CATHOLIC CHURCH'S INTERVENTION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF STREET CHILDREN (AGUU) IN NORTHERN UGANDA

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this research dissertation has not been presented in any other university and that its content is my original work.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all resilient children of Uganda, most especially to children of Northern Uganda. Indeed, your stories, your struggles, and your hopes are the heartbeat of this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for giving me His grace and strength through this time of study. All for His honor and glory (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam).

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the Catholic Church helps street children known as Aguu rebuild their lives in several communities across Northern Uganda. The research questions focused on how Catholic church provision of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training and family tracing and reintegration bring about transformation of the street children in Northern Uganda? The research was guided primarily by behavioral theory, with humanistic and reintegration theories serving as supporting frameworks. Using a convergent design under a mixed-methods approach, the study combined phenomenological and cross-sectional survey designs. The target population was 12,360. The study participants were selected by use of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires (completed by street children) and in-depth interview guides (used with community, cultural, and religious leaders). The research instruments were validated by subject experts, and the questionnaire's internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Trustworthiness was of qualitative data was ensured in terms of their credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, and the findings were presented in frequency distribution tables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, with the results presented in narrative form and supported by relevant direct quotations. Findings showed that the Catholic Church's intervention through psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training and family tracing and reintegration significantly relate to the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda. For example, psychosocial counselling enhanced emotional healing, behavioral change, resilience, and social relationships. Formal education improved access to learning, life skills, self-esteem, discipline, and employability while reducing

involvement in risky behaviors. Vocational skills training equipped rehabilitated children with practical livelihood skills, strengthened self-reliance, restored dignity, and promoted economic empowerment. Family tracing and reintegration fostered reconciliation, restored family relationships, strengthened community acceptance, and supported sustainable social reintegration. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited rehabilitation facilities, insufficient professional counsellors, negative peer influence, weak family support, and limited post-rehabilitation follow-up affected programme effectiveness. The study concluded that the Catholic Church plays a critical role in the rehabilitation, transformation, and reintegration of street children (Aguu) through holistic interventions that integrate psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family reintegration. The study recommended that the Government of Uganda strengthen collaboration and cooperation with faith-based organizations, increase funding for rehabilitation programmes, and expand or increase access to education, counselling, and vocational training. It further recommends that the Catholic Church strengthen psychosocial services, vocational programmes, family reintegration initiatives, and post-rehabilitation follow-up, while development partners provide greater financial and technical support to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes for street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARLPI: Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative

BT: Behavioral theory

CST: Catholic Social Teaching

CLG: Community Leader in Gulu

CLL: Community Leader in Lira

CLP: Community Leader in Pader

CLK: Community Leader in Kitgum

CURLL: Cultural Leader in Lira

CURLG: Cultural Leader in Gulu

CURLP: Cultural Leader in Pader

CURLK: Cultural Leader in Kitgum

DEO: District Education Officer

E.G: Example

EST: Ecological systems theory

ETC: Etcetera

FBOs: Faith-Based Organizations

HF4Y: Housing First for Youth

HT: Humanistic Theory

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

MOES: Ministry of Education and Sports

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

RDC: Resident District Commissioner

RLG: Religious Leader in Gulu

RLL: Religious Leader in Lira

RLP: Religious Leader in Pader

RLK: Religious Leader in Kitgum

RT: Reintegration Theory

UK: United Kingdom

UNCRC: United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The presence of street children in cities worldwide represents not only a profound contradiction to modern civilization but also failure of some governments to protect the vulnerable population. UNICEF (2020) estimates approximately 150 million street children globally, though some scholars argue that the true figure may exceed 100 million children due to hidden populations in some countries. In India, for example, the government's report of 2018 identified only 18,447 children living on streets in 14 major cities across the country, but the Consortium for Street Children (2019) suggests the actual number may be 11–18 million street children—making India the world's largest national population.

Street children are a highly vulnerable and marginalized group shaped by structural factors: poverty, armed conflict, family breakdown, urbanization, and social exclusion among others. They are often perceived as victims of systemic failure rather than delinquents, despite societal stigmatization associating them with crime or moral decay (Willis, 2021). Contemporary research emphasizes their agency and resilience while recognizing severe risks: abuse, exploitation, lack of education, poor health, and psychosocial trauma. Within this context, the Catholic Church's intervention is understood as a faith-based, holistic response that seeks transformation through education, moral formation, psychosocial support, and family reintegration (Cavazzoni et al., 2023).

The term "street children" does not have a single, universally accepted definition. UNICEF (2022) describes them as minors for whom the street, as an unregulated public space, has become their primary place of residence and source of livelihood, often without adequate

adult care or supervision. They are commonly categorized into two groups: “children of the street,” who have little or no family support, and “children on the street,” who maintain some connection with their families but spend significant time on the streets for work or other activities. Their experiences are characterized by a complex combination of extreme vulnerability, hardship, and resilience. Ayuku et al. (2021) revealed that street children face constant danger, trauma, violence, drug use, and serious physical and mental health problems, while lacking access to school and healthcare. Simultaneously, they develop survival strategies—peer networks and informal economic activities like scavenging or begging, and violence among others.

Detrick (2023) stated that, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, street children represent a failure of society’s shared duty to protect the vulnerable. Their plight reflects societal indifference and the normalization of childhood suffering in cities. Moreover, street children create long-term economic problems: growing up without education or stability perpetuates cycles of poverty and marginalization, translating into crime and public health burdens (Blanc, 2020).

That said, the origins of streetism lie in interconnected structural failures: chronic poverty and severe family disintegration due to parental death, abandonment, or abuse (Mabhala et al., 2017). This phenomenon not only poses to the world a major and continuous challenge to human dignity, social justice, and sustainable development, but also an open case of systemic malfunction, which traced back to the entangled game of structural inequalities, economic dislocation, family break up, and political unrest (Olowu & Akinola, 2021). Levine (2022) established that children are pushed to streets by poverty, violence, and broken safety nets, not choice. Thus, transformative rehabilitation or transformation—an approach that goes beyond

welfare to restore agency and address root causes—is essential. This requires the need for protection, understanding and justice for the street children. As such, transformative rehabilitation is one of the most important concepts in this modern understanding which posits that effective intervention must transcend mere welfare provision or behavioral modification. Transformation process is an approach that goes past care and gives a person back their agency. Indeed, transformative rehabilitation process helps heal trauma and bring a person back into a community. This philosophy of transformation moves from charity to justice-based restoration of potential (Healey, 2021). Relating this to street children, it means not only removing them from danger but actively empowering them by addressing the root causes of their exclusion such as family breakdown, poverty, and systemic failure thereby transforming a narrative of loss into one of reclaimed dignity and belonging (Healey, 2021).

Additionally, Hart and Lofton (2023) added that transformative rehabilitation not only aims to bring a fundamental and sustainable change in a child's life by restoring their inherent dignity, providing critical agency, reconstructing positive social relations, and so on; but also, by giving them the skills to find their way out of marginality. This transformative approach considers the child not as an inactive charity case but rather an energetic and supportive actor in his/her recovery and integration back into the society where he or she lives.

The Catholic Church's global response translates theological principles into structured action anchored in Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity, preferential option for the poor, solidarity, subsidiarity, and integral development (Massaro, 2019; O'Brien & Shannon, 2016). Operationally, this involves a sequential model: emergency outreach (drop-in centers, shelters by congregations like Missionaries of Charity), holistic rehabilitation (education, healthcare, vocational skills training, psychosocial support blended with spiritual accompaniment), and

sustainable family/community reintegration (Boeve, 2020., Bunkers et al., 2019; Hefferan, 2015; Clarke & Jennings, 2016).

Still, globally, discourse has shifted from punishment to children's rights, psychosocial support, and holistic development, with street children now seen as rights holders failed by systems (Duncan et al., 2022). In the United Kingdom, studies by Mabhala et al., (2017) examined the social conditions that lead individuals into homelessness through a qualitative analysis of life stories of homeless people. The study reveals that homelessness is not merely an individual failure but a cumulative outcome of structural inequalities such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing policies, family disintegration, poor social protection systems and restricted educational opportunities. It further emphasizes that adverse childhood experiences, disrupted education, and social exclusion significantly increase vulnerability to street life and long-term marginalization. The study situates homelessness within a broader context of social justice and public health, emphasizing how structural negligence contributes to cycles of exclusion. However, the study does not specifically examine the role of formal education as a rehabilitative or transformative intervention for street-connected children. In particular, it does not assess how education-based interventions contribute to psychosocial recovery, moral formation, or long-term reintegration—which the current study sought to address.

Similarly, Hart and Lofton (2023) examine global childhoods through a rights-based and justice-oriented lens, focusing on how structural inequalities, poverty, conflict, and also weak child protection systems shape the lived experiences of vulnerable children, including street-connected children. The author argues that childhood marginalization is largely driven by systemic failures rather than individual shortcomings, and they emphasize children's rights to dignity, protection, participation, and empowerment. The study highlights how social exclusion,

disrupted education, family breakdown or disfunction, and institutional neglect undermine children's wellbeing and limit their opportunities for meaningful reintegration into the community or society. By situating childhood vulnerability within a global social justice and human rights framework, authors stress that there is need for holistic, community-based and rights-affirming interventions to restore agency and social inclusion among marginalized children. Even though the study offers strong theoretical and normative insights into children's rights and empowerment, it does not specifically examine the role of formal education as a transformative rehabilitative intervention for street-connected children. In particular, it does not empirically assess how education contributes to psychosocial recovery, moral formation, and also long-term reintegration within faith-based or post-conflict contexts which the current study sought to address.

In the United States, studies by Gross and Wronski (2021) examined public support for homelessness-related policies and charitable giving in the United States, focusing on the roles of empathy, race, and perceived deservingness. Using a large-scale quantitative design, the study drew on nationally representative survey experiments involving over 3,000 adult respondents and employed structured questionnaires, vignette-based experiments, and also multivariate regression analysis. The findings revealed that empathy significantly increased support for both government interventions and private donations, particularly when homeless individuals were perceived as victims of structural conditions rather than personal failure. Moreover, racial bias was found to mediate levels of empathy and support, disadvantaging marginalized groups. However, the study was limited in scope in relation to the present study. It did not examine the lived experiences of homeless or street-connected children, nor did it assess rehabilitation processes or service delivery mechanisms. More critically, it did not explore the role of faith-based institutions,

psychosocial counseling, or formal education in facilitating transformative rehabilitation. This gap underscored the relevance of the current study, which focused on the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda—by empirically examining how psychosocial, educational, and also faith-based approaches contribute to holistic rehabilitation and long-term reintegration in a post-conflict context (Massaro, 2019).

Nonetheless, in Canada, Gaetz et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal study on the Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) model, demonstrating that the stability of housing combined with intensive psychosocial support significantly improves psychological well-being, resilience, and long-term rehabilitation outcomes among street-involved youth. While the study highlighted the importance of psychosocial support, it assumed the availability of strong state-funded housing systems and did not examine rehabilitation pathways in low-resource or post-conflict settings. Moreover, it did not explore the roles of formal education, vocational skills training, and also family tracing and reintegration as complementary rehabilitation strategies, definitely creating a gap in understanding how holistic rehabilitation unfolds where housing is not the primary entry point.

Nevertheless, Julien (2025), in a non-empirical literature review conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, highlighted the significance of social integration and counselling in resolving the difficulties children with ties to the streets encounter. Even though the study identified counseling as a critical component of rehabilitation, it did lack empirical evidence on how counseling is implemented, the processes involved in the implementation, and its measurable contribution to transformative rehabilitation outcomes. It also did not integrate counseling session with education, vocational training, or family tracing and reintegration, limiting its applicability to comprehensive rehabilitation frameworks—which the current study sought to

address.

Similarly, Julien (2024) examined inclusive education for street children in Jamaica through a literature-based review. The study did also highlight barriers to inclusive education such as stigma, discrimination, and entrenched street lifestyles that hinder educational inclusion, while acknowledging the potential of flexible and context-sensitive education models. However, the study did not empirically assess how formal education contributes to psychosocial recovery, behavioral change, or long-term reintegration. It also overlooked the interaction between formal education, counseling, vocational skills training, family tracing and reintegration, which are central to transformative rehabilitation—which the current study sought to address.

In India, Yildirim et al. (2020) provided empirical evidence on the psychosocial needs of street children, identifying counseling as a critical support when integrated with safety, education, and peer engagement. While this study was close with the objective of examining psychosocial counseling, it was limited by its small, male-only sample, urban context, and short-term focus. Importantly, it did not assess long-term rehabilitation outcomes, vocational skills acquisition, or family tracing and reintegration, nor did it consider faith-based or Church-led rehabilitation models. Overall, existing studies tend to examine rehabilitation components such as psychosocial counseling, education, or housing in isolation, were often non-empirical, or were situated in contexts with strong state infrastructure. Few studies empirically investigated how psychosocial counseling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration interact within a single, holistic rehabilitation framework. This gap is particularly evident in post-conflict and resource-constrained settings such as Northern Uganda. In order to close this gap, the current study sought to empirically investigate how the Catholic Church's integrated interventions psychosocial counseling, formal education, vocational skills training,

and family tracing and reintegration collectively support the transformation or transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

Across Africa, an estimated 30 million children live on the streets and this represent one of the continent's most profound child protection crises (UNICEF, as cited in River Cross Global, 2024; Mail & Guardian, 2024). Indeed, this staggering number reflects deep-rooted causes, including extreme poverty, family breakdown, and rapid urbanization that outpaces social services. Conflict and domestic violence further force children from their homes, while economic hardship leaves families unable to provide care. Many children flee abuse or neglect only to face exploitation, trafficking, and violence on the streets. Without comprehensive strategies addressing these root causes, millions of African children will remain caught in the cycles of marginalization and poverty.

According to the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (2023), an estimated 4.3 million street children live in Nigeria, with 1.2 million concentrated in Lagos, Kano, and Abuja. Poverty and family collapse are primary drivers, and without intervention, the number is projected to rise 15% annually. Despite the Child Rights Act (2003), structured national programs targeting transformative rehabilitation of street children (Almajirai or area boys) are scarce, leaving support fragmented (Gbigbidje, 2021).

Interventions for street children in Africa are often fragmented and underfunded, limited to short-term rescue without addressing psychosocial drivers (Embleton et al., 2020; Mwende et al., 2022). Nigeria exemplifies this crisis.

Furthermore, in Ghana, Arthur-Ewusie (2024) found that many vulnerable youths re-enter the workforce through informal apprenticeships, but without formal education, they struggle to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Similarly, Kusi-Amankwah (2023) pointed out that

access to basic schooling among former street children boosts not only their income potential but also their self-esteem and community participation. However, these benefits are often limited by the absence of coordinated efforts to integrate these children back into the mainstream business and academic ecosystem.

That said, in South Africa and Zimbabwe, social grants and NGO efforts rarely reach street children, and family tracing remains suboptimal (Matarise & Chibonore, 2025; Gunhidzirai & Tanga, 2020). Absence of life and computer skills further hinders rehabilitation (Ndlovu & Tigere, 2022), with street-connected girls facing deeper marginalization than their male counterparts (Ngidi et al., 2024). In Botswana, the Botswana Council of Churches (2025) shows that family tracing is regarded as the preferred long-term approach for supporting the holistic development and social recovery of street children, based on the understanding that the family is the primary context for child development, and yet post-conflict contexts like Northern Uganda with war-related trauma and fragile households remain unaddressed. The current study aimed to address this.

Additionally, in Tanzania, Shitindi et al. (2023) and Nyangi (2021) identified poverty, family breakdown and weak social support systems, which restrict children's access to education, protection, and sustainable reintegration as the drivers to street life. It also demonstrated that, a significant number of children associated with the streets participate in unofficial survival activities with limited pathways back to structured schooling or family life because of poverty, but family-based interventions are inconsistently implemented.

As such, in Kenya, Bunkers et al. (2022) and Banda & Njoku (2020) documented the Catholic Church's integrated intervention approach including vocational skills training via Don Bosco Boys Town to transform street connected children. Moreover, Chepchirchir and Nyang'au

(2022) noted holistic models emerging, often championed by faith-based organizations, aim to provide effective rehabilitation by offering safe spaces that address spiritual, emotional, and material needs of street children, and yet in Northern Uganda, such synergized systems are not widespread. Lumumba and Tioko (2022) found that involving rehabilitated youth in community development boosts agency, but Kaluku (2020) revealed profound adjustment challenges due to unresolved trauma. Moreover, standard reintegration protocols (Hefferan, 2023) may not address caregivers' capacity in post-conflict settings, nor do they evaluate methodologies for collective, intergenerational trauma. Hence the current study was needed.

In Uganda, the official statistics estimate that approximately 15,000 children live on the streets, though the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development acknowledged that this figure likely underrepresents the reality due to the transient nature of this population (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development & Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This data underscores an urgent national child protection crisis requiring immediate intervention. Therefore, these street children (locally called *Aguu in the North part of Uganda*) represent a major social challenge rooted in poverty, family breakdown, and conflict-related trauma from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, which displaced over 90% of the population and dismantled traditional protection systems (Finnström, 2008). The Catholic Church has responded with family reunification, education, counseling, vocational training, and rescue, guided by Catholic Social Teaching (Massaro, 2019). However, existing literature evaluates interventions by output metrics (numbers rescued) rather than transformative rehabilitation—restoring agency, identity, and social belonging (Bunkers et al., 2019). Nambalirwa and Samuel (2023) found psychosocial counseling effective but lacked long-term evidence for collective trauma—which the current study sought to address. Gahungu et al. (2024) noted exclusion from formal

education, while Mugabi et al. (2021) showed vocational training benefits urban youth but not post-conflict northern Uganda—which the current study sought to address. Moro (2025) highlighted family reintegration but ignored unique trauma and poverty challenges—which the current study was needed to address.

Specifically, Northern Uganda's Aguu are a lost generation orphans, former child soldiers, or children fathered by rebel fighters, lacking clan identity and belonging (Divon & Owor, 2021; Omara et al., 2025). They face chronic substance abuse, untreated trauma, police brutality, and petty crimes like breaking into people's houses, shops among others leading to increased insecurity in the districts across the North of Uganda.

Government security crackdowns have proven counterproductive (Omara et al., 2025). NGOs and the Catholic Church provide temporary shelters, medical care, education, vocational training, and family mediation (Hashtag Gulu, 2025a, 2025b; Caritas Gulu, n.d.), yet these efforts are short-term, donor-dependent, and focused on physical survival, ignoring existential rootlessness and social identity erosion (Ojok et al., 2022; Lamunu, 2019).

Consequently, many children return to the streets, contributing to insecurity and creating fear within the wider community. This persistent failure reveals a critical gap in existing interventions—the neglect of the inner, spiritual, and relational dimensions of the Aguu crisis. Faith-based approaches therefore offer significant potential for transformative rehabilitation by restoring a child's sense of identity, helping them to see themselves not as Aguu or criminals, but as children of God and valued members of their communities (Caritas Gulu, n.d.; CCCU, 2023). Moreover, Psychosocial counselling heals trauma and restores self-worth, forming the critical foundation for change. Formal education delivers literacy and numeracy, unlocking cognitive growth and opportunities. Vocational skills training can impart practical trades for income

generation for Aguu, breaking the cycle of street dependency. Concurrently, family tracing and reintegration can rebuild broken family bonds, offering a permanent, loving alternative. Together, these interventions create a comprehensive safety net that rescues children from danger, rebuilds their futures, and guides them toward lasting stability and independence.

Therefore, investigating the Catholic Church's holistic, faith-centered model in Northern Uganda would provide crucial evidence for a transformative blueprint in one of post-conflict Africa's most persistent social challenges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon of Aguu is widespread across Northern Uganda. According to a 2021 report by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Gulu City, the largest urban centre in Northern Uganda, is estimated to accommodate approximately 2,500–3,000 street-connected children. Most of these children are boys and girls aged 8–17, displaced by post-conflict poverty, family breakdown, and cattle rustling. Ideally, street-connected children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda would be economically empowered through vocational skills training, achieve emotional stability, return to formal education, and be fully reintegrated into their families and communities. Their sustained transition away from street life would contribute to the restoration of family structures and the creation of safer and more supportive communities.

The Catholic Church has sought to realize this vision by establishing and supporting rehabilitation initiatives through parish networks, Caritas Uganda, and Church-affiliated centers such as Comboni Samaritan. These initiatives provide psychosocial counseling, access to formal education, vocational skills training, family tracing, and reintegration support for street-connected children (Kizza, 2020; Ochen, 2021).

Despite these efforts, Aguu continue to return to the streets because most interventions prioritize short-term containment such as rescue operations and shelter provision over addressing deep-seated psychosocial trauma, fractured family relationships, limited livelihood opportunities, and the broader post-conflict environment. Consequently, many children cycle back to street life, and communities remain trapped in vulnerability.

Existing studies, such as that by Olanya (2024), have documented the Aguu phenomenon but largely rely on descriptive accounts without rigorously evaluating long-term transformative outcomes of faith-based rehabilitation in post-conflict settings—which the current study sought to address. Moreover, local authorities, community members, police officers among others are openly complaining about rising insecurity because of Aguu children. The Police Spokesperson for North Kyoga observes that petty crimes, house break-ins, and assaults are increasing on a daily basis. He explains, “Our cells are filled with children, but keeping them there does not solve the problem. We release them, only for them to return to the same criminal activities. They move with row eggs at night and if they want to rob a car, they will throw the row eggs on the windscreen. If the driver tries to wipe it, he or she will spread the eggs on the entire windscreen and will not be able to see. So, he or she will be forced to stop and that is when the Aguu will come and take all the valuables in the car. And if you are lucky, they will not kill you” (Okema, 2023, as cited in Mugo & Ochen, 2024, p. 112). Given these persistent shortcomings, rising insecurity and the limited context-specific evidence on sustainable rehabilitation, there was an urgent need for this study to systematically examine how the Catholic Church’s integrated interventions could foster lasting personal transformation and successful community reintegration of Aguu—leading to peace in Northern Uganda.

1.3 Research Questions

i. In what ways does psychosocial counselling support lead to the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda?

ii. To what extent does formal education lead to the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda?

iii. How does vocational skills training lead to the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda?

iv. How do family tracing and reintegration lead to the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

i. H_{o1}: There is no statistically significant relationship between providing psychosocial counselling support to Aguu and the measurable outcomes of their transformation.

ii. H_{o2}: There is no statistically significant relationship between participation in formal education programs and higher measures of the transformation of Aguu.

iii. H_{o3}: There is no statistically significant relationship between participation in vocational skills training and measurable progress in the transformation outcomes of Aguu.

iv. H_{o4}: There is no statistically significant relationship between family tracing and reintegration and measurable outcomes of transformation for Aguu.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study was important because it filled a research gap by showing how faith-based organizations, particularly the Catholic Church, support the recovery and transformation of Aguu

youth affected by trauma in post-conflict Northern Uganda**.** It is hoped that the study findings may be beneficial to various stake holders comprising of the Catholic Church, the Government of Uganda, the Street Children, Social workers, policy makers and advocacy among others.

The findings may benefit the Catholic Church by helping it identify effective interventions for rehabilitating and reintegrating Aguu and use this evidence to improve its programmes. The study may also strengthen collaboration among the Church, families, communities, government agencies, and other organizations in addressing the root causes of street-connectedness and provide remedial measures. In addition, the research provides evidence of the Church's contribution to the transformation of vulnerable children, thereby enhancing its credibility and influence in child protection and humanitarian interventions. The findings can further strengthen the Church's advocacy for improved policies, increased funding, and better protection and support services for street-connected children. Finally, the study findings may guide the church in the development of more effective and holistic interventions that address both the immediate and long-term needs of Aguu, including education, psychosocial support, skills development, rehabilitation, and sustainable reintegration.

The practical and pragmatic significance of the study lies in its contribution to community-based humanitarian and development interventions. By examining the Catholic Church's initiatives, such as trauma counselling, vocational training, spiritual formation, and community mediation, the study identifies practical strategies for addressing the interconnected social, emotional, economic, and spiritual needs of Aguu youth**.**

Moreso, street children (Aguu) are expected to benefit through improved access to education, vocational training, psychosocial counselling, mentorship, and family reintegration. These interventions, supported by better facilities, employment opportunities, and community

stigma reduction, aim to promote self-reliance, social reintegration, and lasting positive behavioral change.

Additionally, social workers and counsellors are expected to benefit from the study findings through increased opportunities for recruitment, professional development, stable career progression, and a supportive work environment that recognizes their integrity, commitment, and genuine care for children**.**

The findings contribute to a contextually relevant model for promoting the recovery, reintegration, and long-term transformation of vulnerable young people in post-conflict communities. The guidelines can also serve as a practical framework for other faith-based organizations working in challenging post-conflict settings across Africa and similar contexts as acknowledged by Ochen et al., (2023).

The findings may provide government agencies and NGO partners with practical evidence to guide collaboration with faith-based organizations in addressing the challenges faced by Aguu. Understanding the sources of community trust in the Catholic Church may help strengthen partnerships and enhance the delivery of effective interventions for vulnerable children and young people as advocated by Ager et al., (2021).

The findings of the study have important implications for policy development and advocacy concerning street-connected children (Aguu). By identifying the plight of street children, the findings may contribute to strengthening child-protection policies by promoting approaches that recognize Aguu as vulnerable children who need protection, rehabilitation, education, psychosocial support, and sustainable reintegration into their families and communities. Rather than responding through punishment, discrimination, or social exclusion, policies should emphasize their rights, dignity, well-being, and long-term social and economic

reintegration**.**

By exposing traumatic experiences of Aguu comprising of assault, rejection, humiliation, sexual abuse and exploitation, frightening experiences of killings, the findings may inform policies that require rehabilitation programmes to provide professional counselling, trauma-informed care, mentorship, and psychosocial support to address the emotional and social needs of street-related children.

The findings of this research matters for policy and advocacy because it provides evidence that faith-based organizations play an important role in child protection and youth development and should therefore be formally recognized in Uganda's national policies. The findings may help the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, UNICEF, USAID, and other development partners strengthen collaboration with religious organizations and improve funding and support for their child-protection programmes.

The study shows that existing faith networks, particularly the Catholic Church, can provide cost-effective and culturally appropriate support**.** It also promotes the localization of humanitarian aid by advocating for increased funding, support, and decision-making power for trusted local organizations that understand Northern Ugandan communities. This evidence can help advocates push for resources and decisions to be brought closer to local communities for greater impact.

The study demonstrates the methodological value of mixed methods research when studying vulnerable groups such as Aguu in sensitive contexts. By including the lived experiences of Aguu, church workers, and community elders, the approach provides authentic, community-based perspectives that complement quantitative evidence and challenge top-down

interpretations. It also promotes ethical research and produces findings that are more relevant, credible, and actionable for the community as noted by Cherewick et al., (2021).

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The doctoral study examined the Catholic Church's role in supporting Aguu in Northern Uganda, focusing on their healing, transformation, psychological well-being, education, and reintegration. It explored their lived experiences and outcomes, particularly through counselling, school reintegration, vocational training, and family tracing and reunification.

In this study, "transformation" goes beyond meeting basic needs; it refers to a deeper process of enabling Aguu to achieve greater independence, rebuild relationships with their communities, and overcome the cycles of vulnerability that continue to place them at risk (Matsiko et al., 2020).

Additionally, the study covered Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, and Pader in Northern Uganda due to their history of conflict and post-conflict challenges. It focused on the period from 2010 onward, when recovery, reconstruction, and child protection efforts were increasingly strengthened. The study focused on street-connected children and young people (Aguu) aged 5–30 years**,** Catholic Church personnel involved in rehabilitation and reintegration, and cultural and community leaders as key informants. It excluded children below 5, adults above 30, and programmes operated exclusively by non-Catholic faith-based or secular organizations.

Delimitations are basically the boundaries a researcher sets on purpose to keep a study manageable and focused (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Conceptual delimitation. The study conceptualized transformation as a long-term process of growth, recovery, and development**,** rather than short-term interventions. While trauma counselling was acknowledged as important, the study did not conduct clinical psychological

assessments. Instead, it explored psychosocial well-being through participants lived experiences and perceptions within their cultural and community contexts**.**

Institutional delimitation. The study focused specifically on the activities and interventions of the Catholic Church, particularly those implemented through diocesan commissions such as the Justice and Peace Commission, Caritas Commission, and various Religious Congregations. It did not seek to compare the Catholic Church's efforts with those of the Anglican Church or Islamic organizations, although their presence and activities may be mentioned where relevant for contextual understanding.

Methodological and temporal delimitations. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, with greater emphasis placed on the phenomenological design. Consequently, in-depth interviews and questionnaires formed the primary methods of data collection, enabling the study to obtain detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives.

The study was also delimited to the period after 2010. Rather than covering the entire conflict era, it focused specifically on the post-conflict years because these years are characterized by rebuilding, recovery, and child protection efforts. This timeframe was particularly relevant given the introduction of the Uganda National Child Policy in 2020 and the continued implementation of church-based programmes during the period. By setting these boundaries, the study explored how the Catholic Church has contributed to transforming the lives of the Aguu people. It did not seek to provide a comprehensive account of all experiences but focused specifically on the post-conflict, faith-based context within this particular region of Uganda.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Behavioral Theory (BT) was first introduced by American psychologist John B. Watson

with the publication of his paper, *"Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It"* in 1913 and later expanded by Pavlov in 1927 and Skinner in 1953 respectively is the foundational or primary theory for this study. The theory emphasizes the study of observable and measurable behavior, arguing that human actions are shaped through interaction with the environment, particularly through processes such as conditioning, reinforcement, and punishment. BT moves beyond introspective or psychoanalytic explanations of human action, arguing that to understand an individual's actions and responses, one must examine the external environmental stimuli and reinforcement histories that shape and maintain his or her behavior. Watson maintained that human behavior could be predicted and controlled through environmental stimuli, emphasizing that behavior is learned through conditioning. His work marked a major shift in psychology from introspection to the scientific study of external actions (Watson, 1913).

BT was further developed by scholars such as Ivan Pavlov in 1927, whose work on classical conditioning provided foundational insights into learned reflexes, and B. F. Skinner in 1953, who introduced operant conditioning by demonstrating how behavior is shaped by consequences such as reinforcement and punishment. It highlights how positive and negative reinforcement influence behavior change (Pavlov, 2010). Behavioral theorists therefore contend that behavior can be learned, modified or shaped, and sustained through consistent exposure to environmental stimuli and reinforcement patterns (Watson, 1913). In contemporary research, Behavioral Theory remains highly relevant in explaining how structured interventions can indeed influence positive behavioral change in people, particularly among vulnerable populations such as Aguu (Bosnjak, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020; Rasmussen et al., 2022).

1.7.1 Core Tenets of Behavioral Theory in Relation to the Topic

Behavioral Theory (BT) offered a practical lens for understanding the transformative

rehabilitation or transformation of street children (Aguu), as it posits that all behaviors are acquired through interaction with the environment (conditioning). The theory emphasizes key tenets such as stimulus response (S–R) associations, environmental determinism, reinforcement and also punishment as mechanisms for shaping behavior, and a strong focus on observable and measurable outcomes. In this regard, behavior is not fixed but can be modified through structured environmental influences and consistent reinforcement patterns (Wendel, 2020).

Kurt (2022) established that BT offers on how reinforcement and punishment shape behavior. Reinforcement strengthens behavior through positive (adding a desirable outcome) or negative (removing an unpleasant condition) means, while punishment can reduce undesirable behavior. This theory also provides factors such as extinction, where behavior declines when reinforcement is withdrawn; stimulus generalization and discrimination, which indeed explains how individuals respond to similar or specific stimuli; shaping, which involves reinforcing gradual steps toward a desired behavior; and behavior modification that change behavior. This theory emphasizes that behavior is learned, controlled, and can also be systematically modified through environmental influences.

In relation to street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda, BT explains how survival behaviors (begging, aggression, substance use) are learned in harsh street environments and how structured Catholic Church's interventions can transform them. Psychosocial counselling, formal education, and vocational skills training can reinforce positive behaviors (through food, shelter, recognition, skills) while withdrawing reinforcement for harmful street behaviors to promote their extinction. Shaping and behavior-modification techniques enable gradual adoption of socially acceptable behaviors, rebuilding relationships, and supporting long-term social and economic reintegration (Rasmussen et al., 2022).

According to Isabirye (2021), it is confirmed that human behavior is learned, shaped, and sustained through interaction with the environment. First, the focus is of course on observable and measurable behavior. This draws attention to specific behaviors that need to change for successful rehabilitation. For Aguu, this includes regular school attendance, participation in vocational skills training, improved social interactions, reduced engagement in risky survival behaviors such as petty theft, and commitment to counselling programs. The Catholic Church interventions through shelters, schools, and vocational centers provide structured environments where these behaviors can be observed, monitored, and gradually improved.

Therefore, in the context of this study, BT offered a helpful framework for analyzing how the Catholic Church in Northern Uganda contribute to behavioral change among street children. At its core, the theory assumes that behavior is learned and can therefore be unlearned or reshaped through appropriate interventions. For instance, psychosocial counselling support offered by the Church functions as a form of positive reinforcement, helping children replace maladaptive street behaviors such as aggression or substance use with socially acceptable behaviors like cooperation and emotional regulation among others. Of course, through consistent guidance, encouragement, and supportive relationships, children gradually develop stable mental well-being, self-worth, and positive peer relationships (Bosnjak, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020).

In relation to this, formal education indeed offers a structured environment where desirable behaviors such as discipline, responsibility, and goal setting are reinforced. In this context, rewards such as academic achievement, recognition, and progression motivate children to adopt productive life patterns. Similarly, vocational skills training functions as a reinforcement mechanism that equips children with practical competencies for income generation thereby reducing reliance on street life. The acquisition of skills such as carpentry, tailoring, or

agriculture not only promotes economic independence but also strengthens the self-esteem and socio-economic reintegration for Aguu (Templeton & Neville, 2020).

Family tracing and reintegration further reflect behavioral principles by reintroducing children into socially supportive environments where their positive behaviors can be sustained. Reintegration into families and communities also provides continuous reinforcement through acceptance, belonging, and social support systems (Kudenga et al., 2025). Of course, over time, this consistent reinforcement fosters community integration, a sense of belonging, and long-term behavioral transformation. Thus, Behavioral Theory explains how Catholic Church interventions (independent variable) including psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration directly influence the transformative outcomes (dependent variable) such as improved mental health or well-being, social belonging, income generation, and overall reintegration into society (Goodman et al., 2023).

BT also stresses data-driven and measurable outcomes. Progress is assessed through observable indicators such as school attendance, participation in vocational training, reduction in risky behaviors, income generation, and improvements in mental wellbeing. This allows Catholic Church programs to evaluate their effectiveness and adjust interventions where necessary. Overall, Behavioral Theory shows that through consistent reinforcement, structured support systems, and practical skill-building, interventions such as the psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration can lead to transformative outcomes for Aguu children, including improved self-worth, positive peer relationships, social belonging, and long-term socio-economic reintegration (Kudenga et al., 2025).

1.7.2 Strengths of Behavioral Theory for this Study

For this investigation, behavioral theory is especially appropriate since it provides a clear and measurable framework for understanding behavior change among street children. First, it aligns with the study's focus on observable outcomes such as reduced risky behaviors, improved social interactions, and increased participation in education and vocational activities. Its emphasis on observable and also measurable outcomes enabled the researcher to set a very clear indicators and objectively track progress, making it easier to assess the effectiveness of the Catholic Church's interventions using both quantitative and qualitative methods or mixed methods (Watson, 1913; Pavlov, 2010; Wendel, 2020).

Furthermore, the theory supports intervention-based research by emphasizing practical and actionable strategies such as reinforcement, modeling, and structured learning environments. Also, Behavioral Theory provides a clear toolkit such as reinforcement schedules and reward systems that can be directly applied within the Church-led programs offering counseling, training in vocational skills, formal education and family tracing and reintegration. It is also highly effective in skill-based training, making it relevant for vocational programs where Aguu children acquire practical competencies for income generation and self-reliance (Bosnjak, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020).

In addition, the theory offers a strong framework for behavior management by supporting the development of structured routines, rules, and consequence systems that foster discipline and stability among street children. Behavioral Theory is also adaptable to different contexts, allowing it to explain how consistent support systems such as those provided by religious institutions can shape long-term behavioral change in post-conflict settings like Northern Uganda (Goodman et al., 2023).

Finally, the theory strengthened the study's conceptual framework by clearly linking independent variables (Catholic Church's interventions such as psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration) to dependent outcomes (transformation indicators such as self-worth, social belonging, and economic independence). This direct and practical relationship enhanced the clarity, applicability, and empirical relevance of the research (Kudenga et al., 2025).

1.7.3 Weaknesses of Behavioral Theory

Despite its strengths, BT has notable limitations. One major weakness is that it tends to focus primarily on observable and measurable behavior while paying limited attention to internal processes such as emotions, thoughts, and personal meaning. This can be restrictive when studying vulnerable populations like street children, whose experiences are deeply influenced by trauma, identity, and social context. To address this limitation, the current study used phenomenological approaches to capture the lived experiences, emotions, and personal narratives of the participants (Berettieri et al., 2024).

Furthermore, BT also tends to emphasize external motivation through reinforcement, which may lead to dependency on rewards and limit the development of intrinsic motivation. In addition, the theory may adopt a generalized approach that overlooks individual differences in background, experiences, and coping mechanisms among children. It is also often criticized for its short-term effectiveness, as behavior change achieved through reinforcement may not always be sustained over time. Ethical concerns may arise when punishment or negative reinforcement is used, as these can affect emotional well-being and self-esteem (National University, 2025).

