidal acts in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency.**

Suicide acts in the area of study occur occasionally. Most of the cases are linked to: poor academic performance, harassment, physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence and childhood abuse.

### **2.4.1 Poor academic performance**

This study was aimed at assessing the various causes of suicide in Chuka Igambang`ombe constituency given that suicide among the secondary students have been made severally in the area. Incidents of suicide pacts (the agreement between two or more people to commit suicide together) among the secondary school students in the area have been reported via strikes that involve deliberate fires in the school. Due to poor performance, a number of students have been reported having attempted suicide. From a girls boarding school five

students were rescued in 2013 from their dormitory after allegedly having set the dormitory on fire deliberately. The case was associated to their poor performance. Secondary students who feel frustrated by their poor academic performance may or may not opt to commit suicide. However, due to failure to perform as expected, the secondary student may be depressed to an extent of committing suicide.

#### **2.4.2 Harassment, physical and sexual abuse.**

Harassment refers to troubling and annoying someone repeatedly. It is closely connected to physical and sexual abuse. These factors may be facilitated by drug and substance abuse among the secondary students increasing the risk of students committing suicide. Drug abuse alters the normal functioning of an individual's body system driving the individual into doing things they are not aware of. The students under drug and substance abuse tend to hallucinate mostly and end up bullying and harassing other students. As this goes on, the drug victim will end up physically and sexually abusing the other students and also themselves thus increasing the risk of suicidal acts. However, for example, if a student has been failing a particular subject and the teacher reminds them of their incapability and harasses them each and every time he or she is teaching the subject, this student will be emotionally and mentally disturbed and due to the harassment, they may opt to kill or harm themselves. Continuous exposure to harassment, physical and sexual abuse may lead to emotional numbness. Such students may also be subjected to anger and denial and this increases the risk of suicide acts.

#### **2.4.3 Social loss**

This involves the loss of a close person in the students' life; a relative, colleague or a friend. For example, if a student has been brought up by a single parent and they happen to pass on, the student will be helpless and thus lack the reason to move on with life. This may result to them committing suicide. The researcher looked critically into the incidents of suicide acts among the sample population of the students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.

#### **2.4.3 Domestic violence and childhood abuse**

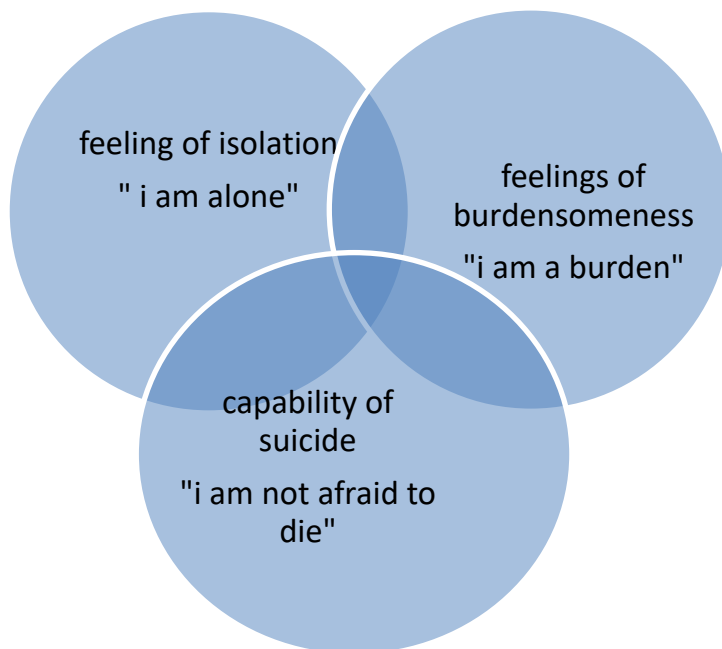
A report by the standard nation by Peace Loise Mbae on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 page 23 reported the suicide case of a secondary student in Marimanti village in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency over school fees. The student committed suicide after a quarrel with his father who had declined to give him a 200 shilling that he had come to collect for his school fees. Another case of suicide occurred on a Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 as was reported by the Daily Nation page 19 of a form three student's body found hanging from a mango tree in

Chuka, Tharaka Nithi County whereby a street boy who alerted the passerby. It is reported that the residents of the area said that the boy came from a needy family and his education was sponsored by a local church. In this case also, the student ought to have committed suicide due to lack of school fees and the continuous fight and domestic violence between his parents. The student was 18 years old. However, childhood abuse and exposure to traumatic experiences may also increase the risk of secondary students committing suicide

## 2.5 Theoretical framework

### 2.5.1 The interpersonal theory of suicide by Thomas Joiner.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the interpersonal theory of suicide; the three interlocking circles



