

“I Want to Go Home, but I'm Afraid My Stepfather Won't Accept Me”; examining the Views of Street Children in Family Reintegration in Kitale Town, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Family reintegration is widely promoted for children in street situations where return is safe and, in the child's, best interests, yet repeated returns to the streets raise concerns about sustainability and the extent to which children's views are considered. This study examined street children's awareness, perceptions and willingness regarding family reintegration in Kitale Town, Trans Nzoia County, Kenya. Guided by the children's agency perspective, a cross-sectional mixed-methods design was used. The target population was 1,435 street children, from which 384 respondents aged 12–17 years were selected using systematic sampling. Qualitative data were obtained through four focus group discussions, 30 in-depth interviews with previously reintegrated children and four key informant interviews with service providers. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were supplemented by additional inferential analyses using a respondent-level analytical dataset. Awareness was reported by 38.0%, 75.0% perceived reintegration positively and 77.6% expressed willingness to reintegrate. In the additional inferential analysis, willingness differed by age group and street duration, while perceived benefits differed by gender and street duration. Logistic regression indicated higher odds of willingness among older adolescents, children aware of reintegration programs and those with positive perceived benefits, while street exposure of four years or more was associated with lower odds. Qualitative findings showed that willingness remained conditional on safety, family acceptance, caregiver relationships, schooling and material circumstances. The additional inferential estimates should be interpreted with appropriate caution because they were derived from retained study distributions.

Keywords: street children, family reintegration, children's views, children's agency, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Globally, children in street situations remain exposed to multiple forms of deprivation and protection risk, while family- and community-based care is widely promoted where return is safe and, in the child's, best interests. The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and General Comment No. 21 on children in street situations emphasize family support, protection from unnecessary separation, and attention to children's views in decisions affecting them (United Nations General Assembly, 2010; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). Family reintegration is therefore not simply the physical act of returning a child home; it requires assessment of whether the receiving environment can support the child's safety, wellbeing and development. For street children, this is especially important because the circumstances that preceded street involvement, including family conflict, neglect, abuse, poverty and disrupted schooling, may continue to shape how children perceive the prospect of return.

In Brazil, for example, a study by Firme and Stone (2017) indicates that although the government has tried to reintegrate street children through programs such as education, a majority of the children face serious challenges such as mistrust, abuse, poverty, lack of legal systems and violence among others during the reintegration process. According to Bottcher Dias and Mendes-Castillo (2018), the views of children on reintegration are hardly considered and they suggest for more studies to inform social workers on the best practices to reunite

families. In Bangladesh, Suha and Sik (2021) contend that reintegration of street children into their families were marred with challenges, for example, many families neglected them making them feel unwanted in the society in which they live. It must be noted that children may have left home following conflict, neglect, abuse, poverty, disrupted schooling or other circumstances that continue to shape how they understand the possibility of returning, which must be understood for any success to be realized.

In Kenya, the 2018 National Census of Street Families recorded 46,639 street persons, with large concentrations in major urban centers. In Kitale, Department of Children Services records used for the present study indicated a target population of 1,435 street children in 2024. Kenya's National Care Reform Strategy for Children 2022–2032 prioritizes prevention of family separation, family strengthening, tracing and reintegration of street children into family- and community-based care (Kenya Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2022). Recent Kenyan evidence further demonstrates the importance of the receiving family context. Goodman et al. (2023), in a study of 227 street-involved children and youth, found that reintegration trajectories were associated with children expressed desire to return, duration of street exposure and family participation in a family- and community-oriented program. Greeson et al. (2024) similarly reported improved child wellbeing and family functioning within a family-strengthening intervention and emphasized reintegration into the healthiest possible family environment. These studies demonstrate the importance of family context and child-specific circumstances, but less is known about how street children themselves evaluate the prospect of return before reintegration. The present study addresses this gap by examining children's awareness, perceived benefits and willingness to reintegrate in Kitale Town.

This article is derived specifically from the study objective examining street children's views of family reintegration in Kitale Town, Trans Nzoia County. It addresses three related issues: children's awareness and understanding of reintegration, their perceived benefits of family return, and the conditions shaping their willingness to reintegrate.

Theoretical framework

The study was informed by James and Prout's (1998) children's agency perspective, particularly the tenet that children are active social actors who interpret and give meaning to their social worlds. The theory also recognizes children as capable individuals with their own perspectives, desires, and abilities to act. Children's agency emphasizes that children are not mere recipients of decisions made by adults but active participants who can contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes.

