



## Early Childhood Care and Education

# Enhancing Child Protection Education for ECD Teacher Trainees: An Analysis of Tutors' and Trainees' Learning Experiences in Selected Institutions in Uganda

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Keywords: Violence Against Children (VAC), Child Abuse Prevention, Child Protection Education, Early Childhood Development (ECD), Teacher Training, Professional Development.

<https://doi.org/10.70060//f6g7h8i9j0>

## Makerere University Journal of Research and Innovations in Teacher Education (RITE)

Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2024

This study investigates the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education in Uganda's Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher training institutions. Using a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, the research involved 125 participants, including 15 tutors and 110 trainees, who were selected through purposive sampling. Data collection methods comprised structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, with analysis employing both thematic and statistical techniques. Key findings reveal significant curriculum content and delivery variations, with practical training components like role-plays and case studies less frequently incorporated than theoretical lectures. Trainees highly valued interactive methods for their practical relevance. Challenges identified include insufficient resources, limited professional development opportunities for tutors, and cultural and societal barriers to effective child protection education. The study underscores the need for a balanced approach integrating theoretical knowledge and practical skills, continuous professional development, and more robust institutional support. Recommendations for future research include expanding the scope and representativeness of samples, employing longitudinal designs to assess long-term impacts, and exploring the integration of practical pedagogical methods. Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of child protection education and ensuring the safety and well-being of children in ECD settings in Uganda.

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## Practitioner Notes

### What is already known about the topic

- Child protection education is critical for safeguarding children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence in Early Childhood Development (ECD) settings.
- ECD teachers play a pivotal role in identifying, preventing, and responding to child abuse and neglect.
- Uganda faces significant challenges with child abuse and neglect, necessitating effective child protection strategies in ECD settings.
- Uganda's 2012 child caregivers training framework highlights the importance of integrating child protection pedagogies into ECD teacher training programs.

### What this study contributes

- This study provides a comprehensive analysis of tutors' and trainees' learning experiences regarding child protection education in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda.
- It identifies significant variations in curriculum content and delivery, emphasizing the need for more practical and comprehensive training components.
- The research highlights the effectiveness of interactive pedagogical approaches, such as role-plays and workshops, over traditional lectures.
- It underscores the importance of external collaborations with NGOs and other organizations in enhancing child protection education.
- The study identifies critical challenges tutors face, including limited resources, insufficient professional development, lack of institutional support, and cultural barriers.

### Implications for practice and policy

- ECD teacher training programs should integrate more practical and interactive components into the curriculum to better prepare trainees for real-world child protection challenges.
- ECD teacher training institutions should prioritize continuous professional development opportunities for tutors to ensure they are updated with the latest practices and research in child protection.
- Strengthening collaborations with external organizations can provide additional resources and expertise, enhancing the quality of child protection education.
- Policymakers should address the disparities in resource availability and institutional support to create a more conducive environment for effective child protection education.
- Raising awareness and addressing cultural and societal barriers to child protection is necessary to ensure the comprehensive and effective implementation of child protection measures in ECD settings.

## Introduction

Child protection education is a critical aspect of Early Childhood Development (ECD) that focuses on safeguarding children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Undie et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2020; Wandera et al., 2017). This form of education encompasses a range of practices and interventions designed to create safe environments where children can thrive and develop healthily. In ECD settings, child protection education aims to empower teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify, prevent, and respond to various forms of child maltreatment. As frontline caregivers, ECD teachers play a pivotal role in recognizing early signs of abuse and implementing protective measures to ensure the well-being of children under their care.

In Uganda, child abuse and neglect are pressing issues that significantly impact the well-being and development of children (Kakuru et al., 2022; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017; According to a study by the Kirivong, 2023; Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, 2018). Incidents of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in ECD centers are alarmingly prevalent. The Uganda Violence Against Children Survey (VAC) conducted in 2015 revealed that 35% of children aged 13 to 17 experienced physical violence, while 11% experienced sexual violence before the age of 18 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). These statistics underscore the urgent need for effective child protection strategies within educational settings, particularly in ECD centers where children are most vulnerable.

Uganda's 2012 child caregivers training framework underscores the importance of incorporating child protection pedagogies into ECD teacher training programs (Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES), 2010). This framework aims to equip teacher trainees with the necessary knowledge and expertise to safeguard children against various forms of abuse and neglect. Effective child protection education for ECD teachers involves not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills in identifying and responding to child maltreatment.

Equipping ECD teachers with robust child protection pedagogies is crucial for several reasons. First, it ensures that teachers are aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, enabling early intervention and support for affected children. Second, it empowers teachers to create safe and nurturing learning environments that promote children's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Third, it fosters a culture of vigilance and responsibility among educators, contributing to the community's broader goal of child protection.

### Statement of the Problem

Child protection is a fundamental aspect of Early Childhood Development (ECD) that aims to safeguard young children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Despite the recognized importance of child protection in ECD settings, there remains a significant gap in the training and preparation of ECD teachers in Uganda. While Uganda's 2012 child caregivers training framework underscores the im-

portance of incorporating child protection pedagogies into ECD teacher training programs (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2012), implementing these pedagogies in teacher training programs needs to be improved. The prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Uganda's ECD centers is alarmingly high. Different Reports indicate that a substantial number of children experience various forms of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, within educational settings (Kakuru et al., 2022; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017; According to a study by the Kirivong, 2023; Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, 2018). These incidents not only harm the immediate well-being of the children but also have long-term adverse effects on their development and future potential. Therefore, it is imperative to equip ECD teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively identify, prevent, and respond to child protection issues. More knowledge and understanding of child protection needs to be gained among ECD teacher trainees. Many training programs need more comprehensive coverage of child protection topics, practical training opportunities, and sufficient resources to prepare future teachers adequately. Tutors often need help delivering effective child protection education due to limited professional development opportunities and inadequate training materials. This gap in training and preparation leaves ECD teachers needing to be equipped to handle complex child protection issues in their professional practice. Without proper training, teachers may fail to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect or may not know how to respond appropriately when such issues arise. This inadequacy poses a severe risk to the safety and well-being of young children in ECD centers. There is an urgent need to improve child protection education for ECD teacher trainees in Uganda. Enhancing the training curriculum to include more comprehensive and practical child protection education will better prepare future teachers to create safe and supportive learning environments for young children. This improvement ensures all children develop in a safe, nurturing, and protective environment.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this research was to analyze the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. Assess the current child protection education and learning practices in ECD teacher training institutions.
- ii. Analyze the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education.
- iii. Identify gaps in the child protection training curriculum for ECD teacher trainees.
- iv. Provide recommendations for improving child protection education in ECD teacher training programs.