**Figure 1.2: The structure of interpersonal theory of suicide**

The three interlocking circles states:

1. The feelings of isolation
2. The feelings of burdensomeness
3. Capability of suicide

The theory provides a model that can be used to help understand the risks of suicide. It implies that reducing sociality cannot merely consist of clinical health interventions and understanding the causes of suicide but must also include preventive measures. The model indicates that the first two elements; the feelings of isolation and feeling of burdensomeness

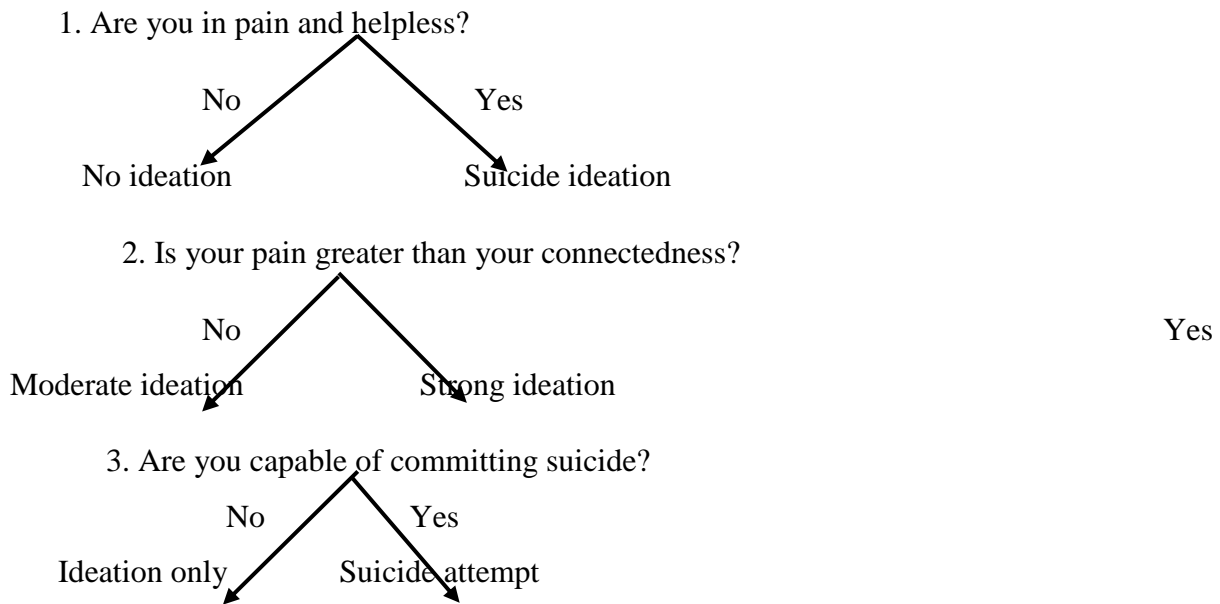
can combine to form a desire for suicide or suicide ideation. This desire however, is not sufficient to carry out a suicide. Fear of death, including by suicide, is a natural and extremely powerful human instinct. The theory proposes repeated exposure to traumatic experiences, engaging in self-harm behavior and suicide ideation may desensitize and habituate the individual and increase the capability for suicidal acts. This may be as well the reason as to why the history of attempted suicide is the number one predictor of future attempts. According to an article on a journal by Heidi Hjelmel and Birthe Loa Knizek (2008), Joiner completely disregards contexts within which suicide is developed and maintained and that within the framework of interpersonal theory of suicide; people are treated as artificial theoretical constructs. By Joiner stating that the theory explains all suicides everywhere and conditions under which they occur, it makes the theory questionable since it is only possible if human beings are deprived of their situational and locational biography. This shows that the theory does not even appear to provide support to its important claim. As a result, its superior role in today`s suicidology is unjustified.

However, Heidi Hjelmel and Birthe Loa Knize criticizes the theory in the view that, just because the three components (capability of suicide, feelings of burdensomeness and the feeling of isolation) are theoretical concepts, it is barely a well justified argument. To claim that a fusion of rare c components foretells a rare outcome is absurd. They therefore states that the fact that various factors are rare, does not inevitably mean that they have any relation to each other or with suicide, leave alone that they foretell it.

According to Rasmussen, (2013); Kjolseth (2010) several qualitative psychological necropsy studies have undoubtedly shown that suicide must be understood in a lifetime perspective. Franklin et al, (2017) states that; precipitating factors have little or predictive value. In addition to this, Yet, Rasmussen, Haurind and Dieserud (2018) found that adolescents` inability to live according to the demands of their parents played a major role in their suicides. Thus, suicide of the adolescents appeared as distinctive acts of compensation. Rasmussen et al, (2018). However, the theory greatly informs the present study since it enables the researcher to conceptualize the suicide ideation which is the desire to end one`s own life which may be facilitated by the feeling of isolation and burdensomeness and also the suicide attempts that result from the individual`s capability of suicide just because they are not afraid to die.