In this study, the perspective is used to understand children's views of reintegration as interpretations grounded in their experiences of family relationships, safety, education, material circumstances and street life. The theory is applied after the empirical findings to explain why children's assessments of return should be treated as substantive knowledge rather than as passive reactions to adult decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kitale Town, Trans Nzoia County, Kenya. The study adopted a cross-sectional design combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The target population was 1,435 street children, from which 384 respondents aged 12–17 years were selected for the quantitative component using systematic sampling. The qualitative component comprised four focus group discussions (FGDs) with street children, 30 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with reintegrated children, and four key informant interviews (KIIs) with service providers: the Sub-County Children's Officer, two social workers from charitable children's institutions, and one civil-society representative. Data collection examined awareness and understanding of reintegration programs, perceived benefits of family reintegration, willingness to return, and the circumstances influencing children's views.

Quantitative data were initially analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics, awareness, perceived benefits and willingness to reintegrate. Additional inferential analyses were undertaken using a respondent-level analytical dataset (N = 384) developed from the retained study distributions reported in the study. Education was grouped as none/pre-primary, primary and post-primary/other, while street duration

was grouped as <2 years, 2–4 years and ≥ 4 years. Pearson’s chi-square tests explored associations between age group, gender, education and street duration and awareness, perceived benefits and willingness; Cramér’s V was reported as an effect-size measure. Binary logistic regression examined factors associated with willingness, coded as willing (agree/strongly agree) versus unsure/unwilling. Predictors were age group, gender, education, street duration, awareness and perceived benefits. Adjusted odds ratios (AORs), 95% confidence intervals and p-values were calculated at $p < .05$. The inferential estimates were interpreted alongside the original descriptive and qualitative findings and with appropriate caution because the analytical dataset was developed from retained study distributions. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and integrated with verbatim accounts.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Maseno University Scientific Ethics Review Committee, with research authorization from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and relevant authorities. Participation was voluntary, appropriate consent procedures were followed, confidentiality was maintained, and identifying information was excluded from qualitative accounts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of respondents

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents (N = 384)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	12–14 years	124	32.3
	15–17 years	260	67.7
	Total	384	100.0
Gender	Male	287	74.7
	Female	97	25.3
	Total	384	100.0
Education level	Never attended school	56	14.6
	Pre-primary	42	10.9
	Lower primary	98	25.5
	Upper primary	88	22.9
	Junior school	46	12.0
	Senior school	39	10.2
	Other	15	3.9
	Total	384	100.0

The study indicated that most respondents were aged 15–17 years (67.7%), while 32.3% were aged 12–14 years. This suggests that street life is more common among mid-to-late teens. Although those aged 12–14 years was smaller, this group is especially vulnerable, and their presence indicates early entry into street life for various reasons including poverty and family conflicts among others.

Male respondents constituted 74.7% while female was 25.3% of the sample. The overwhelming majority being boys suggests that boys may be more likely to leave home due to conflict, poverty, or peer influence. Educational participation was concentrated at primary-school level: 25.5% were in lower primary and 22.9% in upper primary, while 14.6% had never attended school. These characteristics provide context for interpreting children's awareness and views but are not treated as deterministic explanations of their perceptions.