### **Research Questions**

This research investigated the state of child protection education within Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher training programs in Uganda. To guide this analysis, the following research questions were formulated:

- i. What are the current approaches to child protection education in ECD teacher training programs?
- ii. How do tutors and trainees perceive the effectiveness of child protection education in their training programs?
- iii. What practical skills and knowledge do trainees gain from the child protection education provided in ECD teacher training programs?
- iv. What challenges do tutors face in delivering child protection education, and how do they address them?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Child Protection in Early Childhood Settings**

Child protection is a paramount concern in ECD programs, given the vulnerability of young children to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Ensuring that ECD teachers are well-prepared to safeguard children is crucial for promoting their well-being and development. This literature review discusses the importance of child protection in ECD programs, examines the impact of child abuse on children's development, and summarizes best practices for integrating child protection education in ECD contexts.

Research has shown that a safe and nurturing environment is fundamental for healthy growth and development (Bartlett & Smith, 2019). ECD teachers play a crucial role in creating and maintaining such environments, which includes being vigilant and proactive in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect. Numerous international frameworks and guidelines, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscore the necessity of child protection in ECD settings. These frameworks emphasize the right of every child to protection from all forms of violence and highlight the responsibility of caregivers, educators, and institutions to ensure these rights are upheld (Berrick et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2024).

Furthermore, child abuse and neglect have profound and long-lasting impacts on children's development. Studies have demonstrated that children who experience abuse are at a higher risk of developing a range of physical, emotional, and behavioral problems. For instance, children subjected to physical abuse may suffer from injuries and chronic health issues, while those exposed to emotional abuse may experience low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Berrick et al., 2023). Abuse and neglect during early childhood can disrupt brain development, leading to cognitive impairments and difficulties in learning and memory (Smith, 2023). Moreover, the trauma associated with abuse can affect a child's ability to form healthy relationships and manage emotions, impacting their social and emotional development (Cheng & Langevin, 2023).

These adverse effects underscore the importance of early intervention and the critical role of ECD teachers in identi-

fyng and addressing child protection concerns. Early intervention is essential not only for mitigating the immediate impacts of abuse but also for preventing long-term developmental issues. Hence, the role of ECD teachers extends beyond education to include vigilance and proactive measures in safeguarding children.

In summary, child protection in ECD settings is essential for ensuring children's overall well-being and development. Integrating comprehensive child protection education into ECD teacher training programs is critical for equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to identify and address child protection concerns effectively.

### **Best Practices for Integrating Child Protection Education in ECD Contexts**

Achieving adequate child protection within Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs necessitates a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. Here, we explore essential best practices that can be implemented across various areas. Integrating child protection education in ECD contexts requires a comprehensive approach encompassing policy development, curriculum integration, professional development, and community engagement.

Firstly, establishing clear policies and procedures for preventing, identifying, and responding to child abuse and neglect is crucial. These policies should align with national and international child protection standards and undergo regular review and updates (UNICEF, 2024). This alignment ensures that the ECD programs adhere to best practices and evolve as new standards and insights emerge.

Secondly, embedding child protection education within the ECD curriculum is essential (MoES, 2010). This includes teaching trainees about the signs of abuse and neglect, legal and ethical responsibilities, and appropriate intervention strategies. Practical training through role-plays, case studies, and simulations can significantly enhance trainees' ability to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios (Estaji & Hhaji-Karim, 2023). By incorporating these interactive elements, educators can develop practical skills critical for adequate child protection.

Additionally, continuous professional development for ECD educators is vital to keep them abreast of the latest child protection practices and research (Zakaria & Pramesti, 2023). Workshops, seminars, and training programs can help educators develop their skills and confidence in handling child protection issues (Nguyen et al., 2024). This ongoing education ensures that teachers remain competent and confident in protecting children.

Moreover, engaging families and communities in child protection efforts is essential. Educating parents and caregivers about child protection and involving them in creating safe environments can strengthen protective factors for children. Community-based programs and partnerships with local child protection agencies can also provide additional support and resources (Davies et al., 2023). These collaborative efforts expand the safety net for children, making child protection a community-wide responsibility.

Furthermore, providing ECD educators access to support systems and resources, such as counseling services, hot-

lines, and referral networks, can help them address child protection issues more effectively (World Health Organization, 2023). Creating a supportive work environment where teachers can discuss and seek guidance on child protection concerns is also beneficial (Nguyen et al., 2024). This support not only aids in immediate crisis management but also fosters a proactive culture of vigilance and care in ECD settings.

### **Approaches to Child Protection Education in ECD Teacher Training**

Child protection education is a crucial element of ECD teacher training in Uganda. Uganda's ECD teacher training curriculum typically covers a broad range of subjects, including child psychology, early childhood pedagogy, health and nutrition, classroom management, and inclusive education. The curriculum aims to develop teachers who can create supportive and stimulating learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of young children (MoES, 2010). Practical teaching experiences and internships are integral to the training programs, allowing trainees to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

The curriculum includes modules on child rights, child protection policies, identifying signs of abuse and neglect, and appropriate intervention strategies. These modules equip trainees with the knowledge and skills to safeguard children and promote their well-being.

Training institutions employ various pedagogical approaches to child protection education, including lectures, workshops, role-plays, and case studies. These methods aim to give trainees a comprehensive understanding of child protection issues and practical skills for addressing them. Collaboration with child protection agencies and organizations is also encouraged, offering trainees additional resources and support (MoES, 2012).

### **Gaps and Limitations in the Current Curriculum**

Despite including child protection education in the ECD teacher training curriculum, several gaps and limitations hinder its effectiveness. One significant gap is the need for depth and comprehensiveness in the child protection modules. Many training programs provide only basic information on child protection without sufficient emphasis on practical skills and real-world application (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, 2018).