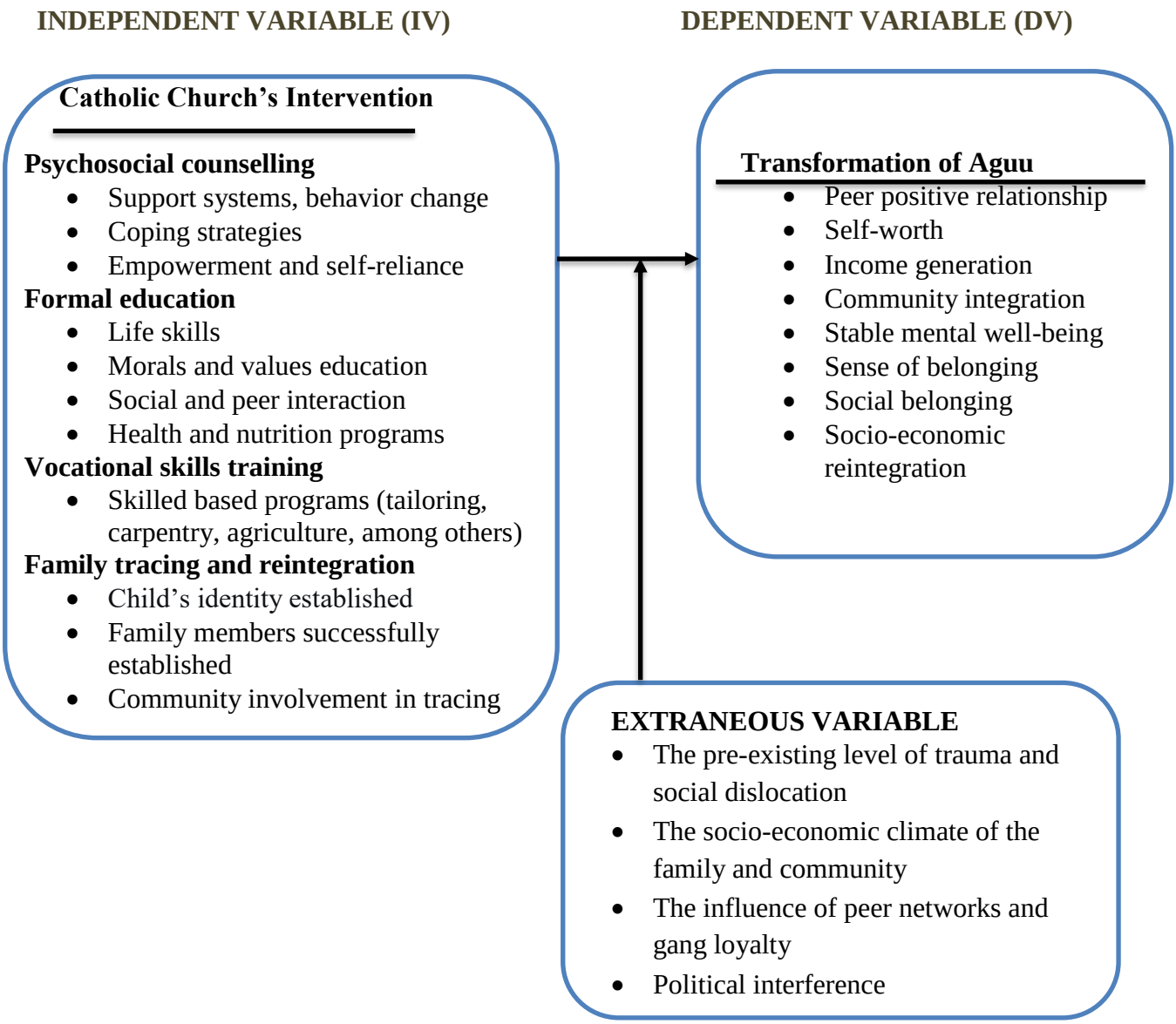
BT also oversimplify complex social issues by attributing behavior change mainly to external stimuli and reinforcement. In reality, the situation of street children in northern Uganda

is impacted by more general elements like poverty, cultural norms, family breakdown, and also post-conflict experiences. Behavioral approaches alone may not actually fully capture these dynamics. Additionally, behavior change is not always linear, especially for Aguu children who often move between the street, rehabilitation centers, and family environments, making consistency difficult to maintain (Watson, 1913; Pavlov, 2010; Wendel, 2020). To mitigate this weakness, the current research incorporated a phenomenological technique to record participants' real experiences in order to overcome these constraints and include contextual analysis of environmental, cultural, and socio-economic factors influencing rehabilitation of Aguu. It will also emphasize sustained interventions such as counselling, follow-up support, and community involvement to ensure long-term behavioral change. Also, the study used other theories in chapter two like humanistic and reintegration theories to mitigate the limitation of BT. Despite its weakness, BT remains a useful framework for understanding how behavior change. When combined with qualitative insights and contextual perspectives, behavioral theory provides a strong basis for examining the Catholic Church's role in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda (Goodman et al., 2023).

1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a system of ideas, presumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that are built logically and coherently to support and guide a research project. It maps the relationships between important variables or constructs and directs the entire research process, representing the researcher's synthesis of the body of current literature and their own experiential knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). A conceptual framework, according to Creswell and Creswell (2023), functions as a narrative or visual representation that describes the

primary elements to be examined—the important variables, concepts, or factors—as well as the assumed relationships between them.



Source: Researcher (2026)

The hypothesis that the Catholic Church's intervention *relate* transformative rehabilitation is grounded in the behavioral theory. The independent variable the Catholic Church's intervention—covers a range of activities: running drop-in centers, providing psychosocial counseling (often called in luo *matir* or "cooling the heart"), facilitating family

mediation and reintegration of Aguu, offering skills training (carpentry, farming, hairdressing), and also advocating for *Aguu (street children)* with local authorities or leaders. Of course, many of these efforts are rooted in the Catholic Church's post-war moral authority. And in northern Uganda, the Catholic Church was often the only institution that remained during the conflict led by Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels.

The dependent variable—*transformation*—is a heavier claim than just "getting Aguu off the street." It implies a fundamental shift in identity: from *Aguu* (seen as dirty, dangerous, hopeless) to a person with dignity, social ties, and economic agency. We are talking about sustained changes: staying off drugs, reconciling with family, holding a job for many months, being recognized by neighbors as someone who has turned a corner or has changed for the best.

In theory, the causal pathway is intuitive. The Catholic Church offers something that police and local government authorities often don't: forgiveness without a long bureaucratic leash. An *Aguu* youth may walk into a Catholic parish center, and a nun or catechist doesn't ask for police record first. That unconditional acceptance—paired with concrete help—can trigger the psychological safety needed for real change. So yes, there is a plausible, direct relationship.

Moreover, if you only looked at the Catholic Church-run programs, you might see that youth who participate in those programs do better. But you would be wrong to credit the Catholic Church alone, because several confounders are almost certainly at play. These are variables that influence both whether someone receives Catholic Church intervention and whether they actually rehabilitate or change.

1.9 Operational and Conceptual Definitions of Key Terms

Catholic Church's Intervention: Catholic Church interventions refer to planned and organized programmes implemented through Caritas, Justice and Peace Commissions,

religious congregations, and parish groups. These interventions support street connected children through rescue, psychosocial care, education and vocational training, family tracing and reintegration, spiritual guidance, and advocacy. They are guided by Catholic Social Teaching principles such as human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good**.** The study considered only interventions conducted through official Church programmes**,** excluding individual acts of charity.

This means the planned, organized actions taken by groups officially under the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Gulu. Basically, we are talking about three main things: (a) Caritas, Justice and Peace Commissions that run programs focused on children; (b) Religious Congregations like Priests, Sisters and Brothers who manage rehabilitation centers, schools, and clinics; and (c) parish groups doing direct outreach and support. All of this work is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching ideas like human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. What do they actually do? They carry out rescues, offer psychosocial support, give formal or vocational education, help with family tracing and reintegration, provide spiritual guidance, and push for advocacy. Just to be clear, this study did not count acts of charity by individual church members unless they were part of an official program.

Transformation: Denotes a holistic and sustainable process of change and rehabilitation that moves beyond meeting basic immediate needs (e.g., food, shelter) to facilitate a fundamental shift in the capabilities, identity, and social integration of the Aguu. Change here means that the child stops the street behavior, and rehabilitation means that the child heals from the reasons they were on the street and gains the skills to begin a different life. It is operationalized through observable indicators in three interconnected domains: psychosocial capability, human capital development through education, and social reintegration. Therefore, transformation or

transformative rehabilitation in this study was used interchangeably to mean the same thing.

Street Children / Aguu: Aguu in this study refers to people, primarily aged 5–30 years, in the selected Northern Ugandan districts, for whom the street (including markets, bus parks, and other public spaces) constitutes a central reference point for survival and identity, and who lack adequate, consistent, and protective adult supervision.

Children street on the street (Aguu-at-Large): People who work on the streets but spend the night in the family home.

Children *of* the street (Aguu-at-Risk): Those for whom the street is their primary dwelling and source of livelihood, with negligible family ties. The local Luo term "Aguu" is often used intentionally to center the participants' and community's conceptualization, which carries specific socio-cultural and historical connotations linked to displacement, conflict, and resilience in the Acholi sub-region (Veale & Stavrou, 2017).

Cultural leaders: Refers to individuals who guide, preserve, and drive the values, traditions, and norms of a particular group of people. They are often rooted in community and family identity, utilizing arts, heritage, and "inherited folkways" to influence social behavior and maintain social cohesion.

Community leaders: Means individuals (project managers, education officers, among others) who represent, mobilize, and facilitate action for a specific group of people, often based on a shared place or common interest. They are viewed as the "mouthpiece" of the group, providing directions to solve problems and acting as liaisons between the community and external authorities.

Religious leaders: Refers to individual recognized figures within a faith organization or by a community as having spiritual wisdom, authority, and accountability, such as, priests, monks and

nuns. They provide spiritual guidance, conduct rituals, and interpret sacred texts, while often exercising moral authority in social, ethical, or political matters.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature on Catholic Church interventions in the transformation of Aguu in selected districts of Northern Uganda. It draws on scholarly books, journal articles, and empirical studies, organized according to the study's research questions. The review is guided by Humanistic and Reintegration Theories and uses a funnel approach, moving from broad concepts to issues directly related to the study. It concludes by identifying gaps in existing literature that the current study addressed.

2.2 Critical Review of Related Theories

Humanistic Theory (HT) and Reintegration Theory (RT) served as the supporting frameworks or lenses for understanding the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in selected districts of Northern Uganda. Humanistic Theory, strongly associated with the works of Abraham Maslow (1943) and Carl Rogers (1951), emphasizes the inherent dignity, potential, and capacity for growth in every individual. The theory posits that human beings are naturally inclined toward self-actualization when provided with supportive, empathetic, and enabling environments. It focuses on personal meaning, self-worth, and the importance of unconditional positive regard in fostering psychological healing and development. In the context of this study, Humanistic Theory offered a framework for comprehending how the Catholic Church's interventions such as psychosocial counselling, and so on can help in restoring dignity, self-esteem, and inner healing among street children. By creating safe and nurturing environments, Church programs enable Aguu children to rebuild their identities, develop confidence, and pursue meaningful life goals (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951).

Reintegration Theory (RT) does not have a single universally recognized founder like some classical theories. However, it is most closely associated with the work of John Braithwaite, who introduced the concept of Reintegrative Shaming Theory in 1989 in his book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. The theory provides a social and structural perspective on how individuals who have been excluded or marginalized can be successfully reabsorbed into society. The theory is closely linked to concepts of social inclusion, reconciliation, and also community acceptance, emphasizing the restoration of relationships between individuals, families, and communities (Braithwaite, 1989). It highlights that effective reintegration is an ongoing process rather than a one-time occurrence that involves family tracing, mediation, community support, and access to social and economic opportunities. In relation to this study, Reintegration Theory explains how Catholic Church interventions particularly family tracing and reunification, community dialogue, and follow-up help Aguu reintegrate into society. It underscores the importance of rebuilding trust, reducing stigma, and indeed fostering a sense of belonging, which are essential for sustainable rehabilitation outcomes (Kuschminder, 2022).

Therefore, combining Humanistic Theory and Reintegration Theory provided a holistic framework for this study. HT focuses on the internal transformation of the child such as emotional healing, self-worth, and personal growth. RT addresses the external processes of social inclusion, family restoration, and community acceptance. Collectively, these theories highlight the need for both individual-centered and community-based interventions, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of how the Catholic Church contributes to the transformative rehabilitation and long-term reintegration of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

2.2.1 Humanistic Theory

Humanistic Theory (HT) is strongly associated with the works of Abraham Maslow (1943) and Carl Rogers (1951). The theory emphasizes the inherent dignity, worth, and potential of every individual, positing that human beings are naturally inclined toward growth, self-actualization, and fulfillment when provided with supportive and enabling environments (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951). Unlike behaviorist perspectives that focus primarily on observable actions, Humanistic Theory centers on internal experiences such as feelings, personal meaning, self-concept, and the need for unconditional positive regard. Maslow (1943) conceptualized human development through a hierarchy of needs, beginning with basic physiological and safety needs and progressing toward higher-level needs such as belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. This implies that people cannot reach their full potential unless their fundamental needs are met. Rogers (1951), on the other hand, emphasized the importance of a supportive environment characterized by empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, which fosters personal growth and psychological healing.

In the context of the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda, Humanistic Theory provides a strong foundation for understanding how the holistic care contributes to personal transformation. Many street children experience neglect, trauma, rejection, and loss of identity in their lives. Through psychosocial counselling, spiritual guidance, and emotional support, the Catholic Church can create a nurturing and safe environments where these children can feel valued and accepted by all people. This sense of acceptance helps restore their self-worth, rebuild confidence, and promote emotional healing.

According to Wang (2024), Humanistic Theory emphasizes inherent human worth and

the pursuit of self-actualization. The theory posited that every individual possesses an innate drive toward growth, meaning making, and realizing their potential, beyond merely responding to external stimuli. It further argued that human development follows a hierarchy, that is, prior to pursuing higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment demands, basic requirements must be satisfied. This perspective is particularly relevant for street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda, whose rehabilitation requires not only material support but interventions that nurture dignity, belonging, and purpose, enabling them to envision life trajectories beyond street survival.

Yanita and Sumarni (2024) asserted that humanistic counselling stresses among other things empathy, unconditional positive regard, and personal meaning. Through a person-centered approach, the theory emphasized the therapeutic relationship as a primary vehicle for emotional healing and personal empowerment. For children who have experienced trauma, abandonment, or social exclusion, supportive relationships are essential to reinforcing self-worth and fostering positive decision-making. Applied to street children in Northern Uganda, interventions guided humanistic principles can build trust, facilitate emotional recovery, and encourage self-directed change, thereby aligning with the long-term objectives of reintegration and resilience.

According to Luke (2022), humanistic responsiveness highlights the importance of perceiving children as active agents in their own growth. This approach stresses understanding children through their lived experiences, emphasizing empathy, authenticity, and validation of their perspectives. In post-conflict Northern Uganda, where street-connected children face a lot of complex trauma and disrupted identities, adopting humanistic responsiveness can indeed enhance rehabilitation efforts by promoting self-determination, validating personal narratives, and also supporting goal-directed behavior.

Moreso, humanistic theory’s focus on holistic development, according to Schneider and

Krug (2021), underscores the integration of emotional, social, and moral dimensions in human growth. For street children, a holistic approach nurtures confidence, belonging, and ethical agency, mitigating the long-term consequences of neglect and street exposure. In Northern Uganda, church-led and community initiatives targeting family reconciliation, social identity restoration, and skills development reflect the humanistic commitment to fostering resilience in children, social connectedness, and purposeful life trajectories (Julien, 2025).

Moreover, Behr et al. (2019) established that the core principle of Humanistic Theory is the role of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and the fulfillment of hierarchical needs in sustaining psychological healing and personal growth. These further points out that street children often experience deep mistrust toward social institutions due to prolonged neglect, abuse, or stigmatization. The Catholic Church, through consistent engagement, faith-based counseling, moral formation, and community involvement, creates environments that foster trust, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. These relational bonds are crucial for rebuilding self-worth, discipline, and positive identity among rehabilitated children, thereby enhancing their capacity for long-term social reintegration.

Additionally, HT also underscores the importance of creating supportive environments and collective responsibility in achieving sustainable rehabilitation outcomes. Rehabilitation initiatives that actively involve families, parish members, local leaders, educators, and social workers, and that provide unconditional positive regard, are more effective than isolated institutional approaches (Joseph, 2021). In Northern Uganda, the Catholic Church’s emphasis on compassion, shared moral responsibility, and social justice strengthens community ownership of rehabilitation efforts and reduces the likelihood of children returning to street life. Through mobilizing local communities and affirming the inherent dignity of each child, the Church

transforms rehabilitation from an individual-centered intervention into a holistic, relationship-driven process (Behr et al., 2026).

Humanistic Theory has notable limitations despite it strengths. Critics argue that the theory's focus on self-actualization may be difficult to achieve for individuals facing extreme poverty, trauma, or structural oppression, as basic needs must first be satisfied before higher-order growth can occur (Maslow, 1970). Furthermore, access to supportive, empathy-rich environments is uneven, and marginalized children may still face structural barriers such as poverty, stigma, or institutional inefficiencies that limit the benefits of humanistic interventions. The theory also tends to underemphasize material and structural constraints, suggesting the need for complementary frameworks that address economic and social realities alongside psychological needs (Charles, 2026).

HT has been widely applied in many studies on child development, trauma recovery, psychosocial counselling, and faith-based social interventions (Joseph, 2021; Dewi & Fauzi, 2025). In rehabilitation contexts, HT guides the design of programs that prioritize emotional healing, self-worth restoration, family reunification, and the creation of supportive relationships. The Catholic Church's application of this theory is evident in its integration of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration, which serve as key interventions aimed at improving the psychosocial well-being, behavioral change, social belonging, and socio-economic reintegration of street children (Charles, 2026; Sethi et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of these interventions, however, may be moderated by factors such as the pre-existing level of trauma and social dislocation, the socio-economic climate of the family and community, the influence of peer networks and gang loyalty, and political interference,

which can either facilitate or constrain the outcomes of the rehabilitation programs (Behr et al., 2026). Through structured engagement in pastoral care program, mentorship, community outreach, and reintegration programs, the Catholic Church strengthens supportive relationships and affirming environments, thereby fostering trust, self-worth, and personal agency—core elements of HT. This approach ensures that rehabilitation is not merely focused on behavior modification or adjustment but also addresses the psychological and emotional needs of these street children, promoting sustainable psychosocial and socio-economic outcomes for rehabilitated children (Joseph, 2021).

This study benefited greatly from humanistic theory since it clarified how the Catholic Church mobilizes empathy, unconditional positive regard, and also encouraging connections to promote Aguu's transformative rehabilitation. The theory provided a conceptual framework for analyzing how parish or zonal and chapel communities, faith-based organizations, and institutional partnerships function as sources of emotional support, identity reconstruction, and reintegration. By addressing the hierarchical needs of street children from basic physiological requirements to safety, belonging, respect, esteem, and eventually self-actualization the Catholic Church enhances resilience, restores dignity, and promotes sustainable social inclusion. Consequently, Humanistic Theory offered a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the Catholic Church's role as a catalyst for social transformation in selected districts of Northern Uganda (Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1961).

2.2.2 Reintegration Theory

Reintegration Theory (RT) does not have a single universally recognized founder like some classical theories. However, it is most closely associated with the work of John Braithwaite, who introduced the concept of Reintegrative Shaming Theory in 1989 in his

book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. The theory provides a social and structural perspective on how individuals who have been excluded or marginalized can be successfully reabsorbed into society. The theory is closely linked to concepts of social inclusion, reconciliation, and indeed community acceptance, emphasizing the restoration of relationships between individuals, families, and their communities (Braithwaite, 1989).

This theory was later expanded by some contemporary scholars to include psychological, economic, and structural dimensions relevant to child protection and post-conflict recovery. These contemporary scholars describe reintegration as a multidimensional process that involves not only the return of individuals to their communities but also the rebuilding of social bonds, the restoration of trust, and also the creation of opportunities for their economic participation and personal growth (Kuschminder, 2022). The theory posits that effective reintegration is an ongoing process rather than a one-time occurrence that involves family tracing, mediation, community support, and access to social and economic opportunities.

According to Braithwaite et al. (2018) reintegration theory distinguishes between two forms of social response to deviance or marginalization: stigmatization and reintegrative shaming. Stigmatization permanently excludes and labels individuals as deviant, creating barriers to social acceptance and increasing the likelihood of reoffending or continued marginalization. In contrast, reintegrative shaming disapproves of harmful behavior while affirming the individual's worth and maintaining social bonds, thereby encouraging positive change without permanent exclusion. This distinction is very critical for understanding how rehabilitation programs can indeed avoid further marginalizing vulnerable populations such as street children, who often face stigma and rejection from their families and communities (Dufour et al., 2023).

Mwende, Shivachi and Sibuor (2022) said that RT posits that successful reintegration is

driven by the restoration of social relationships, with the desire to belong and be accepted by family and community emerging as a very powerful motivators for behavioral change. This perspective highlights how individuals allocate energy and resources to rebuild trust and social connections, making it valuable for designing programs that aimed at enhancing reintegration by sequentially addressing family reunification, community acceptance, and economic self-sufficiency. For street children who have experienced prolonged separation from family, the restoration of these bonds is essential for sustainable rehabilitation.

Zhuo et al. (2023) revealed that beyond basic survival, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization are crucial for personal development and psychological well-being. In parallel, reintegration theory emphasizes that beyond physical return to a community, social acceptance, belonging, and economic participation are crucial for successful long-term reintegration. Research supports that rebuilding family ties and community relationships significantly enhances overall rehabilitation outcomes and reduces the likelihood of children returning to street life, underlining the importance of supportive relationships and opportunities for meaningful participation as critical elements of successful reintegration.

Forsyth and Braithwaite (2020) established that successful reintegration involves several interrelated dimensions: family reunification, community acceptance, economic opportunity, and psychosocial support. Family reunification includes tracing and restoring relationships with biological or extended family members, while community acceptance involves reducing stigma and promoting belonging. Economic opportunity relates to access to psychosocial assistance, education, career training, and income-generating activities. Therefore, in the context of the Catholic Church’s intervention in Northern Uganda, the Church’s programs provide family tracing and reunification services, community sensitization to reduce stigma, formal education

and vocational skills training, and psychosocial counselling to address these multiple dimensions of reintegration.

Tingate et al. (2025) established that reintegration theory outlines a progression from physical return to social and economic reintegration, emphasizing that meeting basic needs for safety, belonging, and economic opportunity is essential for higher-level personal development and long-term community integration of Aguu. By applying reintegration theory, organizations can effectively design rehabilitation programs that foster environments promoting thriving and enable marginalized individuals to realize their fullest potential as contributing members of society. This theory further highlights human reintegration as a progression from physical safety and basic care through social acceptance and belonging to economic independence and self-sufficiency.

According to Greeson et al. (2024) this theory posits that unmet needs at any level of the reintegration process whether physical safety, social belonging, or economic opportunity can hinder successful long-term reintegration and can increase the risk of remarginalization. This viewpoint is especially pertinent to Aguu's rehabilitation in Northern Uganda, whose broken family ties, community rejection, and lack of economic opportunities hinder their capacity to benefit from rehabilitation interventions. Indeed, the theory highlights that successful reintegration requires not only individual behavior change but also changes in family attitudes, community perceptions, and access to sustainable livelihoods.

In relation to this study, Reintegration Theory explains how Catholic Church interventions particularly family tracing and reunification, community dialogue, and follow-up assistance make it easy for street children to integrate into society. It underscores the importance of rebuilding trust, reducing stigma, and also fostering a sense of belonging, which are all

essential for sustainable rehabilitation outcomes of Aguu (Zewude et al., 2023). Moreover, the Church's emphasis on reconciliation, forgiveness, and communal solidarity aligns with reintegrative shaming principles, while its focus on skills development and also economic independence addresses the material dimensions of successful reintegration. By mobilizing families, parish communities, and local institutions, the Church transforms reintegration from an individual-centered intervention into a collective social process that restores relationships, rebuilds trust, and creates opportunities for street children to belong, contribute, and thrive within their communities (Gutiérrez, 2023).

Studies by Van Heerden and Naicker (2025) highlighted that Reintegration Theory emphasizes that successful reintegration is not a one-time event but a continuous process that involves family tracing, mediation, community support, and access to social and economic opportunities. Psychosocial counselling ensures that children's emotional and psychological needs are addressed, helping to reduce trauma and anxiety. Formal education and vocational skills training equip children with knowledge, competencies, and practical skills that enhance behavioral change and socio-economic reintegration. Family tracing and reintegration restores broken familial ties and supports social belonging, creating stable environments that facilitate trust, cooperation, and sustain personal growth. According to Mwende, Shivachi, and Sibuor (2022), pastoral care program, mentorship, community outreach, and reintegration programs further strengthen all these interventions by fostering supportive relationships, a sense of community, and positive identity formation among rehabilitated children.

The strength of Reintegration Theory lies in its holistic and multi-dimensional approach to human development and social reabsorption. By addressing family reunification first, the theory ensures that children are physically and also psychologically ready to engage with higher-

order interventions that promote self-confidence, resilience, and productive participation in society. Programs integrating psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration can thus translate into measurable improvements in psychosocial well-being, behavioral change, social belonging, and socio-economic reintegration. The theory also provides a framework for prioritizing interventions, ensuring that children are supported in a manner consistent with their individual circumstances and community contexts (Coren et al., 2013; Kibet, 2020).

Despite its strengths, Reintegration Theory has limitations. It primarily assumes that successful reintegration follows a relatively predictable pathway from physical return to social acceptance and economic independence, which may not reflect the complex realities faced by street children, who often experience pre-existing trauma, social dislocation, unstable family environments, and peer or gang influences (Kuschminder, 2022). The theory also tends to underplay the impact of socio-economic conditions and political interference, which can disrupt rehabilitation efforts and hinder successful community reabsorption. Moreover, Reintegration Theory is predominantly focused on structural and social dimensions and may not fully account for individual psychological needs or the internal healing processes that influence the success of reintegration programs. These limitations underscored the need for the context-sensitive, multi-dimensional rehabilitation approaches that consider both individual and structural barriers to recovery (Tingate et al. (2025).

The theory underpins the need for holistic and sequential rehabilitation interventions by emphasizing that sustainable transformation occurs only when family relationships are restored, community acceptance is achieved, and economic opportunities are created. In the context of the Catholic Church’s intervention among street children (Aguu) in selected districts of Northern

Uganda, Reintegration Theory thus affirms the importance of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration as interrelated processes that respond to children's progressive reintegration needs. By first addressing family reunification and community acceptance through pastoral care and counselling, the Church may create a foundation for behavioral change, psychosocial well-being, and social belonging, which are essential for long-term rehabilitation.

Furthermore, the theory supports the view that education and vocational training contribute to economic independence and self-reliance, thereby enabling socio-economic reintegration and lowering the chance of going to living on the streets. But this theory assumes a relatively linear progression from physical return to full reintegration and may not fully account for contextual challenges such as trauma severity, family instability, or community poverty that can disrupt this sequence. Thus, while Reintegration Theory provides a strong conceptual basis for understanding rehabilitation processes, its application must be contextualized within the socio-cultural and post-conflict realities of Northern Uganda. Therefore, this theory is considered relevant for guiding both the conceptual framework and practical implementation of Church-led interventions, ensuring that the transformative rehabilitation of street children is structured, developmentally appropriate, and sustainable (Kuschminder, 2022; Mhizha et al., 2018)

2.3 Critical Review of Related Empirical Studies

This section reviews empirical studies that examine the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in selected districts of Northern Uganda. The review is organized into key thematic areas, focusing on the role of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and also family tracing and reintegration in the rehabilitation process of Aguu. Specifically, the studies assess the impact of

these interventions on psychosocial well-being, behavioral change, social belonging, and socio-economic reintegration of street children. The results from the reviewed studies will shed light on the effectiveness of faith-based rehabilitation approaches, the role of pastoral care, mentorship, and also community engagement, and the extent to which Church-led programs align with the developmental and reintegration needs of street children (Aguu) within the Northern Uganda context.

2.3.1 The Role of Psychosocial Counselling Support in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

Psychosocial counselling is a central component of child rehabilitation efforts, as it addresses the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of vulnerability that often accompany life on the streets. For street children, counselling supports healing from trauma, strengthens coping mechanisms, and restores a sense of self-worth and belonging. In post-conflict settings such as Northern Uganda, psychosocial counselling is especially vital in supporting the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) by responding to deep-seated individual and collective trauma linked to violence, displacement, and social breakdown (Mhizha, Marandure & Chikoko, 2021).

According to UNICEF (2021) the global prevalence of street children reflects deep-rooted psychosocial vulnerabilities resulting from poverty, family breakdown, abuse, and social exclusion among others. Psychosocial counselling has increasingly been recognized as a core intervention in transforming the rehabilitation outcomes of street children by addressing trauma, emotional regulation, and social reintegration.

Studies have shown that psychosocial counseling is a global approach that plays a vital part in helping street children undergo dramatic rehabilitation by offering structured emotional,

psychological, and social support. It aids in trauma recovery, rebuilding self-esteem, and developing coping skills, which are essential for reintegration into society. The method addresses issues like abuse, neglect, and social exclusion, helping children process trauma and adopt positive behaviors critical for the education and community integration. This suggests that combining psychosocial counseling with safe environments, mentoring, and life skills training can indeed significantly promote emotional healing and resilience, thereby supporting the transition of street children away from street life (Yildirim et al., 2020).

In the United States, Gross and Wronski (2021) conducted a study on Helping the Homeless: The Role of Race, Empathy, and Deservingness in Motivating Policy Support and Charitable Giving. The study also utilized a large-scale quantitative research design targeting the general adult population. Indeed, the study employed structured questionnaires and vignette-based experiments to assess the attitudes toward homelessness, analyzing these data with multivariate regression models to gauge the effects of empathy, racial perceptions, and moral judgments on support for policies and charitable giving. Data was collected from national representative survey experiments involving over 3,000 respondents.

The findings showed that empathy significantly boosted support for both government-funded homelessness policies and private donations, with perceptions of “deservingness” mediating this relationship. Respondents were more inclined to support individuals viewed as victims of structural issues rather than personal failures. However, racial bias affected levels of empathy and support, with marginalized groups receiving less backing. Although the study provided valuable insights into societal perceptions and attitudes toward homelessness, it did not examine the role of psychosocial counselling interventions in the rehabilitation, reintegration, and transformation of homeless or street-connected children that the current study focused on.

Additionally, it focuses on public opinion rather than the actual experiences of homeless populations or service delivery mechanisms. The gap underscores the need for context-specific research in Northern Uganda to examine how psychosocial counseling within faith-based and community-led rehabilitation programmes can promote transformative outcomes for street-connected children (Aguu) beyond charity and public attitudes.

Additionally, the use of only quantitative research has posed limitations. Although quantitative research provides large-scale numerical data, it may be affected by response bias**,** as participants can give socially desirable, misunderstood, or inaccurate responses. It may also fail to capture the depth of participants' feelings, experiences, beliefs, and interpretations. To address this limitation, the study incorporated a phenomenological approach**,** which explored participants lived experiences in depth and complemented the quantitative findings

Aubry et al. (2020) have carried out a thorough systematic study on the efficacy of income assistance and permanent supportive housing intervention for homeless people in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Public health and socioeconomic determinants of health frameworks served as the study's foundation, targeting homeless adults with varying levels of support needs. A narrative synthesis design, a systematic review, and also meta-analysis were employed in the study. Also, researchers analyzed evidence from 72 peer-reviewed publications drawn from 15,908 citations, including indeed cost-effectiveness evaluations, quasi-experimental research, and also randomized controlled trials. Data was collected through extensive searches of databases including, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, MEDLINE, Embase, PsycINFO, CINAHL, and synthesized using meta-analysis with random-effects. The GRADE method was used to evaluate the certainty of the evidence.

Results showed that long-term housing stability was much enhanced by permanent

supportive housing, especially for those with moderate and high support needs, with effects sustained for up to six years. Participants receiving supportive housing were more likely to remain stably housed compared to those receiving usual care. Interventions for income assistance, particularly housing subsidies in conjunction with case management, also demonstrated positive long-term housing outcomes. However, the review found limited or inconclusive effects on, employment, income generation, substance use and mental health outcomes, suggesting that housing stability alone may be insufficient to address deeper psychosocial and behavioral challenges.

While the study provided strong evidence for structural interventions in addressing homelessness, it largely focused on adult populations in high-income contexts and did not explore child- or youth-specific psychosocial counselling approaches, nor did it address transformative rehabilitation outcomes such as emotional healing, identity reconstruction, and social reintegration among others which the current addressed.

Similarly, Bertotti et al. (2022) explored social prescribing for children and young people in the United Kingdom, examining how non-clinical, community-based interventions support mental health and psychosocial wellbeing among vulnerable youth. Using a narrative and scoping review design, the study synthesized evidence from policy documents, pilot programs, and empirical studies within public health and community wellbeing frameworks. Findings showed that interventions such as youth clubs, arts-based activities, mentoring, and green spaces improved emotional wellbeing, reduced social isolation, enhanced self-esteem, and promoted engagement with education and social services.

The study also emphasized the role of link workers, multi-agency collaboration, and family involvement, while noting inconsistencies in implementation and limited evidence on

long-term outcomes. However, the study did not specifically address street-connected children or youth facing extreme social exclusion, nor did it examine structured psychosocial counselling or transformative rehabilitation outcomes such as trauma recovery, behavioral change, and long-term reintegration which the current study sought to address.

Nonetheless, Gaetz et al. (2021) carried out a long-term study in Canada to investigate the effect of Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) on psychosocial outcomes among street-involved youth. The study was grounded in resilience and recovery-oriented frameworks, followed by homeless youth receiving stable housing alongside intensive case management and psychosocial support. The study used standardized well-being and resilience measures and a qualitative interview guide.

The findings showed significant improvements in housing stability, psychological well-being, and adaptive coping over time. The researchers emphasized that housing stability combined with psychosocial support, rather than housing alone, was critical for strengthening resilience and long-term rehabilitation. However, the study assumed the existence of robust, state-funded housing infrastructure, which is largely absent in low-resource and post-conflict settings such as Northern Uganda. This creates a gap in understanding how psychosocial rehabilitation can be achieved where secure housing is not an immediate entry point (Gaetz et al., 2021). Thus, the current study addressed this gap by showing how the psychosocial healing can be achieved through group counselling without housing stability.

Julien (2025) conducted a study on Street-connected Children Counselling and Guiding Them: A Critical Literature Review in Trinidad and Tobago. The study adopted a non-empirical, literature-based approach, synthesizing findings from various journals and articles to offer conceptual understanding of the phenomenon of children who are tied to the streets. Key results

from the study that lead to children living on the streets include poverty, abuse, violence, and discrimination. However, they also demonstrate innate resilience and adaptability.

The review concluded that although support organizations often provide basic necessities, sustainable rehabilitation requires long-term interventions that incorporate counselling and social integration. The literature review highlights the theoretical importance of counselling but reveals limited empirical evidence on its implementation, processes, and measurable outcomes. It therefore leaves a gap in understanding how counselling contributes to children's rehabilitation, psychosocial well-being, and transformative change, which the current study sought to address.

A similar study by Julien (2024) investigated the complexities of reforming street children's lives through inclusive education in Jamaica and comparable contexts. Therefore, the study employed a non-empirical literature review design, systematically analyzing recent studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses retrieved from Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, RefSeek, and CORE. Findings indicated that street children face stigmatization, discrimination, and social marginalization, which complicate their inclusion in formal education. While inclusive education grounded in equity, diversity, and equality has reform potential, entrenched street lifestyles and societal prejudice limit their full inclusion. Nevertheless, some children expressed a desire for alternative life paths, highlighting that flexible, context-sensitive, and also lived-reality-aligned educational approaches can facilitate meaningful reform. However, the study was non-empirical and did not collect primary data from street children, and it focused on educational inclusion rather than examining psychosocial or transformative interventions such as counselling or rehabilitation programs, which are critical for behavioral, emotional, and social reintegration which the current study did to fill that gap.

Yildirim et al. (2020) conducted a study on Psychosocial needs and supports for street

children in India: Stakeholder perspectives in Delhi, India. Socioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner. Additionally, a qualitative research design was included in the study with 16 participants, including seven children aged 12–16, four parents, and five rehabilitation professionals. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and data was analyzed thematically. Study revealed that street children face complex psychosocial challenges stemming from deprivation, abuse, and social exclusion. Psychosocial counseling emerged as a critical support mechanism, particularly when integrated with safety, education, and peer engagement, facilitating trauma processing, emotional regulation, and transformative change away from street life.

The study also emphasized that emotional and physical safety is foundational for effective counseling and that resilience-building strategies are most successful when basic needs are met. Counseling was found to be most effective when delivered early in rehabilitation and as part of an interdisciplinary support framework. The research recommended that a coordinated approach integrating child protection, counseling, education, life-skills training, and community support. However, the study was limited by its urban Indian context, small male-only sample, exclusion of children who are still homeless, and lack of institutional or faith-based perspectives. It also did not assess long-term rehabilitation outcomes, highlighting the need for context-specific research in Northern Uganda, to explore how psychosocial counseling, particularly within the Church-led initiatives, facilitates sustained rehabilitation for street children.

In Nigeria, Ojo (2021) researched on the reflections by Social Workers' and non-governmental organizations' perspectives on the issue of children living on the streets. The study examined the drivers and Nigerian street children's realities as seen through the perspectives of social workers and NGO practitioners. The study anchored on Strain Theory by Robert Agnew

(1995). A qualitative study design was used, and the target group consisted of social workers and NGO staff engaged in street-children's interventions, with a sample size of five (5) experts selected through purposive sampling. Semi-structured Zoom interviews were used to gather data. And thematic content analysis was used to examine the data.