Awareness and understanding of family reintegration

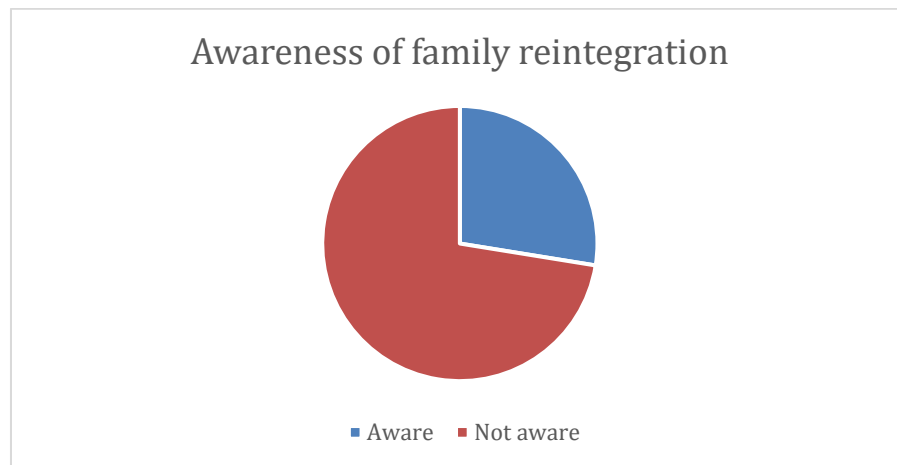


Figure 1. Awareness of family reintegration programs

Awareness of existing reintegration programs was relatively low. Only 146 respondents (38.0%) reported awareness, compared with 238 (62.0%) who were not aware. Among those who had encountered information about reintegration, NGOs (60%), social workers (28%), peers and other community-based or interpersonal channels (10%) were more prominent than formal government communication channels (2%) as shown below:

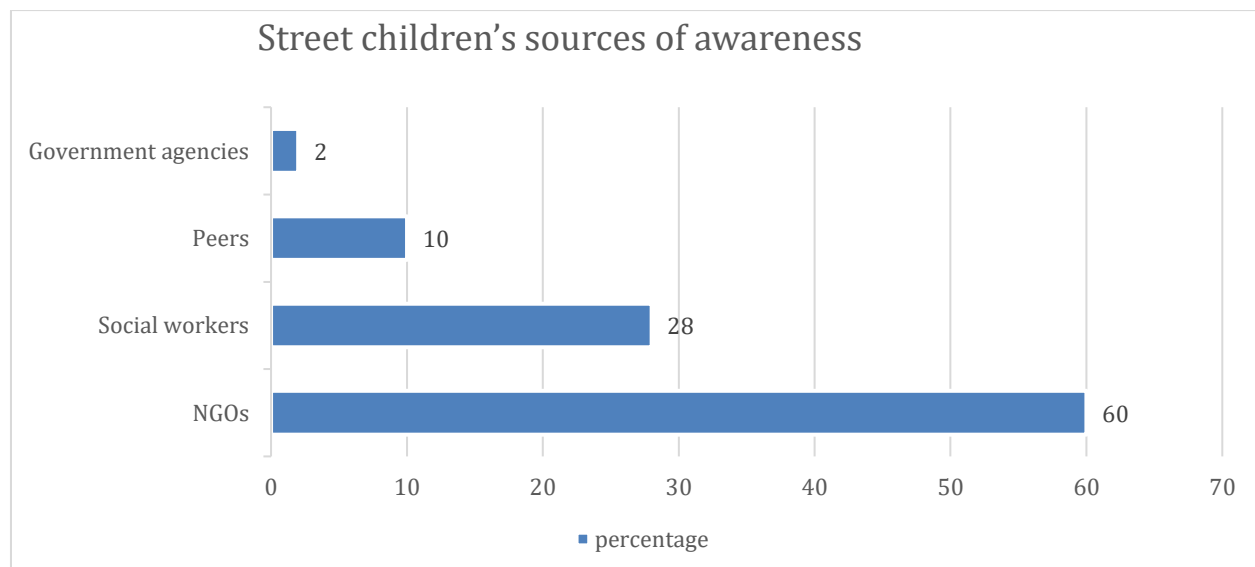


Figure 2. Street children's sources of awareness of reintegration programs

The pattern indicates that information about reintegration reached children predominantly through non-governmental and interpersonal channels. NGOs were the most frequently reported source, followed by social workers. The survey recorded 'social workers' as a source category but did not further disaggregate their organizational affiliation; therefore, the data do not support attributing all social-worker contacts specifically to either government or NGOs. In the qualitative component, however, service-provider perspectives were obtained from both government child-protection services and charitable/civil-society organizations. One respondent explained: "I heard about the program from a social worker who comes by often. She told me I could go home, but I didn't know how or when."

The account further shows that awareness did not necessarily mean that children clearly understood the reintegration process. Some participants understood reintegration mainly as being taken back home, without a clear understanding of how decisions were made, what preparation was involved, or what support might accompany return. The distinction between program awareness and process understanding is therefore important: knowing that children can be returned to their families is not equivalent to understanding what family reintegration entails. This finding is consistent with the child-centered orientation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017), which emphasizes that children in street situations should receive accessible information and have their views taken seriously in interventions affecting them. It also complements Goodman et al. (2023), whose Kenyan reintegration study incorporated children's expressed interests and desire for family reintegration as relevant factors in subsequent trajectories. The present study adds an earlier informational dimension: children's ability to form and communicate informed views may be constrained when they know that reintegration exists but do not clearly understand the process through which return is planned.