Another area for improvement is the inconsistent implementation of child protection education across different training institutions. Variations in the quality and content of the training programs result in disparities in the preparedness of ECD teachers to handle child protection issues. Some institutions may need more qualified tutors or adequate resources to deliver comprehensive child protection training.

Additionally, tutors need continuous professional development opportunities to ensure they remain updated on the latest child protection practices and research. Limited access to ongoing training and support can hinder tutors' ability to teach child protection modules effectively.

The curriculum also needs to integrate child protection education into other subjects. Child protection should be a cross-cutting theme embedded throughout the entire training program rather than confined to specific modules. This approach would reinforce the importance of child protection and ensure that all aspects of ECD education contribute to safeguarding children.

The review of ECD teacher training in Uganda highlights the inclusion of child protection education within the curriculum yet reveals significant gaps and limitations that must be addressed. Enhancing the depth and comprehensiveness of child protection modules, standardizing the quality of training across institutions, and providing continuous professional development for tutors are essential to improving child protection education. If the above gaps are addressed, Uganda can better prepare ECD teachers to create safe and nurturing environments that promote the well-being and development of young children.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research design chosen for this study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey design (Olsen & St George, 2004). This design was deemed most suitable for investigating the current state of child protection education for ECD teacher trainees in selected institutions in Uganda, as well as for analyzing the learning experiences of both tutors and trainees. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was appropriate for this study for several reasons: This design allowed for data collection at a single point, providing a snapshot of the existing practices and experiences related to child protection education in ECD teacher training institutions. This was crucial for understanding the current status and identifying any immediate gaps or strengths in the training programs. The cross-sectional survey design supported the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, which provided numerical insights into the prevalence and effectiveness of child protection education components. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, offering more profound insights into tutors' and trainees' personal experiences and perceptions. The design also allowed for comparing different groups within the study population, such as differences in experiences between tutors and trainees or variations in child protection education practices across various institutions. These comparisons revealed significant trends and patterns that might not have been evident within a single group or institution.

### Selection of Participants

This study involved one hundred twenty-five (n=125) participants, who were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen for this study due to its effectiveness in selecting participants who could provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the research questions. The selection process aimed to include various perspectives

by considering factors such as institutional type (public and private), geographical location (urban and rural), and varying experience levels among tutors and trainees.

Tutors (n=15) were selected based on their experience in ECD teacher training and active involvement in teaching child protection or related course units. The trainees were selected based on their course progression and participation in a course unit or training related to child safeguarding and protection pedagogies.

The graphical representations below provide a detailed overview of the demographics of the study participants, highlighting distribution across various categories for tutors and trainees in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda.

The tutors' gender distribution chart shows more male tutors (10) than female tutors (5). This indicates a gender imbalance among the teaching staff, with males comprising the majority. This disparity may have implications for the perspectives and teaching styles in the training programs, potentially affecting the focus and approach toward child protection education.

The tutors' experience level chart shows that the distribution is relatively balanced across different experience levels. There are five tutors with 2-5 years of experience, six with 6-10 years of experience, and four with over 10 years of experience. This spread suggests a good mix of relatively new and highly experienced educators, which could provide various insights and teaching methods within the training programs. However, most falling into the mid-range (6-10 years) may indicate a stable but not overly experienced teaching cohort.

The tutors' institution type chart reveals a significant skew towards private institutions, with 11 tutors from private institutions compared to only four from public institutions. This imbalance highlights a predominance of private sector involvement in ECD teacher training. The potential differences in resources, training quality, and institutional policies between public and private institutions could influence the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of child protection education provided.

The trainees' gender distribution chart illustrates a stark gender imbalance, with a large majority of female trainees (98) compared to male trainees (12). This suggests that the ECD field is heavily female-dominated at the trainee level, aligning with global early childhood education trends. This

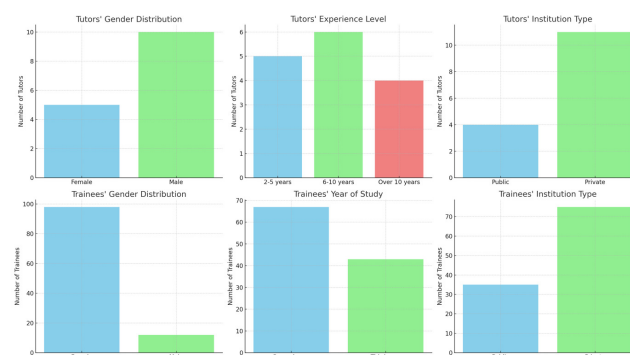


Figure 1. Demographics of the Study Participants

gender distribution could influence classroom dynamics and the focus of training programs, potentially affecting how child protection issues are addressed and emphasized.

The trainees' year of study chart indicates more trainees in their second year (67) than those in their third year (43). This distribution may reflect the intake sizes and retention rates within the training programs. A more significant number of second-year trainees suggests a robust entry-level interest in ECD training. However, the drop to the third year may warrant further investigation into factors affecting trainee retention and progression.

The trainees' institution type chart shows a significant preference for private institutions, with 75 trainees from private institutions compared to 35 from public institutions. Similar to the tutors' distribution, this indicates a strong presence of private institutions in the ECD training landscape. The differences between public and private training environments could impact the trainees' learning experiences, access to resources, and overall preparedness for addressing child protection issues in their future roles.

### Data Collection Instruments

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments was employed to gather comprehensive data on the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda. The instruments included structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. These instruments were chosen to ensure a holistic understanding of the current state of child protection education, capturing both numerical data and in-depth personal experiences.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from both tutors and trainees. The questionnaires included closed-ended questions to gather information on the prevalence, methods, and perceived effectiveness of child protection education components in the training programs. This instrument was chosen because it allows for the collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents, making it possible to quantify the participants' experiences and perceptions.

The questionnaires' development involved a thorough review of existing literature on child protection education and consultations with experts in ECD and child protection. This ensured that the questions were relevant and comprehensive. The questionnaires were piloted with a small sample of participants to test for clarity, reliability, and validity before being administered to the larger study population.

To gather qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected tutors. This instrument was chosen because it allows flexibility in exploring the tutors' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in delivering child protection education. Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to probe deeper into specific areas of interest, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the issues.