### 2.5.2 The three step theory (3ST) of suicide by E. David Klonsky and Alex M. May

This is a theory of suicide rooted in the Ideation-to-Action framework. The theory gives separate explanations for the development of suicidal ideation and the sequence from suicidal ideation to attempts. The theory also explains suicide ideation and attempts in four factors which are: pain, helplessness, connectedness and suicide capacity. Klonsky and May (2014) inspired by Joiner's work, proposed that an Ideation-to-Action framework should guide all the suicide theories and research as explained in the theory.



**Figure 1.3: illustration of the three step theory of suicide.**

#### 2.5.2.1 Step one: Development of suicidal ideation

Concerning the development of suicidal ideation, the first step to ideation begins with pain. Basically, human beings are shaped by behavioral state. They execute behaviors that are rewarded and tend to emit behaviors that are subjected to punishment. If someone's life experience is characterized by pain, that person is basically being punished for living, which may reduce their desire to live and in turn bring about the thoughts of suicide.

However, pain alone is not enough to produce suicide ideation. If the individual undergoing pain has hope then they can improve and instead of thinking about deliberately ending their life, they can concentrate on getting hold of a future reduced pain. For this reason, hopelessness is also a factor that is required for the development of suicide ideation. According to May and Klonsky (2014), pain and hopelessness are key motivators of suicide acts. The combination of the two brings about suicide ideation.

### **2.5.2.2 Step two: Strong versus moderate ideation**

This mainly refers to the connectedness to other people. It can also refer to an individual's attachment to a job, project, role or interest. Connectedness is also a major factor since, even if one lives in pain and helpless, if they consider suicide, the ideation will remain moderate as long as individual's connectedness to life is greater than his or her pain. If both pain and hopelessness are present in an individual and connectedness is absent or outweighed by their pain, the individual will have a strong suicidal ideation and an active desire to end their life.

### **2.5.3.3 Step three: Progression from ideation to attempts**

Once an individual have developed a desire to end their life, it is expected that they act on that desire and make an attempt. However, as stated by Joiner (2005) the main determinant is whether that person has the ability to make a suicide attempt. The theory states that, according to Joiner, people are biologically and evolutionarily wired to avoid pain, injury and death. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to attempt suicide even if they are under the pressure of a very strong suicide ideation.

However, the theory expands Joiner's notion in that, in his emphasis on acquired capability, (which refers to a person's accustoming to pain, fear and death through exposure to traumatic experiences such as non-suicidal self-injury, physical and sexual abuse.

## **2.6 Summary of the identified gap in the reviewed literature.**

Given that the interpersonal theory of Joiner dwells on the three components that explain all suicide, the theory is questionable since human beings are deprived of their situational and locational biography. However, the theory does not appear to provide significant support to its claim thus making its role in the present suicidology unjustified. This state a gap in the theory in that, there are other factors that greatly contribute to suicidal acts that should be critically looked into including the situational and contextual factors.

Interrupted attachment is similar to low belongingness and burdensomeness as described by Joiner's interpersonal theory. The difference between the theory and the three step theory is that in the three step theory, the key role of connectedness is to avoid strong suicidal ideation in those at risk due to pain and helplessness.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the research design, the study area, the target population, sampling techniques, sample size, measurement of variables, research instruments, pre-testing, validity and reliability, data collection techniques, data analysis and logistical and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research design**