This finding suggests that children's views of reintegration are formed within uneven informational environments. Limited understanding may constrain children's ability to evaluate what is being proposed to them. At the same time, the qualitative data show that even children with limited formal knowledge of reintegration could articulate clear expectations about what a safe and beneficial return should involve.

Perceived benefits of family reintegration

Despite relatively low awareness of reintegration programs, respondents generally held positive views of family reintegration. Approximately three-quarters agreed or strongly agreed that reintegration could be beneficial. Children associated return with improved safety, family support, education, shelter, food and greater stability. This pattern is comparable with Kenyan evidence showing that family-based reintegration can be associated with improved child wellbeing when return is made to an appropriate family environment. Greeson et al. (2024), evaluating a family-strengthening program for street children in Kenya, reported improved child wellbeing and family functioning and emphasized reunification with the healthiest possible family environment tailored to the child's circumstances. Goodman et al. (2023) likewise found that children who expressed a desire to reintegrate with their families were more likely subsequently to reintegrate with families of origin. The present findings are consistent with this literature but add the children's own appraisal of why family return is attractive: safety, belonging, schooling and basic needs formed the substantive content of what respondents understood as beneficial reintegration.

These perceived benefits indicate that street life was not necessarily regarded as preferable to family life. Rather, many children continued to value the protection, belonging and opportunities they associated with a supportive family environment. Education was particularly important because return home was often imagined as an opportunity to resume schooling and improve future prospects.

However, the positive evaluation of reintegration requires careful interpretation. Children were not simply endorsing physical return to any family setting. The qualitative findings showed that the anticipated benefits depended on whether the receiving home could actually provide safety, acceptance, education and basic needs. Positive perceptions were therefore attached to the expected quality of reintegration rather than to the act of returning home in itself.

"Being home means I can go to school and sleep safely." (IDI, 16-year-old male)

This experience illustrates how children linked the meaning of reintegration to concrete improvements in everyday life. Safety and education were not abstract program outcomes; they were part of how children judged whether return would improve their circumstances.

Willingness to reintegrate

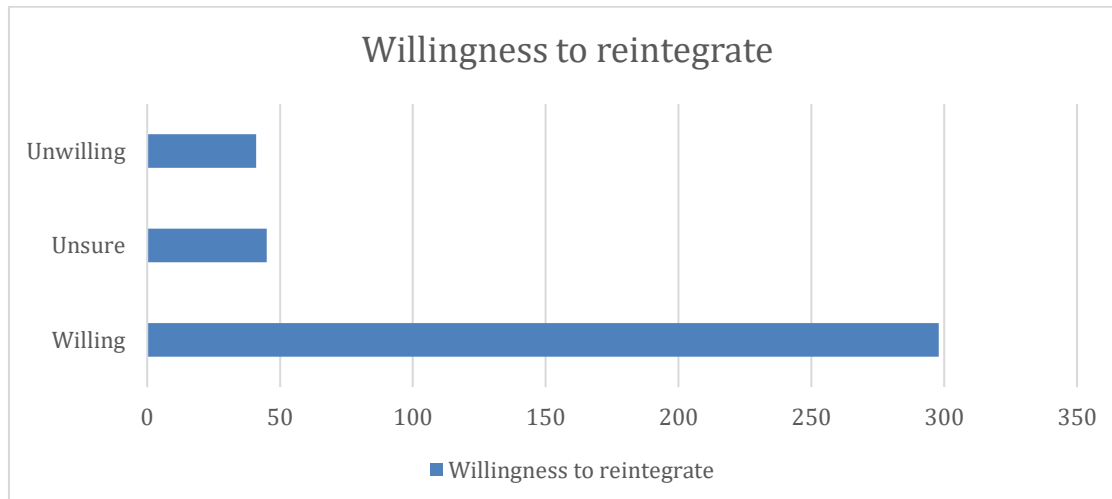


Figure 3. Respondents' willingness to reintegrate

Consistent with the generally positive perceptions of reintegration, 298 respondents (77.6%) expressed willingness to reintegrate. However, 45 (11.7%) were unsure and 41 (10.7%) were unwilling. The high level of willingness demonstrates that family return remained desirable for most respondents, but the qualitative evidence shows that this willingness should not be interpreted as unconditional.