The study found that the key drivers of street life include poverty, terrorism and insurgency, family breakdown, and the illusion of freedom. The study further revealed pervasive social stigma, weak governmental support, and heavy reliance on NGOs and religious organizations for survival and informal rehabilitation services. The study recommended a paradigm shift from punitive and control-oriented government responses to rights-based, collaborative rehabilitation strategies, involving social workers, NGOs, religious institutions, and local communities. However, the study was limited by its exclusive reliance on expert reflections, neglecting the lived psychological experiences of street children, and by its lack of assessment of specific rehabilitation interventions, particularly psychosocial counselling, or their transformative impact. Therefore, this underscored the need for the current study in Northern Uganda, which centers on children's narratives and also empirically examines how the structured psychosocial counselling facilitates transformative rehabilitation within faith-based and community-oriented frameworks.

Similarly, Otigba (2022) examined how social work can strengthen social welfare policies and interventions for street children and youth in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative design. The researcher used purposive sampling; six experienced social workers were interviewed, and thematic analysis revealed that social workers often operating within faith-based and NGO settings provide vital services such as generalist support, psychosocial counselling, housing, medical treatment, and mentoring. Of course, the study

identified widespread mental health challenges, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, and also insecurity among street youth, underscoring the importance of psychosocial counselling interventions. While recommending stronger social welfare policies and greater collaboration with community members and faith-based organizations, the study was limited by its focus on professionals' perspectives and the absence of evaluation of long-term transformative outcomes of psychosocial counselling, thereby justifying further research centered on the lived experiences of these children and rehabilitation outcomes—which the current study sought to address.

Steiner, Adjei, and Kwashie (2023) conducted a study on counselling interventions in promoting behavioural rehabilitation and community reintegration for rescued trafficked children in Ghana. Purposive sampling was used in the study's mixed-methods design to choose 200 participants between the ages of 10 and 20. Of these, 188 were counselled children and 12 were non-counselled controls to enable comparative analysis. Standardized questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data, which were then analyzed using chi-square tests ($\chi^2 = 6.31$, $p = 0.011$) and ANOVA in SPSS. Thematic analysis was performed on qualitative data from 15 in-depth interviews to determine individuals' life experiences.

The results showed that, in comparison to 16.7% of controls, 64.4% of counselled individuals showed considerable behavioral improvement, with notable advancements in social adaption, emotional regulation, and trust-building. According to gender-specific study, female community stigma was 3.2 times greater for survivors (95% CI [1.4, 7.1]), especially for individuals with a history of sexual exploitation. Thematic analysis showed that culturally sensitive methods, like family-mediated therapy and the incorporation of local metaphors, are essential to the efficacy of interventions and increase treatment adherence by 41–67%.

The study concluded that structured, evidence-based counselling is critical for the

behavioral rehabilitation and community reintegration of rescued and also trafficked children. Recommendations included institutionalizing counselling within rehabilitation programs, creating gender-specific treatment modules that can also address stigma resilience, providing funds for rehabilitation programs. Also, implementing sustained district-level psychosocial follow-ups and peer mentorship networks to ensure long-term reintegration outcomes. The study focuses on rescued trafficked children in urban Ghana who have access to structured rehabilitation programs. However, it does not explore how similar counseling interventions could be adapted for street-connected or trafficked children in low-resource or post-conflict areas, such as northern Uganda, where formal rehabilitation infrastructure, family support, and community resources are often lacking. Therefore, this highlights the need for research to understand the effective implementation of psychosocial counseling in settings with minimal institutional support in northern Uganda.

Mhizha, Marandure, and Chikoko (2021) examined resilience-based interventions for Zimbabwe street children, placing the research within the larger issues of street childhood in Africa. The study adopted a secondary data analysis approach, synthesizing existing literature and programmatic evidence on interventions targeting street-connected youth. Findings indicated that resilience-based strategies leverage children's innate ability and agency to overcome misfortune, such as involvement in religious networks, peer support groups, education, expressive arts, family and parenting clubs, contextual psychological support like counselling, vocational training, and drug rehabilitation programs.

The study highlighted that such interventions not only address immediate survival needs but also foster adaptive coping, psychosocial wellbeing, and social reintegration. Despite these insights, the study noted a scarcity of innovative, empirically tested resilience-based programs in

Zimbabwe, underscoring the need for context-specific research with the aim of evaluating the long-term effectiveness of such interventions for street children (Mhizha, Marandure, & Chikoko, 2021).

In Kenya, Ochieng (2022) researched on Relationship between psychosocial health and drug use among street children in Starehe Sub-County, Nairobi County. Problem Behavior Theory (PBT) served as the study's compass. And the target population was approximately 30,000. A correlational research design was adopted. Using cluster and simple random sampling, 100 street children chosen as the sample size, alongside 17 key informants comprising children's officers, NGO/FBO officials, and local administrators. Data was collected using structured questionnaires for street children and interview guides for key informants. Structured surveys for street children and interview guides for key informants were used to gather data. Descriptive statistics (means, percentages, frequencies) and inferential statistics like correlation were used to assess quantitative data. Whereas theme analysis and narrative presentation were used to examine qualitative data.

The results showed a statistically significant relationship between psychosocial health and drug use ($r = 0.503$), indicating that poor psychosocial health characterized by stress, emotional distress, abuse, and limited access to counselling was strongly associated with increased drug abuse among street children. And the study concluded that improving psychosocial health through counselling and mental health interventions plays a critical role in reducing drug use. Key recommendations included providing stable housing, establishing regular free mental health clinics, strengthening behavioural counselling, support groups, and sober social networks, and enhancing government and NGO collaboration to improve access to counselling services. However, a notable research gap remains while the study established a

strong correlation between psychosocial health and drug use, it did not examine how structured psychosocial counselling supports contribute to long-term, transformative rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes, thereby justifying further research focused on the rehabilitative and transformative role of psychosocial counselling among street children (Ochieng, 2022).

Similarly, a study by Lusire (2020) on the effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions on the social development of street children in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya, employed Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. The study used correlational research that included 220 street children taken from both closed and open rehabilitation programs, along with 74 key informants, including rehabilitation staff and social workers. Among the techniques used to gather data were focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists, analyzed through various statistical techniques. The findings revealed that 81.8% of street children visited facilities, and 89% of them were aware of rehabilitative measures primarily run by faith-based organizations, which provided services such as nutrition support and skills training. While 44% reported satisfaction, 49% were dissatisfied due to age restrictions and service quality issues. Statistical analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between social growth and rehabilitation therapies (Υ=0.505, p=0.01).

Despite these insights, the study focused only on attendance and general social development outcomes without exploring the psychological and emotional transformations of street children, such as behavior changes and coping strategies. It also failed to consider the role of structured psychosocial counseling in rehabilitation programs and its contribution to sustained behavioral change and resilience. Addressing this gap, the goal of the current study was to examine how psychosocial counseling can improve the emotional, behavioral, and reintegration outcomes of street children.

Makoye (2025) studied community-centered and preventive strategies that have been highlighted in tackling the issue of street children in Tanzania. A mixed-methods descriptive research design grounded in Structural Functionalist Theory was used in the study. Data was collected from 92 participants through questionnaires and interviews and analysed using SPSS (version 28.0) and Microsoft Excel. The findings revealed moderate levels of community awareness regarding the drivers of streetism and the community's responsibility in combating stigma, while also highlighting structural, coordination, and capacity-related challenges that constrain effective prevention. Although the report emphasized the value of cooperation between community actors and the government, it largely focused on prevention and awareness, with limited attention to structured psychosocial counselling, resilience processes, or post-street rehabilitation outcomes for affected children in Northen Uganda—which the current study sought to address.

In Uganda, Nkurunungi (2024) conducted a study on Provisions of Social Workers to an analysis of children living on Kampala city's streets as victims of internal child trafficking in Uganda. The study made use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Twelve street children between the ages of 15 and 17 made up the purposive sample for this qualitative study. The study responses were substantiated by 3 elected political leaders, 5 social workers, and 1 NGO leader. Interviews were used to collect data and data was analyzed using narrative text and verbatim quotations from the participants. Results showed that street children who are trafficked were highly vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation, physical injury, and emotional abuse, leading to extensive service needs, particularly life-skills training, psychosocial counselling, emotional, vocational skills development, physical protection, and healthcare.

To address these requirements, social workers used preventive, corrective, and follow-up strategies, which were perceived as vital for children's survival and basic functioning. However, the effectiveness of these interventions was constrained by structural and contextual challenges, including mistrust from children, threats from traffickers, and weak policy and institutional support. While the study highlighted the significant function of social workers, it also highlighted the lack of empirical assessment regarding the long-term outcomes of psychosocial counseling and does not address resilience-building and reintegration processes—which the current study sought to address.

Edmonds, Ochaya and Sansom (2022) examined the role of resilience processes in education and well-being outcomes for separated children in Uganda: Exploring street-connected children's pathways through a resilience-based programme and beyond. The study utilized data from the global learning initiative Building with Bamboo (BwB). The study analyzed the pathways of children worked in Uganda with S.A.L.V.E. International from 2016 and 2018, shifting the academic discourse from a deficit-based model of vulnerability to a proactive framework of resilience processes. The study's methodology was drawn up on practice-based research developed through iterative cycles of learning and innovation. The BwB programme's approach was distinct in its systems-level focus; rather than treating the child in isolation, the intervention nurtured resilience by engaging wider ecological systems, including peer networks, organizational structures, families, and the broader community.

The findings indicate that when programme activities are tailored to evolve with the child's specific resilience pathway, there is a measurable improvement in both formal education retention and overall well-being. It further revealed that fostering resilience requires a continuous commitment to innovative practice that empowers street-connected children to navigate complex

social landscapes, providing a practical blueprint for NGOs and social workers operating in the Ugandan context. However, generalization is limited by the study's dependence on qualitative data from a specific program, and the lack of standardized quantitative measures constrains assessment of long-term educational and psychosocial outcomes. Additionally, the interaction between resilience processes and formal state-led child protection and support systems remains underexplored, highlighting gaps in understanding the sustained effectiveness and integration of resilience-based interventions for street-connected children (Edmonds, Ochaya & Sansom, 2022).

Similarly, Hadwell (2025) explored the lived experiences of safety and insecurity among street children in Masaka, Uganda. Using a qualitative approach, the study examined how children navigate risks, threats, and protective factors in their daily lives on the streets. Findings highlighted pervasive exposure to violence, exploitation, and social marginalization, alongside adaptive strategies employed by children to maintain safety and resilience. The study highlighted the significance of child-centered interventions that deal with both urgent demands for protection needs and longer-term psychosocial support. Nevertheless, the study did not methodically evaluate the efficacy of current psychosocial interventions or explore pathways for long-term rehabilitation and reintegration, highlighting the need for further empirical studies on structured support mechanisms for street children. Collins (2022) revealed heightened vulnerability to exploitation, increased social marginalization, and limited access to health and social services, while children employed adaptive coping strategies, such as forming peer networks and engaging in informal economies, to navigate the crisis. The study emphasizes how critical it is to provide focused, child-centered treatments during public health emergencies. However, the research is limited to narratives from Kampala and does not assess the long-term psychosocial or

educational outcomes of street-connected children during and after the LRA war in Northern Uganda.

2.3.2 Role of Formal Education on the Transformation of Aguu (Street Children)

The transformative rehabilitation of street children is greatly aided by formal education, which is an essential route to empowerment and reintegration into society. As these vulnerable children navigate the complex challenges of life on the streets, access to quality education not only equips them with essential knowledge and skills but also fosters resilience, enhances self-esteem, and promotes psychosocial healing (Cavazzoni et al., 2023). For street children, access to structured learning not only restores a fundamental right but also provides stability, cognitive development, and pathways out of marginalization. In post-conflict contexts such as Northern Uganda, formal education plays a particularly significant role by supporting the transformative rehabilitation of street children through academic reintegration, psychosocial healing, and the rebuilding of future-oriented life trajectories (Gaffar & Sardin, 2025).

However, many street children remain excluded from formal education due to poverty, trauma, stigma, mobility, and weak institutional support systems. Therefore, meeting the educational requirements of Aguu is more than just a welfare intervention but a transformative process that restores dignity, builds human capital, and strengthens social inclusion. By prioritizing inclusive and context-responsive educational pathways, societies can facilitate the transition of street children toward stable, productive, and hopeful futures, ultimately breaking the persistent cycles of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion (Mwende, Shivachi & Sibuor, 2022).

In the United States, Jung (2024) explored the self-rehabilitation of homeless children within transwar transpacific reeducation programmes using a historical and comparative

qualitative approach grounded in trans-imperial and post-colonial theory. The methodology of the study was historical discourse and cultural analysis of *Bell Hill, Boys Town,* and *Homeless Angels*. The study demonstrated how narratives of child self-rehabilitation were adapted across colonial, imperial, and occupation contexts, revealing strong ideological continuities. The findings showed that reeducation initiatives were not neutral welfare interventions but were embedded in broader political projects that emphasized self-discipline, moral reform, and individual responsibility, thereby facilitating a shift from formal colonialism to informal liberal imperialism. While the study offered a critical theoretical insight into the political dimensions of rehabilitative education, it did not empirically assess the lived experiences of homeless children or the long-term rehabilitative and educational outcomes of such programmes, indicating a gap for contemporary, child-centered and outcome-focused research.

Julien (2022) conducted a study on street children and the importance of education in the Caribbean. The study employed a non-empirical, conceptual approach to explore why many street children remain excluded from formal schooling. The study drew on a review of scholarly and policy literature to define street children, describe their lived realities, and analyze the structural and social factors shaping educational participation. The normative premise that education is a fundamental right and a critical essential part of a child's development served as the foundation for the investigation.

The findings study revealed that survival imperatives such as securing food, shelter, and personal safety often take precedence over education. Additional factors, including irregular lifestyles, poverty, social stigma, lack of parental support, and rigid schooling structures, further constrain school attendance. Common characteristics of street children identified in the study included disrupted family ties, limited prior schooling, and early engagement in informal

economic activities, all of which undermine educational continuity. The study concluded that while education is essential for holistic child development, conventional schooling systems frequently fail to accommodate the realities of street life. However, the study did not empirically examine educational interventions or rehabilitation outcomes. This underscored the need for empirical research investigating adaptive, inclusive, and rehabilitative education models that can support the transformative reintegration of street children, particularly in low-resource and post-conflict settings such as Northern Uganda.

A similar study was conducted by Julien (2023) who found that despite education being a fundamental right, street children are largely excluded from formal schooling due to survival needs, poverty, instability, stigma, disrupted family ties, limited prior education, and engagement in informal work. The study emphasizes that educational exclusion is shaped by structural and social factors, calling for flexible and context-responsive education models. However, its non-empirical nature limits insight into how formal education supports rehabilitation in practice. This gap highlighted the need for the current study, which empirically examined how formal education, integrated with psychosocial support, contributes to the transformative rehabilitation and reintegration of street children in post-conflict and low-resource contexts such as Northern Uganda.

In the United Kingdom, Lacey (2024) conducted a study on Homelessness, Motherhood and Education: An investigation into the experiences of homeless women at the University of Sheffield who are caring for school-age children. In order to investigate the living experiences of homeless mothers, the study used a qualitative research design navigating housing instability while caring for school-age children. Semi-structured interviews were used in the study, and information was gathered from women experiencing homelessness in Manchester as well as

practitioners working within housing and education sectors. The research examined how homelessness is intersected with motherhood and formal education, particularly focusing on the emotional, behavioural, and structural challenges faced when accessing and sustaining children's schooling.

The study found that living in temporary accommodation significantly disrupted children's educational continuity, affecting attendance, concentration, emotional stability, and overall academic engagement. Homelessness was found to reshape mothers' identities and create emotional strain that indirectly impacted children's school participation. The study further established that although teachers were often willing to support families experiencing homelessness, many lacked adequate training to respond effectively to the behavioural and emotional consequences of housing instability. However, where schools provided understanding, flexibility, and supportive environments, formal education functioned as a stabilizing and protective factor, offering routine, identity formation, and hope for improved future outcomes.

Despite the study providing important insights into the relationship between homelessness and children's educational experiences in the UK, its scope remains limited in several important aspects. First, it did not explicitly engage with the realities of those children with ties to the streets, experiences are frequently different from those of children residing in temporary accommodation with parental care. Street-connected children frequently encounter more acute forms of social exclusion, disrupted attachment systems, survival-based livelihoods, and prolonged detachment from formal schooling. As such, the findings, though relevant, cannot be fully generalized to the complexities surrounding street-based childhoods.

Second, the study did not directly examine structured rehabilitation programmes designed to facilitate transformative reintegration through formal education. Its analytical focus was

largely situated within the broader structural interplay between housing instability and educational disruption, rather than on deliberate, programmatic educational interventions aimed at long-term psychosocial, academic, and socio-economic transformation. Furthermore, the exclusive reliance on a qualitative research design, while generating in-depth experiential accounts, limited the ability to measure the scale, patterns, and measurable outcomes associated with educational access and rehabilitation trajectories.

In contrast, a mixed-methods research strategy was used in this study in order to integrate both quantitative and qualitative evidence. This approach enabled not only an exploration of lived experiences and contextual dynamics but also an empirical assessment of educational participation, retention, and transformative outcomes among street children. By triangulating narrative insights with measurable indicators, the study aimed to offer a more thorough comprehension of how formal education contributes to rehabilitation processes. Therefore, these gaps underscored the necessity for focused research that interrogates how formal education can intentionally and systematically function as a transformative rehabilitation mechanism for street-connected children. This is particularly significant in settings such as Northern Uganda, where structured reintegration programmes aim to move beyond mere school enrolment toward holistic transformation encompassing psychosocial recovery, identity reconstruction, social reintegration, and sustainable long-term life outcomes. Such an approach recognizes education not simply as access to schooling, but as a strategic instrument for restoring dignity, agency, and social belonging among formerly street-connected children.

In Canada, Partridge and Kennelly (2024) from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University conducted a study on *"What are the schooling experiences of young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness?"*. 28 young people ages 16-23

participated in semi-structured interviews as part of the study's qualitative research design in two cities in Ontario. The research explored participants' reflections on their schooling experiences, support systems, bullying, stigma, and how schools could better respond to housing insecurity. Using a phronetic and social-ecological framework, the study centered the voices and real-life experiences of young people who had already dropped out of school and were experiencing the risk of being homeless. The findings of the study revealed that although most participants valued education and aspired to complete high school or pursue post-secondary studies, their schooling experiences were marked by stigma, bullying, exhaustion, lack of information about homelessness, and inconsistent institutional support. Some teachers and staff provided compassion and flexibility, but systemic barriers, overcrowding, and limited policy frameworks constrained meaningful intervention. Participants recommended increased discussion of homelessness in curricula, training for school employees to identify the "signs and symptoms" of precarious housing as well as the creation of more supportive and inclusive school environments as preventive strategies.

Similarly, Sohn and Gaetz (2020) developed: The Upstream Project Canada as an early intervention strategy to prevent youth homelessness and school disengagement. Upstream Canada addresses the fact that between 35,000 and 45,000 young people in Canada are homeless each year. This initiative applies to an equity-focused, preventive model using the Student Needs Assessment (SNA) to identify at-risk students aged 12-18, including those without visible signs of vulnerability. A 40% decrease in teenage homelessness was claimed by Upstream Australia, formerly known as The Geelong Project, and the program fosters collaboration between schools and community organizations to prevent school dropout and housing instability.

However, both studies did not specifically examine formal education as a structured

mechanism for transformative rehabilitation or measure long-term reintegration outcomes. Its focus remained on schooling experiences, stigma, and prevention rather than on education as a deliberate rehabilitative framework. Additionally, the study relied solely on qualitative interviews, whereas the present investigation used a mixed-methods strategy to provide broader empirical evidence. Related studies such as Vetrone et al. (2022) on education aspirations among street-involved youth in Victoria, Kennelly (2020) on urban masculinity and homelessness in Ottawa, Kennelly, Larkins, and Roy (2023) on youth participatory action research, and Poulin et al. (2024) on education policies and youth homelessness prevention in Canada further highlighted systemic barriers within educational institutions. These gaps underscored the need for empirical research that evaluates how formal education can move beyond awareness and prevention toward functioning as a structured rehabilitative tool for long-term transformation and social reintegration, particularly in contexts such as Northern Uganda.

In Bangladesh, Ahmed (2024) conducted a study on comprehending the Rights of children: views from Durham University's street children in Dhaka. The study adopted an ethnographic qualitative research design to examine how Dhaka's street children comprehend and express their rights in the context of their daily lives. Data was collected across three sites in collaboration with local NGOs using interviews, observations, and visual methods. The research was grounded in the framework of the Convention of the United Nations on the Child's Rights (UNCRC), examining how the discourses on the global rights of children intersect with children's cultural realities and power dynamics in Bangladesh.

The findings revealed that street children conceptualize rights not merely as legal entitlements but as lived experiences shaped by participation, citizenship, survival struggles, and relationships with adults who often exercise dominant authority over them. The study showed

that children's understanding of rights is deeply connected to their daily negotiations for food, safety, dignity, and recognition. While the children demonstrated agency and decision-making abilities, their voices were frequently constrained by structural marginalization and power imbalances. The research emphasized that promoting children's rights requires meaningful inclusion of their perspectives, particularly in education and social interventions affecting their lives.

However, this study did not specifically examine the role of formal education as a structured mechanism for transformative rehabilitation. Its focus remained on rights discourse and children's voices, rather than on educational reintegration strategies or measurable rehabilitation outcomes. Additionally, while the original study relied solely on ethnographic qualitative methods, the current study employed a mixed-methods approach in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the role of education in rehabilitation of Aguu. These gaps underscore the need for empirical research that assesses how formal education can transcend a rights-based framework to function as a deliberate rehabilitative tool, fostering long-term transformation and social reintegration of street children, particularly in contexts like Northern Uganda.

NurSekti and Sujarwo (2021) researched on *the Development of a Transformative Learning Model and Its Influence on the Social Behavior of Street Children at "Rumah Singgah" Surabaya* in Indonesia. The study examined how a structured transformative learning approach can support behavioral change among street children in Indonesia. Using a Research and Development (R&D) design based on the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), the study involved foster children at Kampung Anak Negeri Surabaya. Questionnaires, interviews and observations were used to gather data.

According to the report transformative learning model grounded in real-life experience, reflection, conceptualization, and implementation significantly improved social behavior. The findings showed reduced rebellious tendencies, greater participation in learning activities, and enhanced socialization skills. The study concludes that transformative learning offers an effective framework for education and rehabilitation programs targeting street children in Indonesia. However, the study was limited to a single rehabilitation center in Surabaya and focuses primarily on social behavior outcomes. It did not thoroughly investigate long-term reintegration into formal education systems or explore the role of formal education in facilitating sustained rehabilitation and socio-economic transformation of street children (NurSekti & Sujarwo, 2021).

Across Africa, the discourse on rehabilitation is increasingly shifting from charity-based interventions to structured, education-centered transformation. In several African contexts, formal education is gradually being recognized as a critical pathway for the transformative rehabilitation of vulnerable children, including street-connected youth. In Nigeria, Smart (2021) and Agbaire et at al. (2021) conducted a study on Education for Street Children in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and Prospects. The study examined the challenges and interventions in educating street children, highlighting economic poverty as a key driver pushing children onto the streets, where they encounter criminality, exploitation, and health hazards. Street children often lack family support, which undermines their social development, while street girls are particularly susceptible to early labor, sexual exploitation, and survival-based commercial sex work.

On the same, the findings of Smart (2021) study indicated that:

> "…access to formal education can reduce marginalization and enhance social integration, but implementation challenges persist, including insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, cultural resistance, and lack of parental support" (p. 60).

The study further stated that, in Nigeria out-of-school children number between 10.5 and 13.2 million, with 70% of street children being dropouts and 30% never attending school, showing a clear link between educational exclusion and street life. Educational interventions have included Universal Primary Education (1976), later restructured as Universal Basic Education (1999), with strategies like mobile schools, shift systems, and Almajiri schools targeting marginalized children. NGOs have also provided shelters, learning support, and family reunification programs, such as enrolling over 1,600 street children in Lagos schools. Despite this, access to formal education has reduced marginalization and promoted social integration but challenges persist. The study emphasizes the importance of collaboration between government, NGOs, religious leaders, and communities to sustain educational opportunities. However, there are still gaps in our knowledge of these therapies' the long-term impacts, especially regarding reintegration into formal schooling and socio-economic transformation. This gap is relevant to Northern Uganda, where street children face similar poverty, displacement, and limited access to education, underscoring the need for targeted programs for transformative rehabilitation.

Similarly, Umar and Maaji (2025) examined the transformation of the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria, the study found that Almajiri system, once a respected Islamic educational tradition, has deteriorated into a humanitarian crisis, forcing children into street life and exposing them to neglect, malnutrition, disease, and exploitation. The study highlights the lack of structured educational systems as a key factor in their vulnerability but does not examine formal

education as a tool for transformative rehabilitation, which the current study sought to address. Ogbuabo (2021) found that in Enugu State, many street children remain excluded from universal basic education due to poverty, hidden fees, inadequate facilities, and societal barriers, pushing them further into street life. Both studies stress the necessity of focused, situation-specific measures to guarantee access to education as a pathway for social reintegration and long-term transformation.

Chapirah (2022) studied streetism among children in Atimpoku in Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological design and purposively selected fifteen participants. To gather data, an interview was used, after which the data was then analyzed thematically. The study found that key factors driving children to the streets included family break-up, fear of punishment, poverty, lack of parental care and control, and child abuse. On the streets, children face social challenges such as theft, police arrest, accidents, and peer aggression, as well as personal challenges including truancy, illness, lack of basic needs, and emotional neglect. Coping strategies included seeking help from peers and caregivers, begging, self-medication, and substance use. The study recommended establishing training centers in partnership with NGOs to provide formal education and employable skills like ICT, hairdressing, carpentry, and fashion design. However, it did not specifically assess formal education as a tool for transformative rehabilitation, indicating a need for research in contexts like Northern Uganda on how education can promote the reintegration and social transformation of street children.

Badat and Buchizya (2024) analyzed selected Non-State Actors' interventions addressing street children in Lusaka District, Zambia. The study adopted a qualitative design using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, and data was analyzed thematically. Results showed that NGOs, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations employ initiatives

such as identifying street children, providing shelter, healthcare, education, food, clothing, sports, recreation, and facilitating family reunification. Challenges included financial constraints, lack of coordination, cultural barriers, government resistance, stigma, COVID-19 disruptions, and inadequate infrastructure. The study recommended strategies such as sponsorship, partnership building, and empowerment initiatives. However, it did not specifically assess how formal education functions as a mechanism for transformative rehabilitation, highlighting the need for research in contexts like Northern Uganda on how education can support the reintegration and social transformation of street children (Aguu).

Banda et al. (2024) explored substance abuse among street children in Lilongwe, Malawi, using a qualitative phenomenological and symbolic interactionist approach. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to gather data, and data was analyzed thematically. The study found that substance abuse among street children is influenced by familial absence, emotional voids, peer pressure, economic hardship, environmental accessibility, and coping mechanisms. Findings highlighted how peer dynamics, socio-environmental factors, and personal experiences contribute to substance abuse, emphasizing the need for context-specific interventions and policy frameworks. While the study provided insights into the challenges faced by street children, it did not examine formal education as a deliberate tool for transformative rehabilitation, pointing to the importance of research in contexts like Northern Uganda where structured education can support reintegration.

Mundibi (2024) investigated child poverty and streetism in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, through the lens of the Preferential Option for the Poor within Catholic Social Teaching. The study employed an interdisciplinary approach combining theological, ethical, sociological, and practical perspectives. Focusing on initiatives by the Jesuit Centre

Monseigneur Munzihirwa, the research highlighted the reintegration of street children into families, poverty alleviation, and social justice efforts. It identified challenges including systemic inequalities, material deprivation, and insufficient transformative interventions. While the study emphasized empowerment and systemic change, it did not specifically explore formal education as a structured mechanism for rehabilitating street children. This gap underscored the relevance of research in Northern Uganda on how formal education can foster holistic transformation and social reintegration for street-connected children.

Several studies in Kenya have examined the educational conditions and rehabilitation of street children. For instance, Burkholder (2020) examined the education levels for street-connected children in Nairobi and found that many could communicate in Sheng and recognize numbers but struggled with literacy and basic arithmetic skills. Despite these challenges, many aspired to professional careers such as pilots and doctors, leading to the proposal of an "education for life" centre to help transition them from street life to formal schooling. However, the study did not explore how free education policies could be used to support street children.

In another study, Mwende et al. (2022) examined the adaptation of former street children in Trans Nzoia County and found that although many reintegrated well after rehabilitation, they continued to face challenges such as inadequate resources and limited job opportunities. The study, however, did not emphasize formal education as a central component of rehabilitation.

Weru (2024) examined the challenges of rehabilitating street children in Starehe Sub-County, Nairobi, using a qualitative narrative inquiry. The study found that many children return to street life because rehabilitation programmes often fail to address root causes and do not adequately develop social-emotional skills necessary for reintegration. It also noted that many rehabilitation centers lack research-based approaches in assisting street children. However, the

study did not examine how formal education can serve as a structured mechanism for transformative rehabilitation and long-term reintegration, highlighting a gap for further research. Iminza and Kimaru (2023) found that poor living conditions in some centers often pushed children back to the streets, even though some developed a sense of belonging when integrated into schools. However, the study also did not analyze how national education policies address the unique needs of street children. Overall, these studies highlight important challenges faced by street children but do not clearly examine how formal education can function as a structured mechanism for transformative rehabilitation and long-term reintegration.

Studies in Ethiopia have examined the experiences and problems street children face. Chimdessa (2022) explored the initiation into street life and survival strategies among street children in Addis Ababa using a phenomenological design with 103 participants. According to the report, children had to deal with issues including being trafficked, being harassed, and not having enough basic needs, and often experienced social rejection and weak legal protection. Solutions such as, shelter, access to education, community support, health services, and income-generating activities were perceived by street children. Similarly, Abate et al. (2022) investigated the health status and causes of streetism among 220 street children in Harar using mixed methods. The study revealed that many children had limited or no schooling due to poverty and negative parental attitudes, while substance abuse and health problems were common. However, the study did not examine how formal education policies could effectively support street children.

Other studies have also focused on survival and social conditions of street children. Fikre (2024) examined livelihood strategies of street children in Addis Ababa and found that children relied on social networks, creativity, and street subculture to survive and gain sympathy from the

public. Fantahun and Taa (2022) studied social exclusion among street children in Gondar and reported that poverty, lack of parental support, and negative societal attitudes led to deprivation of basic needs and psychological challenges. Similarly, Arabbadvi et al. (2023) evaluated the effect of nutrition education among 70 street children and found that targeted training significantly improved their nutritional knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Despite these findings, the studies largely did not examine how formal education systems can serve as a structured pathway for the long-term reintegration leading to rehabilitation of street children.

The impact of schooling on the lives of street children has been studied in Tanzania. For example, Athumani et al. (2026) investigated caretaker perceptions at Drop-In Centers in Kinondoni Municipality, finding that positive attitudes towards education fostered school attendance and behavioral changes, while negative perceptions could lead to increased poverty and social exclusion. They suggested the need for tailored curricula, trained educators, and stable housing to improve educational outcomes. Similarly, Haji (2025) evaluated inclusive education for primary school-aged street children in Dodoma City, revealing that while it was aligned with policy, funding and training challenges limited its effectiveness. Both studies underscored the necessity of supportive educational frameworks but did not adequately address structured formal education as means for the long-term reintegration of street children leading to their rehabilitation.

Studies conducted in Uganda have shown how important social protection, parenting, education, and resilience are in resolving the difficulties experienced by youngsters connected to the streets. For example, Edmonds et al. (2022) examined resilience-based programmes through the Building with Bamboo initiative, showing that fostering resilience among street-connected children improved their educational and well-being outcomes by engaging them in strength-

based activities and supportive peer, family, and community networks. Apecu and Zabibu (2022) explored parenting practices in Arua City, finding that inadequate parenting including neglect, abuse, poverty, and weak parent-child bonding significantly contributed to children joining street life, emphasizing the importance of family-based interventions and economic empowerment.

Furthermore, Kakuru et al. (2019) found that social protection for street children in Kampala was underfunded, donor-dependent, and largely inaccessible, highlighting the need for greater government support. Similarly, Africa Educational Trust (AET) and Child Restoration Outreach (CRO) showed that targeted interventions such as catch-up classes, counselling, family support, and community engagement helped reintegrate street children into formal education, though many children still lack access or struggle to remain in school (AET, 2024). Overall, these studies reveal significant gaps in how formal education is structured and utilized as a mechanism for the long-term rehabilitation and reintegration of street children. While resilience programs, parenting interventions, and social protection provide critical support, there is limited research on systematically integrating formal education with rehabilitation efforts to ensure sustainable outcomes. This gap highlighted the necessity of the current investigation, which seeks to examine how formal education can serve as an organized and transforming instrument to aid in skill development, social inclusion, and reintegration of street-connected children in Northern Uganda.

2.3.3 Role of Vocational Skills Training Leading to the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

Vocational skills training contributes significantly to the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu (street children) by equipping them with practical competencies that enhance employability, self-reliance, and social reintegration. For children who have experienced life on

the streets, access to structured vocational training provides not only technical skills but also fosters self-esteem, discipline, and resilience, contributing to psychosocial healing and personal empowerment (Mayombe, 2021). Through apprenticeships, hands-on workshops, and tailored skill-building programs, street children gain the tools to generate income, support themselves and their families, and break free from cycles of poverty and marginalization (Ozor et al., 2024).

In contexts such as urban Uganda, vocational skills training complements formal education by offering alternative pathways for children who have missed traditional schooling, enabling transformative rehabilitation through economic empowerment, social reintegration, and life skills development (Moses & Liu, 2023). However, many street children are not allowed to receive vocational skilling because of structural and social obstacles like limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and weak stakeholder coordination. Implementing flexible, inclusive, and context-sensitive vocational programs can enhance productivity, practical skills, confidence and social inclusion, offering sustainable avenues for long-term reintegration and breaking cycles of poverty. This also eliminate marginalization and enhance community development (Mwende, Shivachi & Sibuor, 2022; Akpama et al., 2025).

Starr et al. (2024) carried out a comprehensive assessment of research from Netherlands, Australia, and the United Kingdom titled “Understanding how young people transitioning from out-of-home care acquire and develop independent living skills and knowledge: A systematic review of longitudinal studies.” The study synthesized 27 longitudinal studies from ten countries to examine how vulnerable youth develop Independent Living Skills (ILS) needed for successful transition into adulthood. Guided by a systematic review research paradigm, the study analyzed existing empirical literature using structured review protocols and thematic synthesis. The authors identified eight major ILS domains, including financial management, accessing support

services, management housing, job seeking, education planning, health risk management, relationship management, and domestic tasks. The findings emphasized that vocational and life-skills training should not focus only on technical competence but must be supported by social systems, mentorship, and community networks, as successful rehabilitation requires interdependence rather than isolated independence.

The study further revealed that most studies addressed only a limited number of ILS domains and lacked long-term follow-up on outcomes such as employment stability, social reintegration, and well-being. Additionally, the majority of research was conducted in high-income countries with established welfare and youth support systems, which differ significantly from low-resource contexts. This creates a contextual and methodological gap, particularly for regions such as Northern Uganda, where street children often face poverty, displacement, and limited institutional support. Moreover, existing vocational initiatives in Uganda rely largely on program reports and qualitative testimonies rather than rigorous longitudinal or mixed-methods research that tracks rehabilitation outcomes over time. Therefore, the current study was necessary to examine how vocational skills training contributes to the transformative rehabilitation of street children in Northern Uganda, providing context-specific evidence on skill acquisition, social reintegration, and long-term livelihood outcomes.

Similarly, DeJaeghere and Murphy-Graham (2022), in the edited volume Life Skills Education for Youth: Critical Perspectives. It presents a critical examination of life skills and vocational training programs designed for marginalized youth and argued that such programs are often promoted as pathways to empowerment and rehabilitation. In the same volume, Christina Kwauk (2022) asserts that:

"an approach that solely focuses on empowering girls through sport by depositing in her

useful life skills ignores the structural conditions that have disempowered her in the first place" (p. 92).

The findings indicate that although vocational skills training can support empowerment and rehabilitation, many programs emphasize individual skill acquisition without sufficiently addressing broader structural inequalities. This creates a gap in understanding how vocational training can lead to transformative rehabilitation for vulnerable groups such as street children (Aguu). Consequently, a study in Northern Uganda was needed to explore how vocational skills training can be designed to address both skill development and the structural conditions impacting street children's long-term reintegration and rehabilitation.

In the United States, Newman (2020) conducted a study on *life skill development and transfer: "they're not just meant for playing sports".* The researcher explores how youth develop and impart life skills in programs for positive youth development or PYD through sports. A purposive sampling was employed by the study, and a qualitative research paradigm was also used to choose 13 youth participants. Semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation were used to gather data, which served as the main research tools to explore how participants acquired and used life skills within and beyond program contexts. The findings revealed that youth developed a variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal life skills, which they were able to apply to different other areas of their lives. The study emphasized that structured developmental programs could play an important role in equipping vulnerable youth with practical competencies that support personal growth and social integration.