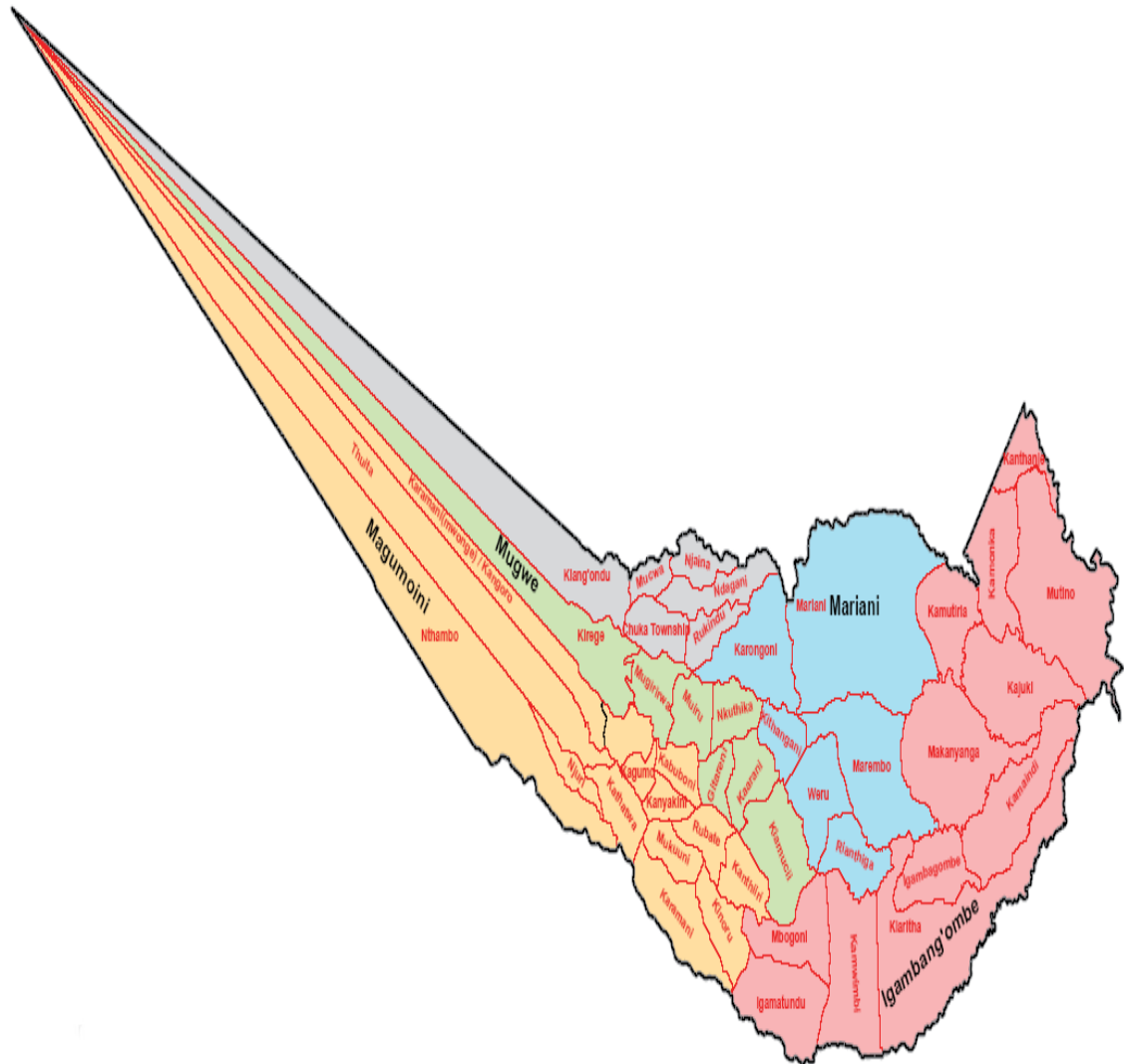
According to the report done by Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1995), research design gives a fundamental direction for carrying out a study. In accordance to this, the researcher used a descriptive design in order to clearly show a description of the relationship between the independent variables (poor academic performance, harassment, physical and sexual abuse, social loss, domestic violence and childhood abuse) and the dependent variable (suicide acts). This design suits the study not only because it permits one to analyze the interrelationships among the independent and the dependent variables at the time of research, but also because it provides the degree of relationship between the variables being studied. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

#### **3.3 Study area.**

The research was carried out in Tharaka Nithi County, Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency, Kenya. Having more than 30 schools, Chuka Igambang`ombe is uniquely positioned at the entrance of Tharaka Nithi County immediately after Embu County. Tharaka Nithi County is positioned between Embu County and Meru County. It is in Kenya`s former Eastern Province. It has an area of 281.4 square kilometers.



Figure 3.1



**KEY: A map of Chuka Igambang`ombe**

### 3.4 Target population

Tharaka Nithi County having a total number of 111 secondary schools in its 3 constituencies, Chuka Igambang`ombe has a total number of 34 secondary schools with each having at least two streams of classes. The target schools are four schools which the researcher randomly picked with a target population of 600 students in order to get a population that can be easily dealt with.

### 3.4.1 Statistics of the secondary students in the four schools of study

Name of the school	Number of students
Secondary School 1	125
Secondary School 2	160
Secondary School 3	156
secondary School 4	159

**Table 3.4.1 Statistics of the secondary students in the four schools of study**

### 3.5 Sampling techniques.

Based on the study target population, the study used simple random sampling technique in order to select a number of respondents to form the sample size for data collection. In this technique, all elements in the target population are taken into consideration and each element have an equal chance of being selected as the subject of the study. Sekaran (2013) states that the simple random technique is known to provide findings that are generalizable and least biased.