Children frequently assessed the desirability of return against what they knew or anticipated about the receiving family. Previous conflict, rejection, treatment by caregivers, safety, schooling and material conditions influenced whether return was considered acceptable. Thus, the survey finding of high willingness is best understood alongside children's explanations of the conditions under which they would feel able to return.

"I want to go home, but I'm afraid my stepfather won't accept me. I have lived on the streets for years, and I don't know if I still belong there." (IDI, 15-year-old boy)

The quotation captures the central tension in the findings: desire for family return could coexist with uncertainty about acceptance. The child did not reject the idea of home; rather, he questioned whether the particular home environment remained socially and emotionally available to him.

Conditional willingness: the importance of the receiving home

The qualitative findings clarified that willingness to reintegrate was conditional rather than absolute. Children evaluated return in relation to whether the circumstances associated with leaving home had changed sufficiently to make return safe and worthwhile. In particular, they referred to family acceptance, previous conflict, caregiver relationships, safety, continued education and access to basic needs.

An FGD participant summarized this conditional position directly:

"Kurudi home ni sawa kama tu watu pale home wamekubali." (Going home is okay only if the people there accept) (FGD participant)

Acceptance was therefore not a secondary consideration. It shaped whether children expected home to function as a place of belonging or as a setting in which earlier difficulties might recur. This helps explain why some respondents could simultaneously perceive reintegration as beneficial in principle while remaining unsure or unwilling to return to a particular household.

This conditionality is also evident in recent Kenyan reintegration evidence. Greeson et al. (2024) argue for reunification with the healthiest possible family environment and for plans tailored to each child's unique family situation, while Goodman et al. (2023) found that children's expressed desire for family reintegration was

associated with later reintegration outcomes. The Kitale findings deepen this evidence by showing what children themselves place behind a stated desire to return: acceptance, safety and confidence that earlier family difficulties will not simply be reproduced. Thus, willingness is better interpreted as an evaluation of a particular receiving home than as a general endorsement of family return.

The same pattern applied to material and educational circumstances. Children's positive views of reintegration were often linked to expectations of food, shelter and schooling. Where they anticipated that these needs would remain unmet, enthusiasm for return could be reduced. This finding is consistent with Greeson et al. (2024), who emphasize that sustainable family reintegration requires attention to children's individual needs and the wider functioning and basic needs of the receiving family. It also corresponds with Goodman et al. (2023), whose Kenyan study found that family-oriented support and children's own reintegration interests were associated with reintegration trajectories, while longer street exposure reduced the likelihood of reintegration with families of origin. In the present study, therefore, children's references to education and material conditions should not be read merely as preferences for additional benefits; they formed part of their assessment of whether a particular return was likely to improve their everyday circumstances. The relevant analytical distinction is between a general preference for family-based life and an assessment of whether a specific family environment can provide the conditions children associate with beneficial reintegration.

Duration on the streets also formed part of this assessment. Children with longer street histories tended to express greater caution about return, although prolonged street involvement did not amount to complete rejection of reintegration. Longer exposure may alter relationships with family, increase uncertainty about belonging and make the transition back to family routines more difficult to imagine. The finding is therefore better interpreted as increased caution rather than loss of interest in family reintegration.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the question 'Do children want to go home?' is analytically insufficient. A more informative question is 'What kind of home do children believe they are going back to?' The answer determines how willingness should be understood.

Interpreting children's views through the children's agency perspective

The empirical findings can be interpreted through James and Prout's (1998) conceptualization of children as active social actors. Respondents did not simply accept or reject reintegration as a program option. They interpreted the meaning of return through their own experiences of family relationships, safety, schooling, material conditions and street life.

This is particularly evident in the distinction between positive perceptions of reintegration and conditional willingness to return. Children could recognize the potential benefits of family life while simultaneously identifying circumstances that might make a particular return unsafe, unacceptable or unsustainable. Their views therefore contained evaluative knowledge about the receiving environment rather than merely emotional preferences for or against home.

The agency perspective does not imply that children should independently determine reintegration decisions. Rather, it supports recognition that children possess experiential knowledge relevant to understanding whether proposed family return corresponds with their lived circumstances. In this study, children's accounts of acceptance, conflict, safety, education and material needs demonstrate why their perspectives are important when interpreting willingness to reintegrate.

The contribution of the study is therefore to show that children's willingness to reintegrate is relational and context-dependent. Children may value family reintegration while withholding unconditional support for return to a home they perceive as unsafe, rejecting or unable to meet basic expectations. This reinforces the importance of understanding children not simply as recipients of reintegration, but as social actors who actively evaluate the environments to which they are expected to return.