However, the study mainly focused on sport-based life skills programs in a well-resourced context and did not specifically examine vocational skills training as a pathway for the street children's transformative rehabilitation. In addition, the research was conducted with a

small sample of young people already engaged in structured programs, which limits its applicability to highly marginalized street children's population. This creates some gap in comprehending how vocational skills training can support long-term rehabilitation, social reintegration, and economic empowerment of street-connected children in low-resource and post-conflict contexts. Therefore, the current study in Northern Uganda was necessary to examine how vocational skills training can contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of street children by equipping them with practical livelihood skills and supporting their reintegration into society.

In India, Saravanakumar (2020) conducted a study on *"Life Skill Education for Creative and Productive Citizens"*. The study was conceptual and relied on literature analysis within an educational development paradigm to explore how life skills education strengthens employability, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities. The findings indicated that life qualities including cooperation, adaptability, and stress management are essential for successful involvement in modern economic and social life. However, the study did not focus on vulnerable groups such as street children or examined how life skills training can support street children's rehabilitation. This creates a gap in understanding how vocational and life skills training can contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of street children in marginalized and post-conflict regions. Therefore, the current study in Northern Uganda was necessary to examine how vocational skills training can empower street children with practical competencies for sustainable reintegration.

Furthermore, Pilz and Regel (2020) carried out research on *"Vocational Education and Training in India: Prospects and Challenges from an Outside Perspective"* to examine the structure and advancement of VET (vocational education and training). The study adopted a

policy analysis and systemic research paradigm using document analysis of vocational education policies and programs. Results showed that vocational training is important in addressing skills shortages and promoting workforce development, although the system faces challenges such as quality concerns, structural gaps, and inadequate coordination. Despite highlighting the importance of skills development, the study focused primarily on national training systems and did not examine how vocational training can support vulnerable populations such as street children. Consequently, there was limited evidence on how vocational training can facilitate transformative rehabilitation among street children, particularly in post-conflict contexts such as Northern Uganda, where livelihood skills are critical for reintegration.

Similarly, Basak and Moitra (2024) researched on *"Effectiveness of Life Skill Training on Self-esteem and Self-perception Among Street Children"* to examine the psychological impact of life skills training on street children in Kolkata, India. The study adopted a quantitative experimental paradigm using a pre- and post-test design with purposive sampling of 20 adolescents aged 11–17 years. Data were collected through structured psychological scales measuring self-esteem and self-perception. The findings revealed that life skills training significantly improved self-esteem and several domains of self-perception, including social acceptance, behavioral conduct, and job competence. However, the study focused mainly on psychosocial outcomes and did not explore how life skills training could be integrated with vocational skills to support long-term economic empowerment and rehabilitation. This highlighted the need for further research in contexts such as Northern Uganda to investigate how vocational skills training can promote both psychosocial transformation and sustainable livelihood opportunities for street children.

Across Africa, vocational skills training (VST) is increasingly recognized as a key tool

for social justice, economic independence, and youth empowerment leading to their transformation. Studies by Maame (2018) emphasize that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) equip young individuals with essential practical skills for entrepreneurship and participation in the informal sector, thereby reducing youth unemployment. Similarly, McGrath et al. (2020) highlight how effective vocational education can promote inclusive livelihoods. Chigudu (2025), research shows that vocational and entrepreneurship training enhances employability, supports small business creation, and strengthen community stability among disadvantaged youth. However, these studies focus on general youth populations rather than street children, leaving a gap in understanding how vocational skills training specifically promotes the transformative rehabilitation of street-connected youth. Mayombe (2021) further underscores that the effectiveness of vocational training for unemployed and disadvantaged youth depends on enabling environments, stakeholder involvement, and alignment with labor market needs, providing very strong evidence base for policy and practice. This highlights the need for research in Northern Uganda to examine how vocational skills training can foster long-term reintegration, self-reliance, and social inclusion for street children.

Akpama et al. (2025) researched on *vocational training programmes and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.* The study examined how vocational training contributes to the economic empowerment of street children. 300 street children in Calabar Metropolis made up the sample population for the study, which employed an ex post facto research approach. And the same number was used as the sample through the use of a technique called census sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to gather the data, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for analysis at the 0.05 significance level. The results showed a strong correlation between barbing, plumbing, and

furniture-making skills training and the economic empowerment of street children. This indicated that vocational skills could help street children become more self-reliant and economically stable. Consequently, the study recommended that government agencies integrate vocational skills programmes into youth empowerment policies and provide financial support such as scholarships or stipends to reduce dropout rates. However, the study focused mainly on economic empowerment and did not examine the broader role of vocational skills training in the transformative rehabilitation and social reintegration of street children. Since the study was conducted in Calabar, Nigeria, its context differs from Northern Uganda, especially considering post-conflict realities. Therefore, this study was necessary to explore how vocational skills training can support self-reliance leading to rehabilitation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda.

Similarly, Otigba (2021) researched on *social work with street children and youth in Nigeria.* The study adopted a qualitative research paradigm using purposive sampling of six experienced social workers in Lagos State to explore how social work interventions support street youth. Data was collected through interviews with practitioners working with street youth in shelters, health programs, and counseling services. The findings highlighted the significance of social work interventions in resolving issues like substance abuse, exploitation, and psychosocial vulnerability among street youth. Additionally, Teslim (2024) emphasized that vocational training contributes to community development and individual empowerment by improving employability and economic participation. However, these studies mainly focused on economic empowerment and social welfare interventions rather than examining how vocational training can lead to transformative rehabilitation and long-term reintegration of street children. Therefore, the current study in Northern Uganda was necessary to explore how vocational skills

training can facilitate the transformative rehabilitation, self-reliance, and the rehabilitation of street children into society in a context where empirical research on this population remains limited.

In Ghana, Teye and Adjetey (2026) conducted a study on *Interventions for Street-Connected Children: Micro-, Mezzo-, and Macro-Level Suggestions from Social Workers* in Accra. The research adopted a qualitative research paradigm and used interviews as the main research tool to collect data from a purposive sample of 12 social workers who had experience working with street-connected children. The findings revealed that effective responses require interventions at three levels: micro-level support such as assisting vulnerable families, mezzo-level programmes aimed at reintegrating street children into society, and macro-level actions including policy advocacy, government engagement, vocational skills training and public awareness campaigns through the media. The study emphasized that a comprehensive, multi-level approach is necessary to reduce the number of street-connected children and improve their social wellbeing.

However, the study mainly focused on social work interventions and policy-level responses rather than examining how vocational skills training can directly support the transformative rehabilitation of children living on the street. Furthermore, the research depended on the perspectives of social workers without including the experiences or training outcomes of street-connected children themselves. This created a gap in understanding how vocational skills programmes can equip street children with practical livelihood skills for long-term self-reliance and reintegration. Therefore, the current study in Northern Uganda was required to investigate how vocational skills training contributes to the transformative rehabilitation, economic independence, and the social reintegration of Aguu in a context affected by poverty and post-

conflict recovery.

Van Doorn Foundation (2026), established that vocational training initiatives targeting vulnerable youth have been implemented in Kenya and across East Africa. For instance, the Levozy Self Help Group in Nairobi provides street children and school dropouts in Dagoretti with vocational training in trades such as car mechanics, electrical work, tailoring, shoemaking, bicycle repair, and hairdressing. The program aimed to reduce poverty by helping participants generate income and gain sustainable livelihoods, with ongoing support from organizations like the Van Doorn Foundation. In addition, Doroba (2025) revealed that initiatives supported by the African Development Bank and other partners have expanded Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) opportunities, improving infrastructure, modernizing curricula, and providing scholarships to young people, including women both in Kenya and South Sudan. Examples include Wambui, an electrical engineering student in Kenya, and Biar Bol Deng, a chef in South Sudan, whose lives and career prospects were transformed through vocational training. These experiences illustrate the potential of targeted skills programs to promote economic empowerment, social inclusion, and long-term self-reliance among youth.

Furthermore, Guantai and Kariuki (2026) examined the dual system of vocational training in Kenya, which combines classroom instruction with hands-on industry experience. Their study found that this approach accelerates skills acquisition, improves workplace readiness, and aligns trainees' competencies with labor market needs, despite challenges like coordination and limited placements. These findings suggest that practice-oriented vocational training can foster economic empowerment and self-reliance. In Northern Uganda, adapting such models for street-connected children could support transformative rehabilitation, sustainable livelihoods, and social reintegration, emphasizing the necessity of conduction research that is

context-specific.

However, while these studies emphasize the need of training in occupational skills in rehabilitation and economic empowerment, they mainly focused on prisoners and youth in Kenya and the broader East African region rather than street children in post-conflict settings. They also emphasized employment and economic outcomes but gave limited attention to the transformative street children's rehabilitation, which include, social reintegration, psychological recovery, and long-term self-reliance. Furthermore, the contextual realities of Northern Uganda particularly the historical effects of conflict, displacement, and social vulnerability create unique reintegration challenges for street-connected children that differ from those in Kenya. Therefore, the current study on the role of vocational skills training leading to the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda was necessary to explore how vocational skills training can contribute not only to economic empowerment but also to holistic transformation, social reintegration, and sustainable livelihoods for street children in this specific context.

Xinhua (2025) reported that Tanzania rolls out street children support program nationwide in Tanzania. This program aimed at supporting street-connected children, initially implemented in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and Mwanza. The initiative focuses on education, vocational training, and life skills, ensuring children receive protection and opportunities to reach their potential. The program works alongside NGOs like OMAWA, which assess children's backgrounds, facilitate reintegration with families or foster parents, and provide education and vocational training, emphasizing community-based rehabilitation rather than institutional care (OMAWA Foundation, 2026). However, while the Tanzanian program demonstrated promising approaches for skill acquisition and social reintegration, gaps remained regarding how these

interventions can be adapted to Northern Uganda, where street children face additional challenges related to post-conflict realities and economic marginalization. There was a need for empirical research to explore how vocational skills training can be effectively designed to foster transformative rehabilitation, sustainable livelihoods, and long-term social reintegration for street-connected youth in Northern Uganda, building on lessons from regional models like Tanzania.

Nevertheless, Moses and Liu (2023) conducted a study in Uganda titled "The Role of TVET Skill Development in Transformation of Informal Sector in Developing Countries: The Case Study of Skilling Uganda Program in Kampala Urban Area Uganda" to investigate how Kampala, Uganda's informal sector has changed as a result of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The research paradigm used in the study was qualitative, using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA framework. A total of 14 items were kept for in-depth analysis after screening 40 initial sources. Data was analyzed by utilizing content analysis to find trends and themes associated with TVET's impact on informal sector transformation. The findings indicated that Uganda's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) informal sector contributes over 50%, with Kampala alone providing 20% of this output and accounting for over 70% for vulnerable urban dwellers which is of non-farm employment opportunities. TVET skill development was found to enhance employability, technical competencies, and income-generating capacities among informal sector workers.

However, the study focused on general informal sector workers rather than street-connected or marginalized youth, leaving a gap in recognizing the transformative rehabilitation of street children through the application of TVET and vocational skills training. In the situation of Northern Uganda, where street-connected children face severe social, economic, and structural

barriers, empirical research was needed to investigate how vocational skills training can promote both skill acquisition and long-term reintegration into society. This highlighted the need to adapt TVET approaches, such as those demonstrated in Kampala, to design effective programs that foster sustainable livelihoods, psychosocial transformation, and social inclusion for street-connected youth in Northern Uganda.

Similarly, Van Doorn Foundation (2026) revealed that initiatives like Rescue Mission for Street Life provides trade skills training for teenage street children who cannot return to formal schooling due to age or family rejection. The program equips children with tools and practical skills to become self-supportive and transition into independent adulthood. Data collection tools include needs assessments, baseline surveys, and observation of skill acquisition outcomes. Sample populations include teenage street children rescued by police, probation officers, and local authorities, typically aged 10–18 years. The research paradigm is primarily qualitative, supplemented by descriptive program evaluations to understand the impact of vocational training on psychosocial well-being, economic independence, and social reintegration.

Findings suggest that vocational skills significantly improve children's employability, self-esteem, and potential for sustainable livelihoods, while providing alternatives to street life. However, gaps remain in addressing long-term psychosocial support, integration with family/community structures, and scalable implementation strategies for wider populations. Despite the progress in Kampala, Northern Uganda faces similar challenges of high numbers of street-connected children with limited access to vocational training, mental health support, and reintegration pathways. Monitor (2024) confirmed that programs like the Keddi Foundation and Kanyike Skills Centre have demonstrated that community-based skilling and mentorship can transform street children into law-abiding, self-reliant citizens. These insights underscored the

need for empirical research in Northern Uganda to investigate how structured vocational skills training can be adapted to local contexts, promoting transformative rehabilitation, sustainable livelihoods, and social reintegration of street-connected youth.

2.3.4 Role of Family Tracing and Reintegration on the Transformation of Aguu (Street Children)

Family tracing and reintegration are vital for the transformative rehabilitation of street children, as they restore familial connections, provide emotional support, and foster a sense of belonging essential for psychosocial healing. Reuniting with supportive family members not only meets the emotional and social needs of these children but also enhances their resilience and self-worth, contributing to holistic rehabilitation. Through structured tracing, counseling, and monitored reintegration programs, street children can rebuild familial bonds and access a stable environment that promotes education and skill acquisition (Greeson et al., 2024). In Northern Uganda, family tracing complements vocational training and psychosocial support by creating a nurturing home environment that fosters emotional security and positive identity development. However, challenges such as disrupted family structures, community stigma, and inadequate coordination among social services can hinder reintegration efforts. Implementing inclusive and context-sensitive tracing and reintegration programs can enhance stability and social inclusion, offering sustainable pathways for rehabilitation and breaking cycles of dependence and marginalization (Zewude et al., 2023).

A study on family-level factors to reintegrate street-involved children in low and middle-income countries was carried out in the United States by Goodman et al. (2020). The study examined interventions that support the reunification of SICY (street-involved children and youth) with their family members. The study synthesized evidence from previously implemented

programs and research on family-related risk factors that influence migration of children to the streets and their reintegration back into families. The review utilized secondary data from multiple studies and program reports, drawing on diverse samples of street children and their families across low as well as middle-income countries. As literature-based study, the researchers relied on document analysis and thematic synthesis as primary tools for examining evidence across the stages of street migration, such as follow-up, rehabilitation, reintegration, and rescue. The study used a family capital framework and a qualitative research paradigm to examine how health, capital, economic, cultural, and social capital can influence the capacity of family members to reintegrate children back into their families and their communities.

The results showed that street children can be effectively reintegrated but this relies heavily on strengthening family capacities, including economic stability, supportive social networks, caregiver education, and overall family health. Programs integrating psychosocial counseling, family mediation, educational support, vocational training, and community engagement were found to facilitate sustainable reintegration. The review emphasized the importance of the rescue and rehabilitation phases, where trust-building and skills development are crucial for preparing children for family reunification. However, the study identified significant gaps in existing literature, particularly regarding empirical evaluations of reintegration programs in low-income contexts, as most evidence comes from organizational reports rather than peer-reviewed studies. There is also a lack of focus on long-term follow-up post-reintegration and insufficient research on community-based interventions that can bolster family systems to prevent recidivism to street life. These gaps underscored the necessity of context-specific research, especially in Northern Uganda, to investigate how structured family tracing can support the sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of street-connected children

into their communities and families.

Furthermore, Love et al. (2023) carried out a qualitative intrinsic case-study of convicted female sex traffickers in the United States of America to examine obstacle to reintegration. The study explored the reintegration experiences of ten convicted female sex traffickers aged 24-56 using qualitative interviews. The study found that successful reintegration was hindered by limited life choices, social stigma, social needs, unmet physical needs, emotional needs, and negative labeling, which made it difficult for participants to rebuild their lives. However, the study focused primarily on adult offenders and did not address vulnerable street-connected children or the role of family-based reintegration strategies. This gap highlighted the need for research in Northern Uganda to examine how family tracing and reintegration programs can support the transformative rehabilitation and social reintegration of street children with their families (Love et al., 2023).

In Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, and the Central African Republic, Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) during the COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious disease outbreaks was studied by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020).

The study highlighted key principles of FTR family unity, best interests, participation, confidentiality, and “do no harm” and provided practical guidance on advocacy, coordination, prevention, communication, and transportation. Using case management frameworks, Standard Operating Procedures, ICT tools such as WhatsApp and VOIP, and cross-sectoral collaboration among UN agencies, NGOs, health actors, and local authorities, the programs targeted children in temporary care or undergoing reunification. Measures such as foster care networks, quarantine protocols, psychosocial support, safe transportation, and monitoring of infection risks were

implemented to maintain family connections and protect children from abuse, trafficking, neglect, and social stigma, even in restrictive contexts.

The findings indicated that FTR interventions effectively maintained family unity, reduced separation risks, and supported reintegration through individualized assessments, follow-up, and livelihood assistance. The use of ICT and cross-sectoral coordination enabled continuous communication and monitoring despite pandemic-related restrictions. However, gaps remained, particularly regarding the long-term transformative impact of FTR on street-connected children outside humanitarian crises. Research was limited to urban street children or those in informal settlements, and there is scarce data from nations with low and moderate income on trauma-informed family preparation and community support for sustainable rehabilitation. According to The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020), in Northern Uganda, where street-connected children face poverty, violence, and social exclusion, context-specific research is needed to explore how FTR initiatives can promote transformative rehabilitation, family reintegration, and social reintegration.

Across Africa, studies revealed that family tracing and reintegration reunites vulnerable children, especially street-connected ones, with their families after separation from conflict, displacement, or poverty. The process includes verifying family ties, providing support during transition, and monitoring the child's well-being. It fosters emotional bonds, social stability, and access to education and vocational opportunities. Despite its importance for rehabilitation and integration, research in Northern Uganda is limited. Trauma-informed family preparation, community support, and socio-economic factors are underexplored. This highlighted the need for context-specific studies on sustainable reintegration and holistic development of street children (Mwende et al., 2022; Goodman et al., 2023).

In Nigeria, Nte (2025) conducted a study on *Community Support and Challenges of Reintegrating families, women, and children who have returned from IDP Camps* in North-East Nigeria. The conducted study looked the function of community structures in supporting the reintegration of displaced populations returning from the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The research employed a qualitative research paradigm, specifically a research design called phenomenological, which aimed at understanding the daily lives of individuals undergoing reintegration. The sample consisted of key informants and community members, including community leaders, returning families, and local stakeholders involved in reintegration programmes. Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were utilized to gather data. Thematic analysis was used to examine the gathered data in order to find recurrent themes and patterns associated with reintegration encounters.

Findings revealed that successful reintegration depends heavily on community-based support systems. Communities were found to play crucial roles in providing psychosocial support, education opportunities, economic assistance, and social acceptance for returning individuals and families. Additionally, the study emphasized the significance of collective responsibility between communities, government institutions, and humanitarian organizations in ensuring sustainable reintegration outcomes. However, the study identified several challenges, including limited resources, inadequate support services, stigma toward returnees, and weak coordination among stakeholders, which hinder effective reintegration and increase vulnerability among returnees. Although the study offered useful insights into community participation in reintegration, it mainly focused on IDP returnees rather than street children and was conducted in North-East Nigeria, a context that differs from Northern Uganda. Therefore, further research was needed to examine how community support mechanisms and family tracing and reintegration

programs assist in the rehabilitation of Northern Ugandan Street children.

Similarly, Abdullahi and Onapajo (2024) studied reintegration and peacebuilding among survivors of human trafficking in Northeastern Nigeria and Cape Town, South Africa. The study adopted a qualitative feminist research paradigm and used unstructured in-depth interviews with a sample of ten survivors selected through snowball and convenience sampling, with data analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that reintegration is influenced by factors such as family acceptance, forgiveness, stigma, emotional trauma, and economic challenges. The study further highlighted the important role of rehabilitation centers and family support in preparing survivors for successful reintegration (ICMPD, 2021). However, some survivors chose not to return to their families due to fear of rejection and social stigma. The study also had limitations because it focused on adult female survivors of human trafficking rather than street children, and the small sample size and limited locations reduced the findings' generalizability. Consequently, there is little empirical evidence on the reintegration experiences of street children in post-conflict communities such as Northern Uganda. Therefore, the current study was necessary to examine how family tracing and reintegration programmes influence the transformative rehabilitation of street children in Northern Uganda.

Frimpong-Manso, Agbadi, and Deliege (2022) conducted a study on *factors associated with the family reintegration stability for children with a residential care experience* in Ghana. Using secondary data analysis from the records of children and their guardians who were interviewed, the study used a quantitative research paradigm. Included in the dataset were 659 children and guardians, although the final analysis focused on 408 cases with complete data. Data were analyzed to examine factors associated with children's inclination to stay with their extended family or birth parents after reintegration. The findings revealed that 73% of the

children preferred to remain with their families, indicating positive reintegration outcomes. Factors influencing reintegration stability included the age of a child, the duration of their stay in residential care, and the existence of a documented case file. The study emphasized the importance of proper assessment, preparation of both the child and family, ongoing follow-up assistance, and connecting reunified families with long-term social support programs to strengthen family capacity.

However, the study focused on children with residential care experience rather than street children, whose circumstances and rehabilitation needs may differ. Additionally, the research was conducted in Ghana, which differs socially and economically from Northern Uganda. Therefore, there was limited empirical evidence on how family tracing and reintegration programs contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of street children in post-conflict settings such as Northern Uganda, particularly by exploring family preparedness, follow-up support, and the sustainability of reintegration outcomes.

Similarly, Asomah (2025) found that young ex-offenders successfully reintegrate when their personal agency is supported and social networks provide guidance, education, and employment opportunities. Applying this to Northern Uganda, family tracing and reintegration can similarly support the transformative rehabilitation of street children by restoring family bonds, offering psychosocial and educational support, and promoting social inclusion. However, Asomah's study focuses on young offenders, not street children, leaving gaps in understanding reintegration in the Northern Ugandan context. Research is limited on trauma-informed family preparation, community support, and the impact of socio-economic challenges on long-term outcomes. These shortcomings emphasized the necessity of context-specific studies to identify effective strategies for sustainable rehabilitation and holistic development of street children.

Kudenga, Heeralal and Ndwandwe (2025) researched on Reimagining family re-unification: Exploring strategies for reintegrating street children in Harare, Zimbabwe. The study used Rational Emotive Behaviour Theory as a framework, and a qualitative phenomenological design. 10 social development officers who were actively involved in family reintegration made up the population, and they were purposively sampled. Interviews were semi-structured and were used to gather data, which was then subjected to thematic analysis. Results showed that the importance of innovative strategies to support reintegration. Key approaches included family conferences, community engagement, psychosocial support, counselling, and providing families with resources.

The study emphasized the underlying reasons for street children's homelessness and pointed out the need that these factors are essential for successful reintegration. Recommendations include prioritizing counselling, psychosocial support, community involvement, and addressing underlying social issues. The research contributes to understanding the complexities of street child homelessness and offers practical guidance for policymakers, social development officers, and researchers seeking to improve family reintegration outcomes. However, the study was limited to Harare, Zimbabwe, and focuses mainly on social development officers' perspectives. There was limited research in other contexts, such as Northern Uganda, on how similar strategies can support the transformative rehabilitation of street children, particularly in addressing trauma, socio-economic challenges, and long-term reintegration outcomes. This emphasized the necessity of context-specific research to explore effective approaches for sustainable reintegration and holistic development of street children in Northern Uganda.

In Kenya, studies Goodman et al. (2023) conducted a study on *enabling structural resilience of street-involved children and youth in kenya: reintegration outcomes and the*

flourishing community model. frontiers in psychology. The study examined how coordinated community and family interventions support the reintegration of young people in Kenya who have been involved with the streets. The study tracked the reintegration outcomes of 227 street-involved adolescents and youth taking part in programs using program monitoring techniques and longitudinal data analysis as rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration program combined with family and community empowerment initiatives. Guided by a structural resilience and socio-ecological research paradigm, the study analyzed data collected across multiple stages of program participation.

According to the results, 50% of the participants went back to their families, and 79% of the participants successfully reintegrated into the larger community to resumed schooling. Others joined vocational or boarding schools or started small businesses. Reintegration success was higher among children with less time spent on the streets, whose families took part in the family-strengthening program, those with shorter street exposure, and those motivated to reunite with their families. However, the study identified gaps in understanding long-term outcomes, support mechanisms for children who fail to reintegrate, and strategies for preventing children from leaving their homes and migrating or moving to the streets. These gaps emphasized that there is need of additional study in Northern Uganda to ascertain how family tracing and reintegration programs contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu, particularly by examining family involvement, community support systems, and sustainable pathways for reintegration into families and society.

Similarly, Greeson et al. (2024) researched on reintegration of street-connected children in Kenya: evaluation of agape children's ministry's family strengthening programme. The study aimed to reintegrate street-connected children into their families. The programme targets

children and families recently reunited and provides time-limited, crisis-oriented support. The study involved 30 children and 38 caregivers, assessing outcomes in the wellbeing of children and the operation of families. And the findings showed that all but two of the children remained reintegrated by the end of the research period, indicating notable gains in children's wellbeing and family functioning. The findings highlight the significance of comprehensive, family-based therapies catered to individual needs and family circumstances. Also, the study highlighted the role of governmental support in meeting families' basic needs to sustain reintegration.

Mwende, Shivachi, and Sibuor (2022) examined the rehabilitation and reintegration of street children in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya, focusing on post-institutional outcomes. Using a mixed-methods strategy, information was gathered from social professionals, past homeless children, and parents through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. SPSS was used to analyze quantitative, but qualitative data were thematically analyzed. And it was found by the study that most children were adapting well and were happy to be reunited with their families. Key challenges included inadequate household resources, abuse or neglect by caregivers, and limited job opportunities after vocational training. The authors recommended investments to improve family living standards and scholarships to support reintegrated children's education.

However, while these studies demonstrate positive outcomes in Kenya, both were limited to the Kenyan context and did not provide insights into how family reintegration initiatives function in settings of high poverty, displacement, and street-connected children in Northern Uganda. Research methodology also remains a barrier in fully understanding these dynamics. Therefore, this emphasized the necessity of context-specific research in Northern Uganda to explore effective strategies for family tracing and reintegration. Such initiatives can contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of Northern Uganda's street children by restoring family

connections, providing psychosocial and educational support, and fostering social inclusion.

Zewude et al. (2023) conducted a study on a social-ecological view of the factors affecting the effectiveness of reintegration interventions targeting children out of family-based care situations in Ethiopia. This review examined the success of reintegration therapies for children not in family-based care, including street-connected children as well as those in residential care. Guided by a social-ecological framework, the study analyzed empirical research to identify factors influencing successful reintegration. Data extraction focuses on objectives, major findings, study designs, and data sources.

The review highlighted several key factors affecting reintegration outcomes. These included children's characteristics, street subcultures, experiences in childcare centers, child family attachment, parenting skills, family socioeconomic status, preparation and willingness for reunification, community-level factors, and follow-up support. Findings showed that reintegration interventions often succeed when they address both individual and environmental factors, support family and community engagement, and provide structured follow-up. However, most studies were limited to general assessments of reintegration effectiveness, with scarce region-specific evidence, particularly in contexts like Northern Uganda. Research gaps included understanding trauma-informed family preparation, the role of community support systems, and how socio-economic challenges influence long-term reintegration outcomes for street children. This underscored the need for context-specific studies to explore strategies that can sustainably support the holistic rehabilitation of street-connected children.

Nolascus, Wagana, and Mavole (2025) research on the *experiences of social workers in* Mwanza City, Tanzania, *helping to reunite street-connected children* through Railway Children Africa (RCA). The study used a qualitative phenomenological design and grounded in

attachment theory. The study highlighted the centrality of secure child-caregiver bonds for emotional and psychological development. Fourteen experienced social workers participated in in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis of data. Results showed that social workers perform critical roles as mediators, facilitators, counselors, and advocates, guiding both children and families through the reunification process. Key responsibilities included tracing families, preparing them emotionally, resolving conflicts, providing psychosocial support, ensuring safe shelter, and conducting follow-up visits to monitor children's adjustment. Collaboration with local leaders, schools, NGOs, and government entities was essential for successful reintegration.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including heavy caseloads, limited resources, emotional strain among social workers, and inadequate institutional support, which often hinder sustainable reunification efforts. Although the study offered crucial information about the functions of social workers in facilitating reunification, it was conducted in Mwanza City, Tanzania, a context that differs socially and institutionally from Northern Uganda. In addition, the study used only a qualitative approach, whereas a mixed-methods strategy was used in the current study to produce both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Also, there was different in sample population and size, as the current study involved a broader group of participants relevant to the reintegration process. Furthermore, the study mainly focused on the experiences of social workers rather than the broader outcomes of family tracing and reintegration on the rehabilitation of street children. Therefore, there was limited empirical evidence on how family tracing and reintegration play a role in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda, making this current research necessary.

In Uganda, Consortium for Street Children. (2021) conducted a study on reunion of families and the rights of children living on the streets in The Gambia and Uganda.

The significance and difficulties of family reunification for children living on the streets were investigated in this study. The research adopted a qualitative, rights-based research paradigm, drawing on organizational reports, case documentation, and stakeholder submissions prepared the Rights of the Child as discussed by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Data were gathered from partner organizations working with street-connected children in Uganda and The Gambia through document analysis and organizational experiences, focusing on children who had experienced family separation.

The findings revealed that for children living in street situations, family reunification is important but difficult process. Family violence, family dissolution, poverty, substance misuse among caregivers, and forced separation are some of the reasons why a lot of children end themselves apart from their families.

Moreso, the study emphasized that family tracing, mediation, and preparation of both the child and family are essential for successful reunification, while safeguarding children's rights and ensuring their safety and well-being. The study also pointed the importance of community involvement, child protection mechanisms, and continuous monitoring to support sustainable reintegration outcomes. However, the study mainly relied on organizational reports and qualitative evidence, with limited empirical data from structured research methods. In addition, it did not provide specific methodological tools, defined sample populations, or detailed outcome measurements regarding the effectiveness of family tracing and reintegration programs. Although the study included Uganda, it addressed children in street situations broadly and did not specifically focus on Northern Uganda, which has unique post-conflict socio-economic challenges that may influence the rehabilitation and reintegration process. Therefore, there was need to carry out empirical studies on the role that reintegration and family tracing play in the

transformative rehabilitation Northern Uganda's Aguu.

Furthermore, there are various initiatives that explored on Uganda's rehabilitation, family tracing, and reintegration of street-connected children. For instance, the Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program by Child Restoration Outreach (CRO Uganda) focuses on rescuing street children and preparing them for reintegration into their families or education through street outreach, counseling, life-skills training, catch-up education, and family assessments (Children's Rights Observation Uganda, 2026). Similarly, organizations such as Retrak, supported by the Faith to Action Initiative, implement family reintegration models that prioritize family tracing, counseling, pre-reintegration home visits, mediation, and follow-up support. These initiatives show that rehabilitation and structured reintegration processes can help children develop positive behavior, rebuild family relationships, and successfully reintegrate into their communities, although challenges such as family rejection, poverty, and lack of basic needs can affect sustainability (Faith to Action Initiative, 2026).

Additionally, the Ssuubi4Family - 4Children program in collaboration with Makerere University conducted a study titled Reintegration of Children into Family-Based Care in Uganda, using an interventional research design with tools such as surveys, focus group discussions, and parenting interventions, and statistical analyses including ANOVA, ANCOVA, and GLMM. The findings indicated that family-based care and parenting support can improve children's wellbeing, social integration, and developmental outcomes (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2026). However, many of these initiatives are program-based rather than rigorous empirical studies, and most focus on general child reintegration rather than specifically on family tracing and reintegration of street children in Northern Uganda.

In Northern Uganda, Gutiérrez (2023) conducted a study on *the economic reintegration*

of former child soldiers. The study examined strategies used by the government and non-state actors to support the rehabilitation of former child soldiers following the fight with Lord's Resistance Army. The study included a semi-structured interviews and secondary data analysis as part of its qualitative research methodology, with experts as key tools. The findings revealed that although some reintegration strategies incorporated psychosocial support and livelihood assistance, many former child soldiers continued to face extreme poverty, psychological distress, stigma, and social isolation, largely due to missed educational opportunities and limited economic support. The study further noted that reintegration efforts were constrained by limited resources and weak political commitment, which hindered effective implementation of best practices. However, the study focused mainly on the economic reintegration of former child soldiers rather than street-connected children, leaving a gap in understanding how family tracing and reintegration play a role in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda, which the current research seeks to address.

Kiconco (2021) in the book Gender, Conflict and Reintegration in Uganda: Abducted Girls, Returning Women examines the reintegration experiences of girls abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) who later returned to their communities in Northern Uganda. The study was based on extensive qualitative research, drawing on interviews, narratives, and secondary sources to explore the challenges faced by formerly abducted women during reintegration. The findings revealed that although reintegration programs aimed to support their return, many women continued to face stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion, and their home communities were not always supportive environments. The study further highlighted that reintegration is a complex and long-term process requiring continuous negotiation between returnees and their communities. However, the study focused primarily on formerly abducted

women and gender dimensions of post-conflict reintegration, leaving limited attention to Aguu and the function of family tracing and reintegration in their transformative rehabilitation in Northern Uganda, which the current study sought to address.

Similarly, the JRP (Justice and Reconciliation Project) implemented in Northern Uganda an initiative on reintegration of children born of war through family reunions, which aimed to reunite children born during the LRA conflict with their families and promote reconciliation between maternal and paternal relatives. The initiative adopted a qualitative, community-based participatory approach, using tools such as dialogue sessions, mediation meetings, family tracing, and community consultations involving children, their mothers, families, and community leaders in the Acholi sub-region. The findings showed that family reunification helped restore children's identity, social belonging, and access to family resources, while also promoting community reconciliation and reducing stigma (Justice and Reconciliation Project, 2026).

However, the initiative focused mainly on children born of war rather than street children and was largely a program-based intervention with limited empirical evaluation and defined research methods. Furthermore, few studies focus specifically on Northern Uganda, a region characterized by post-conflict social disruption, poverty, and family disintegration, which may influence reintegration outcomes. Therefore, there remained limited empirical evidence on how family tracing and reintegration participate in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda. Consequently, the current research was necessary to examine the influence of family tracing and reintegration programs on the transformative rehabilitation of street children in Northern Uganda, using a mixed-methods approach and a clearly defined sample population to generate context-specific evidence.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review and Knowledge Gaps

Research on Catholic Church interventions for street children covers vocational training, psychosocial counselling, formal education, and family tracing and reintegration**.** However, many studies have methodological limitations, including unclear target populations, inadequate sample-size justification, and small or unrepresentative samples, which limit the generalizability of findings. For example, Yildirim et al. (2020) used only 16 male participants, while Ojo (2021) relied on five expert reflections, with limited attention to the lived psychological experiences of street children**.**

Many previous studies used either qualitative or quantitative methods alone, limiting the depth and generalizability of their findings. Qualitative studies by Ndlovu (2019), Chapirah (2022), and Nte (2025) provided limited generalizable evidence, while Akpama et al. (2025) focused mainly on economic empowerment. This methodological gap highlights the need for a mixed-methods approach that integrates economic, psychosocial, and rehabilitation perspectives.

Some studies relied on a single data-collection method or failed to report the validity and reliability of their instruments, limiting the depth and credibility of their findings. For instance, Westat and Makerere University (2017) noted the need for qualitative data to complement quantitative measures, while Goodman et al. (2020, 2023) depended mainly on program reports and secondary data, reducing the strength of their empirical conclusions.

Existing research shows geographic and contextual gaps, as studies have focused on boys in Mexico and homeless adults in high-income countries, limiting relevance to street children in post-conflict Northern Uganda. A mixed-methods approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of rehabilitation by integrating quantitative objectivity with qualitative insights.

A further significant gap is the absence of trauma-informed and culturally contextualized approaches in existing interventions. While Steiner, Adjei, and Kwashie (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of culturally responsive techniques such as family-mediated therapy and local metaphor integration for trafficked children in Ghana, similar approaches have not been systematically examined for street-connected children in Northern Uganda. Studies by Kudenga, Heeralal and Ndwandwe (2025) in Zimbabwe and Nolascus, Wagana and Mavole (2025) in Tanzania highlighted the importance of family conferences, community engagement, and psychosocial support, yet these insights remain context-specific and have not been empirically tested in Northern Uganda's post-conflict environment. Additionally, the Justice and Reconciliation Project (2026) and Gutiérrez (2023) focused on children born of war and former child soldiers respectively, rather than street children, leaving a critical population underserved by empirical research.

Longitudinal evidence tracking rehabilitation outcomes beyond immediate post-intervention periods is notably scarce. Starr et al. (2024) systematic review of independent living skills found that most studies lacked long-term follow-up on outcomes such as employment stability, social reintegration, and well-being. Similarly, Goodman et al. (2023) identified gaps in understanding long-term outcomes for street-involved children in Kenya, particularly those who fail to reintegrate successfully. The current study in Northern Uganda faces similar challenges, as most available evidence came from organizational reports and program evaluations rather than rigorous peer-reviewed longitudinal research. Studies by Edmonds, Ochaya and Sansom (2022) on resilience-based programmes in Uganda provided valuable qualitative insights but lacked standardized quantitative measures to assess long-term educational and psychosocial outcomes—which the current study sought to address.

In order to close these gaps, the current study used a mixed-methods methodology, which combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, to guarantee a more thorough investigation of how psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration contribute to the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda. Indeed, utilizing some well-justified, representative sample drawn from multiple districts and involving diverse stakeholders including street children, social workers, NGO staff, church and community leaders, this research enhanced the generalizability of its findings.