### 3.6 Sample size

The sample for the present study was obtained from the various secondary schools in Chuka Igambang`ombe Constituency. Since the study was based on a case- study approach design, 10% of the total number of 34 schools in the area of study was selected which included 4 out of 34 schools. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), there is a suggestion that for descriptive studies that are based on case study design, 10 percent of the cases are sufficient for data collection. In this study, the researcher selected 4 secondary schools. Each with a total number of 125 students in secondary 1, 160 students in Secondary 2,156 students in Secondary 3 and 159 students in Secondary 4. The researcher further took 10% of the total students' population in the four schools in order to use a number that was easier to deal with. As a result, 600 students in the four secondary schools were the sample size that was used.

### 3.7 Research instruments.

The present study used self-administered questionnaires with structured questions by the researcher to collect data from the participants. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), this type of questionnaire with structured questions motivates the respondent to complete the survey willingly and at ease. Moreover, it takes a reduced amount of time and it's also less expensive in collection of data from a large target population.

The structured questionnaire had two sections. The first section was designed to collect data on the participants' demographics that include age and gender. The second, section consists of antecedents of suicide acts. All the questions in these sections were designed to measure the independent variables (poor academic performance, harassment, physical and sexual abuse, social loss and domestic and childhood abuse).

### **3.8 Measurement of the variables.**

All constructs that were used to measure the different variables was based on a five- point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Variables that are measured on this scale are easy to code; fast to enter data and subsequent analysis.

### 3.8.1 Operationalization of study variables

Variable	Nature of the variable	Measure	Indicator	Questionnaire number
Domestic violence and childhood abuse	Independent	Number of students who are victims of the same	Fear	1
		Number of reported cases on childhood abuse and domestic violence	stigma	4
		Number of times a student has attempted suicide		
			Guilt	2
			Depression	
			Burdensomeness	
Social loss	Independent	Number of students who have committed suicide due to loss of relative	Frustration	5
Harassment and Physical abuse	independent		feeling of isolation burdensomeness	6

### **3.9 Pre-Testing**

The researcher carried out a pre-test of the questionnaire to test its design and usability. The main purpose of pre-testing was to test the respondents' understanding and clarity on the questions used in addressing the study variables. Moreover, the process of pre-testing was necessary in order to check the quality of the questionnaire before conducting the actual data collection. Questionnaires were presented to four schools with a total population of 600 students. 10% of the total students were given the questionnaires which gave a total of 15 students in each of the four schools

### **3.10 Validity and Reliability of the questionnaire.**

Validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it purports to be measuring. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data represents the phenomena under investigation. The main important thing is ensuring that the instrument developed to measure a particular concept is indeed accurately measuring the item. The better the instrument, the more accurate the results thus enhancing the scientific quality of the study. The present study used content validity technique (also referred to as face validity) to evaluate the validity of the questionnaires. The purpose of content validity was to determine the extent to which a test measures representative samples of the domain of task under consideration.

Reliability on the other hand refers to the consistency of the measures that is; how consistent the test scores are from one measurement to the other. Its analysis examines the internal consistency among items in the questionnaire. The researcher used test-retest method where the same questionnaire was administered twice to the same group of students with a two weeks' time interval between the two administrations of the test. The resulting test scores provided a measure of stability.

### **3.11 Data collection techniques**

In the present research, data collection was through postal questionnaires since the subjects of study were widely distributed over a large geographical area with harsh terrain. However, before the process of collection of data, the researcher sought permission from the principals in the ten selected secondary schools in the area of study. The permission was issued allowing the researcher two days to collect data. This was done on Thursday and Friday during club and movements meetings to avoid interruptions with the school programs. After the permission was approved, the researcher requested the help of the secondary schools' administrators (the principal in every school of study) in distributing the posted

questionnaires to 10% of the students in the 4 secondary schools. Randomly chosen students were issued with the questionnaires during the club and movements meetings. The secondary school teachers were requested to assist in the collection of data by encouraging the students to participate in the study by filling the questionnaires. This enhanced a chance for high response rate. The respondents were instructed to complete filling the questionnaires and return directly to the supervisors (the teachers) who had administered the survey. A total of 15 students in every school were approached of all which completed the questionnaires. Thus giving a total of 15 questionnaires in every school that was used for further analysis representing a response rate of 100%. A method that was used to increase the response rate was the use of the secondary teachers to help in data collection.