The interview guide was developed based on key themes identified from the literature review and the study's objectives. It included open-ended questions that encouraged detailed responses and allowed participants to share their

experiences and insights freely. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with trainee groups to facilitate a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences regarding their child protection education. FGDs were chosen as they provide a platform for participants to collectively discuss and reflect on their learning experiences, which can elicit a more decadent array of insights than individual interviews.

The focus group guide was designed to prompt discussion around specific topics related to child protection education, such as the effectiveness of the training methods, practical skills gained, and areas for improvement. Each focus group comprised 6-8 trainees, ensuring a manageable size for meaningful interaction. The researcher moderated the discussions, recorded them, and transcribed them for subsequent thematic analysis.

The combination of structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions was strategically selected to capture a comprehensive picture of child protection education in ECD teacher training programs. Structured questionnaires provided quantifiable data that could be statistically analyzed to identify patterns and trends. Semi-structured interviews offered detailed qualitative insights from tutors directly delivering the education. Focus group discussions allowed trainees to share their collective experiences and perspectives, revealing the practical implications of the education they received.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis for this research followed a mixed-methods approach, reflecting the combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments. This comprehensive analysis aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education in ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda.

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Audio recordings from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. A systematic coding process was applied to the data. Key phrases, sentences, and paragraphs related to the research questions were highlighted, and specific codes were assigned using inductive and deductive coding methods. Inductive codes emerged directly from the data, while deductive codes were based on pre-determined themes identified from the literature review. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that captured significant patterns in the data. These themes represented the core findings related to the learning experiences of tutors and trainees, such as the perceived effectiveness of child protection education, practical skills gained, and challenges faced in delivering and receiving this education. Each theme was clearly defined and named, summarizing the findings. Detailed descriptions of each theme, supported by direct participant quotes, were prepared to illustrate the key points. The final step involved integrating the themes into a coherent nar-



rative that addressed the research questions. This narrative included illustrative quotes to provide rich, contextualized insights into the participants' experiences.

On the other hand, the quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Responses from the structured questionnaires were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), ensuring accuracy and consistency in the data entry process. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the questionnaire items. These statistics provided an overview of child protection education components' prevalence, methods, and perceived effectiveness. Inferential statistical tests were conducted to explore relationships and differences between variables. These included T-tests used in comparing means between two groups (e.g., public vs. private institutions) to determine if there were significant differences in their perceptions and experiences. The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) technique was used to compare means across multiple groups.

### Ethical Considerations

Conducting research involving human participants requires careful attention to ethical principles to protect all participants' rights, dignity, and well-being. The following ethical considerations were observed throughout this study: Before commencing data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were provided comprehensive information about the study, including its purpose, objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. This information was communicated verbally and in writing to ensure clarity and understanding. It was emphasized that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Written informed consent forms were developed and distributed to participants. These forms included detailed information about the research and required participants to sign to indicate their voluntary agreement to participate. Maintaining the confidentiality of participant information is crucial in research to protect privacy and build trust. To protect the identity of participants, unique codes were assigned to each participant instead of using their real names. These codes were used in all data records and analyses to maintain anonymity. The findings from this study are also reported here in aggregate form without disclosing any identifying information about individual participants. Direct quotes used in the qualitative analysis are anonymized to prevent identification.

### Presentation and Discussion of Key Findings

This section presents the key findings from analyzing tutors' and trainees' learning experiences regarding child protection education in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda. The findings are organized according to the research questions and themes identified in the data

analysis. Relevant data excerpts, including quotes and statistics, are included to support the findings.

## Results for Research Question 1: What are the Current Approaches to Child Protection Education in ECD Teacher Training Programs?

### Theme 1: Curriculum Content and Delivery

The analysis revealed significant variations in the content and delivery of child protection education across institutions. All institutions included some form of child protection education, but the depth and comprehensiveness differed. As one tutor from a private institution noted, *"We teach about child rights and how to identify signs of abuse, but the content is quite basic. There's a need for more detailed and practical training."* In contrast, a tutor from a public institution highlighted a more engaging approach: *"In our institution, we use role-plays and case studies to teach child protection, which helps students understand real-world scenarios."*

The data in [Table 1](#) indicates that while essential topics such as child rights and signs of abuse are universally covered, practical components like role-plays and case studies are less frequently incorporated. This suggests a need for a more balanced approach that includes both theoretical knowledge and practical application. Existing literature supports this finding, emphasizing that practical training is crucial for developing the skills to effectively recognize and respond to child protection issues (Briggs, 2020; Forrester et al., 2008; Trotter, 2020).

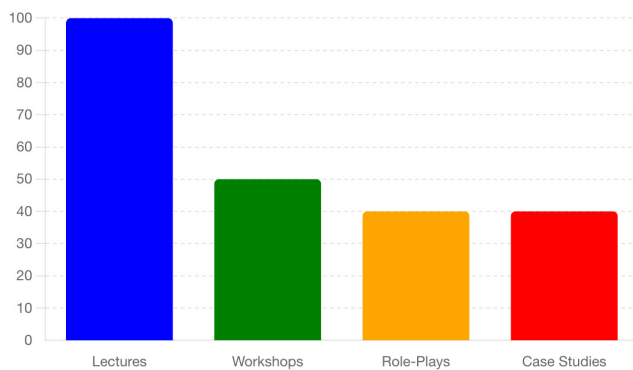
### Theme 2: Pedagogical Approaches

Pedagogical approaches to child protection education included lectures, workshops, role-plays, and case studies. Lectures were the most common method, while practical approaches, though less frequent, were highly valued by trainees. Trainees emphasized the value of these methods: *"The role-plays were very helpful. They made us think about how to handle real situations involving child abuse,"* shared a third-year trainee from a private institution. Another trainee, a second-year student from a public institution, echoed this sentiment: *"We had a workshop with a local NGO, and it was eye-opening. They provided us with practical tools to use in the classroom."*

The reliance on lectures suggests a traditional approach to teaching, which may not fully equip trainees with the practical skills needed for adequate child protection. The positive feedback on workshops and role-plays indicates the importance of incorporating more interactive and experiential learning methods. These methods provide trainees with hands-on experience, enhancing their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. This is critical for developing the competencies to handle child protection issues effectively. Existing literature highlights the importance of interactive learning in enhancing practical skills and understanding (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). The reliance on lectures suggests a traditional approach to teaching, which may not fully equip trainees with the practical

**Table 1. Curriculum Content and Delivery**

| Curriculum Content          | Number of Institutions (n=10) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Child Rights                | 10                            | 100            |
| Signs of Abuse and Neglect  | 10                            | 100            |
| Intervention Strategies     | 8                             | 80             |
| Role-Plays and Case Studies | 4                             | 40             |
| Guest Lectures/Workshops    | 5                             | 50             |

**Figure 2. Pedagogical Approaches in Child Protection Education**

skills needed for effective child protection. The positive feedback on workshops and role-plays indicates the importance of incorporating more interactive and experiential learning methods. These methods provide trainees with hands-on experience, enhancing their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. This is critical for developing the competencies to handle child protection issues effectively.