Demographic variations and inferential analysis

The chi-square analysis examined whether awareness, perceived benefits and willingness varied by age group, gender, education level and duration on the streets. Age group was significantly associated with willingness, $\chi^2(2) = 8.94$, $p = .011$, Cramér's $V = .153$, but not with awareness or perceived benefits. Gender was associated with perceived benefits, $\chi^2(2) = 8.46$, $p = .015$, $V = .148$, and willingness, $\chi^2(2) = 6.07$, $p = .048$, $V = .126$, but not awareness. Education was not significantly associated with any of the three outcomes. Street duration showed the clearest pattern: it was associated with awareness, $\chi^2(2) = 39.23$, $p < .001$, $V = .320$; perceived benefits, $\chi^2(4) = 16.83$, $p = .002$, $V = .148$; and willingness, $\chi^2(4) = 18.27$, $p = .001$, $V = .154$.

Table 2. Associations between demographic characteristics and reintegration views

Characteristic	Outcome	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V
Age group	Awareness	0.28	1	.597	.027
Age group	Perceived benefits	1.70	2	.427	.067
Age group	Willingness	8.94	2	.011	.153
Gender	Awareness	1.69	1	.193	.066
Gender	Perceived benefits	8.46	2	.015	.148
Gender	Willingness	6.07	2	.048	.126
Education level	Awareness	4.25	2	.119	.105
Education level	Perceived benefits	5.28	4	.259	.083
Education level	Willingness	5.29	4	.259	.083
Street duration	Awareness	39.23	2	<.001	.320
Street duration	Perceived benefits	16.83	4	.002	.148
Street duration	Willingness	18.27	4	.001	.154

Descriptively, willingness was higher among respondents aged 15–17 years (81.5%) than among those aged 12–14 years (69.4%). Female respondents showed higher positive perceptions (84.5% versus 71.8%) and willingness (85.6% versus 74.9%) than male respondents. Street duration showed a marked gradient: awareness increased from 21.2% among children with less than two years on the streets to 61.3% among those with four or more years, whereas willingness declined from 83.9% to 63.2%. These patterns are consistent with the qualitative finding that prolonged street exposure may increase uncertainty about belonging and the feasibility of return.

The binary logistic regression model was statistically significant overall (likelihood-ratio $\chi^2 = 161.31$, $p < .001$; McFadden pseudo- $R^2 = .395$). After adjustment, respondents aged 15–17 years had higher odds of willingness than those aged 12–14 years (AOR = 2.60, 95% CI [1.29, 5.27], $p = .008$). Awareness of reintegration programs was associated with higher odds of willingness (AOR = 2.19, 95% CI [1.03, 4.65], $p = .042$). Positive perceived benefits showed the strongest association (AOR = 26.92, 95% CI [13.72, 52.81], $p < .001$). Respondents with four or more years of street exposure had lower odds of willingness than those with less than two years (AOR = 0.22, 95% CI [0.09, 0.55], $p = .001$). Gender, education and street exposure of 2–4 years were not independently significant after adjustment.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression of factors associated with willingness to reintegrate

Predictor	AOR	95% CI	p	Interpretation
Age 15–17 vs 12–14	2.60	1.29–5.27	.008	Higher odds
Female vs male	1.31	0.59–2.94	.508	Not significant
Primary vs none/pre-primary	0.81	0.37–1.76	.596	Not significant
Post-primary/other vs none/pre-primary	1.46	0.57–3.75	.426	Not significant
Street duration 2–4 vs <2 years	0.82	0.35–1.90	.641	Not significant
Street duration ≥4 vs <2 years	0.22	0.09–0.55	.001	Lower odds
Aware vs not aware	2.19	1.03–4.65	.042	Higher odds
Positive benefits vs neutral/negative	26.92	13.72–52.81	<.001	Higher odds

These inferential patterns reinforce the descriptive and qualitative interpretation that willingness is related to children’s information about reintegration, their appraisal of its likely benefits and their accumulated experience of street life. From a children’s agency perspective, children evaluate return within particular developmental, relational and material circumstances. These inferential findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution because the respondent-level analytical dataset was developed from retained study distributions; they are considered alongside, rather than independently of, the descriptive and qualitative findings.