In addition, the study rigorously established the reliability and validity of its instruments through pilot testing and appropriate statistical measures and adhered strictly to ethical research standards that would not have been comprehensively addressed in previous studies. By embracing this methodological rigor, this study did not only address the limitations observed in previous research such as small sample sizes, lack of triangulation, geographic narrowness, and absence of trauma-informed cultural frameworks but also provided contextually relevant insights into the rehabilitation practices and challenges faced by service providers and street-connected children in Northern Uganda's unique post-conflict context. This integrated approach combining psychosocial support, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration, aims to provide robust insights into effective rehabilitation practices. Unlike prior research, which often examined interventions in isolation, the current study highlighted the interconnected nature of these components in promoting holistic and transformative rehabilitation in a post-conflict setting of the street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the methodological framework that guided the study. It described the research design, target population, and geographical setting of the study. It also detailed the sampling procedures, including the sampling frame, sampling techniques, and the approach used to determine the appropriate sample size. In addition, the chapter outlined the research instruments that were used to collect data. Furthermore, the chapter addressed the validity and reliability of the research instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis. Ethical considerations and the anticipated contribution of the study were also discussed. Overall, the chapter provided a systematic account of the research procedures, ensuring that the study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethically appropriate manner.

3.2 Research Design

The strategy that can direct the entire research process is known as research design. It provides the systematic plan for conducting the study, this includes the procedures and methods that the researcher uses in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. A well-organized research design is essential because it ensures that the study is conducted in a logical and consistent manner, leading to accurate and reliable findings (Creswell & Plano 2023; Takona, 2024; Chali, Eshete & Debela, 2022). According to Ansari et al. (2022), the choice of research design plays a critical role in determining the quality and credibility of the data collected, as it influences how the research problem is investigated and how conclusions are drawn. McCombes (2019) further established that a research design, also called a research strategy, is a plan to answer a set of questions. It is a framework that includes the methods and procedures to collect, analyze, and

interpret data (Weyant, 2022).

This study used a research design called a mixed-methods research design, and more precisely a convergent design. With this design, the researcher was be able to simultaneously gather qualitative and quantitative data, analyzed separately the two datasets, and then later integrated the findings to offer a thorough comprehension of the research problem. This design of course allowed the researcher to compare and triangulate results from both approaches, thereby generating deeper insights than either method could provide independently. Indeed, the use of mixed methods was appropriate because it facilitated the collection of quantitative data to establish measurable patterns and relationships, while qualitative data helped in explaining and interpreting those findings in greater depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). By integrating both approaches, the study offered a more comprehensive grasp of the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in selected districts of Northern Uganda.

Moreso, the researcher's choice to use a mixed-methods study design was informed by a pragmatic philosophical perspective. A pragmatic view sees Aguu first and foremost as survivors employing a desperate strategy for survival, belonging, and safety on the streets of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira in order to meet their basic needs. It moves the conversation from "is the Catholic Church a force for good or ill?" a question that leads to endless and unproductive debate—to "What is the Church actually doing, how is it doing it, and what are the tangible consequences for the Aguu children?" The latter question is the one that truly matters for the children, for the community, and for anyone who wants to understand how real change happens in a complex and broken world like in Northern Uganda. A child sleeping on the street in Gulu doesn't need a theological treatise; they need safety, food, and a reason to hope. The

pragmatic lens validated the Catholic Church's work precisely because it provided these tangible things.

The quantitative component of the research employed a cross-sectional survey design, in which information was gathered all at once from selected respondents. Structured questionnaires using Likert-scale items were administered to street children to examine the influence of Catholic Church interventions on their rehabilitation outcomes. Variables examined included participation in psychosocial counseling support, formal education, vocational skills and training, family tracing and reintegration. A cross-sectional design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine relationships between variables within a defined population at a specific time without manipulating the study environment (Leavy, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative component adopted a phenomenological design especially interpretative to explore the perceptions of stakeholders (community, cultural and religious leaders) involved in street children and rehabilitation programs implemented by the Catholic Church, and how they make sense of those experiences. This was intended to comprehend how people interpret their daily experiences. Of course, the features of qualitative design are the use of inductive data analysis, natural settings, subjectivity, perspectives of participants, reflexivity, and the researcher is seen as data collection instrument among others. This approach enabled the researcher to capture the meanings participants attach to their experiences with street children in Northern Uganda, and rehabilitation interventions, including counseling, spiritual guidance, formal education, vocational skills training, family tracing and reintegration into families and communities (Tisdell et al., 2025; Frost, 2021). Through in-depth interviews and open-ended discussions, the researcher gained deeper insights into how these interventions influence the transformative rehabilitation of street children. The phenomenological approach was suitable

because it allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words, thereby providing rich and detailed insights into the street children's lives and rehabilitation process (Ghanad, 2023).

3.3 Location of the Study

This study was carried out in selected districts of Northern Uganda, primarily within the Acholi and Lango sub-regions, including Gulu, Pader, Kitgum and Lira. The location was chosen because of many Aguu presence in the area. Also, the site was selected because of convivence for the researcher. Northern Uganda serves as the historical epicenter of the prolonged armed conflict involving the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) from the mid-1980s to the late 2000s, which displaced millions, disrupted family and community structures, and significantly contributed to the emergence and persistence of street children, locally referred to as Aguu. These districts are characterized by a post-conflict socio-economic environment marked by limited access to basic services, orphanhood and ongoing challenges related to trauma, high levels of poverty and social exclusion, all of which exacerbate vulnerability among Aguu.

The area is especially appropriate for this research due to the strong and visible presence of the Catholic Church, which operates extensive rehabilitation programs, safe houses, drop-in centers, vocational skills training initiatives, and community-based psychosocial and educational support through diocesan structures (such as Archdiocese of Gulu), Caritas, and affiliated faith-based organizations (Catholic Care for Children in Uganda [CCCU]. (2023, May 17). These interventions of course target street children with a holistic approach that integrates formal education, spiritual guidance, family tracing and reunification, and life-skills training making Northern Uganda an ideal context for examining the Catholic Church's role in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu children. The areas chosen also benefits from proximity to local research

networks, NGOs, and child protection stakeholders, which enhances the study's feasibility and potential for practical impact on policy and programming for street children in post-conflict settings. Furthermore, the continued presence of war-affected communities, high numbers of displaced and vulnerable children, and active faith-based responses to child protection provided not only a rich and relevant setting for assessing the effectiveness of church-led transformative rehabilitation initiatives but also their transformative

3.4 Target Population

Population in research constitute every subject, object, or item of interest to the researcher that is under investigation. According to Willie (2024), the subjects that form the target population have common attributes or qualities that are distinguishable from other subjects that do not form part of the very population that is being studied. Therefore, the target population is that group of individuals from whom the researcher collects data and draws conclusions that answer the research problem. Indeed, the target population of this study was made up of not only street children but also cultural leaders, community leaders (district education officers, project managers among others), and religious leaders in the selected districts of Northern Uganda. These individuals are directly involved in or interact with initiatives aimed at the rehabilitation and reintegration of street-connected children in Northern Uganda, particularly those that are supported by the Catholic Church. They were therefore central to understanding the nature and effectiveness of the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in the region.

The population is estimated to be at 12,360 individuals, drawn from a broader regional population of approximately 130,000 people in Northern Uganda (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The office records show about 11,000 street children aged 5–30 years, 600 community

leaders, 420 cultural leaders, and 340 religious leaders who form the key groups interacting with and influencing rehabilitation processes (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The focus on selected districts of Northern Uganda was justified because the region has experienced significant social disruption due to past conflict, which has contributed to the prevalence of street-connected children. The accessible population therefore included street children and key stakeholders within these selected districts who are involved in community leadership, cultural guidance, and faith-based rehabilitation initiatives. Their roles placed them in a strategic position to provide informed insights regarding the efforts made by the Catholic Church to improve the lives of Aguu in the region.

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

According to Creswell (2018), a sample of a population is a subset of the entire population that the researcher selects for investigation, and it is used to make generalizations about the target population. Therefore, the sample size according to Creswell & Creswell (2023) refers to the number of individuals, units, cases, or observations selected from a target population to participate in a research study**.** It is an important component of research methodology because it determines the amount of data available for analysis and influences the accuracy, reliability, and generalizability of the study findings.

In this study the researcher used the established sample-size table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the sample size of the street children. From Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2017), there are 11,000 street children, which translate to sample size of 370 respondents, which ensured a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level

Sampling procedure on the other hand refers to the systematic process a researcher follows to select a smaller group of participants, known as a sample**,** from a larger population for

inclusion in a study. In other words, sampling procedure refer to the methods and techniques used by a researcher to select participants from the target population (Rahman, 2023). In this study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed to select participants for the quantitative and qualitative components, respectively. Probability sampling gives every member of the target population a known and often equal chance of being selected to participate in the study.

Thus, in accordance with Kothari and Garg (2023), the researcher developed a sampling frame comprising all Catholic Church rehabilitation centres, affiliated centres, and parishes implementing Aguu rehabilitation programmes in the selected districts. From this sampling frame, simple random sampling was used to select the centres to be visited. For instance, if the sampling frame contained 20 centres, 10 centres would be randomly selected to ensure that the sample was representative and that the findings could be generalized to the wider population of centres. Non-probability means that the researcher would follow people and their stories, and it was very realistic and deep.

3.5.1 Sampling of Street Children

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed to select street children for participation in the study. Specifically, cluster sampling was used in areas where street children could be readily identified and accessed, while snowball sampling was employed in locations where the *Aguu* were difficult to identify or access. This combination of sampling techniques enabled the researcher to reach street children across different settings and ensured the inclusion of participants who might otherwise have been difficult to locate.

The study used snowball sampling by first consulting a Catholic Church social worker to identify Aguu participating in the rehabilitation programme. These participants then referred the

researcher to other eligible Aguu, especially their commanders in the command centers. The commanders were given money and they would quickly mobilize the rest of Aguu to participate in the study. This approach facilitated access to the otherwise hidden population by using trusted peer networks to build confidence and establish contact with potential participants.

Cluster sampling was employed where the street children were easily identified. Cluster sampling is a probability sampling technique in which the target population is divided into naturally occurring groups, known as clusters, and a researcher randomly selected some of these clusters for inclusion in the study. Rather than sampling individuals from the entire population, the researcher studied individuals within the selected clusters. It is particularly useful when a population is geographically dispersed or when a complete sampling frame of individuals is unavailable (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Taherdoost, 2022).

In this study, given that the Catholic Church implements parish-based rehabilitation programmes, cluster sampling was appropriate because the clusters corresponded to specific rehabilitation sites, which enabled the researcher to access street children participating in or targeted by the Catholic Church's interventions. These included treating natural congregation points such as markets, bus parks, church premises as clusters which the researcher randomly selected clusters and enumerated all. And this reduced costs and captures hidden populations. Although cluster sampling may increase standard errors, it remained the most practical approach for reaching transient and geographically dispersed street children in a post-conflict setting as recommended by Nakato & Okello (2023).

3.5.2 Sampling of Community Leaders

Criterion sampling was used to select community leaders, specifically heads of clans, who met the predetermined selection criteria to participate in the study. According to Creswell

and Creswell (2023), criterion sampling is a purposive sampling technique in which participants are deliberately selected based on specific criteria that are directly relevant to the research problem. In this study, the primary criterion for selection was that, they must have administrative jurisdiction over particular wards or sub-counties or towns in the selected districts, interact with Aguu communities on a day-to-day basis, and have at least five years and above of governance experience (Omara et al., 2025). This ensured that the selected community leaders had adequate knowledge, relevant experience, and practical understanding of the phenomenon.

Community leaders (Local Council Chairpersons) were selected because of their firsthand knowledge of the limitations of state-led interventions, such as police raids and temporary shelters, as well as their active involvement in community initiatives. Their experience made them valuable sources of information on the rehabilitation of Aguu because they are involved in important roles in community mobilization, local decision-making, and supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of street children, providing valuable perspectives on the effectiveness of Catholic Church interventions. In total 10 community elders from various districts participated in the study.

3.5.3 Sampling of Cultural Leaders

Expert purposive sampling was used to select Cultural leaders to participate in the study. Expert purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher deliberately selects participants because they possess specialized knowledge, expertise, or substantial experience relevant to the research problem. Cultural leaders form part of the study population because they influence traditional values, social norms, and community acceptance of rehabilitated street children. The researcher employed expert sampling to purposively select 10 cultural leaders from a total population of 420 for participation in the study. Expert sampling was

considered appropriate because cultural leaders, particularly clan chiefs and elders, possess specialized and context-specific knowledge of Acholi customs, including traditional law, clan descent systems, and the *mato oput* rituals associated with reconciliation and reintegration into society (Divon & Owor, 2021).

The perspectives of clan elders were important because cultural institutions play a crucial role in reconciliation, reintegration, and fostering community acceptance of formerly street-connected children. Clan elders possess valuable knowledge and expertise in restoring identity, particularly through clan recognition, cultural purification, and the restoration of social belonging, all of which were important in addressing the challenges associated with the Aguu syndrome.

3.5.4 Sampling of Religious Leaders

The researcher used homogenous sampling to select 10 religious leaders to participate in the study. Homogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique in which the researcher deliberately selects participants who share similar characteristics, experiences, or backgrounds relevant to the study. The aim was to obtain in-depth and focused information from a relatively uniform group. For example, in a study on the transformation of street-connected children (Aguu), a researcher may have selected only clan elders with extensive experience in Acholi cultural practices and reintegration processes.

Religious leaders were included because they are key stakeholders in the rehabilitation of street children because many faith-based organizations, particularly the Catholic Church, are actively involved in providing spiritual guidance, counseling, education, and social support. According to the Northern Uganda Office (2025), there are 340 religious leaders in the selected districts. This technique enabled the researcher to focus exclusively on the spiritual frameworks

for addressing the existential rootless state of Aguu, devoid of any form of interference from other secular individuals. Also, this method enabled the researcher to deliberately select religious leaders who are actively involved in church-based programs that support the rehabilitation of street children.

This approach was appropriate because it reduced variation among participants by deliberately selecting religious leaders from organizations that are actively involved in the rehabilitation of street-connected children through their religious affiliation (Ojok et al., 2022).

Table 1

Sampling Frame Matrix

Participants Category	Target Population	Sampling Technique	Sample Size	Percentage
Street Children	11,000	Cluster Sampling and Snowball Sampling	370	52%
Community Leaders	600	Criterion Sampling	10	16%
Cultural Leaders	420	Expert Sampling	10	16%
Religious Leaders	340	Homogeneous Sampling	10	16%

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

This sampling approach ensured that the study obtain representative data from key people who are involved in the rehabilitation of Aguu children in Northern Uganda, thereby providing reliable insights into the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in the selected districts of Northern Uganda.

3.6 Description of Research Instruments

In research studies, research instruments are tools used for data collection, measurement, and data analysis (Lasmana et al., 2024). Because each variable must be precisely captured in

accordance with its conceptual or theoretical description. So, choosing the right instruments is essential. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were employed to obtain comprehensive data. The quantitative instrument included questionnaires. As Srivastava (2024) postulates that questionnaires are useful instruments for gathering organized data from many numbers of respondents. In this study, street children were key participants, and therefore their views and experiences were taken into consideration while developing the questionnaire. The questionnaire also helped gather information on their experiences regarding the Catholic Church's intervention in their transformation in selected districts of Northern Uganda. And the qualitative instrument included an in-depth interview guide, which was used to collect detailed information from community leaders, cultural and religious leaders. An in-depth interview guide was a useful qualitative instrument that helped participants personalize a social issue and built a genuine picture of their perspectives on a specific occurrence. In fact, the participant's stories also helped the researcher to comprehend how people interpret their daily encounters and answer the questions of research. Indeed, flexibility during interviews was necessary because each person had unique experience and response. Through these interviews, the researcher got deeper insights into how the Catholic Church's intervention contributed to the rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

3.6.1 Questionnaire for Street Children

To collect quantitative data, questionnaires were administered to street children who have benefited from or were currently involved in rehabilitation programs supported by the Catholic Church in the selected districts of Northern Uganda. In fact, this approach provided a practical and affordable way to gather information from a relatively large number of respondents. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect the opinions and experiences of street children

regarding the Catholic Church's interventions in their transformation process. According to Srivastava (2024), the usefulness of a questionnaire in research lies in its ability to systematically collect data from a large group of respondents and to generate comparable responses across participants. One of the key advantages of this method is that it can make it possible for the researcher to collect data effectively from respondents who are spread across different geographical areas.

The structure of the study questionnaire was also arranged in accordance with the study's research goals, and also contained open-ended and closed-ended questions. Respondents to closed-ended questions were able to give organized answers that were simple to measure and evaluate, whereas open-ended questions enabled respondents to express their experiences and perceptions in greater detail. The questionnaire was consisting of five (5) sections (A–E). Section A captured demographic information such as age group, gender, and the amount of time spent on the street before entering rehabilitation programs. Section B focused on the psychosocial counseling support provided by the Catholic Church to the Aguu children, such as shelter, counseling and spiritual guidance, using a 5-item, five-point Likert agreement scale. Section C examined the formal education of street children as the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programs, using a 5-item, five-point Likert agreement scale. Section D explored the extent to which vocational skills training provided by Catholic Church interventions contribute to the personal transformation and empowerment of street children, using a 5-item, five-point Likert agreement scale. Finaly, Section E examined the influence of family tracing and reintegration in restoring relationships between street children and their families, thereby promoting their social reintegration into the family and community, also using a 5-item, five-point Likert agreement scale. The detailed questionnaire for the data collection was also included in Appendix IV.

3.6.2 In-depth Interview Guide for Community, Cultural, and Religious Leaders

An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method that involves direct and detailed conversations between the researcher and participants. This method enabled the researcher to ask open-ended and probing questions in order to better comprehend or understand the experiences of participants, perceptions, as well as decision-making processes. According to Bisaria et al. (2026), in-depth interviews are particularly useful when exploring complex social issues that require detailed explanations and personal reflections. This method therefore allowed the researcher to obtain rich insights into how community, cultural, and religious leaders perceive the role of the Catholic Church in the rehabilitation of street children.

The interview guide was administered to community leaders, cultural leaders, and religious leaders who were actively involved in community-based initiatives or church-supported programs addressing the challenges faced by street children. Their leadership roles and direct engagement with the community place them in a strategic position to provide informed perspectives on the effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions. Of course, the interview guide was structured into five (5) sections (A–E). Section A was to collect demographic information such as gender, age group, leadership role, and years of experience in community, cultural, or religious leadership. Section B was to explore or find out the provision of psychosocial counseling support offered through Catholic Church interventions in addressing the needs of street children in the selected districts. Section C was to examine or establish the role of formal education in the rehabilitation and development of street children. Section D focused on the role of vocational skills and training in empowering street children or Aguu and supporting their personal transformation and economic independence. Finally, Section E was to establish the

influence of family tracing and reintegration in restoring relationships between street children and their families and promoting their social reintegration into their community in Northern Uganda. The detailed interview questions for the data collection are in Appendix V.

3.7 Determination of Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Prior to the actual data collection exercise, the tools were subjected to validation processes. They all underwent a pilot trial and consistency checks. Several techniques were employed to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments designed to assess the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

3.7.1 Determination of Validity of the Research Instruments

According to Armour and Williams (2022), validity ensures that research instruments or tools accurately measure the intended variables and produce results that reflect actual values. To establish validity in assessing the Catholic Church's interventions, the researcher conducted face, content, and construct validity checks. Subject-matter experts evaluated the items for face validity to ensure their appropriateness in collecting the required data. Content validity involved expert consultation to confirm that the instruments cover all critical aspects of the study (Connelly, 2022). Additionally, a review of relevant literature, expert input from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi and pilot testing were used both to strengthen construct and content validity.

The assessments by subject experts established the validity of qualitative data collection tools, while a small pilot sample was used to identify ambiguities and make necessary modifications (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Also, triangulating data sources to strengthen credibility of qualitative tool was employed by combining multiple data sources to increase

credibility, and member verification or checking would improve the accuracy and applicability of findings. In addition, dependability of qualitative tool (interview) was built through a transparent audit trial and standardized interview protocols to ensure consistent, trustworthy overall findings. Also, to ensure consistency in data collection and interpretation, research assistants were trained, and frequent debriefing sessions was conducted (Bans-Akutey & Timub, 2021).

3.7.2 Pilot Testing of Research Instruments

Prior to testing for reliability, pilot research was conducted to improve and validate the instruments or tools used to evaluate the Catholic Church's interventions. The pilot phase involved a sample drawn from communities similar to those in the main study. That is, 10 Aguu members picked from the sample size filled out the questionnaire. About 6 religious, cultural and community leaders picked from the sample size joined one-on-one interviews. This fine-tunes how we measure the Catholic Church's success in transforming the lives of Aguu in northern Uganda.

Ten (10) responses obtained during the pilot testing enabled the researcher to identify unclear wording, ambiguous items, and confusing response scales without creating excessive logistical demands. In addition, six (6) interviews were conducted to obtain feedback on the flow of questions and their relevance to the study, while keeping the analysis manageable. This combination helped the researcher identify and address potential misunderstandings at an early stage, thereby ensuring that the instruments used in the main study accurately captured the Church's contribution to the rehabilitation of Aguu.

Furthermore, the pilot testing procedure provided an opportunity to assess the efficacy, relevance, and clarity of the instruments in collecting the required data (Khanal & Chhetri, 2024;

Mehendale & Patil, 2024; Muresherwa & Loyiso, 2022). Each instrument was carefully reviewed to identify ambiguities, duplication, and areas requiring modification or refinement (Tate et al., 2023). Feedback obtained from the participants informed necessary adjustments to improve the appropriateness, clarity, and accuracy of the instruments. Consequently, the pilot testing enhanced confidence that differences observed in the main study would reflect genuine findings rather than errors arising from poorly designed or inconsistent research instruments.

3.7.3 Determination of Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability ensured consistency, dependability, and reproducibility of results (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021). To ensure reliability of the research tools, the researcher pilot tested with a representative sample to refine the instruments and measure metrics. In quantitative data, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach alpha which was run on SPSS. For example, a 05-item questionnaire measuring "street children's sense of belonging") administered once to a sample of 08. Each item must use the same response scale (e.g., 1–5 Likert). Missing values are handled (listwise deletion or imputation). Cronbach's α is calculated as:

$$\alpha = \frac{k \cdot \bar{r}}{1 + (k - 1) \cdot \bar{r}}$$

where k = number of items, $\bar{r}$ = average inter-item correlation. The output gives a single number between 0 and 1. And the result $\alpha \geq 0.90 \rightarrow$ excellent. While the split-half method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument by determining the extent to which the items consistently measured the same construct, taking into account their inter-item correlations. The instrument was divided into two equivalent sections comprising even- and odd-numbered items, after which Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. Glen (2023) notes that a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable, while a coefficient of approximately 0.80 indicates strong reliability. Therefore, the reliability coefficient of 0.802

obtained during the pilot testing was considered adequate and satisfactory for the study (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021; Emerson, 2024).

Moreover, to enhance the reliability of the qualitative data, the researcher employed several strategies. First, inter-coder reliability was established by having two independent researchers code transcripts from the six pilot interviews and compare their identified themes until a consensus of over 90% was achieved. Second, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review the summaries of their interviews and verify their accuracy. This process went beyond simple proofreading, as participants were given an opportunity to clarify the researcher's interpretations, correct any misunderstandings, and provide additional information where necessary. These measures strengthened the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings.

3.8 Description of Data Collection Procedures

To ensure compliance with university research standards, the researcher first got a letter of clearance from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa's postgraduate studies department in Nairobi. Subsequently, a research permit was sought from Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports to obtain official authorization to conduct research within Uganda. District administrative authorities, district officials, and relevant Church leaders were notified and engaged. Following receipt of all clearances, official written requests sent to selected Church facilities and stakeholders involved in street children rehabilitation, seeking their consent to take part in the research. Questionnaires were administered personally to participants in the selected districts (Gulu, Lira, Kitgum and Pader), allowing approximately two weeks for completion. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person with religious leaders, community leaders and cultural leaders in the selected districts (Gulu, Lira, Kitgum and Pader)—allowing approximately

three weeks for completion of recording (using smartphone which has high-quality recording app to record audio only) as well as transcription—in order to gain their in-depth perspectives on the Catholic Church's interventions, challenges, and outcomes in the transformation of Aguu children.

3.9 Description of Data Analysis Procedures

The interpretation and analysis of data for this study was conducted sequentially. That is, qualitative themes were used to explain quantitative patterns. Prior to analysis, quantitative data were carefully prepared through data cleaning and handling of missing values to ensure accuracy and reliability. This process involved checking for completeness of responses, identifying missing data, and addressing them appropriately through methods such as listwise deletion, pairwise deletion, or data imputation depending on the extent and pattern of missingness. For example, in listwise deletion, the researcher simply said 30 Aguu answered vocational skills question and 25 answered psychosocial counselling question or if one Aguu missed a question, the researcher would ask another Aguu to answer it. In addition, data were screened for errors, outliers, and inconsistencies, and coding verified before entry into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences—version 30).

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) summarized the data, while inferential statistics (correlation coefficients, such as Pearson's *r*) were used to test the strength and direction of relationships between key variables. The results of this analysis identified which quantitative relationships require deeper explanation or to identified points of convergence and divergence. For the qualitative phase, data from recorded in-depth interviews were transcribed using otter.ai by the researcher and then reviewed, coded,

and analyzed thematically following Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) procedures.

In their mixed methods work, Creswell and Clark (2023) outline seven steps for qualitative data analysis. First, the researcher would prepare and organize data, such as by transcribing interviews and typing field notes and arrange data into manageable formats such as word file among others (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Next, the researcher would read through everything to jot down initial thoughts and get a general sense of the information. Then came the heart of analysis: coding the data, which involved breaking it into segments and labeling them. After coding, the researcher grouped similar codes into broader categories or themes, which were then reviewed and refined. The researcher represented these findings clearly, perhaps in a narrative or a visual display. Next, the researcher interpreted the data, connecting themes to the bigger picture of his mixed methods study. For example, relating the findings to research questions, literature, or theory. Finally, the researcher validated his findings to ensure they were accurate and credible, following the eight verification procedures like triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing among others as recommended by Creswell and Clark (2023). These steps helped a researcher integrate qualitative insights with quantitative data to draw meaningful conclusions (Younas et al., 2023), making the process both systematic and also human. In fact, it involved a detailed, line-by-line examination of transcripts to identify recurring themes, followed by a search for connections across these themes to develop a coherent narrative of the participants' experiences. Interpretation occurred during the integration phase, where qualitative themes were used to explain, contextualize, and illuminate quantitative correlations. For example, if quantitative data showed a strong correlation between vocational training and reduced criminality, qualitative data revealed that this is because the training instilled a sense of

purpose and provided a socially acceptable peer group, thereby explaining the mechanism behind the statistical relationship.

To ensure validity and reliability (quantitative) and trustworthiness (qualitative), rigorous measures were implemented. Internal validity was addressed by acknowledging that correlation does not imply causation. Reliability was established by pilot-testing the survey instrument to ensure consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and by using clear, unambiguous questions. For qualitative phenomenological design, trustworthiness was established through credibility (internal validity), ensured via prolonged engagement and member checking; dependability (reliability), maintained through an audit trail of all research decisions; transferability (external validity), supported by providing thick, rich contextual descriptions; and confirmability (objectivity), achieved through reflexivity, where the researcher continually reflect on and acknowledge biases and preconceptions about the Aguu and the rehabilitation process (Creswell & Poth, 2022). By meticulously applying these standards across both methodological strands, this mixed-methods study yielded a robust, valid, and deeply insightful understanding of the Catholic Church's role in rehabilitating street children in Northern Uganda.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Responsible research practices guided by ethical principles were used to ensure safety of the participants and research integrity. These involved informed consent, assent form, avoidance of harm, respecting people's dignity, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, honesty, transparency, and avoidance of deception (Arifin, 2018). Prior to data collection, all necessary licenses and approvals were obtained from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi-Kenya, Uganda's Ministry of Education and sports, and district authorities.

Written consent forms outlining the study's purpose, rights of participants, and

confidentiality was given to all the participants. Also, participation was voluntary or not by force and respondents were free to withdraw at any time without repercussion. The researcher did not gather any personally identifiable information, and culturally sensitive techniques was employed during data collection.

Moreso, only the researcher had access to the safely stored data. And all secondary sources were properly cited to uphold academic honesty. The collected data were used solely for the purposes of this study. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the study's legitimacy, credibility, and the welfare of participants were fully maintained (Creswell, 2022).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four offers the findings of the investigation in accordance with the research questions. It is organized into sections including the response rate of participants, demographic details like age, gender, current living status, duration on the street, district of residence, years of participant's experience, leadership role, and other relevant background information. Additionally, the chapter presents, interprets, and discusses the results, which are in line with the study's research questions.

4.2 Instrument Return Rates

The research tools were given to various groups of study participants. These included questionnaires distributed to street children (Aguu), while in-depth interviews were conducted with community leaders, cultural leaders, and religious leaders. Table 2 displays the findings.

Table 2

The participants response rate for the study

Participants	Sampled Participants	Actual Participants	Return Rate (%)
Street Children (Aguu)	370	370	100
Community Leaders	10	10	100
Cultural Leaders	10	10	100
Religious Leaders	10	10	100

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

As shown in Table 2, all the 370 questionnaires distributed to street children (Aguu) were completed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate, which was considered adequate for

data analysis and reporting. Similarly, all 10 community leaders, 10 cultural leaders, and 10 religious leaders took part in the in-depth interviews, resulting in a response rate of 100% for every respondent category.

Indeed, reaching a response rate 100% can be attributed to effective planning and coordination during the process of collecting data. The questionnaires were personally distributed and collected by the researcher and his assistants, who also gave the participants a thorough explanation of the goal and importance of the study, and worked closely with the Catholic Church rehabilitation centres and community leaders to schedule convenient times for data collection. This approach enhanced participants' willingness to participate and ensured that all interviews and questionnaires were successfully completed. The full participation of the respondents ensured that no data were lost during the data collection process.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), a response rate of 50% is adequate for data analysis and reporting, 60% is considered good, and 70% or above is regarded as excellent. As a result, the study's 100% response rate was outstanding and provided sufficient information for the study's analysis, interpretation, and reporting of the findings.

4.3 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

The study looked at the respondents' age, gender, length of stay on the street before rehabilitation, district of residence, participation in the Catholic Church rehabilitation programme, and the profiles of Cultural, Religious, and Community Leaders. These characteristics provided important background information for interpreting the findings and understanding of the respondents' perspectives on the Catholic Church's role in the street children's (Aguu) transformative rehabilitation in the selected districts of Northern Uganda.

4.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Street Children (Aguu)

The investigator aimed to determine the demographic features of the street children (Aguu) who participated in the study. This was assessed based on of age, gender, present street status, duration spent on the street before rehabilitation, district of residence, and participation in the Catholic Church rehabilitation programme. Table 3 presents the findings.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Street Children (Aguu) (n = 370)

Demographic Characteristics		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Age	1–5 Years	21	5.7
	6–10 Years	109	29.5
	11–15 Years	89	24.1
	16–20 Years	93	25.1
	20 Years and above	58	15.7
Gender	Male	254	68.6
	Female	116	31.4
Currently Living on the Street	Yes	99	26.8
	No	269	72.7
	Other	2	0.5
Duration on the Street before Rehabilitation	Less than 1 year	54	14.6
	1–3 Years	163	44.1
	3–5 Years	90	24.3
	More than 5 years	63	17.0
District of Residence	Pader	46	12.4
	Lira	51	13.8
	Kitgum	51	13.8
	Gulu	223	60.03
Participation in Catholic Church Rehabilitation Programme	Yes	267	72.2
	No	103	27.9
Total		**370**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

As seen in Table 3, the investigator sought to determine the gender distribution of the street children (Aguu) in order to understand whether both male and female children were

adequately represented in the study. The results showed that 68.6% of the respondents were male, while 31.4% were female. This shows that both genders participated in the research, although male street children constituted the majority of the respondents. The inclusion of both genders made sure that the results represented a range of street children's rehabilitation experiences in Northern Uganda.

Additionally, the study also aimed to ascertain the age distribution of the respondents because age is an important factor that may influence children's rehabilitation needs, psychosocial development, educational opportunities, and social reintegration. The results demonstrated that the majority of those who responded (29.5%) were aged 6–10 years, followed by 25.1% aged 16–20 years, 24.1% aged 11–15 years, 15.7% aged 20 years and above, while 5.7% were aged 1–5 years. These findings suggest that the Catholic Church rehabilitation programmes serve children and young people across different age groups, with the majority being within school-going age.

Regarding the respondents' current living status, the study sought to establish whether the children were still living on the streets when the data were collected. This information was important in determining the reach and effectiveness of the Catholic Church rehabilitation programmes. According to the results, 72.7% of the participants stated that they were no longer living on the streets, while 26.8% indicated that they were still living on the streets. This suggests that the majority of the children had benefited from rehabilitation interventions aimed at removing them from street life and facilitating their reintegration into safer living environments.

The study further examined the duration the respondents had spent on the streets before joining rehabilitation programmes. Understanding this variable was important because prolonged exposure to street life may influence the severity of psychosocial challenges and the complexity

of the rehabilitation process. The findings indicated that 44.1% of the respondents had spent 1–3 years on the streets before entering rehabilitation programmes, 24.3% had stayed 3–5 years, 17.0% had lived on the streets in the North of Uganda for more than five years, while 14.6% had spent less than one year. These results show that a large number of respondents had experienced prolonged street life before receiving support from the Catholic Church.

Additionally, the survey aimed to determine the respondents' Northern Uganda district of domicile in order to determine the geographical distribution of the participants across the selected districts of Northern Uganda. According to the results, the majority of respondents (60.0%) were from Gulu District, while 13.8% were from Lira District, another 13.8% from Kitgum District, and 12.4% from Pader District. This distribution reflects the concentration of most rehabilitation programmes and the prevalence of street children within the selected study districts.

Finally, the study further examined the respondents' participation in Catholic Church rehabilitation programmes because direct involvement in these programmes was essential in assessing the effectiveness of the Church's interventions. The findings showed that 72.2% of the respondents had participated in Catholic Church rehabilitation programmes, whereas 27.6% had not. This high level of participation shows that the vast majority of the respondeers had firsthand experience about the Catholic Church's interventions, making them well placed to provide reliable information regarding the contribution of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration to the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

4.3.2 Demographic Characteristics of Key Informants

The goal of the study was to determine the main informants' demographics. The primary

informants comprised Cultural Leaders, Religious Leaders, and Community Leaders drawn from the selected districts of Northern Uganda. Their demographic characteristics were looked at in terms of gender, age, leadership position, years of experience, type of organization, and district of operation. These characteristics were considered important because they provide insights into the background, experience, and perspectives of individuals directly involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration of street children (Aguu). Table 4 presents the findings.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Key Informants (n = 30)

Demographic Characteristics		**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	23	76.7
	Female	7	23.3
Age Bracket	25–40 Years	6	20.0
	41–60 Years	10	33.3
	61–80 Years	9	30.0
	81–100 Years	5	16.7
Leadership Role	Administrator	4	13.3
	Project Officer	4	13.3
	Advisor	2	6.7
	Bishop	5	16.7
	Episcopal Vicar	2	6.7
	Parish Priest	3	10.0
	Spiritual Director	4	13.3
	Matron	1	3.3
	Counsellor	4	13.3
	Administrative Secretary	1	3.3
Years of Experience	1–10 Years	17	56.7
	11–20 Years	5	16.7
	21–30 Years	4	13.3
	31–40 Years	4	13.3
Type of Organization	Cultural Leaders	10	33.3
	Community Leaders	10	33.3
	Catholic Church	10	33.3
District	Pader	7	23.3
	Lira	8	26.7
	Kitgum	7	23.3
	Gulu	8	26.7
Total		**30**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

As seen in Table 4, the investigator aimed to ascertain the gender distribution of the key informants (cultural leaders, religious leaders and community leaders) in order to establish whether the study captured diverse leadership perspectives on the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformation of Aguu in the selected districts of Northern Uganda. The results showed that 76.7% of the key informants were male, while 23.3% were female. This indicates that although both genders were represented, male respondents constituted the majority of the participants. This distribution reflects the leadership composition of many religious and cultural institutions in Northern Uganda, where senior leadership positions are predominantly occupied by men. Nevertheless, the inclusion of female respondents, particularly among community leaders, ensured that women's experiences and perspectives on child protection, psychosocial counselling, formal education, family tracing and reintegration were adequately represented.

Studies emphasized that gender diversity in leadership enhances the quality and credibility of the responses by bringing together varied experiences of respondents, their perspectives, and approaches to addressing social challenges (UN Women, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). In the context of this study, the participation of both male and female strengthened the breadth of information gathered regarding the rehabilitation of street children. Male religious and cultural leaders provided strategic and institutional perspectives on policy implementation and also faith-based interventions, while female community leaders contributed valuable insights into caregiving, emotional support, family dynamics, and community-based rehabilitation processes.

Furthermore, promoting gender inclusivity among key informants increases the study's conclusions' legitimacy, applicability, and significance. Different leadership experiences enable a more comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial, educational, vocational, and family-related interventions implemented by the Catholic Church. Such diversity also supports the

balanced decision-making and promotes more responsive rehabilitation programmes that address the needs of both girls and boys and living on the streets. Consequently, the representation of both genders enriches the interpretation of the results and advances a more comprehensive knowledge of the Catholic Church's function in the social reintegration and transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

Regarding the respondents' ages, the research aimed to ascertain the age distribution of the key informants because age is often associated with leadership maturity, professional experience and knowledge of community dynamics. By examining this variable, the study aimed to establish whether different age groups contributed diverse experiences and insights regarding the rehabilitation and reintegration of Aguu. The findings showed that the largest proportion of respondents (33.3%) were aged 41–60 years, followed by 30.0% who were 61–80 years, 20.0% who were 25–40 years, and 16.7% who were 81–100 years. These results indicate that the vast majority of the respondents were actually mature and experienced leaders who had served their communities (districts) for many years.