### Theme 3: Use of External Resources and Collaborations

Some institutions enhanced child protection education by collaborating with external organizations, such as NGOs, to provide additional training and resources. This was evidenced by submissions from a tutor and trainee at a private institution: *"We partnered with a local NGO that specializes in child protection. They provided training sessions for both tutors and trainees, which was very beneficial,"* explained the tutor. A second-year trainee from the same institution added, *"Guest lectures from child protection experts added a lot of value to our training program."*

The involvement of external resources and collaborations suggests that these partnerships can significantly enhance the quality of child protection education. Institutions that engaged with NGOs and external experts reported positive outcomes, indicating the value of such collaborations. These partnerships bring additional expertise and practical insights that enrich the training programs, providing trainees with a broader understanding of child protection issues and practical strategies to address them. This finding aligns with the literature, which empha-

sizes the importance of community and professional partnerships in child protection education (Bryan et al., 2020; Fong, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020).

### Theme 4: Practical Training Opportunities

Practical training opportunities, such as internships and real-life case studies, were identified as crucial for effective child protection education. However, these opportunities were not uniformly available across some institutions. Trainees highlighted the importance of these experiences: *"Internships provided us with a chance to apply what we learned in real situations, which was invaluable,"* shared a third-year trainee from a public institution. Another trainee, a second-year student from a private institution, expressed the need for more practical exposure: *"We need to see how these principles are applied in real-world settings."*

The limited availability of practical training opportunities highlights a significant gap in child protection education. Ensuring all trainees have access to internships, real-life case studies, and simulations is essential for translating theoretical knowledge into practical skills. The quotes from trainees emphasize the value of hands-on experience in preparing them for real-world challenges. Institutions should prioritize creating more opportunities for applied learning, such as mandatory internships or practicum placements with child protection agencies or daycare centers. Additionally, incorporating simulated scenarios and role-playing exercises into the curriculum can provide trainees with a safe space to practice their skills and build confidence in identifying and responding to child protection concerns.

Available literature supports the above need for practical training, noting its importance in effectively preparing educators to address child protection issues (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). Studies have shown that educators who participate in practical training programs are better equipped to recognize signs of abuse, communicate effectively with children and families, and report suspected cases to the appropriate authorities.

### Results for Research Question 2: How do tutors and trainees perceive the effectiveness of child protection education in their training programs?

This section explores how tutors and trainees perceive the effectiveness of child protection education in Ugandan ECD teacher training programs. Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data revealed four key themes:



**Table 2. Perceived Comprehensiveness of the Curriculum**

| Curriculum Aspect        | Number of Positive Responses (n=125) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Basic Concepts           | 115                                  | 92             |
| Practical Skills         | 65                                   | 52             |
| Real-World Applications  | 70                                   | 56             |
| Case Handling Techniques | 45                                   | 36             |

### Theme 1: Perceived Comprehensiveness of the Curriculum

While both tutors and trainees acknowledged the curriculum's foundation in basic concepts, concerns arose regarding its depth in practical skills and real-world applications. Many participants expressed a desire for more in-depth exploration in these areas. A public institution tutor stated, *"The curriculum covers the basics well, but we need more detailed training on how to handle specific cases of abuse."* This sentiment was echoed by a second-year trainee from a private institution: *"I feel like we learn about the theory, but we don't get enough practical training on what to do if we actually encounter abuse in a classroom setting."*

The data in [Table 2](#) confirm a strong positive perception of basic concept coverage. However, it also highlights a significant gap in practical skills and real-world application areas. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of practical training for developing the competencies required to handle child protection issues effectively (Firmin, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020).

### Theme 2: Effectiveness of Pedagogical Methods

Trainees and tutors provided insights into the perceived effectiveness of various teaching methods. Lectures, while viewed as informative, needed to be revised. Interactive methods like role-plays and workshops were highly valued for their practical relevance. A third-year public institution trainee highlighted this contrast: *"Lectures give us the theoretical foundation, but it's the role-plays and workshops that help us understand how to apply what we've learned."* Similarly, a tutor from a private institution emphasized the value of external collaboration: *"The workshops we conducted in collaboration with local NGOs were particularly effective. They provided practical tools and techniques directly applicable in the classroom."*

The reliance on lectures, while providing a foundation, could have been more effective in preparing trainees for real-world situations. The positive feedback on workshops and role-plays indicates the need for a more balanced pedagogical approach incorporating theoretical and practical elements. This finding is supported by Molina et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of interactive learning in enhancing practical skills and understanding.

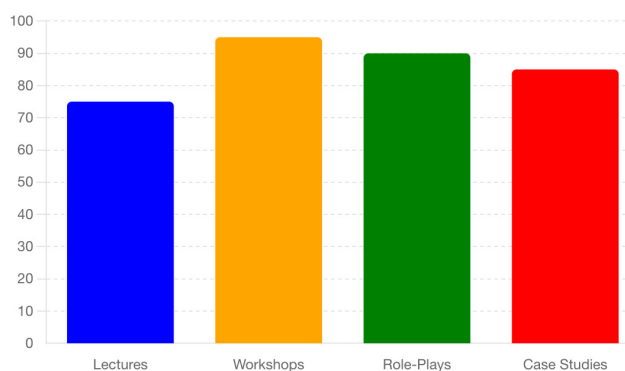
### Theme 3: Satisfaction with External Collaborations

Collaborations with external organizations, such as NGOs, were viewed positively by both tutors and trainees. These collaborations enhanced the quality of child protection education by providing additional resources and expertise. A second-year trainee from a private institution shared the value of external experts: *"The training sessions conducted by the NGO experts were incredibly beneficial. They brought expertise and practical knowledge that we don't usually get in regular classes."* Similarly, a public institution tutor emphasized the broader benefits of collaboration: *"Collaborating with external organizations adds immense value to our program. It exposes students to real-world practices and current trends in child protection."*

The data in [Table 3](#) highlights a high level of satisfaction with the involvement of external organizations. This suggests that partnerships with NGOs and other experts can significantly enhance the effectiveness of child protection education. This finding aligns with Wilson et al. (2020), Bryan et al. (2020), and Fong (2020), who stress the importance of community and professional partnerships in child protection education.