### **3.12 Data analysis**

Data processing was conducted immediately after collecting the questionnaires that were posted back to the researcher before any data analysis. The process of data preparation involved checking, editing, coding and computations. Checking was to ensure that all the questions given in the questionnaire were completely filled by the respondents. Coding, data entry, screening and data transformations were computed for the facilitation of data analysis using SPSS v.20

### **3.1.3 Logistical and Ethical considerations**

Logistics refer to the activities that a researcher must carry out in order to ensure a successful completion of the research project Mugenda. Mugenda (2003). In the present study, the researcher obtained permission approvals from the secondary schools` administrators who are the principals. Study logistics includes pre-testing the questionnaires, budget planning, administering the questionnaires, data collection, gathering the questionnaires from the field of study, editing, coding and entering data into an appropriate package of analysis. The researcher informed the participants that their participation was on voluntary basis and assured them that all the information provided was treated with privacy. The researcher, through the administrators of the questionnaire in brief explained what was required of the respondents before they started filling the questionnaires.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the response rate of the respondents, background information of the data obtained and the discussions of the findings.

#### 4.2 Overview of the respondent rate

The researcher was able to note that all of the respondents in the study were able to quantitatively answer the questionnaires. Out of 60 questionnaires issued to the sampled respondents, 60 were filled and returned. The response rate of the total issued questionnaires stood at 100%.

The questionnaires were distributed to the four selected secondary schools. Each school was issued with 15 questionnaires. A high response rate was achieved as the researcher used self-administered questionnaires with the help of the principal and teachers in the four selected Secondary Schools.

#### 4. 2.1 Table of the response rate.

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires issued</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires returned</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires not returned</b>
Secondary School 1	15	15	0
Secondary School 2	15	15	0
Secondary School 3	15	15	0
secondary School 4	15	15	0
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0</b>

#### 4.1.2.2 Percentile index table of the response rate

<b>Questionnaires returned</b>	<b>Percentile index</b>	<b>Questionnaires not returned</b>	<b>Percentile index</b>
<b>60</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>

#### 4.1.2.3 Frequency index table of the response rate

Questionnaires returned	Frequency index	Questionnaires not returned	Frequency index
60	100	0	0

#### 4.1.2.4 Calibrated ratio of the response rate

Questionnaires returned =60

Questionnaires not returned =0

Calibrated ratio = 60:0

### 4.2 Background information of the respondents

#### 4.2.1 Overview of the respondents' suicidality experience.

The researcher was able to determine the prevalence of suicidal acts in the area of study in that, out of the quantitative data collected, some of the respondents had attempted suicide more than once and others were victims of suicide who were left by their loved ones who allegedly had committed suicide. As per the data obtained, majority of the respondents had experienced suicidal thoughts and behavior during their period in secondary school. A few of the respondents had never experienced suicidal thoughts and acts before. However, 90 % of the respondents pointed out domestic violence and drugs and substance abuse as the key cause of suicidal acts.

#### 4.2.2 Overview of the respondent's gender composition

The research study identified that majority of the respondents were female and the rest of the respondents were male. Quantitatively, the researcher observed that 38 of the respondent's gender were clustered under the female gender while 22 of the remaining respondents were clustered under the male gender

##### 4.2.2.1 Table of the gender composition of the respondents

	Frequency	Valid Percent
1 male	22	36.7
2 female	38	63.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>



From the table above, results showed 63.3% were female while 36.7% were males thus totaling to 100% of the respondents. From the table, there was no gender equality since majority of the respondents were female.

#### 4.2.3 Overview of the respondent’s age bracket

The researcher identified two age brackets that had co-existed in terms of analyzing and calibrating the qualitative data of the research study. The existent age brackets that were discovered include age bracket of 13-15 which consisted of most of the respondents and the age bracket of 16-24.

#### 4.2.3. Table of the respondents age bracket

	Frequency	Valid Percent
1 13 to 15	41	68.3
2 16 to 24	19	31.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.2.3 indicates that the age brackets of the students’ respondent consisted of students of between 13 to 15 years with a percentage of 68.3 while the rest of student’s respondents were of 16 to 24 years with 31.7 percent.

#### 4.3 Prevalence of secondary students ‘suicide in Chuka Igambang'ombe constituency.

The researcher was able to note that suicidal acts accounts for 85% of the deaths among the adolescents and youths of between 13-15 years in the study area. These are mostly the secondary School students. 40% of secondary school students in the area of study have contemplated suicide within their four years of study. Moreover, at least two secondary school students commit suicide every year. In 2014, two students were reported to have attempted suicide due to drug and substance abuse. The students were said to have had excessive bhang. In the same year, a student is said to have jumped into River Ruguti and drowned to death. This was allegedly due to lack of basic needs since the father to the victim had abandoned the family. The mother is said to have not been able to cater for the needs of the student. Between 2013-2018, almost ten students had contemplated suicide leading to suicide death of four secondary students in the area.