Study limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design captured children’s views and experiences at one point in time. Although 298 respondents expressed willingness to reintegrate, the study did not prospectively follow these children to determine whether reintegration subsequently occurred or whether their pre-return expectations corresponded with their post-return experiences. The study therefore cannot establish temporal or causal relationships.

Second, the study relied substantially on self-reported information from street children. Responses may have been influenced by recall bias, differences in individual experience and variation in respondents’ understanding of reintegration. Self-report was nevertheless essential to the study objective because the research specifically sought to foreground children’s own views and experiences.

Third, although perspectives were obtained from children and service providers, receiving parents or caregivers were not included as a distinct participant group. The study therefore could not directly assess receiving families’ willingness, preparedness, caregiving capacity and concerns regarding reintegration. Similarly, the study was not designed around matched child–social worker dyads and consequently could not compare each child’s self-assessment of reintegration suitability with the corresponding professional assessment.

Fourth, the 30 IDIs involved previously reintegrated children and captured accounts of both difficult and unsuccessful return experiences; however, unsuccessful reintegration was not used as an exclusive purposive sampling criterion. A dedicated sample of children with repeated or unsuccessful reintegration attempts could provide a more detailed account of the pathways leading to reintegration breakdown and return to street life.

Finally, some FGDs and IDIs were conducted in locations preferred by participants to promote comfort and openness. Prevailing weather conditions occasionally affected audio-recording quality and created minor challenges during transcription and qualitative analysis. The use of mixed methods, triangulation across

questionnaires, FGDs, IDIs and service-provider interviews, and the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence helped strengthen the credibility of the overall interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined street children's awareness, views and willingness regarding family reintegration in Kitale Town. Awareness of reintegration programs was limited, with only 38.0% reporting awareness, yet attitudes toward family reintegration were generally positive. Approximately three-quarters perceived reintegration as beneficial, and 77.6% expressed willingness to return.

The principal finding, however, is that willingness was conditional rather than absolute. Children evaluated reintegration against the circumstances of the receiving home, particularly safety, family acceptance, previous conflict, caregiver relationships, education and material conditions. Positive perceptions of family reintegration should therefore not be interpreted as willingness to return to any household under any circumstances.

The findings demonstrate that street children actively interpret the potential benefits and risks of return. Their perspectives provide insight into what makes family reintegration desirable from the child's point of view. Reintegration practice should consequently distinguish between arranging physical return and establishing whether the proposed home environment corresponds with the conditions children associate with a safe and beneficial return.

Implications For Policy And Practice

- Reintegration programs should provide children with clear, age-appropriate information about what family reintegration involves before return decisions are made.
- Assessment of willingness should explore the conditions underlying a child's response rather than recording willingness as a simple yes/no decision.
- Pre-reintegration assessment should pay particular attention to the child's concerns about safety, family acceptance, previous conflict, caregiver relationships, schooling and basic needs.
- Children's views should be considered alongside family and professional assessments because they provide lived knowledge about the home environment to which they are expected to return.
- Reintegration programs should strengthen post-return monitoring so that children's pre-return expectations regarding safety, acceptance, schooling and basic needs can be reviewed against their actual experiences after reunification.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should employ longitudinal designs that follow children from the point at which they express willingness to reintegrate through family preparation, reunification and post-return follow-up. Such studies would establish whether stated willingness translates into actual reintegration and whether children's expectations regarding safety, acceptance, education and basic needs correspond with their later experiences in the receiving household.

Further studies should include receiving parents or caregivers to examine family willingness, preparedness, socioeconomic capacity and concerns regarding reintegration. Matched assessments involving children and their social workers would also allow direct examination of similarities and differences between children's self-assessments and professional judgments of reintegration suitability.

Purposive qualitative studies should additionally focus on children who have experienced unsuccessful or repeated reintegration attempts. This would permit deeper analysis of family rejection, recurring conflict, unmet material and educational needs, psychosocial adjustment and other mechanisms contributing to return to street

life. Comparative and longitudinal research should also examine whether reintegration views, participation and outcomes vary by gender, age, educational background and duration of street involvement.

Declarations

The authors make the following declarations regarding ethical approval and consent, conflict of interest, and data availability.

Ethical Approval and Consent

Ethical approval was obtained from the Maseno University Scientific Ethics Review Committee, with relevant research authorization from NACOSTI. Appropriate consent procedures were followed, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data are not publicly available because they contain sensitive information obtained from a vulnerable population of children. Any request for de-identified data would be subject to ethical and institutional requirements.

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