### Theme 4: Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Both tutors and trainees identified several challenges and areas for improvement in the current child protection education programs. These included insufficient practical training, lack of resources, and the need for continuous professional development for tutors. A third-year public institution trainee highlighted the need for practical appli-

**Figure 3. Perceived Effectiveness of Pedagogical Methods**

**Table 3. Satisfaction with External Collaborations**

| Collaboration Aspect    | Number of Positive Responses (n=125) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Training Sessions       | 110                                  | 88             |
| Expertise and Resources | 105                                  | 84             |
| Practical Insights      | 115                                  | 92             |
| Overall Satisfaction    | 120                                  | 96             |

**Table 4. Identified Challenges and Areas for Improvement**

| Challenge/Area for Improvement    | Number of Responses (n=125) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Insufficient Practical Training   | 90                          | 72             |
| Lack of Resources                 | 85                          | 68             |
| Need for Professional Development | 75                          | 60             |

cation: *"We need more practical training opportunities like internships and real-life case studies. It's crucial to see how these principles are applied in real-world settings."* The need for ongoing development was also emphasized by a tutor from a private institution: *"There is a need for continuous professional development for tutors to keep up with the latest child protection practices and research."*

The data in [Table 4](#) underscores the need for more practical training opportunities and resources to enhance the effectiveness of child protection education. Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) for tutors is also crucial to ensure they remain updated on the latest practices and research. These findings are consistent with the literature, highlighting the importance of practical training and CPDs in preparing educators to address child protection issues effectively (Davey & Egan, 2021; Treacy & Nohilly, 2020).

### **Results for Research Question 3: What practical skills and knowledge do trainees gain from the child protection education provided in ECD teacher training programs?**

This section explores the practical skills and knowledge trainees gain from child protection education in Ugandan ECD teacher training programs. Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data revealed three key themes that illuminate these aspects.

#### **Theme 1: Building a Foundation for Child Protection**

Equipping trainees with the knowledge and skills to identify and report child abuse is crucial for protecting children in their care. Trainees reported feeling more confident in recognizing various forms of abuse and understanding the appropriate reporting procedures. A third-year trainee from a public institution shared this newfound awareness: *"The training has made me more aware of the signs of abuse. I now know what to look for and who to report to if I suspect a child is being abused."* Similarly, a second-year trainee from a private institution emphasized the importance of knowl-

edge in protecting children: *"We learned about the different types of abuse and the procedures for reporting. This knowledge is crucial for protecting children in our care."*

The high mean scores and percentages reported in [Table 5](#) indicate that trainees feel well-prepared to identify and report child abuse. This aligns with theoretical frameworks such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2000), which emphasizes the importance of understanding a child's environment and the interactions between these layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1983; Crawford, 2020). By recognizing signs of abuse and reporting them appropriately, trainees can act as vital safeguards within the child's microsystem (ECD program).

#### **Theme 2: Fostering Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**

Beyond identifying and reporting abuse, creating safe and supportive learning environments is essential for child protection. Trainees reported gaining practical skills in areas such as classroom management for safety and promoting a positive classroom climate. A second-year trainee from a public institution highlighted the importance of classroom design in promoting safety: *"We learned how to set up a classroom environment that minimizes risks and promotes safety. This includes everything from the physical layout to the daily routines."* A third-year trainee from a private institution emphasized building trust and communication with children: *"Creating a supportive environment is crucial. We've been taught strategies to build trust and open communication with children, which helps them feel safe."*

The data presented in [Table 6](#) suggests that trainees feel equipped to create environments that support children's well-being. This aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the role of social interactions and the environment in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1962). By fostering safe and supportive environments, ECD teachers can contribute positively to children's social and emotional development, reducing their vulnerability to abuse.

**Table 5. Trainees' Confidence in Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse**

| Skill                       | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Confident (%) |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Identifying Physical Abuse  | 4.2  | 0.8                | 84                       |
| Identifying Emotional Abuse | 4.0  | 0.9                | 80                       |
| Identifying Sexual Abuse    | 3.8  | 1.0                | 76                       |
| Reporting Procedures        | 4.1  | 0.7                | 82                       |

**Table 6. Trainees' Confidence in Creating Safe Environments**

| Skill                                          | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Confident (%) |
|------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Classroom Management for Safety                | 4.3  | 0.6                | 86                       |
| Promoting Positive Classroom Climate           | 4.2  | 0.7                | 84                       |
| Building Trust and Communication with Children | 4.1  | 0.8                | 82                       |

**Table 7. Trainees' Confidence in Intervention Strategies**

| Skill                                         | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Confident (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Legal and Ethical Guidelines for Intervention | 4.0  | 0.9                | 80                       |
| Providing Initial Support                     | 4.2  | 0.7                | 84                       |
| Referral to Specialized Services              | 4.1  | 0.8                | 82                       |

### Theme 3: Intervention Strategies and the Importance of Training Consistency

Another critical area of practical knowledge development is the ability to intervene appropriately when child abuse or neglect is suspected. Trainees reported gaining skills in understanding legal and ethical considerations, providing initial support, and making referrals to specialized services. A second-year trainee from a private institution highlighted the importance of appropriate intervention: *"We were taught how to intervene in cases of suspected abuse, including how to approach the child and what steps to take next. This training is vital for ensuring we respond appropriately."* Similarly, a third-year trainee from a public institution emphasized the value of legal and ethical guidelines: *"Knowing the legal and ethical guidelines for intervention helps us act confidently and correctly when dealing with sensitive issues."*

The data in [Table 7](#) indicates that trainees feel prepared to intervene effectively in cases of suspected abuse. These skills align with the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), which emphasizes learning through observation and imitation of behaviors modeled by others.