Five students from one of the school were rescued in 2013 from their dormitories after allegedly having set the dormitory on fire deliberately. The case was associated with their poor performance. This shows that cases of suicidal acts have prevalently been witnessed.

#### **4.4 Causes of suicidal acts among secondary school students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.**

Suicidal acts refer to any idea, behavior or action that shows the desire to end one's own life. These acts include thinking of or wanting to end one's own life, overdosing, suffocation, hanging oneself to death and also being in deep thoughts and depression. Suicidal acts in the area of study occur occasionally. Most of the cases are linked to; poor academic performance, harassment, physical and sexual abuse, domestic and childhood abuse and also drug and substance abuse.

##### **4.4.1 Poor academic performance.**

Poor academic performance brings about suicide pacts (is the agreement between two or more people to commit suicide together). Among the secondary school students. In Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency, this has been seen through strikes that involve deliberate fires in school dormitories and also classes as witnessed in 2013, and also 2014. Both cases were associated with poor academic performance that brought about depression to the students thus opting to commit suicide together. However, in both cases, the students were rescued and none died.

##### **4.4.2 Harassment, physical and sexual abuse.**

Troubling and annoying someone repeatedly is closely connected to physical and sexual abuse. This is also a factor that contributes to suicidal acts in the area of study. Teachers in secondary schools have greatly contributed to this. For example, if a student fails a subject continuously, some teachers tend to continuously remind them of their incapability and harass them each and every time the teacher is teaching the subject. In this case, the student(s) will be emotionally and mentally disturbed and due to the low self-esteem and harassment, they may opt to kill or harm themselves. A form three attempted to hang herself due to harassment by a teacher and the fellow students. A student committed suicide after she was physically and sexually abused by a drunkard .

**Table 4.4.1 Harassment; Physical and sexual abuse contribution to suicidal acts among secondary school students**

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	24	40.0
Agree	15	25.0
Not sure	9	15.0
Disagree	6	10.0
Strongly disagree	6	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the data above, 40% of the students respondents strongly agreed, 15% agreed, 9% were not sure, 6% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. This means that majority of the students strongly agreed that harassment, physical and sexual abuse contributed to suicidal acts among students in Chuka Igambang’ombe Constituency

#### **4.4.3 Social loss.**

**Social loss is a** possible cause of suicidal acts in the area of study. Students from 4 schools were from a very humble backgrounds. Most of them are brought up by single parents and some by guardians. The loss of a guardian or a single parent who was the sole provider and protector of the student leads to suicidal thoughts and behavior. A student in 2015 was reported to have attempted suicide by hanging after she had lost her mother who died of cancer. The mother was the sole provider to the student thus the student felt depressed and lost hope to live. Another student was reported to have jumped into a well after the death of his grandmother who was his guardian. The student had earlier lost both of his parents in an accident.

**Table 4.4.2, social loss as a cause of suicidal act**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Strongly agree	28	46.7
Agree	11	18.3
Not sure	8	13.3
Disagree	5	8.3
Strongly disagree	8	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

46.7% of the student's respondents strongly agreed that social loss was a cause of suicidal act while 13.3% disagreed. With a high percent of the students strongly agreeing, the researcher was able to conclude that social loss was a major cause of suicidal acts among students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.

#### **4.4.4. Domestic violence and Childhood abuse.**

In 2014, a student in Marimanti village in Chula Igambang'ombe Constituency was reported to have committed suicide by PeaceloiseMbae on 23rd April 2014 in the Standard Nation. This was after the student had a quarrel with his father who had declined to give him 200 shillings note that he had come to collect for his school fees. In one of the Secondary School, on a Tuesday, December 18th 2018, another case of suicide occurred as reported by the Daily Nation. A form three student's body was found hanging from a mango tree in Chuka, Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency. The residents of the area said that the student came from a humble background and was sponsored by a local church. This was due to domestic violence.

The Daily Nation also reported that the student was 18 years old had witnessed his parents having a continuous fight and domestic violence. This could have traumatized him which could have also led to an increase in the risk of him committing suicide.

**Table 4.4.3 indicates how domestic violence and childhood abuse contributes to suicidal act**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Strongly agree	32	53.3
Agree	10	16.7
Not sure	5	8.3
Disagree	4	6.7
Strongly disagree	9	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table illustrates that 53.3% of the student's respondents strongly agreed that domestic violence and childhood abuse contributed to suicidal acts, 16.7% agreed, 8.3% were not sure, 6.7% disagreed while 15% strongly disagreed. The researcher thus concluded from the data obtained that, domestic violence and childhood abuse was a significant factor that contributed to suicidal acts

#### **4.5 Major causes of suicidal acts in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency**

Out of the above discussed causes of suicidal acts, the researcher was able to identify the major causes of suicidal acts as shown in the pie chart below.