Therefore, these respondents were considered appropriate for this study because they possess historical knowledge of the challenges facing Aguu in Northern Uganda, especially during and after the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict. Their long-standing involvement in pastoral ministry, cultural and community leadership and rehabilitation programmes enabled them to provide rich and informed perspectives on the effectiveness of the Catholic Church's interventions. At the same time, the inclusion of younger leaders brought contemporary perspectives, innovative approaches, and practical experiences regarding current child rehabilitation strategies. The combination of both older and younger leaders therefore strengthened the depth, credibility, and diversity of the study results.

As such, study by Robin and David (2020) observed that age-diverse leadership teams enhance organizational decision-making by combining institutional experience with innovation and adaptability. Similarly, Michael et al. (2022) reported that experienced leaders provide historical knowledge and strategic guidance, while younger leaders contribute creativity and responsiveness to emerging social challenges. In the context of this study, the diversity in age among the key informants enriched the understanding of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programmes by integrating historical experience with contemporary approaches to psychosocial support, education, vocational training, and family reintegration. This combination enhanced the reliability of the information obtained and strengthened the interpretation of the study findings.

Concerning leadership roles, the study sought to find out the positions held by the respondents because different leadership responsibilities provide different levels of interaction with rehabilitation programmes and policy implementation. The results showed that 16.7% of the participants were Bishops, while 13.3% were Administrators, 13.3% were Project Officers, 13.3% were Spiritual Directors, and 13.3% were Counsellors. Parish Priests constituted 10.0%, whereas Advisors and Episcopal Vicars each accounted for 6.7% of the respondents. Matrons and Administrative Secretaries represented 3.3% each.

This distribution demonstrates that the study obtained views from individuals occupying diverse leadership positions within the Catholic Church, community organizations, and cultural institutions. Such diversity enhanced the richness of the findings because each category of respondent contributes unique experiences regarding psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational training, family tracing, policy implementation, and community reintegration of street children. Consequently, the inclusion of leaders with different responsibilities strengthened the breadth, credibility, and richness of the qualitative findings by providing multiple viewpoints on

the planning, implementation, and sustainability of rehabilitation interventions.

A study by Northouse (2022) observed that leadership effectiveness is strengthened when organizations incorporate individuals serving in diverse leadership roles because each contributes specialized knowledge, decision-making capacities, and practical experiences that enhance organizational outcomes. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) emphasized that child protection and rehabilitation programmes are more effective when they involve leaders from multiple sectors, including religious institutions, community organizations, and local governance structures, since such collaboration promotes holistic service delivery and sustainable reintegration. In this study, the diversity of leadership positions among the key participants enriched the understanding of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programmes by integrating strategic, pastoral, administrative, and community perspectives. This multidisciplinary representation enhanced the credibility of the data gathered and reinforced the analysis and interpretation of the research results about the rehabilitation and reintegration of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

The study further sought to determine the years of experience of the key informants because professional experience is often associated with a deeper understanding of rehabilitation programmes and child welfare interventions. According to the results, 16.7% of the respondents had 11-20 years of experience, while 56.7% had 1-10 years. In addition, some participants of 13.3% had served for 21–30 years and 13.3% had 31–40 years of experience. These findings indicate that although the vast majority of the participants had between one and ten years of formal leadership experience, they had acquired substantial practical knowledge through direct involvement in psychosocial counselling, community outreach, family tracing and reintegration, and rehabilitation programmes for vulnerable children like Aguu. The inclusion of respondents with over twenty years of experience further enriched the study by providing historical and

institutional perspectives on the evolution of the Catholic Church's interventions in Northern Uganda. The combination of relatively experienced practitioners and long-serving leaders therefore strengthened the depth, credibility, and reliability of the information generated during the interviews.

A study by Northouse (2022) observed that leadership experience enhances decision-making, problem-solving, and organizational effectiveness because experienced leaders are better equipped to interpret complex situations and guide programme implementation. Similarly, the UNICEF (2021) Child Protection Strategy emphasizes that experienced child protection practitioners play a very important role in improving the quality and also the sustainability of rehabilitation programmes through accumulated practical knowledge, mentorship, and institutional memory. In this study, the varied years of experience among the key informants enriched the understanding of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation initiatives by combining practical field experience with long-term institutional knowledge. This diversity of experience enhanced the validity of the results and offered a thorough comprehension of the challenges and opportunities associated with the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

Nonetheless, the study also sought to find out the type of organization represented by the key informants because institutional affiliation influences the nature of interventions, perspectives, and experiences regarding the rehabilitation of Aguu. The findings revealed that 33.3% of the respondents represented Cultural Leadership institutions, 33.3% represented Community Leadership organizations, while the remaining 33.3% were drawn from the Catholic Church. These findings indicate that the study achieved balanced institutional representation from the three principal stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration of Aguu in Northern Uganda. This implies that the rehabilitation of street children is a shared responsibility

that requires collaboration among cultural institutions, community organizations, and the Catholic Church. It further suggests that each institution contributes distinct but complementary roles, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of psychosocial support, education, vocational skills development, family reintegration, and community reintegration. The balanced representation also enhances the validity and thoroughness of the research findings by guaranteeing that multiple institutional perspectives were considered in understanding the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children in Northern Uganda.

These findings align with a study by UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that sustainable rehabilitation outcomes for vulnerable children are achieved through coordinated partnerships among religious institutions, community organizations, traditional leadership structures, and government agencies. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) argues that addressing complex social challenges requires collaboration among diverse institutions because each stakeholder contributes complementary knowledge, resources, and capacities that enhance programme effectiveness. In addition, a study by United Nations (2022) highlights that integrated approaches involving faith-based organizations, community actors, and traditional institutions strengthen child protection systems by improving coordination, community ownership, and long-term reintegration outcomes. In this study, the balanced institutional representation among the key informants provided diverse and complementary perspectives on the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu). This institutional diversity enhanced the credibility of the results and also provided a holistic understanding of how collaborative efforts contribute to sustainable rehabilitation and social reintegration in Northern Uganda.

Lastly, the study sought to establish the geographical distribution of the key respondents

because geographical representation is important in capturing contextual differences in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes across Northern Uganda. The results revealed that 26.7% of the responders were drawn from Lira District, another 26.7% from Gulu District, while 23.3% came from Pader District and 23.3% from Kitgum District. These findings suggest that the study achieved a relatively balanced representation of the four selected districts, thereby ensuring that the findings reflected diverse geographical experiences and contextual realities regarding the rehabilitation of street children (Aguu). This representation was considered appropriate because each district has experienced unique social, cultural, and post-conflict dynamics that influence the nature and effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions. Respondents from the different districts provided valuable insights into variations in Catholic Church programmes, community participation, cultural practices, psychosocial counselling, vocational training, family reintegration, and child protection initiatives. Consequently, the geographical diversity of the key participants strengthened the comprehensiveness, credibility, and transferability of the study findings by ensuring that the perspectives obtained were not limited to a single locality but reflected the broader realities of Northern Uganda.

The findings are consistent with UNICEF (2021), which observed that child protection interventions are more effective when they are informed by local contexts and community realities, as the needs and vulnerabilities of children often vary across geographical locations. Similarly, UNDP (2024) noted that regional disparities in social services, economic opportunities, and community support systems significantly influence the outcomes of rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes. And further study by UNESCO (2021) emphasized that context-sensitive and geographically inclusive approaches strengthen the design, implementation, and sustainability of education and social protection programmes by ensuring

that interventions respond to local needs and cultural realities.

In the context of this study, the balanced geographical representation of the key respondents enhanced the understanding of the Catholic Church's intervention in the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) by incorporating experiences from different districts with varying post-conflict realities, cultural traditions, and institutional capacities. This geographical diversity strengthened the credibility, applicability, and validity of the study results across Northern Uganda. Overall, the demographic characteristics demonstrate that the study engaged experienced and knowledgeable key informants whose diverse backgrounds, leadership positions, institutional affiliations, and geographical representation provided rich, credible, and comprehensive information for understanding the Catholic Church's role in the transformation of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

4.4 The Role of Psychosocial Counselling Support in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The first research question of the study examined the role of psychosocial counselling support in the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda. To achieved this, participants were actually asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements given using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Role of Psychosocial Counselling Support in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) (n = 370)

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.

	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
I have received counselling or spiritual guidance through the Church rehabilitation programme.	142 (38.4)	25 (6.8)	-	160 (43.2)	43 (11.6)	3.9000	1.30176
I regularly participate in counselling or spiritual activities organized by the Church and have improved my social life and coping strategies.	123 (33.2)	31 (8.4)	1 (0.3)	34 (9.2)	181 (48.9)	4.0432	1.28711
The psychosocial support provided by the Church has improved my emotional well-being and empowered me.	39 (10.5)	21 (5.7)	-	112 (30.3)	198 (53.5)	4.1054	1.30549
The Church has provided me with a safe and stable shelter during my rehabilitation process.	107 (28.9)	26 (7.0)	1 (0.3)	36 (9.7)	200 (54.1)	4.1054	1.30133
Counselling support from the Church has positively influenced my behaviour and interactions with others.	37 (10.0)	23 (6.2)	1 (0.3)	99 (26.8)	210 (56.8)	4.1405	1.30529

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

As seen in table 5, majority of the respondents 54.8% (n = 203) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that they had received counselling or spiritual guidance through the Church rehabilitation programme. This suggests that the Catholic Church offers psychosocial and spiritual support to street children (Aguu), thereby relating to the rehabilitation, transformation and reintegration process. The mean score of 3.90 (SD = 1.302) further reflects a generally positive perception of these interventions. However, 38.4% (n = 142) of the

respondents disagreed and 6.8% (n = 25) strongly disagreed, indicating that not all respondents had similar experiences or access to counselling or spiritual guidance through the Church rehabilitation programme. It further implies possible variations in programme accessibility, duration of participation, institutional capacity, or the implementation of psychosocial support services across different rehabilitation centres. Leaders (Cultural, Community and Religious leaders) were interviewed and a Community Leader in Gulu (CLG 1) said:

> Most of these children arrive with deep emotional wounds resulting from violence, neglect, and rejection. Counselling enables them to rediscover their dignity and begin trusting other people again. Beyond emotional healing, the rehabilitation process also emphasizes Christian values, moral formation, and prayer, encouraging children to embrace values such as honesty, respect, and peaceful living while giving them hope for a better future and helping them feel valued and accepted (Community Leader in Gulu 1, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Later, while talking about the role of the Catholic Church, a Religious Leader in Kitgum (RLK 2) noted:

> The Church provides holistic psychosocial support to street children (Aguu) through counselling, spiritual guidance, recreation, and social interaction. Activities such as eating together, playing football, netball, and participating in other group activities help improve their emotional well-being, reduce aggression, and build healthy relationships. Through these interactions, the children encourage one another, develop hope for a better future, and gain confidence that they can succeed in life. Spiritual guidance further gives them a sense of belonging and purpose, helping them to forgive themselves, embrace a new life, and recognize

> that they are valued and accepted (Religious Leader in Kitgum 2, Interview, 7th July 2026).

During another interview, a Religious Leader in Lira (RLL 4) revealed that:

> Well, there are many approaches, but for me, the most effective is counseling. That is one very important aspect. Additionally, we have community gatherings where these individuals can meet with experienced people like tutors, parents, and religious or popular leaders. These figures make a significant difference. It is also crucial to involve the parents, so that all different aspects are brought in. Fundamentally, the aspect of religion is to be brought in very strongly, because when you lose sight of God, the light becomes worthless and you can do anything. The conscience formation is also be part of this psychosocial formation (Religious Leader in Lira (RLL) 4, Interview, 10th July 2026).

These findings are consistent with those of Yildirim et al. (2020), who found that psychosocial counselling plays a critical role in the rehabilitation of street children by promoting emotional healing, restoring self-esteem, strengthening coping skills, and facilitating successful social reintegration. Their study emphasized that counselling, when combined with supportive environments and life skills interventions, significantly enhances resilience and long-term transformation among vulnerable children. Similarly, the findings also concur with Julien (2025), who argued that effective rehabilitation of street-connected children requires long-term counselling and social integration beyond the provision of basic needs. It further emphasized that counselling enables children to recover from trauma, rebuild their identity, and successfully reintegrate into society. Similarly, the present study demonstrates that psychosocial counselling, spiritual guidance, moral formation, prayer, and recreational activities provided through the

Catholic Church help street children rediscover their dignity, develop hope, improve emotional well-being, and embrace positive lifestyles.

Regarding participation in counselling and spiritual activities organized by the Church, the findings reveal that 17.6% (n = 65) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided. However, a combined 82.1% (n = 304) agreed and strongly agreed that regular participation in counselling and spiritual activities had improved their social life and coping strategies. The statement yielded a mean score of 4.04 (SD = 1.287), indicating strong agreement among the respondents. These findings imply that continuous participation in psychosocial and spiritual programmes enables rehabilitated children to develop positive coping mechanisms, improve interpersonal relationships, and strengthen their resilience against social and emotional challenges. During the interviews, a CLG 2 shared:

> Through regular counselling sessions, many street children gradually learn how to control anger, communicate better, and relate positively with others. However, many still do not have the opportunity to participate consistently because of limited resources and varying levels of the programme access (A CLG 2, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Building on this narrative, CLL 2 further explained:

> Through counselling and the teaching of Christian values, the children gradually improve their emotional well-being, social relationships, and coping abilities. Many arrive from the streets having been exposed to negative influences such as theft, quarrelling, and abusive language, which they often adopt as survival mechanisms. Counselling helps them understand positive values, manage their emotions, resolve conflicts peacefully, and develop healthier ways of interacting

> with others. As they embrace these values, they gradually adjust their behaviour, become more respectful, and begin living positively within the community. However, not all children change at the same pace, as some require longer periods of counselling and consistent follow-up due to the severity of their past experiences and the challenges of readjusting to society (A CLL 2, Interview, 6th July 2026).

This comment demonstrates that psychosocial counselling and spiritual guidance play a vital role in transforming the lives of Aguu by improving their emotional, social relationships, coping strategies, well-being, and behaviour. The interviews show that counselling extends beyond emotional healing to include moral formation through Christian values, enabling children to overcome negative behaviours acquired on the streets, develop healthy interpersonal relationships, and build resilience. At the same time, the respondents acknowledged that limited resources, inconsistent programme participation, and the severity of some children's traumatic experiences affect the pace and extent of transformation. These findings suggest that while the Church's counselling programmes are often effective in promoting rehabilitation and social reintegration, expanding access and also providing sustained follow-up support would further strengthen their impact on the transformation of street children (Aguu).

Indeed, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Ochieng (2022), who found that psychosocial counselling strengthens emotional well-being, positive coping strategies, and behavioural change among street children. They also concur with Mhizha, Marandure, and Chikoko (2021), who reported that counselling, religious support, peer interaction, and community engagement enhance resilience, psychosocial well-being, and social reintegration. Similarly, the present study established that regular participation in counselling and spiritual activities improved the children's emotional well-being, social relationships, coping abilities, and

behaviour. Interview findings further revealed that counselling enabled the children to manage anger, abandon negative behaviours such as theft, quarrelling, and abusive language, adopt Christian values, and develop hope and resilience. However, sustained counselling and consistent follow-up remain essential, as some children require longer rehabilitation due to the severity of their past experiences and unequal access to psychosocial support programmes.

Results in Table 5 also show that a combined majority of 83.8% (n = 310) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the psychosocial support provided by the Church had improved their emotional well-being and empowered them. This indicates that the Church's psychosocial interventions play a significant role in promoting emotional healing, restoring self-worth, and empowering street children (Aguu) to start over and reintegrate into society. The statement recorded a mean score of 4.11 (SD = 1.305), reflecting a very high level of agreement among the respondents. However, 10.5% (n = 39) of the respondents disagreed and 5.7% (n = 21) strongly disagreed with the assertion, suggesting that some beneficiaries may not have experienced similar levels of emotional support or empowerment, possibly due to differences in programme participation, individual experiences, or the severity of their psychosocial needs. The interviews further revealed that emotional healing is one of the most significant outcomes of the Church's rehabilitation programmes because it enables children to overcome traumatic experiences and regain confidence in themselves and society. A CLG 5 remarked that:

> Most children arrive feeling hopeless and worthless, but after psychosocial support they become emotionally stable, optimistic, and willing to pursue education or vocational training. It further revealed that healing emotionally is the first step towards transforming the entire life of a child (A CLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Notably, CLK 6 added that:

> The counseling we offer is all-round and clearly improves emotional well-being. When we speak to the children, they realize somebody cares about them and that they are important and valued. They also learn that others have suffered similarly yet attained change through commitment. Behaviorally, teaching Christian values helps them adjust, reducing theft, quarreling, and abusive language. Prayer instills grace and the fear of God, so they tread more carefully when tempted. Overall, they begin to feel happy and loved, and their conduct improves markedly. However, some children require longer periods of counselling and continuous support because the emotional wounds and experiences they bring from street life differ in severity (CLK 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

RLG 4 further explained that:

> Accessibility is good once rapport is built and children are in the programme—sessions happen daily, weekly, or as needed, both individually (in a private room) and in groups. However, for children still fully on the streets, access is harder; suspicion and mobility make initial contact difficult unless consistent presence, greeting, and trust-building occur first (RLG 4, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Talking about the Church efforts, RLK 3 said:

> The Church has made deliberate efforts to rehabilitate vulnerable children and young people through counselling, guidance, and livelihood support. We have worked with groups affected by war, substance abuse, and street life by bringing them together, listening to their challenges, and connecting them with support programmes. For example, after engaging some street children involved in illegal sand mining, we helped them access financial assistance to start income-generating

> activities such as goat rearing. We continued mentoring them through regular meetings and accepted them as members of our community rather than treating them as outsiders. This sense of acceptance, combined with counselling and practical support, encouraged positive behavioural change and strengthened their reintegration into society. However, limited resources prevent us from reaching and supporting every child who needs assistance (RLK 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings are aligned with studies by Gaetz et al. (2021), who found that psychosocial support enhances individuals' well-being, resilience, and adaptive coping among street-involved youth; Bertotti et al. (2022), who reported that community-based psychosocial interventions improve emotional well-being, self-esteem, and social relationships. Similarly, Steiner et al. (2023), established that structured counselling promotes emotional regulation, behavioural change, and successful community reintegration. Similarly, the present study found that the Church's psychosocial support, counselling, Christian values, and spiritual activities improved the emotional well-being, confidence, social relationships, behaviour, and overall empowerment of rehabilitated street children (Aguu), thereby facilitating their successful reintegration into society.

The findings reveal that 54.1% (n = 200) of the respondents strongly agreed and 9.7% (n = 36) agreed that the Church had provided them with safe and stable shelter during rehabilitation. This indicates that the to a large extent the Church provide secure accommodation, protection, and a stable environment that supports the rehabilitation and reintegration of street children (Aguu). The study's mean score of 4.11 (SD = 1.301), indicating strong agreement among the respondents. In contrast, 28.9% (n = 107) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 7.0% (n = 26) disagreed with the statement, while 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided. This implies that

although the majority of rehabilitated street children benefited from safe and stable shelter provided by the Church, a considerable proportion did not experience similar support, possibly due to limited shelter capacity, varying durations of programme participation, or differences in access to Church rehabilitation services.

This demonstrates that safe shelter serves as a foundation for effective psychosocial rehabilitation by providing the security and stability necessary for counselling, learning, and holistic recovery.

However, a notable proportion of respondents reported not receiving adequate shelter, possibly due to limited capacity and unequal access to rehabilitation services, the overall findings affirm that safe and stable accommodation is a foundational element of psychosocial rehabilitation, enabling children to regain security, stability, and hope for a better future. The findings align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), which emphasizes that basic physiological and safety needs, such as shelter and protection, must be met before individuals can achieve emotional healing and personal growth. By providing safe and stable accommodation, the Church creates an environment that supports emotional recovery of street children, behavioural transformation, and social reintegration among rehabilitated street children (Aguu), despite challenges of limited shelter capacity and unequal access for some beneficiaries. In another the interviews, RLG 6 stated that:

> Yes, the church provided safe and stable shelter because it is one of the first steps in rehabilitation. When children have a secure place to live, they begin to feel protected, regain trust in others, and become more receptive to counselling, education, and other rehabilitation programmes. However, limited space and

> resources sometimes prevent us from accommodating every child who needs shelter immediately (RLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Moreover, CLL 3 further said:

> Providing safe shelter gives the children a sense of stability and belonging that many have never experienced while living on the streets. Once they know they have a secure place to sleep, regular meals, and protection from danger, they become more willing to participate in rehabilitation activities and begin planning for a better future. However, maintaining adequate shelter for all children remains a challenge because of limited facilities and financial resources (CLL 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

As if that is not enough, CLG 7 shared:

> We experience several challenges during counselling. One is the language barrier, especially when external counsellors do not speak the children's local language, making communication difficult. Another challenge is that behavioural and emotional change takes time. The children often require repeated guidance before they fully understand, trust, and apply what they are taught. Many also compare themselves with other children and question why they lack similar opportunities, making it necessary to continually encourage them and restore their hope for the future. In addition, teaching prayer and Christian values requires patience because many children have no prior religious background and must first learn the basics before they can actively participate. Overall, effective counselling demands time, consistency, and continuous follow-up to achieve lasting transformation (CLG 7, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Additionally, another CLG 8 revealed that:

> Children often remain in denial, feeling worthless and unloved; resentment is deeply ingrained and requires great patience. Painful memories surface during sessions, leading to crying, tension, or argumentativeness. Some still carry a street mindset, making consistent engagement difficult. Mobility of those not yet settled in a centre further complicates regular follow-up. in addition, at the beginning children may give faulty information because they fear arrest or do not yet trust adults. Peer influence and residual street thoughts can undermine progress. Some misuse materials or machines during related activities. Building lasting trust and overcoming suspicion (especially among those still on the streets) takes sustained effort and time (CLG 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrate that the provision of safe and stable shelter is a fundamental component of the Church's psychosocial rehabilitation programme for street children (Aguu). By providing secure accommodation, protection, and a supportive environment, the Church creates the conditions necessary for counselling, emotional healing, behavioural transformation, and successful social reintegration. Although challenges such as limited shelter capacity, language barriers, trust-building, and the need for sustained follow-up affect the rehabilitation process, the overall evidence indicates that safe shelter serves as the foundation upon which other rehabilitation interventions become effective. These findings further affirmed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, highlighting that meeting children's basic safety and physiological needs is essential for promoting their emotional well-being, personal development, and long-term transformation.

Regarding whether counselling support had positively influenced the respondents' behaviour and interactions with others, the findings indicate that 16.2% (n = 60) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement, while 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided. In contrast, a combined 83.6% (n = 309) strongly agreed and agreed that counselling support provided by the Church had positively influenced their behaviour and social interactions. The statement recorded a mean score of 4.14 (SD = 1.305), indicating a high degree of consensus among participants. These results imply that psychosocial counselling from the church promote positive behavioural change, strengthening interpersonal relationships, enhancing conflict resolution skills, and facilitating the successful social reintegration of rehabilitated street children (Aguu). During the interviews, a CLG 5 noted:

> Children who initially displayed aggression, substance abuse, and antisocial behaviour gradually become respectful, cooperative and responsible members of the community after undergoing counselling. In addition, counselling changes how children see themselves and how they relate with others, making family reunification and community reintegration much more successful (CLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Also, RLG 9 observed that:

> We believed that continuity is built through ongoing community and church involvement, local leaders, Small Christian Communities, and regular follow-up visits. Children are linked to prayer groups, catechesis, and supportive adults so that the sense of care, accountability, and guidance does not end when formal rehabilitation finishes. Mediation and monitoring after reintegration further reinforce the psychosocial gains (RLG 9, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Moreover, RLK 5 explained:

> We invite church leaders, members, and willing Christians to participate in counseling and guidance. After children leave the centre they can continue meeting these same people in prayers, fellowship, choir, and other church programmes, thereby receiving ongoing spiritual and emotional support within the community. Further, after observing behavioural and moral improvement we enroll children in apprenticeship or vocational programmes (tailoring, hairdressing, construction, etc.). These practical pathways, combined with continued contact through church structures and peer networks, help maintain the gains made during rehabilitation and support longer-term emotional stability (RLK 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A CLP 8 observed:

> I believed that the programme must be regular and consistent. Counseling should be practical and reinforced with tangible support (food, clothing, hygiene items) so that teaching is demonstrated, not only spoken. Committed, experienced persons are needed, and a multidisciplinary approach involving religious leaders, teachers, health workers, and successful peers (peer-to-peer counseling) would strengthen impact (CLP 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLK 3 said:

> Counseling should be continuous rather than occasional; different therapeutic techniques should be available and referral made when one approach is ineffective. Greater emphasis on identity restoration, family preparation, and addressing root causes (poverty, family dysfunction) is essential. Involving parents and community leaders from the outset improves sustainability. Further, increase the frequency and

> reach of sessions, including more home and community visits by priests, catechists, and social workers. Provide friendly, non-condemnatory spaces and role models. Equip programmes with adequate resources, train facilitators thoroughly, and ensure strong follow-up after children leave centres so that emotional gains and behavioural change are maintained over time (CLK 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Explaining the role of the government, RLG 10 noted:

> Personally, I would suggest that a center or more specific place be provided for these people. The government should be involved in providing the resources to build a very comfortable shelter where they can be kept and introduced to skilling items. All these should be included. The atmosphere must be really friendly, brotherly, and sisterly. Even those who are helping them should not pose as enemies or as above them, but rather put themselves close like a friend, like a brother, like a parent. I think that way we could achieve better results (RLG 10, Interview, 6th July 2026).

These results are in line with a number of earlier investigations. For example, Yildirim et al. (2020) found that psychosocial counselling, when integrated with education, safety, and peer support, promoted emotional regulation, positive behavioural change, and successful social reintegration among street children. Similarly, Steiner, Adjei, and Kwashie (2023) reported that structured counselling significantly improved emotional regulation, social adaptation, trust-building, and community reintegration among vulnerable children, emphasizing the importance of sustained psychosocial support. Likewise, Mhizha, Marandure, and Chikoko (2021) established that resilience-based interventions, including counselling of street children, peer

support, and religious involvement, strengthened adaptive coping, psychosocial well-being, and also successful reintegration of street-connected children into society.

Indeed, based on these results, the present study demonstrate that psychosocial counselling support provided through the Catholic Church plays a critical role in promoting emotional healing, behavioural transformation, social integration, resilience, and the overall rehabilitation and reintegration of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the results of the hypothesis testing conducted to determine whether statistically significant associations exist between the Catholic Church's intervention programmes and the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda—using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The independent variables included psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration, while the dependent variable was the transformation of Aguu. The Pearson correlation analysis was also employed to establish both the direction and the strength of the relationships between each intervention and the transformation of street children or Aguu in Northern Uganda. The decision to reject or accept each null hypothesis was actually based on the significance (p-value), where a p-value less than 0.05 indicated a statistically significant relationship or association. The decision rule for hypothesis testing can be stated as follows:

At the 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$): Reject the null hypothesis (H_0) if the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Fail to reject (do not reject) the null hypothesis (H_0) if the p-value is greater than or equal to 0.05 ($p \geq 0.05$). This indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant.

The first hypothesis sought to establish whether there was a statistically significant relationship between psychosocial counselling and the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the relationship, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Relationship between Psychosocial Counselling and the Transformation of Aguu

Variables	Psychosocial Counselling	Transformation of Aguu
Psychosocial Counselling	1	
Transformation of Aguu	0.784**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
N	370	370

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings in Table 6 indicate a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between psychosocial counselling and the transformation of Aguu ($r = +0.784$, $p = 0.01$ level). Since the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that psychosocial counselling significantly contributes to the transformation of street children in Northern Uganda. The strong positive correlation suggests that as the quality and effectiveness of psychosocial counselling improve, the level of transformation among Aguu also increases. Psychosocial counselling therefore plays a vital role in promoting emotional healing, behavioural change, trauma recovery, self-esteem, resilience, and successful social reintegration of rehabilitated street children. These findings align with a study by Mayombe (2021), who observed that psychosocial support enhances emotional healing, self-esteem, resilience, and social adjustment among vulnerable youth, enabling them to rebuild their lives and successfully reintegrate into society. Similarly, Basak and Moitra (2024) found that life skills and psychosocial interventions significantly improved self-esteem, self-perception, behavioural

adjustment, social functioning and overall transformation of the street children. These studies support the present findings that effective psychosocial counselling contributes to the transformation of street children in Northern Uganda.

4.5 The Role of Formal Education in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The second research question of the study was to examine the role of formal education in the transformation of Aguu in Northern Uganda. To achieve this, participants were all asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the various statements regarding the contribution of Church-supported educational programmes to their rehabilitation using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Role of Formal Education in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) (n = 370)

Statements	SD Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	SA Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
I am currently enrolled in a school or educational programme supported by the Church.	36 (9.7)	26 (7.0)	1 (0.3)	137 (37.0)	170 (45.9)	4.0243	1.27386
The quality of education provided through the Church-supported programme is satisfactory because of health and good diet.	31 (8.4)	32 (8.6)	1 (0.3)	114 (30.8)	192 (51.9)	4.0919	1.27183
I have acquired new knowledge, life skills, good morals and values through Church-supported educational programmes.	37 (10.0)	28 (7.6)	–	110 (29.7)	195 (52.7)	4.0757	1.31479

The education I have received has improved my confidence and personal development.	32 (8.6)	29 (7.8)	2 (0.5)	98 (26.5)	209 (56.5)	4.1432	1.28300
Educational programmes have helped reduce my involvement in risky behaviours.	34 (9.2)	28 (7.6)	–	102 (27.6)	206 (55.7)	4.1297	1.29390

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings in table 7 reveal that majority 45.9% (n = 170) of the participants strongly agreed and 37.0% (n = 137) agreed that they were currently enrolled in a school or educational programme supported by the Church, representing a combined 82.9% of the respondents. However, 9.7% (n = 36) strongly disagreed, 7.0% (n = 26) disagreed, and 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided. The mean score of 4.02 (SD = 1.274) implies that the majority of respondents acknowledged being enrolled in Church-supported educational programmes, although a small proportion reported limited or no access to such educational opportunities. This indicates that the Catholic Church has played a significant role in increasing access to formal education for rehabilitated street children (Aguu), thereby providing them with opportunities to acquire knowledge, develop life skills, and improve their prospects for successful rehabilitation and social reintegration.

The findings are consistent with studies by Mwende et al. (2022), who found that access to formal education promotes the social reintegration of former street children by enhancing their knowledge, skills, dignity, and inclusion in society, despite challenges such as limited resources and employment opportunities. Similarly, Edmonds, Ochaya, and Sansom (2022) established that educational interventions, combined with supportive family and community networks, improved educational participation, resilience, well-being, access, and long-term reintegration among

street-connected children in Uganda. These findings support the present study, which demonstrates that Church-supported formal education system provides rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with opportunities to acquire knowledge, develop life skills, and improve their prospects for successful rehabilitation and social reintegration. In an interview, CLG 7 said:

> For us we believed that formal education has transformed many of the children because it gives them a sense of purpose and prepares them for independent living. Through schooling, they can improve academically, build self-confidence, develop social and communication skills, and begin to believe they can have a better future. The Church also provides guidance, school materials, and continuous follow-up to help them remain in school and complete their education, even though limited resources sometimes affect the level of support we can provide (CLG 7, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Furthermore, a CLL 8 observed:

> At our center, we first identify suitable schools or institutions for them. We prefer Catholic-founded schools because they align with the morals and values we teach. Then we solicit funds to sponsor them, paying tuition, providing scholastic materials, and supporting their participation. When they are home during holidays, we also organize remedial teaching on both the school curriculum and life skills. That is essentially how we support their access to formal education (CLL 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLK 8 said:

> During the end of the year, we always have an end-year party in December with various functions. Many children come; they eat, dance, and celebrate with us.

> Others who attend the party pick up interest in joining us. Some children already know our religious leaders when they are moving within the city. They will run to them and ask to be with us or join our home. From there, we call them together, talk to them, and interview them. After that, we trace their background, where they come from, whether they have relatives or parents. Once we gather this information, they are brought here. They stay with us for some months, and later we take them to school (CLK 8, Interview, 13th July 2026).

Also, CLG 9 stated:

> We also connect with donors who provide support for educational expenses. While we focus on providing psychosocial support at our center, we also invite others to come and share their experiences with the youth. This exposure helps the children see possibilities beyond their current circumstances. In addition, we do engage their families to ensure that there is confidentiality in what we are doing, talk to them, take care of them, and if they are upset, we help them join vocational skills (CLG 9, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Nevertheless, regarding the quality of formal education provided through Church-supported programmes, a combined 82.7% (n = 306) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that it was satisfactory because of adequate health support and good nutrition, while 17.0% (n = 63) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided, with a mean score of 4.09 (SD = 1.272), reflecting strong agreement. This indicates that respondents perceived the Catholic Church's educational programmes as providing a conducive learning environment that supports both academic achievement and the overall well-being of rehabilitated children. These findings are consistent with Cavazzoni et al. (2023), who found that quality

education for vulnerable children extends beyond academic instruction by incorporating supportive learning environments that foster resilience, psychosocial healing, self-esteem, and also holistic development. Similarly, Edmonds, Ochaya, and Sansom (2022) established that the educational interventions, when complemented by supportive services and community networks, enhance children's educational participation, well-being, and successful reintegration into society. Collectively, these studies support the present findings that the Catholic Church's provision of quality education, alongside health and nutritional support, creates a favourable environment that promotes both academic success and the holistic rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda. During the interviews, a RLG 8 noted:

> The Church believes that quality education involves addressing the child's physical, emotional, and academic needs simultaneously. We ensure that the children receive balanced meals, access to healthcare, counselling, and a safe learning environment alongside classroom instruction. These interventions have greatly improved school attendance, academic performance, discipline, and also the children's overall well-being. Many of them have regained confidence and are now actively participating in school activities (RLG 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another RLG 6 observed:

> We observed quality education begins with teaching them to truly know God. The Bible says that knowing God is the beginning of everything. We teach them how to be in a community, how to pray, and all other subjects. The schools we send them to are good schools (RLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A RLK 9 further explained:

> Our schools teach the children to understand how good God is. They learn that without God, they cannot survive. This knowledge helps them not to be consumed by sin because they understand that God sees everything they do. It helps them not only to fear human beings but also to fear God. They learn to share what they have, love one another, and understand the value of education. When they study hard, they can become good and influential people in the future, servants of God, political leaders, and so much more (RLK 9, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrate that the Catholic Church provides quality formal education that extends beyond classroom instruction to attend to the comprehensive needs of rehabilitated Aguu in Northern Uganda. Through the integration of academic learning, adequate health care, nutritious meals, counselling, spiritual formation, and a safe learning environment, the Church has created favourable conditions that enhance educational participation, academic performance, discipline, confidence, and overall well-being.

The interview findings further reveal that the Church's educational programmes emphasize not only intellectual development but also moral values, spiritual growth, community living, and character formation, thereby preparing children to grow up to be responsible and useful members of society. However, some proportion of respondents who actually disagreed that the quality of education was satisfactory suggests that some rehabilitated children continue to experience challenges in accessing or fully benefiting from these educational services, highlighting the need to strengthen and expand support mechanisms to ensure equitable and consistent quality across all Church-supported programmes. Overall, the findings indicate that quality Church-supported education serves as a vital instrument for the holistic rehabilitation, empowerment, and successful social reintegration of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda

(Cavazzoni et al., 2023; Edmonds et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that a vast majority of the respondents, 52.7% (n = 195), strongly agreed and 29.7% (n = 110) agreed that they had acquired new knowledge, life skills, good morals, and values through Church-supported educational programmes. In contrast, 10.0% (n = 37) strongly disagreed and 7.6% (n = 28) disagreed, accounting for a combined 17.6% who did not share this view. The mean score of 4.08 (SD = 1.315) indicates a high degree of agreement. This shows that the Church-supported educational programmes extend beyond academic instruction by equipping rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with practical knowledge, life skills, moral values, and positive attitudes that are essential for responsible citizenship, personal development, and successful social reintegration. However, the proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that not all rehabilitated street children have equally benefited from these educational programmes, possibly due to variations in programme implementation, individual learning experiences, or the diverse psychosocial needs of the children. This highlights the need for continuous improvement and targeted support to ensure that all beneficiaries equally acquire the knowledge, life skills, and moral values necessary for sustainable rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. In an interview, CLG 4 observed:

> When these children first come to us, many have never been in a classroom or have dropped out of school for several years. Through our education programme, they gradually learn how to read and write, solve problems, communicate respectfully, and make responsible decisions. We also teach them discipline, honesty, respect for others, and Christian values. As a result, many become more confident,

> responsible, and are able to relate positively with their families and the wider community after rehabilitation (CLG 4, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLG 5 noted:

> The Ugandan curriculum provides holistic education that prepares them for the future. They learn the syllabus and also acquire life skills that help them integrate into society. Upon completion, we believe they will be qualified for various professions teaching, medical professions, business, social work, and even religious vocations that will help them lead independent lives (CLG 5, Interview, 11th July 2026).

A CLK 8 also explained:

> Formal education has contributed greatly to the personal development of street children. I perceive it very positively because it equips them with knowledge, practical skills, discipline, and values that prepare them for a better future. When a child is trained in a professional field such as civil aviation, for example, they can become a pilot, secure meaningful employment, earn a decent living, and live with dignity. Education opens opportunities for self-reliance, restores hope, and enables these children to become responsible and productive members of society (CLK 8, Interview, 10th July 2026).