### Exploring Differences in Perceptions and Experiences

To further explore potential variations in program effectiveness, statistical analyses were conducted. T-tests indicated significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of child protection education between public and private institutions, with private institutions scoring slightly

higher on some skills (Tables [8](#) & [9](#)). Similarly, ANOVA revealed that tutors with more experience reported feeling more confident in delivering training on intervention strategies and building trust with children.

These findings suggest that the type of institution and the experience level of tutors may impact the effectiveness of child protection education. This highlights the need for standardized training programs and continuous professional development opportunities for tutors to ensure consistent quality across all ECD teacher training programs.

### Results for Research Question 4: What challenges do tutors face in delivering child protection education, and how do they address these challenges?

Equipping tutors with the knowledge and resources to effectively deliver child protection education is crucial for safeguarding children. Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data with tutors revealed four key themes illuminating their challenges.

#### Theme 1: Limited Resources Hinder Effective Delivery

Tutors consistently reported needing more adequate resources as a significant barrier to effective child protection education. This included insufficient access to teaching aids, up-to-date textbooks, and digital resources. A public institution tutor shared the difficulties this poses: *"We often have to make do with outdated materials. There is a significant lack of up-to-date resources on child protection."* Similarly,

**Table 8. T-Test Results for Public vs. Private Institutions**

| Skill                           | t-value | p-value | Significant Difference |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Identification of Abuse         | 2.45    | 0.015   | Yes                    |
| Classroom Management for Safety | 1.98    | 0.049   | Yes                    |

**Table 9. ANOVA Results for Different Experience Levels of Tutors**

| Skill                                          | F-value | p-value | Significant Difference |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Intervention Strategies                        | 3.87    | 0.024   | Yes                    |
| Building Trust and Communication with Children | 4.15    | 0.018   | Yes                    |

**Table 10. Availability of Teaching Resources and Materials**

| Resource Type             | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Reporting Adequacy (%) |
|---------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Textbooks                 | 2.8  | 0.9                | 56                                |
| Digital Resources         | 2.4  | 1.1                | 48                                |
| Teaching Aids             | 3.0  | 0.8                | 60                                |
| Updated Curriculum Guides | 2.6  | 1.0                | 52                                |

**Table 11. Access to Professional Development Opportunities**

| Training Frequency                 | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Reporting Adequacy (%) |
|------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Regular In-Service Training        | 2.2  | 0.7                | 44                                |
| Workshops and Seminars             | 2.5  | 0.9                | 50                                |
| Continuing Education Programs      | 2.3  | 0.8                | 46                                |
| Access to Updated Training Modules | 2.4  | 1.0                | 48                                |

a tutor from a private institution emphasized the impact on teaching quality: *“Access to digital resources and teaching aids is limited, which affects the quality of our instruction.”*

The data in [Table 10](#), with low means and percentages, confirms the widespread inadequacy of teaching resources. This aligns with existing literature, such as Aina and Bipath (2022), which highlights the critical role of adequate resources in effective education delivery.

### **Theme 2: Insufficient Training Limits Confidence and Skills**

Tutors also highlighted insufficient training and professional development opportunities as a challenge. Many felt inadequately prepared to deliver child protection education due to a lack of training in the latest practices. A tutor from a private institution voiced this concern: *“There are limited opportunities for professional development in child protection. We need more training to stay updated with the latest practices.”* Another tutor from a public institution echoed this sentiment, highlighting the need for more comprehensive programs: *“Professional development programs are sporadic and often not comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of child protection.”*

The data in [Table 11](#), with low means and percentages, reflects a need for more consistent and comprehensive professional development opportunities. This aligns with the theoretical frameworks of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), emphasizing the importance of ongoing learning and development for educators (Abakah, 2023; Gartia & Sharma, 2013).

### **Theme 3: Lack of Institutional Support Creates Implementation Roadblocks**

Another significant challenge identified by tutors was the need for more institutional support and consistent implementation of child protection policies. Without solid backing from the administration and transparent, well-implemented policies, tutors struggle to teach and implement child protection strategies effectively. A tutor from a public institution highlighted the need for more robust support: *“The support from the institution is not always strong. We need more backing from the administration to implement child protection measures effectively.”* Similarly, a private institution tutor emphasized the importance of clear policies: *“Policies on child protection are not consistently implemented, which creates confusion and hampers our efforts.”*

**Table 12. Institutional Support and Policy Implementation**

| Aspect                               | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Reporting Adequacy (%) |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Administrative Support               | 2.9  | 0.8                | 58                                |
| Clarity of Child Protection Policies | 2.7  | 0.9                | 54                                |
| Implementation Consistency           | 2.5  | 1.0                | 50                                |
| Resource Allocation                  | 2.6  | 0.9                | 52                                |

**Table 13. Cultural and Societal Barriers**

| Barrier Type                | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage Reporting Impact (%) |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Community Resistance        | 3.1  | 0.7                | 62                              |
| Institutional Resistance    | 2.9  | 0.8                | 58                              |
| Cultural Norms and Beliefs  | 3.0  | 0.9                | 60                              |
| Awareness and Understanding | 2.8  | 1.0                | 56                              |

The data in [Table 12](#), with moderate means and percentages, indicates a need for improved institutional support and policy clarity. This is supported by existing literature such as Davis, Rogers, and Harrigan (2020), which emphasizes the importance of administrative backing and transparent policies for effective educational practices.

#### **Theme 4: Cultural and Societal Barriers Add Layers of Complexity**

Finally, cultural and societal attitudes toward child protection pose additional challenges for tutors. Some tutors reported resistance from the community and even within the institution due to cultural norms and beliefs surrounding child protection issues. A private institution tutor shared this experience: *"There is a cultural barrier when discussing child protection. Some parents and even colleagues are resistant to these topics."* Similarly, a public institution tutor emphasized the broader societal challenges: *"Societal attitudes towards child abuse and neglect make it challenging to enforce child protection measures effectively."*

The data in [Table 13](#), with moderate to high means and percentages, indicates that cultural and societal barriers significantly impact the delivery of child protection education. This aligns with research by Honig (2006) and Harris and Jones (2018), who highlight the influence of cultural and societal factors on educational practices and policy implementation.