##### **4.5.1 A pie chart showing the major causes of suicidal acts in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.**

#### **4.6 Interpretation based on the study findings**

According to the data obtained from the student's respondents in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency, the researcher was able to conclude that social loss, harassment; physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence and childhood abuse were major factors that contributed to suicidal acts among public secondary school students.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of summary, conclusions and recommendations

#### **5.1 Summary of the major findings**

The research showed that at least three secondary school students from different schools in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency had committed suicide due to domestic violence and childhood abuse. This has contributed to about 34% of the suicidal acts in the area of study. Harassment, physical and sexual abuse has also greatly contributed to the suicidal acts. In Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency, two secondary students had attempted and one of the two had committed suicide due to Harassment physical and sexual abuse. This is an indication of at least 24% contribution to the suicidal thoughts and acts. Poor academic performance on the other hand has been mainly associated with group of students having suicidal thoughts and acts. There have been the cases secondary school where a group of students decided to intentionally start fire in their dormitories. This has also contributed 22% to the suicidal thoughts and acts in the area of study. Lastly, social loss among the secondary school students has been a challenge to a few students. In 2015, from the sampled schools two students experienced suicidal acts after the loss of their guardians. The two went through traumatic experiences that facilitated their suicidal behavior. Compared to the former discussed three causes of suicidal acts, social loss has been identified as the least factor that causes suicidal acts. It has contributed to at least 20% to the suicidal acts experienced by public secondary school students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.

#### **5.2 Conclusion of the findings**

The research study concluded that, domestic violence and childhood abuse has contributed most to the suicidal acts among public secondary school students in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.

The research study also concludes that social loss least contributes to suicidal acts and that most of the suicidal acts among public secondary school students have been due to lack of guidance and counseling in the learning institutions both to the students and their parents and guardians.

### **5.3 Recommendation for the causes of suicidal acts.**

The research study recommends that the government should try and intervene in taking necessary actions against the individuals who abuse children and also provide public guidance and counseling sessions to the members of the society through the government offices in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency government officials so as to reduce the number of suicidal acts cases.

The research also recommends that the secondary school's curriculum should include the guidance and counseling lessons through professionally trained teachers who will guide the learners on how to deal with domestic violence and childhood abuse, harassment physical and sexual abuse, social loss, poor academic performance, drug and substance abuse and any other challenge that they may face that could lead to suicidal thoughts and acts in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency.

The research study also recommends that any secondary school teacher found harassing students either physically or sexually, legal actions should be taken against them, their certificate nullified and also the teacher's service commission terminate their payments. This will reduce the cases of suicide death and other suicidal acts in Chuka Igambang'ombe Constituency among the public Secondary School students.

### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

This study recommends that similar studies to be carried out in various sub-counties as well as other counties in Kenya so as to provide a comparable analysis on whether domestic violence, academic performance, social loss, harassment physical and sexual abuse and drug and substance abuse are the major causes of suicide among secondary schools' students in the public schools.

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## **APPEDIX 1.**

Dear sir/ Madam

I am Gitari Judith Gatwiri, a student at Grestsa University undertaking a Bachelor`s degree in Education (arts). I am carrying out a study on the Causes of suicidal acts in Chuka Igambangombe Constituency, Tharaka Nithi County. The study will be useful to many people in reducing the risk of suicide. Your response will be of great help for the successful completion of this study.

Thankyou.

Yours faithfully,

Judith Gatwiri Gitari

## **APPEDIX II;**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECONDARY SHOOL STUDENTS**

Please answer all the following questions.

**SECTION 1: Personal details and general information.**

Please fill in or tick the appropriate answer to the following questions according to your opinion.

1. State your age: ..... years
2. Have you been enrolled in any other school apart from your current school? Yes...  
NO.....
3. State the year you joined this school. ....

**SECTION 2**

Please tick the column which most represents your views of the following statements. There is no correct or wrong answer. The best answer is the one that honestly reflects your views.

Key: SA- Strongly Agree A- Agree UD - Undecided D - Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	In my opinion, early exposure to childhood abuse causes suicidal ideation					

2	I have attempted suicide severally					
3	There have been cases of suicide acts in our school					
4	Domestic violence facilitates suicidal behavior					
5	In my school, a student committed suicide due to loss of his close relative					
6	Harassment and physical abuse increases the risk of committing suicide					