The findings are associate with NurSekti and Sujarwo (2021) found that transformative learning programmes significantly improved street children's social behaviour in the community, life skills, discipline, participation in learning, and social interaction, demonstrating that education can foster both behavioural change and holistic personal development. And this is consistent with behavior theory. In addition, Gaffar and Sardin (2025) reported that in post-

conflict settings, formal education facilitates the transformative rehabilitation of street children by supporting academic reintegration, psychosocial recovery, identity reconstruction, and the development of future-oriented life trajectories. Collectively, these studies support the present findings that Church-supported formal educational programmes equip rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with practical knowledge, life skills, moral values, and positive attitudes that contribute to responsible citizenship, personal development, and successful social reintegration into society.

Results in Table 6 indicate the majority 83.0% (n = 307) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the education they had received improved their confidence and personal development, whereas 16.4% (n = 61) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 0.5% (n = 2) remained undecided. The statement achieved the highest mean score of 4.14 (SD = 1.283) among all the education indicators. This suggests that formal education contributes substantially to rebuilding the self-esteem, confidence, and personal growth of rehabilitated street children, enabling them to develop a positive outlook towards their future. These findings concur with Gaffar and Sardin (2025), who established that formal education serves as a transformative mechanism for the rehabilitation of vulnerable children by promoting psychosocial healing, cognitive development, self-confidence, and hope for a better future through structured learning opportunities.

Similarly, Lacey (2024) found that supportive school environments significantly enhance children's emotional well-being, confidence, identity formation, and self-esteem by providing understanding, encouragement, and inclusive learning spaces that enable vulnerable children to develop positive expectations about their future despite experiences of homelessness and social instability. Athumani et al. (2026) also reported that positive educational experiences within

rehabilitation centres promote behavioural change, confidence, social adjustment, and long-term commitment to formal education, enabling street-connected children to develop meaningful life aspirations beyond street life. These findings show that formal education helps in rebuilding the confidence, self-esteem, meaning and personal development of rehabilitated street children, thereby facilitating their successful social reintegration and long-term transformation in Northern Uganda. During the interviews, CLL 6 noted:

> Many of these children come to our rehabilitation centres feeling worthless because they have experienced rejection, abuse, and life on the streets. Once they are enrolled in school, they gradually regain confidence. They begin to believe in themselves, participate actively in class, and develop hope that they can have a better future like other children (CLL 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLG 7 explained:

> Education has transformed many former street children beyond academic achievement. It has helped them develop discipline, self-esteem, and positive behaviour. We have witnessed children who could not communicate confidently becoming class leaders, mentors to others, and responsible members of their families and communities after completing rehabilitation (CLG 7, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Building on this narrative, a RLG 3 noted:

> We believe the education offered is sufficient to reduce engagement in risky behaviours because when the children truly understand what they are taught, they begin to distinguish between right and wrong. They stop engaging in behaviours such as stealing, fighting, abusing others, and other actions that are contrary to

> biblical teachings. This understanding helps them develop good morals and self-discipline, which reduces the likelihood of returning to their former life on the streets (RLG 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A CLG 5 explained:

> Engaging them in formal education keeps them busy. They do not have time to go to the streets. At the rehabilitation center, they are confined from morning until 5 PM. With that kind of schedule, they don't have any laxity to go outside and engage in negative activities. Formal education confines them and engages them in different stages, preventing them from loitering in town or returning to street life (CLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CLG 6 observed:

> Formal education keeps street children positively engaged in learning and productive activities, giving them the knowledge and skills needed to earn a living and become self-reliant. By engaging them in school and skill development, it equips them with employable competencies that enable them to secure jobs, generate income, and build a better future. Beyond employment, continuous engagement in education instills discipline, good behaviour, and positive values, helping them become responsible members of society. With proper educational engagement, these children can pursue professional careers such as engineers, doctors, lawyers, or even serve as priests, religious brothers, and sisters, thereby transforming their lives and contributing meaningfully to their communities (CLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The results show that the majority 83.3% (n = 308) of the respondents agreed and

strongly agreed that educational programmes had helped reduce their involvement in risky behaviours, while 16.8% (n = 62) disagreed and strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.13 (SD = 1.294) indicate a high level of agreement. This finding demonstrates that participation in formal education not only enhances academic development but also serves as a protective factor against behaviours such as substance abuse, theft, violence, criminal activities, and other forms of delinquency by promoting discipline, positive values, and constructive engagement.

Furthermore, the findings imply that formal education is a very critical protective and rehabilitative intervention for street children by reducing their likelihood of engaging in risky and antisocial behaviours while promoting positive personal and social development. The high level of agreement among respondents suggests that educational programmes extend beyond academic instruction to provide structured environments that foster discipline, moral values, self-control, and constructive engagement. Consequently, education equips rehabilitated street children with the knowledge, attitudes, and life skills necessary to make responsible decisions, avoid substance abuse, violence, criminal activities, and other forms of delinquency, and successfully reintegrate into society. These findings further imply that sustained access to formal education is essential for promoting long-term behavioural transformation, social inclusion, and successful rehabilitation among Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda (Cavazzoni et al., 2023; Gaffar & Sardin, 2025).

These findings concur with NurSekti and Sujarwo (2021), who found that transformative learning programmes significantly reduced rebellious behaviour in children and also enhanced discipline, participation in learning activities, and positive social and harmonious interactions among street children. Their study demonstrated that structured educational programmes keep vulnerable children constructively engaged while promoting behavioural change and social

responsibility.

The findings also agree with Smart (2021), who established that access to formal education reduces marginalization and promotes positive social integration among street children by providing structured learning environments that discourage involvement in criminal activities, exploitation, and other harmful behaviours. The study emphasized that education serves as a protective mechanism by equipping children with positive values and opportunities for personal development. Similarly, Athumani et al. (2026) reported that positive educational experiences within rehabilitation centres foster behavioural change and encourage street-connected children to remain engaged in school rather than returning to street life. Their findings showed that supportive educational programmes promote discipline, responsible behaviour, and long-term commitment to productive activities, thereby reducing children's vulnerability to risky behaviours and social exclusion.

These findings are also consistent with Reintegration and Behavioural Theories, which posits that successful rehabilitation occurs when vulnerable individuals are provided with structured opportunities that facilitate behavioural change, social inclusion, and reintegration into mainstream society. The theory emphasizes that interventions such as formal education help individuals replace antisocial behaviours with socially acceptable values, skills, and relationships. By providing structured learning environments, promoting discipline, fostering positive social interactions, and equipping street children with life and employability skills, formal education strengthens their capacity to disengage from substance abuse, violence, criminal activities, and other risky behaviours while facilitating successful reintegration into their families and communities. The findings therefore support the central proposition of Reintegration Theory that sustainable rehabilitation is achieved through continuous engagement

in constructive social institutions that often promote responsible citizenship, self-reliance, and long-term social inclusion. In an interview, CLG 9 observed:

> When these children return to school, they begin following a daily routine that keeps them focused on learning rather than spending time on the streets. As they continue with their education, we see a noticeable reduction in behaviours such as fighting, stealing, substance abuse, and other forms of misconduct. School gives them purpose, discipline, and hope, making it less likely for them to return to risky behaviours (CLG 9, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CLG 6 noted:

> Education keeps the children positively engaged throughout the day and helps them understand the importance of making responsible choices. Through classroom learning, moral instruction, and interaction with teachers and other learners, they develop good values, respect for others, and self-control. As a result, many of them abandon harmful behaviours and gradually become responsible members of their families and communities (CLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A RLG 2 revealed:

> The major challenges include inadequate funding to sustain tuition and provide scholastic materials, as the programme largely depends on donor support and local contributions. Additionally, many street children continue to struggle with a street-life mentality, frequently expressing a desire to return to the streets before coming back to the rehabilitation centre. Convincing them to accept the centre as their permanent home and fully embrace a stable lifestyle remains a significant challenge. Coupled with difficulties in adapting to formal education and the

> absence of family support, some children drop out of school or relapse into street life due to peer influence and the attraction of quick money on the streets. These children require continuous counselling, reassurance, and individualized attention to facilitate successful integration into the school environment (RLG 2, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A RLK 3 stated:

> I recommend strengthening educational support through remedial classes, timely school enrolment, adequate learning materials, and sustainable funding to ensure children successfully remain in school. Rehabilitation programmes should also provide a supportive environment that meets children's basic needs and helps them feel at home. In addition, graduates of vocational training should receive start-up tools, financial support, and continuous follow-up to enable them to apply their skills, remain self-reliant, and reduce the likelihood of returning to street life (RLK 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

These interview responses indicate that formal education is a powerful rehabilitative and protective intervention that facilitates the behavioural transformation and social reintegration of street children. They demonstrate that structured school routines or schedules, moral instruction, and continuous engagement in learning can reduce the involvement of children in many risky behaviours like fighting, stealing, abuse of substance, and other forms of misconduct by fostering discipline, responsibility, self-control, and hope for the future. At the same time, the responses revealed that the effectiveness of educational programmes depends on sustained psychosocial support, adequate funding, and individualized guidance, as many rehabilitated street children continue to struggle with a street-life mentality, emotional

attachment to street living or life, and difficulties adjusting to formal education. This indicates that successful rehabilitation requires education to be complemented by counselling, family-like support, and adequate resources to ensure long-term behavioural change and sustainable reintegration into society.

Based on the results, the study's conclusion suggest that formal education provided through Catholic Church-supported rehabilitation programmes offers a holistic transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. Beyond improving access to schooling, formal education enhances knowledge acquisition, life skills, self-confidence, personal development, discipline, moral values, and positive identity while significantly reducing engagement in risky behaviours. It further equips rehabilitated street children with employable skills that promote self-reliance, responsible citizenship, and sustainable socio-economic reintegration. Although challenges such as inadequate funding, limited educational resources, and difficulties in adapting to formal schooling remain, the findings affirm that formal education is a critical pillar of successful rehabilitation. Therefore, strengthening Church-supported educational interventions alongside sustained financial support, psychosocial counselling, and community follow-up is essential for ensuring the long-term rehabilitation of street children into society.

Hypothesis Testing

The second hypothesis examined whether there was a statistically significant relationship between formal education and the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Relationship between Formal Education and the Transformation of Aguu

Variables	Formal Education	Transformation of Aguu
Formal Education	1	
Transformation of Aguu	0.742**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
N	370	370

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The results in Table 8 reveal a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between formal education and the transformation of Aguu (r = +0.742, p = 0.01 level). Since the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings imply that formal education makes a significant contribution to the transformation of street children by equipping them with literacy, knowledge, discipline, life skills, and opportunities for further education and employment. Access to formal education enhances personal development, social integration, confidence, and future career prospects, thereby supporting the successful rehabilitation and long-term transformation of Aguu. The findings are consistent with a study by Saravanakumar (2020), which argued that formal education and life skills development equip young people with knowledge, critical thinking, discipline, and problem-solving abilities necessary for productive participation in society. In addition, Moses and Liu (2023) revealed that education and skills development significantly improve employability, productivity, and social inclusion by enhancing knowledge and competencies required for sustainable livelihoods. These findings reinforce the present study, which shows that formal education contributes significantly to the holistic transformation and successful reintegration of street children.

4.6 Role of Vocational Skills Training Leading to the Transformation of Street Children

The study's third objective was to examine the role of vocational skills training in the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern region of Uganda. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to really indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with various statements regarding vocational skills training provided through the Catholic Church. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Role of Vocational Skills Training in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) (n = 370)

Statements	SD Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	SA Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have participated in vocational skills training programs offered by the Church.	40 (10.8)	38 (10.3)	4 (1.1)	115 (31.1)	173 (46.8)	3.9270	1.36450
I have learned practical vocational skills like carpentry through the Church's training programs.	36 (9.7)	47 (12.7)	10 (2.7)	98 (26.5)	179 (48.4)	3.9108	1.37541
I feel confident in using the vocational skills I learned to earn a living in the future.	39 (10.5)	39 (10.5)	5 (1.4)	95 (25.7)	192 (51.9)	3.9784	1.38108
Vocational training has improved my sense of independence and self-worth.	39 (10.5)	43 (11.6)	8 (2.2)	76 (20.5)	204 (55.1)	3.9811	1.41121
The vocational skills I acquired have contributed to positive changes in my daily life.	31 (8.4)	38 (10.3)	11 (3.0)	92 (24.9)	198 (53.5)	4.0486	1.31607

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

Results in Table 9 indicate that the majority, 46.8% (n = 173) of the respondents strongly agreed and 31.1% (n = 115) agreed that they had participated in vocational skills training programmes offered by the Catholic Church. This indicates that the Catholic Church has actively integrated vocational skills training into its rehabilitation programmes, enabling the majority of street children (Aguu) to acquire practical and employable skills that support their personal transformation and future livelihoods. On the other hand, a combined 21.1% (n = 78) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, while 1.1% (n = 4) remained undecided. This shows that not all rehabilitated street children had equal access to or participation in the Church's vocational skills training programmes, suggesting possible disparities in programme coverage, accessibility, duration of participation, or individual engagement with the rehabilitation services. The mean score of 3.93 (SD = 1.365) further suggests that the Catholic Church has provided substantial opportunities for rehabilitated street children to acquire vocational skills, with the relatively high mean reflecting an overall positive perception of the intervention and the standard deviation indicating moderate variation in respondents' experiences.

These results align with those of Akpama et al. (2025), who established a significant and positive relationship between vocational skills training and the economic empowerment of street children, concluding that practical skills such as barbing, plumbing, and furniture-making enhance self-reliance and improve future livelihood opportunities. The findings also concur with Moses and Liu (2023) revealed that vocational skills development improves employability, technical competence, and income-generating capacity among vulnerable populations. Although their study focused on informal sector workers rather than street-connected children, the current

findings similarly indicate that practical skills acquired through vocational training can improve the employability, self-sufficiency, and effective reintegration of recovered street children into society.

Similarly, the findings support those of Basak and Moitra (2024), who revealed that structured training programmes significantly improved participants' self-esteem, self-perception, behavioural conduct, and confidence. The present findings suggest that participation in vocational skills training programmes offered by the Catholic Church extends even beyond technical skill acquisition by fostering personal development of Aguu, confidence, and also positive behavioural transformation, which are essential for the long-term street children's (Aguu) social reintegration and rehabilitation in Northern Uganda. In an interview, a CLL 7 said:

> From my observation, participation in the vocational training programmes has steadily increased over the years. The majority of rehabilitated street children willingly take part because they recognize that the skills provide opportunities for employment and self-reliance. However, a few of the children fail to participate consistently due to personal challenges, relocation, or limited spaces in some training centres (CLL 7, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A RLG 5 observed:

> Currently, we offer vocational skills training, particularly tailoring and design, for rehabilitated street children who are above 15 years and unable or unwilling to return to formal school. We also provide art and craft training, including basket weaving, beadwork, and bag making, to equip them with practical livelihood skills. We intend to expand the programme to include carpentry and other vocational

> trades so that more children, including the younger ones, can benefit from diverse skill development opportunities (RLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

RLL 3 noted:

> We believe these trainings are highly effective. Through skills training, children receive not just technical knowledge but also basic life skills. They build social networks with friends and institutions, which is crucial because helping a youth requires collective effort. Economically, when someone learns a trade or starts a business, they benefit greatly, they can meet their basic needs. Some of these youth have children of their own and can now pay school fees and feed their families using the money they earn from their skills (RLL 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Therefore, these findings imply that vocational skills training is indeed a key strategy through which the Catholic Church promotes the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in the Northern region of Uganda, which is consistent with Reintegration Theory (Braithwaite, 1989). By equipping children with practical livelihood skills, the Church enhances their self-reliance, confidence, social acceptance, and economic participation, thereby supporting sustainable reintegration into society. However, the reported limited participation by some respondents indicates that reintegration is a continuous process requiring inclusive access, ongoing support, and active family and community involvement to achieve long-term rehabilitation outcomes (Braithwaite, 1989; Kuschminder, 2022).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the majority of the participants, 74.9% (n = 277) agreed and strongly agreed that they had learned practical vocational skills such as carpentry through the Catholic Church's training programmes, whereas 22.4% (n = 83) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 2.7% (n = 10) were undecided. This indicates that the Catholic Church's

vocational training programmes have successfully equipped most rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with practical and marketable skills that enhance their employability, self-reliance, and capacity for sustainable socio-economic reintegration. The minority who disagreed suggests that some beneficiaries may not have fully accessed or completed the vocational training programmes, possibly due to some differences in programme availability, individual interests, or duration of participation. The mean score of 3.91 (SD = 1.375) further indicates that vocational training has equipped most beneficiaries with practical and marketable skills for future employment, while the moderate standard deviation reflects some variation in respondents' experiences regarding the acquisition of vocational skills. These findings are consistent with the work of Mayombe (2021), who established that vocational skills training equips many disadvantaged youths with practical competencies that can enhance employability, self-reliance, and sustainable livelihoods when supported by enabling environments and relevant labour market opportunities.

The findings also concur with Starr et al. (2024), who found that effective vocational and life-skills programmes should extend beyond technical competence by equipping many vulnerable young people with practical independent living skills while strengthening mentorship, social support systems, and community networks. Similarly, the findings support those of Guantai and Kariuki (2026), who revealed that practice-oriented vocational skills training combining classroom learning with hands-on experience accelerates skills acquisition, improves workplace readiness, and enhances economic self-reliance. In the same way, the findings of this study suggest that the Catholic Church's vocational training programmes have equipped rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with practical and marketable livelihood skills that can indeed enhance their confidence, employability, socio-economic transformation, and also

capacity for their sustainable long-term reintegration into society. However, the findings also reveal that some rehabilitated street children have not fully benefited from these programmes due to disparities in access, programme coverage, duration of participation, and individual circumstances. This underscores the need for the Catholic Church and other stakeholders to expand vocational skills training opportunities and ensure that all rehabilitated street children have equitable access to quality skills development for sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration. During the interviews, a CLG 9 noted:

> From what we have observed, many of the rehabilitated street children acquire practical vocational skills through our training programmes. Some have learned tailoring, carpentry, craft making, and other income-generating skills that enable them to become productive members of the community. These practical skills reduce their dependence on street life and prepare them for future employment (CLG 9, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLG 6 observed:

> When these youths first come to us, they believe they cannot achieve anything. They feel worthless and unloved. However, after going through training, combined with psychosocial support and counseling, they become more confident. They realize they can survive in the community. Their self-esteem grows stronger, which helps them reintegrate into society. Initially, they feel stigmatized people view them as threats rather than valuable members of the community. The holistic support we provide helps them reconnect with their families. In our Acholi cultural context, parents tend to embrace their children when they see them doing

> something productive. When a child's behavior improves, we naturally love and embrace them more (CLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CLG 8 further explained:

> The vocational training programme has transformed the lives of many rehabilitated street children by equipping them with practical skills, self-reliance, and hope for the future. Through these skills, they have realized that hard work can provide a sustainable livelihood, enabling them to meet their basic needs while inspiring them to support other vulnerable children in the future. The training has also fostered confidence, a sense of belonging among them, and the realization that they are part of a supportive community, who are working towards a common goal of personal transformation and social reintegration (CLG 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrate that the Catholic Church's vocational training programmes have played a vital part in the Aguu's transformation in Northern Uganda—by giving them a variety of useful, practical and marketable livelihood skills that enhance employability, self-reliance, confidence, and also socio-economic reintegration. The quantitative findings, supported by qualitative evidence from community and Church leaders, indicate that vocational training extends beyond technical skills acquisition to foster psychosocial healing, improved self-esteem, behavioural transformation, and renewed hope for the future of these Aguu. The interviews further revealed that integrating vocational training with psychosocial counselling, mentorship, and family reintegration enables rehabilitated street children to regain their dignity, reconnect with their families and communities, and become productive members of society. However, the findings also showed that not all beneficiaries have an equal access to vocational training opportunities due to variations in programme availability, participation, and individual

circumstances. Therefore, expanding vocational training programmes, diversifying the skills offered, and ensuring equitable access for all rehabilitated street children would strengthen the effectiveness of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation initiatives and to promote sustainable socio-economic reintegration and long-term transformation in Northern Uganda.

The findings further revealed that 77.6% (n = 287) of the participants strongly agreed and agreed that they felt confident in using the vocational skills acquired to earn a living in the future, while 21.0% (n = 78) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 1.4% (n = 5) remained undecided. This indicates that the vocational skills training provided through the Catholic Church has significantly enhanced the confidence of most rehabilitated street children (Aguu) in their ability to secure sustainable livelihoods, become economically self-reliant, and successfully reintegrate into society. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some beneficiaries may still lack sufficient confidence due to factors such as limited practical experience, inadequate follow-up support, personal circumstances, or challenges in accessing employment opportunities after training. The mean score of 3.98 (SD = 1.381) further demonstrates that vocational skills training enhances beneficiaries' confidence in their future economic self-reliance, while the moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in respondents' levels of confidence and perceived readiness to use the acquired skills for income generation.

These findings align with studies by Guantai and Kariuki (2026), who established that practice-oriented vocational training combining classroom instruction with hands-on experience enhances not only learners' confidence, workplace readiness, but also economic self-reliance by enabling them to apply acquired skills in real-life situations. The findings also concur with Basak and Moitra (2024), who found that structured life skills and vocational training

significantly improved the self-esteem, self-perception, confidence, and behavioural adjustment of street children, thereby strengthening their readiness for independent living.

Similarly, the findings support those of Teye and Adjetey (2026), who revealed that vocational skills training forms an essential component of the rehabilitation and reintegration of street-connected children by enhancing their employability, economic independence, and also capacity for sustainable community integration. In the same way, the present study suggests that the Catholic Church's vocational skills training programmes have strengthened rehabilitated street children's confidence in their ability to utilize acquired skills for future employment, economic self-reliance, and successful long-term social reintegration.

The findings implied that the Catholic Church's vocational skills training programmes significantly promote the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu), consistent with Reintegration Theory (Braithwaite, 1989). By equipping these Aguu children with practical skills, confidence, and opportunities for self-reliance, the programmes enhance their readiness for sustainable socio-economic reintegration and also community participation. However, the respondents who reported lower confidence suggest that reintegration is a continuous process requiring ongoing mentorship of Aguu, follow-up support, family and community involvement, and access to employment opportunities to ensure that there are long-term rehabilitation and successful reintegration (Braithwaite, 1989; Kuschminder, 2022). In an interview, CLG 3 said:

> From our experience, most of the rehabilitated street children become more confident after completing vocational training. Once they acquire practical skills such as tailoring, carpentry, or craft making, they begin to believe that they can earn a living without returning to the streets. We have seen many of them develop

> hope for the future because they realize they can support themselves through the skills they have learned (CLG 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CLG 6 noted:

> These programs are very effective. They can lead to higher employment rates, improved mental health, and increased incomes. By earning their own money, the Aguu are empowered economically, which gives them a sense of purpose and independence. In addition, those who have done it are somehow better off than those who have finished university education. Some have gone back to do practical things, and they are very productive. Although it requires patience, dedication, and hard work (CLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A CLP 4 revealed:

> At least they have where to earn money and they learn how to earn a living. They'll have their own jobs, and they can go and work because they have now gained the skills they know. Once I work, I am going to be paid for it (CLP 4, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrated that vocational skills training provided by the Catholic Church has substantially strengthened the confidence of rehabilitated street children (Aguu) in their ability to earn a living and become economically self-reliant. The high level of agreement among respondents, supported by the interview findings, indicated that practical vocational training equips beneficiaries with employable skills, restores their self-confidence, and provides hope for a better future beyond street life. By enabling children to acquire sustainable livelihood skills, the Church enhances their readiness for productive employment, independent living, and successful reintegration into their families and communities. These findings further affirmed

that vocational skills training is not only an economic intervention but also a psychosocial empowerment strategy that restores dignity, purpose, and resilience among rehabilitated street children.

Moreso, the findings also revealed that a notable proportion of respondents for this study lacked confidence in utilizing their acquired skills, suggesting that skills training alone may not guarantee successful reintegration. Factors such as limited practical experience, inadequate post-training mentorship, insufficient employment opportunities, and varying personal circumstances may hinder some beneficiaries from fully translating acquired skills into sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, the Catholic Church, together with government agencies and other stakeholders, should make sure that they strengthen post-training support through mentorship, business start-up assistance, employment linkages, continuous follow-up, and community-based reintegration programmes. Such complementary interventions would enhance the long-term effectiveness of vocational skills training and promote sustainable socio-economic reintegration of Aguu who have received rehabilitation in Northern Uganda.

The results showed that the majority, 75.6% (n = 280) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that vocational skills training had improved their sense of independence and self-worth, whereas 22.1% (n = 82) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 2.2% (n = 8) were undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church's vocational skills training programmes have played a significant role in restoring the self-esteem, dignity, confidence, and also personal independence of most rehabilitated street children (Aguu), thereby empowering them to view themselves as capable people, productive, and valuable members of society. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some beneficiaries may not have experienced the same level of personal transformation, possibly due to some differences in individual backgrounds,

unresolved psychosocial challenges, and varying levels of programme participation, or limited opportunities to apply the acquired skills. The mean score of 3.98 (SD = 1.411) further suggests that vocational skills training contributes substantially to restoring dignity, self-esteem, and personal empowerment among rehabilitated street children (Aguu), while the moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in respondents' perceptions of the programme's impact on their independence and self-worth.

The results align with those of Ozor et al. (2024), who determined that vocational skills training equips vulnerable youth with practical competencies that enhance self-reliance, personal empowerment, and resilience, enabling them to overcome social exclusion and build sustainable livelihoods. The results also concur with Mwende, Shivachi, and Sibuor (2022), who revealed that flexible and inclusive vocational skills programmes enhance beneficiaries' confidence, practical competence, social inclusion, and economic productivity, thereby promoting long-term rehabilitation and community participation. Similarly, the findings support those of Chigudu (2025), who found that vocational and entrepreneurship training enhances employability, self-confidence, economic independence, and community stability among disadvantaged youth.

In the same way, the present findings suggest that the Catholic Church's vocational training programmes have empowered rehabilitated street children (Aguu) by restoring their confidence, dignity, self-worth, and independence, thereby enhancing their capacity for self-reliance, socio-economic productivity, and successful community reintegration. However, the findings also indicate that some rehabilitated street children have not experienced these benefits equally due to limited programme participation, unresolved psychosocial challenges, inadequate follow-up support, and restricted opportunities to apply their acquired skills. This underscores

the need for the Catholic Church and other stakeholders to strengthen post-training mentorship, expand equitable access to vocational programmes, and provide sustained reintegration support to ensure that all rehabilitated street children or Aguu achieve lasting personal empowerment and successful socio-economic reintegration. During the interview, CLG 7 said:

> From what we have observed, vocational training has restored the confidence and self-worth of many rehabilitated street children. As they master practical skills and begin producing quality work, they start believing in themselves again. They no longer see themselves as helpless but as capable individuals who can contribute positively to their families and communities. This transformation gives them dignity and a renewed sense of purpose. In addition, I do see that their lives will improve. If we compare now with the time, they first arrived, we see a great difference. Right now, they can make good clothes that they can sell, as well as baskets and bags. When they continue like this in the future, I know they can still go and get further training based on the skills they have acquired from here (CLG 7, Interview, 8th July 2026).

A RLG 5 noted:

> Peer influence is a major barrier. Just this morning, we went to a place where these youth live called “skip” to provide food. We encountered others who discourage their friends from coming to our program, telling them there is no money there and it is easier to get money on the streets. Additionally, some youth come from families where no one has ever studied, yet they survive, so these children believe they can survive without education too, even though they’re living in miserable

> conditions. This mindset significantly affects their willingness to engage in vocational training (RLG 5, Interview, 10th July 2026).

A CLG 3 noted:

> What I see is that they do not open up as long as they have not built confidentiality with you and they are unaware of you. They remain closed off to you because you live and you don't know what is on their mind. Especially now, you can see we have those who are already like drug addicts, and these ones come into the community with people immediately and adopt the way people in the community do. It is not easy for them. It has to take time (CLG 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrated that vocational skills training provided by the Catholic Church has made a significant contribution to the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda by restoring their confidence, self-worth, dignity, and their personal independence. The high level of agreement among respondents, supported by the interview findings, indicates that vocational training empowers rehabilitated street children to perceive themselves as capable, productive, and valuable members of society while strengthening their capacity for self-reliance and sustainable socio-economic reintegration. However, the findings also revealed that not all beneficiaries experience these positive outcomes equally due to barriers such as peer influence, unresolved psychosocial challenges, negative family backgrounds, varying levels of programme participation, and limited opportunities to apply the acquired skills. Therefore, the Catholic Church and other stakeholders should strengthen psychosocial support, mentorship, community sensitization, and post-training follow-up while expanding access to vocational training opportunities to ensure

that all rehabilitated street children achieve lasting personal empowerment and successful reintegration into society.

The results showed that the majority, 78.4% (n = 290) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the vocational skills they had acquired contributed to positive changes in their daily lives, whereas 18.7% (n = 69) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 3.0% (n = 11) were undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church's vocational skills training programmes have played a very significant function in improving the daily lives of most rehabilitated Aguu by enhancing their productivity, self-reliance, independence, and overall well-being, thereby enabling them to become more responsible, economically active, and socially integrated members of the society. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some beneficiaries may not have experienced the same level of positive change, possibly due to limited opportunities to apply the acquired skills, unresolved psychosocial challenges, varying levels of programme participation, inadequate post-training support, or difficulties in securing sustainable livelihood opportunities. The mean score of 4.05 (SD = 1.316) further suggests that vocational skills training has had a significant positive influence on the daily lives of rehabilitated Aguu by improving their productivity, independence, and also their overall well-being, while the moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which the acquired vocational skills have transformed their daily lives. In the interview, CLL 8 said:

> From what we have witnessed, vocational training has brought noticeable positive changes in the daily lives of many rehabilitated street children. Those who complete the training become more responsible, productive, and disciplined. They are able to use their skills to earn an income, meet their basic needs, and contribute

> positively to their families and communities instead of depending on street life (CLL 8, Interview, 12th July 2026).

CLG 10 noted:

> The long-term impact of vocational training is evident in the way many rehabilitated street children become economically independent and self-reliant. Those who consistently apply the skills they acquire are able to secure employment, start small businesses, and provide for their basic needs. Over time, this reduces their dependence on street life and enables them to become responsible members of their families and communities (CLG 10, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A RLG 6 observed:

> We have seen many beneficiaries sustain themselves through the skills they learned. Some are now employed, while others have established their own small enterprises. Beyond earning an income, they regain dignity, build stable relationships, and become role models who encourage other vulnerable children to pursue productive lives instead of returning to the streets (RLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A CLG 5 observed:

> There are challenges. Some children misuse the machines and spoil them. They also damage materials provided to them, like clothes, needles, and other supplies. You have to stay close to them to ensure they handle things properly. Additionally, some still have that street mindset and can still fight and abuse their friends, so those are the challenges we face (CLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026*).*

Another CLG 3 noted:

> Respondents recommended strengthening vocational training programmes by recruiting skilled and committed trainers, providing continuous capacity building for instructors, and equipping training centres with adequate tools, modern infrastructure, and market-relevant learning materials. They also emphasized the need to provide graduates with start-up tools and resources to enable them to apply their skills and earn sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, vocational courses should be aligned with individual interests, talents, and labour market demands to enhance motivation, skills acquisition, and also employment outcomes. Finally, respondents stressed the importance of collaboration among parents, cultural leaders, government agencies, and other stakeholders to address the root causes of street-connectedness, strengthen rehabilitation policies, and provide sustained support for the successful reintegration of rehabilitated street children (Aguu) (CLG 3, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings demonstrate that vocational skills training provided through Catholic Church-supported rehabilitation programmes plays a significant role in transforming street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda by equipping them with practical livelihood skills, enhancing their confidence, restoring their self-worth and dignity, promoting independence, and improving their prospects for sustainable livelihoods and successful socio-economic reintegration. The programmes have empowered most rehabilitated street children to become more self-reliant, productive, and socially accepted members of their communities. However, disparities in programme participation, limited post-training support, unresolved psychosocial challenges, and restricted access to employment opportunities indicate that vocational skills training alone is insufficient to guarantee lasting transformation. Therefore, strengthening

mentorship, expanding equitable access to vocational programmes, improving training resources, aligning skills with labour market demands, and fostering collaboration among the Catholic Church, families, communities, government, and other stakeholders will enhance the long-term rehabilitation and also successful reintegration of street children in Northern Uganda.

Hypothesis Testing

The third hypothesis sought to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between vocational skills training and the transformation of Aguu (street children). Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis, and the findings are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Relationship between Vocational Skills Training and the Transformation of Aguu

Variables	**Vocational Skills Training**	**Transformation of Aguu**
Vocational Skills Training	1	
Transformation of Aguu	0.768**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
N	370	370

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

Table 10 shows a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between vocational skills training and the transformation of Aguu (r = +0.768, p = 0.01 level). Since the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that vocational skills training significantly and positively enhances the transformation of rehabilitated street children by equipping them with practical and marketable skills that improve entrepreneurship, self-reliance, employability, and income-generating opportunities. As street children acquire vocational competencies, they become economically empowered, socially productive, and less likely to return to street life. These findings demonstrate that vocational

skills training is a critical component of sustainable rehabilitation and long-term transformation. The study's findings, together with Akpama et al. (2025), show that vocational training significantly enhances the economic empowerment of street children by improving employability, self-reliance, and income-generating opportunities. Similarly, Chigudu (2025) established that vocational and entrepreneurship training strengthens employability, promotes business creation, and supports long-term community stability among disadvantaged youth. These studies support the present findings that vocational skills training foster economic independence, social productivity, sustainable rehabilitation and overall transformation of street children in Northern Uganda.

4.7 Role of Family Tracing and Reintegration on the Transformation of Aguu (Street Children)

The fourth research question sought to examine the role of family tracing and reintegration on the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Undecided (UD), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The findings are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Influence of Family Tracing and Reintegration on the Transformation of Aguu (Street Children) (n = 370)

Statements	SD Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	SA Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
	45 (12.2)	34 (9.2)	5 (1.4)	126 (34.1)	160 (43.2)	3.8703	1.37710

I have been reconnected with my family through the Church's intervention.							
My family has been supportive since I was reintegrated into the family.	41 (11.1)	42 (11.4)	5 (1.4)	104 (28.1)	178 (48.1)	3.9081	1.39383
Family reintegration has improved my social behavior and sense of belonging.	43 (11.6)	36 (9.7)	3 (0.8)	91 (24.6)	197 (53.2)	3.9811	1.40736
I have faced challenges in rebuilding relationships with my family after reintegration.	41 (11.1)	38 (10.3)	4 (1.1)	118 (31.9)	169 (45.7)	3.9081	1.36832
I feel valued and involved in my family and community after the reintegration process.	33 (8.9)	37 (10.0)	1 (0.3)	87 (23.5)	212 (57.3)	4.1027	1.33140

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

As seen in Table 11, the findings indicate that the majority, 77.3% (n = 286) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they had been reconnected with their families through the Catholic Church's intervention, while 21.4% (n = 79) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 1.4% (n = 5) were undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church has played a significant role in facilitating family tracing and reunification for most rehabilitated street children (Aguu), thereby restoring family relationships, strengthening emotional support systems, and enhancing their opportunities for successful social reintegration and long-term rehabilitation. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some rehabilitated street children had not been successfully reunited with their families, possibly due to rejection, unresolved conflicts, difficulties in tracing relatives, or concerns regarding the safety and suitability of the home environment. The mean score of 3.87 (SD = 1.377) further indicates that

the Catholic Church's family tracing and also reunification interventions have generally been effective in reconnecting rehabilitated street children with their families, while the moderate standard deviation also reflects some variation in some respondents' experiences of the reintegration process. In the interview, CURLG 3 said:

> Family tracing is one of the most important interventions we provide. Before reuniting a child with the family, we first assess the home environment and engage parents or guardians through counseling and dialogue. Once children are reunited with supportive families, we observe significant emotional healing, improved family relationships, and a greater willingness to continue with education or vocational training rather than returning to street life (CURLG 3, Interview, 13th July 2026).

CLG 10 noted:

> When we recruit a child, we interview them. Those who can describe their homes, we go and trace. For those who cannot, we use existing networks and structures. If we know where we picked the child from, we engage local leaders both government and church representatives to help trace the child's origin. Our interest is not necessarily in finding the exact family home because not all children come from traditional homes. Some come from broken homes, others were living with relatives, sympathizers, or friends. We try to establish a support system around the child. We do this for every child we recruit at the center. And it's like Aguuology or the study of Aguu (CLG 10, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CURLL 7 noted:

> Although many rehabilitated street children are successfully reunited with their families, the process is not always easy. Some families are initially reluctant to receive the children due to previous conflicts, poverty, or mistrust. In such situations, continuous follow-up visits, family counseling, and mediation are necessary to rebuild trust and ensure that the reintegration process becomes stable and sustainable (CURLL 7, Interview, 16th July 2026).

Another CURLG 5 noted:

> We have witnessed many positive outcomes after family reunification. Children who reconnect with caring families regain a sense of belonging, emotional security, and hope for the future. They become more disciplined and responsible because they now have people who guide, encourage, and monitor their progress. However, for some children whose families cannot be traced or remain unsafe, alternative care arrangements and ongoing psychosocial support are essential to achieve successful long-term rehabilitation (CURLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The interview findings imply that family tracing and reintegration are indeed fundamental components of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programmes, extending beyond simply returning children to their families. The findings demonstrate that successful reintegration involves careful assessment of the home environment, family counseling, mediation, collaboration with community structures, and continuous follow-up support to ensure that rehabilitated street children (Aguu) are reunited with safe and supportive caregivers. The interviews further revealed that family reunification strengthens children's emotional healing, sense of belonging, discipline, and motivation to pursue education or vocational training, thereby decreasing the chance of going back to living on the street. However, the findings also indicated

that successful reintegration is not always possible because some of the children experience family rejection, poverty, unresolved conflicts, or cannot be safely reunited with their biological families, making alternative care arrangements and sustained psychosocial support necessary.