#### **Exploring Variations in Challenges**

To further explore potential variations in tutors' challenges, T-tests and ANOVA were conducted. The results indicate significant differences based on the type of institution (public vs. private) and the experience level of tutors.

The findings presented in [Tables 14](#) and [15](#) suggest that the type of institution and the experience level of tutors impact the challenges they face in delivering child protection education. Public institutions, for instance, reported having limited access to resources compared to private insti-

tutions ([Table 14](#)). Similarly, more experienced tutors felt more confident navigating institutional challenges or cultural barriers ([Table 15](#)).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research aimed to analyze the learning experiences of tutors and trainees regarding child protection education in selected ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda. Child protection is a critical aspect of ECD, as it focuses on safeguarding children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Despite the recognized importance of child protection in ECD settings, significant gaps exist in the training and preparation of ECD teachers in Uganda. The key findings of this study, organized by the research questions, are as follows:

The curriculum content and delivery vary significantly across institutions. While essential topics such as child rights and signs of abuse are universally covered, practical components like role-plays and case studies are less frequently incorporated. Pedagogical approaches predominantly include lectures, with workshops and role-plays being highly valued but less often used. Collaborations with external organizations, such as NGOs, enhance the quality of child protection education. Practical training opportunities, such as internships and real-life case studies, are crucial but only uniformly available across some institutions.

Tutors and trainees perceive the curriculum as comprehensive in basic concepts but need more depth for practical skills and real-world applications. Interactive pedagogical methods, such as role-plays and workshops, are perceived as more effective than traditional lectures. Satisfaction with external collaborations is high, with training sessions conducted by NGO experts being particularly beneficial. Identified challenges include insufficient practical training, lack of resources, and the need for continuous professional development for tutors.

Trainees report gaining confidence in identifying and reporting child abuse, creating safe and supportive learning environments, and understanding intervention strategies.

**Table 14. T-Test Results for Public vs. Private Institutions**

| Challenge                       | t-value | p-value | Significant Difference |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Availability of Resources       | 2.98    | 0.005   | Yes                    |
| Professional Development Access | 2.35    | 0.021   | Yes                    |

**Table 15. ANOVA Results for Different Experience Levels of Tutors**

| Challenge             | F-value | p-value | Significant Difference |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Institutional Support | 4.12    | 0.019   | Yes                    |
| Cultural Barriers     | 3.89    | 0.027   | Yes                    |

However, as highlighted by the trainees' feedback, there are significant gaps in practical skills and real-world applications. Furthermore, the study found that institutional type and tutors' experience levels influence child protection education's perceived effectiveness and challenges.

Tutors need more resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, lack of institutional support, and cultural and societal barriers. These challenges impact the effectiveness of child protection education delivery. The study's findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the importance of practical training, continuous professional development, and community and professional partnerships for child protection education.

Based on the above findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance child protection education in ECD teacher training programs in Uganda:

1. The curriculum should be standardized across institutions to ensure comprehensive coverage of child protection topics. Practical components such as role-plays, case studies, and real-life simulations should be integrated into the curriculum to provide trainees with hands-on experience.
2. Training programs should incorporate more interactive and experiential learning methods, such as workshops and role-plays, to enhance practical skills and understanding. These methods are more effective in preparing trainees for real-world situations.
3. Institutions should actively seek partnerships with NGOs and other child protection experts to provide additional training and resources. These collaborations can bring valuable expertise and practical insights, enriching the training programs.
4. Practical training opportunities, such as internships and real-life case studies, should be mandatory and uniformly available across all institutions. These opportunities are crucial for translating theoretical knowledge into practical skills.
5. Regular in-service training, workshops, and continuing education programs should be provided to ensure tutors are updated on the latest child protection practices and research. This will enhance their confidence and skills in delivering child protection education.
6. Institutions should strengthen administrative support and ensure consistent implementation of child

protection policies. Clear policies and strong administration backing are essential for effective education delivery.

7. Efforts should be made to raise awareness and understanding of child protection issues within the community and the institution. Engaging parents and caregivers in child protection efforts can help overcome resistance and create a supportive environment for implementing child protection measures.

### Limitations of the Study

While this research provides valuable insights into the state of child protection education in Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher training programs in Uganda, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a purposive sample of 125 participants from selected ECD teacher training institutions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all ECD teacher training programs in Uganda. Additionally, the geographical limitation means that the findings may not apply to institutions in other parts of the country with different socio-economic, cultural, and educational contexts. The reliance on self-reported data, collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, introduces the possibility of biases such as social desirability bias. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design captured data at a single point in time, which does not account for changes and developments over time, potentially affecting the understanding of the long-term effectiveness of child protection training. Resource constraints, including time and financial limitations, may have impacted the depth and breadth of data collection and analysis, potentially overlooking some aspects of the research topic. The limited number of qualitative data sources, such as interviews and focus groups, may not capture the full range of perspectives, and the analysis might need to explore all nuances of the participants' experiences fully. These limitations suggest that the results may not apply to all ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda, and response biases could affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Future research should consider using a more prominent and representative sample, including institutions from different regions of Uganda, and employing longitudinal studies to provide insights into the long-term effectiveness of



child protection education. Mixed methods approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources could also enhance the robustness and comprehensiveness of the findings.

### Future Research Directions

Future research on child protection education in Early Childhood Development (ECD) contexts should focus on expanding the scope and representativeness of the sample to include a diverse range of institutions across different regions of Uganda. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of child protection training programs. Additionally, longitudinal research designs could offer insights into the long-term impact of child protection education on teachers and students, tracking changes and developments over time. This approach would help assess the sustainability of the training's effectiveness and the ongoing need for professional development. Further investi-

gation should also explore integrating more practical and interactive pedagogical methods into the child protection curriculum, such as internships, simulations, and role-plays. Research could examine the specific impacts of these methods on trainees' skills and confidence in handling child protection issues.

Additionally, studies could investigate the barriers and facilitators of effective child protection education, focusing on institutional support, resource availability, and cultural attitudes. Understanding these factors would provide valuable insights for designing more effective training programs and policies that address the specific challenges ECD teachers face in different contexts. Collaboration with external organizations and the role of community and professional partnerships in enhancing child protection education are also critical areas for future research.

Submitted: March 04, 2024 EAT. Accepted: July 15, 2024 EAT.

Published: August 15, 2024 EAT.



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