These findings are consistent with Kuschminder (2022), who argues that sustainable reintegration requires continuous family support, social networks, follow-up services, and also community involvement rather than one-time reunification. The findings also concur with Teye and Adjetey (2026), who established that effective rehabilitation of street-connected children depends on family-centred interventions, counseling, community collaboration, and sustained support systems that promote long-term social reintegration and well-being. In another interview, CLG 5 noted;

> Through our project which is called RACROSCAY (Rehabilitation and Community Reintegration of Street Children and Youth), we conduct family tracing. When a child reports to our center, we accompany them to their families to understand the challenges that pushed them away from home. We look for ways to reconnect and mediate between the child and their family. Our field officers take the initiative to visit many families and multiple times, not just once. Unfortunately, we sometimes face rejection. Some parents say they would prefer their child dead—one father, who is actually a teacher in a district school, told us that if the child dies, we should bring his body and he has space for burial. This is heartbreaking, and we encounter such responses frequently (CLG 5, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLG 7 revealed:

> We support family tracing and reintegration by providing logistical and financial assistance, working closely with probation some officers, local leaders, community development officers, and church representatives throughout the process. We also provide basic necessities to vulnerable families to strengthen their capacity to receive the child. Through counseling, mediation, and continuous support, we help families understand the importance of accepting and guiding rehabilitated street children, ensuring that reintegration is sustainable and promotes the child's long-term well-being (CLG 7, Interview, 18th July 2026).

A RLG 6 explained:

> Our church has social workers. These social workers can get more information on these street children, and then the church workers can also evaluate the homes, identify the homes of these people for their safety, and keep visiting. They can also use community connections with the leaders, like the local council chairpersons, the local leaders, the parish leaders, among others. We can also use the catechists to address these families (RLG 6, Interview, 6th July 2026).

The findings align with studies conducted by Wamuyu and Njoroge (2023), who established that family tracing and reunification are critical components of the rehabilitation process because reconnecting these children with their families restores emotional attachment, strengthens family support systems, and also promotes sustainable social reintegration among vulnerable children. It further concurs with Teye and Adjetey (2026), who revealed that successful rehabilitation of street-connected children or Aguu requires family-centred interventions alongside community support, emphasizing that reintegration into supportive family environments enhances children’s psychosocial well-being, social acceptance, and long-

term reintegration. Similarly, the findings support those of Kuschminder (2022), who found that sustainable reintegration depends on rebuilding family relationships, strengthening social networks, and providing continuous post-reintegration support, all of which reduce the likelihood of children returning to street life and promote lasting rehabilitation. In the same way, the present findings suggest that the Catholic Church's family tracing and reunification programmes have successfully restored family relationships, strengthened emotional and social support systems, and enhanced the long-term social reintegration of rehabilitated street children (Aguu). However, the findings also indicated that some children continue to face barriers to successful family reunification due to family rejection, unresolved conflicts, and difficulties in tracing or reconnecting with suitable caregivers, highlighting the need for sustained family counseling, follow-up support, and community-based reintegration interventions.

The findings further reveal that 76.2% (n = 282) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that their families had been supportive since they were reintegrated, whereas 22.5% (n = 83) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 1.4% (n = 5) remained undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church's family reintegration interventions have enabled most rehabilitated street children (Aguu) to receive positive emotional, social, and practical support from their families, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging, enhancing psychosocial well-being, and promoting successful long-term rehabilitation and community reintegration. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some rehabilitated street children continue to experience limited family support due to unresolved family conflicts, poverty, dysfunctional family relationships, neglect, or other socio-economic challenges that hinder effective reintegration. The mean score of 3.91 (SD = 1.394) further suggests that family support following reintegration is generally perceived positively among rehabilitated street children,

while the moderate standard deviation shows that respondents' experiences varied in terms of the degree of support received from their families after reintegration.

These findings are consistent with Betancourt et al. (2020), who established that supportive family relationships significantly enhance the psychosocial well-being, resilience, and long-term recovery of vulnerable children by providing emotional security, protection, and stable care environments following rehabilitation. The findings also concur with UNICEF (2022), which emphasizes that family-based care and reintegration provide children with protection, emotional attachment, identity, and sense of belonging, making supportive families essential for successful reintegration and preventing children from returning to street life or other forms of vulnerability.

Similarly, the findings support those of Harms et al. (2021), who also found that sustained family support, combined with community-based follow-up services, improves children's social adjustment, emotional stability, and long-term reintegration outcomes by strengthening family relationships and reducing the risk of social exclusion. In the same way, the present study suggests that the Catholic Church's family reintegration programmes have strengthened family support systems for rehabilitated street children (Aguu), enabling them to experience greater emotional security, family acceptance, psychosocial well-being, and sustainable community reintegration. However, the findings also indicate that not all rehabilitated street children receive adequate family support because of persistent socio-economic hardships, unresolved family conflicts, and unstable home environments, underscoring the need for continuous family counselling, follow-up support, and community-based interventions to ensure lasting rehabilitation and successful reintegration.

During the interviews, a CLG 8 noted:

> Family support is one of the strongest indicators that reintegration has been successful. When children return to families that accept, encourage, and care for them, we see remarkable changes in their behaviour and emotional well-being. They become more responsible, regain confidence, and are motivated to continue with school or vocational training because they know someone believes in them and is walking with them through the recovery process (CLG 8, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Another CLK 8 said:

> In my view, family tracing and reintegration efforts have been largely successful because they involve families, cultural leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, and government authorities throughout the process. Before reunification, families are counseled and prepared to receive the children back, which helps restore trust and strengthen family relationships. Since Aguu are children with the potential to become responsible and productive members of society, collaborative efforts among all stakeholders are essential in addressing the root causes of street life, preventing involvement in violence and crime, and ensuring successful long-term rehabilitation and reintegration into their families and communities (CLK 8, Interview, 16th July 2026).

These findings imply that family support and collaborative family reintegration are critical determinants of the successful transformation and long-term rehabilitation of rehabilitated street children (Aguu). They suggest that reintegration is most effective when families accept and support the children emotionally and practically, while cultural, religious, community leaders, and government stakeholders work together to facilitate reconciliation,

address the underlying causes of street life, and provide continuous guidance and follow-up.

Furthermore, the interviews indicate that family acceptance restores children's confidence, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging, motivating them to pursue education or vocational training and decreasing the possibility of going back to the life on the street. They also demonstrate that successful family tracing and reintegration require comprehensive counseling, mediation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to rebuild trust in the family, strengthen family relationships, prevent involvement in crime and violence, and also promote sustainable community reintegration. These findings reinforced the importance of holistic, family-centred rehabilitation approaches that extend beyond reunification to include continuous family and community support for lasting transformation.

Results in Table 8 also indicate that the majority, 77.8% (n = 288) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that family reintegration had improved their social behaviour and sense of belonging, while 21.3% (n = 79) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 0.8% (n = 3) were undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church's family reintegration interventions have significantly contributed to improving the social behaviour, family relationships, and sense of belonging of most rehabilitated street children (Aguu), thereby enabling them to develop positive social values, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and also become accepted and responsible members of their families and communities. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some rehabilitated street children may not have experienced similar positive outcomes due to unresolved family conflicts, social stigma, inadequate family support, negative peer influences, or challenges in adjusting to family and community life after reintegration. The mean score of 3.98 (SD = 1.407) further suggests that family reintegration has made a substantial contribution to improving the social behaviour and sense of belonging of rehabilitated street

children, while the moderate standard deviation suggests that respondents' perceptions of the efficacy of reintegration process in fostering social transformation and community acceptance.

These findings are consistent with the work of Teye and Adjetey (2026), who established that successful reintegration of street-connected children requires coordinated family, community, and social support interventions that strengthen children's social relationships, sense of belonging, and long-term community integration. In addition, Otigba (2021) established that holistic social work interventions involving family support, counselling, and community participation improve the psychosocial functioning, social adjustment, and reintegration outcomes of street children by rebuilding positive relationships and promoting responsible social behaviour. In the same way, the present study suggests that the Catholic Church's family tracing and reintegration programmes have strengthened rehabilitated street children's social behaviour, interpersonal relationships, and sense of belonging within their families and communities, thereby promoting their psychosocial well-being and sustainable social reintegration. This is consistent with behaviour theory. However, the findings also revealed that some rehabilitated street children continue to face barriers to successful reintegration due to persistent family conflicts, stigma, inadequate community support, and difficult home environments. This underscores the need for continuous family counselling, community sensitization, and also post-reintegration follow-up to ensure that there is lasting behavioural transformation and successful community acceptance. In the interviews, CLG 10 observed:

> Family reintegration has a profound influence on children's behaviour because they begin to experience love, acceptance, and guidance once they return home. We have observed that many children who were once aggressive, withdrawn, or involved in risky behaviours gradually become respectful, cooperative, and

> responsible after reconnecting with their families. Feeling that they belong again motivates them to adopt positive values and rebuild healthy relationships within both the family and the community. However, where families continue to reject them, fail to provide adequate support, or where community stigma persists, some children struggle to sustain these positive behavioural changes, highlighting the need for continuous family counseling, follow-up support, and community sensitization to ensure successful long-term reintegration (CLG 10, Interview, 6th July 2026).

A CLL 7 explained:

> Family reintegration has been one of the most effective ways of transforming rehabilitated street children. Once they return to families that provide love, acceptance, and guidance, many begin to change their behaviour, become more responsible, and regain a sense of belonging. However, successful reintegration requires continuous family counseling, regular follow-up, and community support because some children still face rejection, stigma, or difficulties adjusting to family life, which can hinder the sustainability of these positive changes (CLL 7, Interview, 6th July 2026).

These findings imply that family reintegration is a critical component of the transformative rehabilitation of street children (Aguu), as supportive family environments foster positive behavioural change, strengthen children's sense of belonging, and promote successful long-term social reintegration. The findings further suggest that reintegration is most effective when it is accompanied by continuous family counseling, regular follow-up, community support, and efforts to address family rejection and social stigma. However, where these support systems

are lacking, rehabilitated street children may experience difficulties sustaining positive behavioural changes and adjusting to family and community life. These findings are consistent with Teye and Adjetey (2026), who also emphasized that successful reintegration of street-connected children requires coordinated family, community, and also institutional support to strengthen social relationships, promote acceptance, and ensure sustainable rehabilitation.

The findings also show that 77.6% (n = 287) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they had faced challenges in rebuilding relationships with their families after reintegration, whereas 21.4% (n = 79) disagreed and strongly disagreed, and 1.1% (n = 4) were undecided. This implies that although the Catholic Church's family reintegration interventions have successfully reunited many rehabilitated street children (Aguu) with their families, a significant proportion continue to encounter difficulties in rebuilding trust, restoring family relationships, and readjusting to family life. These challenges may arise from unresolved family conflicts, past experiences of neglect or abuse, poverty, stigma, emotional trauma, or inadequate post-reintegration support. The proportion of respondents who disagreed suggests that some rehabilitated street children experienced relatively smooth reintegration with minimal relational difficulties due to supportive family environments and effective follow-up interventions. The mean score of 3.91 (SD = 1.368) further indicates that challenges in rebuilding family relationships are mainly common among rehabilitated street children, while the moderate standard deviation reflects some variation in respondents' experiences regarding the severity of these reintegration challenges.

The findings align with the studies of Starr et al. (2024), who argue that successful rehabilitation requires continuous social support, mentorship, and strong family and community networks beyond the initial reunification process. Similarly, DeJaeghere and Murphy-Graham

(2022) contend that sustainable reintegration depends on addressing underlying structural and family-related challenges such as poverty, dysfunctional family relationships, and social exclusion that often hinder children's adjustment after returning home. Teye and Adjetey (2026) also emphasize that effective family reintegration requires coordinated family counseling, community participation, and also sustained follow-up interventions to rebuild trust in the family, strengthen family relationships, and promote the long-term rehabilitation of street-connected children. These studies support the present findings that although family reunification has been largely successful, many rehabilitated Aguu children continue to face challenges in rebuilding family relationships and adapting to family life after reintegration. During the interviews, a CLG 2 explained:

> Most families willingly receive the children back, reintegration is often accompanied by challenges such as poverty, unresolved conflicts, and community stigma. Some family members remain skeptical about whether the child has truly changed, making it difficult for the child to regain trust and acceptance. We therefore conduct follow-up visits, provide family counseling, and engage community leaders to encourage understanding and strengthen the reintegration process until relationships become stable (CLG 2, Interview, 6th July 2026).

CLG 1 stated:

> There are challenges. Some parents are harsh. When you reach there and introduce yourself, local leaders sometimes ask for money before taking you down to the family. They request something for transport, even if they are not moving far. You have to convince the local leader who you are so they can take you to the family. Upon reaching there, some parents, guardians, or relatives start accusing you

> immediately. They might accuse you of stealing their children or hiding their children. So, we first talk to the local leader who will support us and explain what is actually happening. If the parents refuse to understand, the local leader threatens them by saying we will arrest them for neglecting their child or relative. That is when they calm down and give us all the details we need about the children (CLG 1, Interview, 6th July 2026).

Lastly, regarding feeling valued and involved in my family and community after the reintegration process, the results indicate that the vast majority of respondents, 80.8% (n = 299) strongly agreed and agreed, whereas 18.9% (n = 70) strongly disagreed and disagreed, and also 0.3% (n = 1) remained undecided. This implies that the Catholic Church's family tracing and reintegration interventions have enabled most rehabilitated street children (Aguu) to regain a sense of identity, dignity, acceptance, and active participation within their families and communities. It further helps in strengthening their self-worth, emotional well-being, social inclusion, and confidence to engage in productive social and economic activities. The high level of agreement further suggests that successful reintegration has fostered stronger family relationships and community acceptance, which are essential for sustaining long-term rehabilitation and keeping children off the street. Moreover, the proportion of respondents who disagreed indicates that some rehabilitated street children continue to experience limited acceptance, family rejection, social stigma, discrimination, or inadequate community support, which may hinder their full participation, sense of belonging, and successful reintegration into society. The mean score of 4.10 (SD = 1.331), further suggests that respondents generally perceived reintegration as having a strong positive influence on their sense of value, belonging, and community participation, while the moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in

individual experiences.

The findings further suggest that the Catholic Church's family tracing and reintegration interventions have largely succeeded in restoring rehabilitated street children (Aguu) to supportive family and community environments where they feel valued, accepted, and actively involved. Regaining a sense of identity, dignity, and belonging appears to have strengthened their self-worth, emotional well-being, social inclusion, and confidence to participate in productive social and economic activities. These outcomes are essential for sustaining long-term rehabilitation and decreasing the likelihood that children will return to street life. However, some of the proportion of respondents who disagreed indicates that some rehabilitated children continue to experience family rejection, social stigma, discrimination, and also inadequate community support, which may make it more difficult for them to fully reintegrate and engage with society.

The findings are consistent with studies by Starr et al. (2024), who emphasized that supportive family relationships, mentorship, and community networks are essential for sustainable rehabilitation. Teye and Adjetey (2026) also highlighted that coordinated family and community reintegration enhances children's social well-being and participation. Similarly, the Van Doorn Foundation (2026) found that combining vocational skills training with family reintegration and continuous mentorship improves self-esteem, psychosocial well-being, and social inclusion among vulnerable youth. Monitor (2024) reported that community-based skilling and also mentorship programmes promote confidence, social acceptance, and long-term rehabilitation. These findings support the present study, which found that the Catholic Church's family tracing and reintegration interventions have enabled most rehabilitated street children (Aguu) to feel valued, accepted, and actively involved in their families and communities, thereby

strengthening their sense of belonging and also reducing the likelihood of them returning to life on the street.

During interviews, CURLG 4 explained: “Our goal is not only to reunite children with their families but also to help families and communities accept them. When children feel loved, valued, and involved, they gain confidence and are less likely to return to the streets” (CURLG 4, Interview, 12th July 2026).

A CLG 3 stated:

> When we meet a family, we encourage them to visit the children at the rehabilitation center so they can maintain contact and build healthy relationships. We also encourage regular phone calls to check on the children. Before reintegration, we accompany the children to visit their families so that they reconnect and become familiar with one another. By the time the child returns home, they are no longer strangers but have already rebuilt trust and friendship, making reintegration smoother and more sustainable (CLG 3, Interview, 14th July 2026).

Another CLG 2 stated:

> We recommended that family tracing and reintegration programmes should adopt a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach by involving church leaders, local leaders, clan leaders, the police, families, and other community stakeholders throughout the reintegration process. In addition, there is need to strengthen families through continuous parental sensitization on their responsibilities, promote dialogue within households, and encourage parents to provide love, care, protection, and guidance from childhood. We also need to address the root causes that push children to the

> streets by economically empowering families, reducing poverty, improving access to education through scholarships, and creating supportive home environments. Successful reintegration depends not only on returning children to their families but also on strengthening family capacity and community support systems to ensure long-term rehabilitation and prevent children from returning to street life (CLG 2, Interview, 18th July 2026).

Overall, the findings showed that family tracing and reintegration have significantly contributed to the transformative rehabilitation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda by strengthening family reunification, restoring a sense of belonging, and promoting social inclusion. Although most rehabilitated children felt valued and also accepted within their families and communities' environments—which also align with behavioural theory, some continued to face rejection and stigma, highlighting the need for ongoing psychosocial support, family counselling, economic empowerment, and community-based follow-up to sustain successful reintegration and prevent a return to street life.

Hypothesis Testing

The fourth hypothesis sought to establish whether there was a statistically significant relationship between family tracing and reintegration and the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to examine the relationship, and the results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Relationship between Family Tracing and Reintegration and the Transformation

Variables	Family Tracing and Reintegration	Transformation of Aguu

Family Tracing and Reintegration	1	
Transformation of Aguu	0.731**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
N	370	370

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings presented in Table 12 indicate a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between family tracing and reintegration and the transformation of Aguu (r = +0.731, p = 0.01). Since the correlation is significant the 0.05 level, the null hypothesis was rejected. Although family tracing and reintegration recorded the lowest correlation coefficient among the four intervention programmes, it still demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with the transformation of Aguu. This suggests that reconnecting street children with their families and communities relate substantially to their rehabilitation by restoring family support systems, emotional security, identity, and a sense of belonging. Successful family reintegration provides a stable environment that supports sustained behavioural change, strengthens emotional well-being, facilitates successful reintegration into families and communities, and reduces the likelihood of children returning to street life. The findings therefore affirm that family-based interventions remain an essential component of comprehensive rehabilitation programmes and confirm that family tracing and reintegration is an indispensable element of the Catholic Church's holistic intervention programmes for the transformation of Aguu in Northern Uganda.

These findings are consistent with the studies of Starr et al. (2024), who emphasized that successful rehabilitation of vulnerable youth depends not only on independent living skills but also on supportive family relationships, mentorship, and strong community networks that foster

belonging and long-term reintegration. Similarly, Teye and Adjetey (2026) revealed that effective reintegration of street-connected children requires coordinated family support, community participation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to promote social inclusion and sustainable rehabilitation. These findings support the present study, which demonstrates that reconnecting Aguu with their families and communities restores emotional security, identity, and belonging, thereby facilitating their holistic transformation and successful reintegration into society in Northern Uganda.

Overall Composite Score for Catholic Church's Intervention and Transformation of Aguu

Variable	Relationship with Transformation of Aguu
Overall Catholic Church Intervention Programmes (Composite Score)	Pearson Correlation = 0.756 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.01

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The overall composite score for Catholic Church intervention programmes recorded a Pearson correlation coefficient of +0.756, indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with the transformation of Aguu. This composite measure reflects the combined contribution of psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration towards the overall transformation process. The findings imply that the effectiveness of Aguu transformation increases considerably when these intervention programmes are implemented collectively rather than independently. Based on these findings, all the null hypotheses were rejected because the significance values for all the relationships were p = 0.01, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the study concludes that there are statistically significant positive relationships between psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, and family tracing and reintegration, and the transformation

of Aguu. These findings confirmed that the Catholic Church's intervention programmes play a significant role in facilitating the holistic transformation and successful reintegration of street children in Northern Uganda.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study, based on the findings discussed in chapter four. The summary is organized according to the research questions and highlights the key findings regarding the Catholic Church's intervention programmes in the transformation of Aguu (street children) in Northern Uganda. The chapter also presents conclusions drawn from the study findings, policy and practical recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The summary of the major findings or results of the study are presented in this section. The findings are organized according to the research questions of the study providing a concise overview of the role of Catholic Church's intervention programmes in the transformation of Aguu in Northern Uganda. The summary highlights the key findings or results obtained from both qualitative and quantitative data analyses, and it also forms the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the subsequent sections.

5.2.1 The Role of Psychosocial Counselling Support in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The study found that psychosocial counselling and spiritual support provided by the Catholic Church significantly relate to the transformation of Aguu in Northern Uganda. Through counselling, spiritual guidance, moral formation, prayer, and recreational activities, the Church helps children heal emotionally, rebuild self-esteem, develop resilience, and improve their social relationships and behaviour. Respondents also reported that these interventions helped them cope with trauma, regain hope, develop positive values, rebuild trust, and successfully reintegrate into

their families and communities.

Moreso, the study established that psychosocial support significantly related to the transformation of rehabilitated children by enhancing their self-confidence, emotional stability, positive behaviour, and willingness to pursue education or vocational training. Counselling also helped reduce negative behaviors such as aggression, theft, quarrelling, and abusive language while improving interpersonal relationships and community participation. In addition, the Church's provision of safe and stable shelter created a secure environment that facilitated emotional healing, behavioral change, and successful reintegration of Aguu into society.

However, the findings identified challenges such as unequal access to counselling, limited shelter capacity, inadequate resources, language barriers, difficulties in building trust, and the need for continuous follow-up for children with severe trauma. Overall, psychosocial counselling remains a key component of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programme, relating significantly to emotional healing, behavioural change, resilience, empowerment, and long-term transformation of Aguu. Expanding access to counselling and strengthening post-rehabilitation follow-up would further improve outcomes.

5.2.2 The Role of Formal Education in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The second research question established that the Catholic Church plays a significant role in transforming street children (Aguu) through formal education. Church-supported educational programmes have enhanced children's access to education, knowledge, life skills, moral and spiritual values, while also promoting rehabilitation and social reintegration. The quality of education was considered satisfactory because it was complemented by healthcare, nutritious meals, counselling, spiritual formation, and a safe learning environment, thereby promoting both academic achievement and holistic child development.

Nonetheless, the findings established that Church-supported formal education related significantly to the transformation of children by enhancing their confidence, self-esteem, discipline, personal development, and positive identity. It equipped them with practical knowledge, employability skills, and Christian values essential for responsible citizenship and independent living. Participation in education also reduced risky behaviours such as substance abuse, theft, violence, and delinquency by providing structured routines, moral guidance, and constructive activities. Overall, education restored hope, improved behaviour, strengthened social relationships, and prepared children for productive and independent futures through continued schooling, mentorship, and family engagement.

However, the study found that the effectiveness of formal education was constrained by inadequate funding, limited scholastic materials, donor dependence, difficulties in school adjustment, attachment to street life, peer influence, and insufficient family support. These challenges led to irregular attendance, school dropout, and the need for continuous counselling and individualized follow-up. Overall, formal education emerged as a critical component of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programme, promoting holistic transformation, behavioral change, self-reliance, and sustainable social reintegration of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda. Strengthening financial, psychosocial, and educational support would further enhance rehabilitation outcomes.

5.2.3 Role of Vocational Skills Training in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The findings of the third research question revealed that vocational skills training significantly relates to the rehabilitation of street children by providing practical livelihood skills, fostering self-reliance and confidence, and supporting sustainable socio-economic reintegration. Although most participants benefited from Catholic Church vocational programmes, some

experienced limited participation due to challenges related to accessibility, training duration, and individual engagement. Most respondents gained practical vocational skills such as tailoring, carpentry, and craft making through Church-supported programmes, which enhanced their employability, economic productivity, and ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Qualitative data showed that vocational training promoted psychosocial healing, family reintegration, and community acceptance. However, respondents recommended diversifying programmes and expanding access to reach more rehabilitated children.

Furthermore, vocational skills training enhanced rehabilitated street children's independence, confidence, self-esteem, dignity, and social responsibility**.** However, its benefits were limited for some children by peer influence, psychosocial challenges, negative family backgrounds, and varying levels of participation. Vocational skills training significantly improved rehabilitated street children's **s**elf-reliance, productivity, discipline, income generation, and overall well-being**.** However, inadequate resources, limited employment opportunities, and continued street-life influences constrained its effectiveness. The study therefore recommends strengthening vocational programmes, providing post-training support, and enhancing collaboration among the Church, families, government, NGOs, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration.

5.2.4 Family Tracing and Reintegration and the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

The findings of the fourth research question revealed that the Church played a significant role in facilitating the family reunification of most rehabilitated Aguu through family tracing, counselling, mediation, home assessments, and collaboration with community leaders. Family reintegration provided emotional support, restored relationships, strengthened the children's

sense of belonging, and encouraged them to pursue education and vocational training.

The findings emphasized that successful reintegration requires proper family preparation, continuous follow-up, and collaboration among Church workers, probation officers, local leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure children return to safe and supportive homes.

Furthermore, the study found that family tracing and reintegration improved the social behavior, confidence, sense of belonging, and community participation of rehabilitated street children. Family acceptance, love, guidance, and support restored confidence, encouraged responsible behavior, strengthened psychosocial well-being, and reduced the risk of returning to street life. Sustainable reintegration requires continuous counselling, mediation, community sensitization, and collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

Still, the findings revealed that although family tracing and reintegration successfully reunited many street children with their families, several challenges hindered sustainable reintegration. These included family rejection, unresolved conflicts, poverty, stigma, neglect, emotional trauma, unstable homes, difficulties in tracing families, limited community support, logistical constraints, and inadequate follow-up. Overall, family reintegration was a critical component of the Catholic Church's rehabilitation programme, promoting emotional healing, family reunification, social inclusion, behavioral transformation, and sustainable recovery. Strengthening family counselling, household economic empowerment, community support, and continuous follow-up would further improve reintegration outcomes and reduce children's return to street life.

5.3 Conclusions of the Study

The study concludes that the Catholic Church's integrated intervention programmes have significantly related to the rehabilitation and transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern

Uganda. Programmes such as psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational training, and family reintegration have promoted emotional recovery, positive behavioural change, resilience, and economic independence. Overall, these interventions have restored the dignity, self-esteem, and well-being of Aguu while supporting their successful reintegration into families and communities and enabling them to become responsible and productive members of society.

Role of Psychosocial Counselling Support in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

Moreso, the study found that the Catholic Church uses a holistic psychosocial counselling approach to support the transformation of Aguu (street children). Through counselling, spiritual guidance, prayer, recreational activities, Christian values, and community participation, the programmes help children overcome trauma, rebuild self-esteem and dignity, develop hope, and reintegrate into society. Continuous psychosocial support also promotes emotional stability, resilience, positive coping, conflict resolution, and healthy relationships. The interventions were further found to reduce negative behaviours such as aggression, substance abuse, theft, quarrelling, and abusive language, while motivating children to pursue education, vocational training, and sustainable livelihoods. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Church's counselling interventions promote holistic rehabilitation by addressing children's emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual needs.

Still, the study found that beneficiaries and Church leaders highly appreciated the psychosocial rehabilitation programmes because they combine counselling with practical support such as safe shelter, livelihood assistance, spiritual guidance, and community acceptance. Secure accommodation was seen as essential for emotional healing, learning, and personal development. Overall, the combination of shelter, counselling, Christian values, and community support created a stable environment that promoted behavioural change, successful rehabilitation, and

sustainable reintegration. These findings support Maslow's and Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory, which emphasizes that fulfilling children's basic physiological and safety needs provides a foundation for emotional recovery, personal growth, and positive transformation.

The study identified several challenges that reduce the effectiveness of psychosocial counselling programmes, including inadequate funding, limited shelter capacity, unequal access to services, language barriers, and insufficient follow-up after rehabilitation. Some children require prolonged counselling due to severe trauma, while irregular participation and the mobility of street-connected children make continuous support difficult. Consequently, these challenges limit the programmes' ability to reach all vulnerable children and achieve lasting transformation.

The study concludes that psychosocial counselling offered by the Catholic Church has played an important role in promoting emotional recovery, positive behavioural change, resilience, and reintegration of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda. However, rehabilitation outcomes could be strengthened by improving access to counselling, increasing funding for counselling and shelter services, involving families and communities more actively, training more counsellors, and establishing effective long-term follow-up. These measures would provide more comprehensive and sustainable psychosocial support, facilitating the successful reintegration of Aguu into their families and communities.

Role of Formal Education in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

Nevertheless, the study found that the Catholic Church's formal education programmes played a significant role in relating to the transformation and rehabilitation of vulnerable children in Northern Uganda. By combining education with counselling, healthcare, nutrition, spiritual guidance, and a safe learning environment, the programmes equip children with knowledge, life

skills, moral values, and opportunities for sustainable personal development and reintegration.

The findings indicate that formal education significantly relates to the transformation of street children by strengthening their self-confidence, self-esteem, discipline, positive identity, and employability skills. Through Church-supported education, children acquire practical competencies, Christian values, and responsible behaviours while becoming less involved in substance abuse, theft, violence, and other delinquent activities. The structured learning environment also encourages positive behavioural and emotional development, ultimately supporting their successful reintegration into society.

The study found that respondents strongly appreciated the Church's holistic educational approach, which integrates academic learning with mentorship, family involvement, psychosocial support, and spiritual guidance. This integrated support helps restore hope, improve behaviour, strengthen relationships, and equip Aguu with skills for independent and productive lives, thereby promoting sustainable rehabilitation and long-term transformation.

The study found that formal education programmes face challenges such as inadequate funding and learning materials, reliance on donors, peer influence, limited family support, emotional attachment to street life, and difficulties adjusting to school. These factors may lead to irregular attendance and school dropout, making continuous counselling and individualized support necessary. Nevertheless, formal education remains a key strategy for rehabilitating and transforming Aguu. Improving funding, educational resources, psychosocial support, and family and community involvement would enhance participation, rehabilitation, and successful reintegration into society.

Role of Vocational Skills Training in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu)

Moreso, the study found that vocational skills training significantly relates to the transformation of street children (Aguu) by providing practical and marketable skills that support rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration. Through Church-supported programmes, beneficiaries gain skills such as tailoring, carpentry, and crafts, which enhance self-reliance, confidence, employability, and their ability to achieve sustainable economic independence.

In addition, vocational skills training significantly improves beneficiaries' confidence, self-esteem, self-worth, and ability to become economically self-reliant. The practical skills gained help them meet basic needs, regain dignity, and develop positive attitudes towards work. The training also supports psychosocial recovery, family reintegration, community acceptance, and lasting behavioural change, contributing to holistic rehabilitation.

The study found that vocational skills training faces challenges such as inadequate resources, unequal participation, limited job opportunities, unresolved psychosocial issues, peer influence, and weak family support. These barriers hinder some rehabilitated children from effectively using their skills and achieving sustainable economic independence.

The study found that vocational skills training provides a strong foundation for productive livelihoods, but its long-term impact could be improved through continuous mentorship, start-up assistance, employment opportunities, and post-training follow-up. Stronger collaboration among the Church, families, government agencies, and development partners would enhance programme sustainability and long-term rehabilitation outcomes.

The study concludes that vocational skills training is a key component of the Catholic Church's efforts to transform Aguu. Expanding training opportunities, providing adequate financial and technical support, strengthening mentorship, and improving employment linkages would enhance self-reliance, socio-economic reintegration, and sustainable transformation

among rehabilitated street children in Northern Uganda.

Role of Family Tracing and Reintegration in the Transformation of Aguu

The study concludes that family tracing and reintegration are essential for the holistic rehabilitation of *Aguu* children. The Church's intervention has related significantly to emotional healing, social inclusion, and positive behavioural change. However, sustaining these achievements requires stronger family economic empowerment, community-based support systems, and continuous follow-up. Ultimately, successful long-term reintegration depends on addressing the poverty and social instability that contribute to children's displacement from their families.

The study concludes that rehabilitating street children requires a holistic approach that addresses not only the child's needs but also the wellbeing and resilience of families and communities. The Catholic Church's programme demonstrates significant potential while facing challenges in achieving sustainable reintegration. Strengthening family-focused and community-based strategies can help children and families build secure and hopeful futures. Overall, the study advocates for a comprehensive, child-centred, and community-driven approach to sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration.

Contribution to the body of knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge by showing that an integrated approach combining psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational training, and family reintegration can effectively transform street-connected children (Aguu) in post-conflict Northern Uganda. It also documents key achievements and ongoing challenges, particularly limited resources and inadequate follow-up, which need to be addressed to ensure sustainable rehabilitation outcomes.

Theoretically, the study extends Maslow and Rogers' humanistic framework by showing that spiritual support, community participation, and cultural sensitivity are essential for effective rehabilitation. These findings can guide governments and faith-based organisations in designing contextually relevant interventions and prioritising resources effectively.

Additionally, Aguuology is the emerging body of knowledge and conceptual framework derived from this study and it systematically explains the transformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of street children, specifically the Aguu of Northern Uganda. But also, the term combines "Aguu"—the local Acholi name for street children—and the suffix "-ology," meaning the study or science of a subject. Hence Aguuology means the study of Aguu.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

The study highlights the need to strengthen child protection and rehabilitation efforts in Northern Uganda. While Catholic Church programmes have effectively supported the transformation and reintegration of Aguu, improving their accessibility, quality, sustainability, and long-term support is essential. Strengthening counselling, education, vocational training, family reintegration, and post-rehabilitation services may promote lasting personal, social, and economic independence. The study found that a coordinated multi-sectoral approach is essential for improving the well-being of vulnerable street children and their communities. This requires addressing challenges such as inadequate funding, limited rehabilitation facilities, insufficient educational and vocational resources, and shortages of qualified counsellors. Effective rehabilitation should also include ongoing psychosocial support, family participation, mentorship, livelihood assistance, and consistent monitoring after reintegration to promote sustainable outcomes.

Based on these findings, the researcher therefore made several recommendations for

different stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation and transformation of street children (Aguu).

i. To the Government of Uganda. The study recommends that the Ugandan government strengthen child protection and rehabilitation programmes by increasing funding for rehabilitation centres, expanding access to formal education and vocational skills training, and employing more qualified, ethical, and child-centred counsellors and social workers. In addition, the government should develop clear policies to strengthen collaboration with faith-based organizations, particularly the Catholic Church, while investing in rehabilitation facilities, employment opportunities for rehabilitated youth, and effective monitoring and family reintegration programmes to promote sustainable rehabilitation outcomes.

ii. To the Catholic Church in Northern Uganda. The study recommends that the Catholic Church strengthens its intervention programmes by expanding psychosocial counselling, enhancing access to quality education and vocational skills training, improving rehabilitation infrastructure through the establishment of additional centres and schools, and recruiting more qualified professional counsellors. The Catholic Church must also strengthen family tracing and reintegration initiatives, provide continuous mentorship and post-rehabilitation follow-up, and establish partnerships with employers, vocational institutions, and financial organizations to improve employment opportunities and economic self-reliance for rehabilitated street children (Aguu).

iii. To Families and local Communities in the region. The study recommends that parents, guardians, religious leaders, cultural leaders, and community members actively participate in preventing children from migrating to the streets by strengthening family support systems, for example, income generating activities, promoting children's education, and creating safe and supportive home environments—where parents and children live in peace. Community members

are also urged to work closely with rehabilitation centres during family reintegration, reduce stigma against rehabilitated children, and provide mentorship and social support that can facilitates successful reintegration and long-term behavioral transformation.

iv. To Development Partners and Non-Governmental Organizations. The study recommends enhancing financial and technical support for rehabilitation programmes by providing adequate educational materials, vocational training equipment, counselling services, healthcare, shelter, and livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, strengthening collaboration among the Catholic Church, government institutions, local communities, and the private sector would help address gaps in funding, technical expertise, and service delivery, thereby promoting the sustainability and effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes. Indeed, expanding resource mobilization, strengthening capacity building, and enhancing coordinated programme implementation will improve the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of rehabilitation services for vulnerable Aguu (street children). In addition, sustained support for livelihood programmes, family reintegration, and post-rehabilitation follow-up may enhance successful reintegration, promote economic self-reliance, and contribute to the long-term well-being of rehabilitated street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

i. The result suggests that upcoming researchers conduct comparative studies on the effectiveness of Catholic Church intervention programmes in the rehabilitation and transformation of Aguu in various areas of Uganda and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such studies would help determine whether the results of this present study are situation-specific or broadly applicable across different socio-cultural and institutional settings.

ii. The study recommends that future researchers undertake longitudinal research to know the long-term effect of Catholic Church's intervention programmes, particularly psychosocial counselling, formal education, vocational skills training, family tracing, and reintegration initiatives, on the socio-economic well-being, resilience, behavioural transformation of Aguu, and their sustainable reintegration.

iii. Future research should also investigate the effectiveness of collaborative rehabilitation approaches involving the Government of Uganda, the Catholic Church, families, local communities, development partners, and other faith-based organizations. Particular attention should be given to family tracing and reintegration programmes, community-based rehabilitation models, and multi-stakeholder partnerships in preventing children from returning to street life while promoting sustainable transformation, child protection, and socio-economic reintegration.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Introduction Letters

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

(Postgraduate, Department of Education)

P.O. Box 62157 – 00200.

Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Participant,

My name is Michael Oringa. I am conducting a research study titled: "Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda." This study forms part of my PhD dissertation in Educational Administration and Planning at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to decline participation or skip any question without giving a reason. All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected will be used only for academic purposes, and the findings will be presented in summary form without revealing the identity of any participant.

While there are no direct benefits or risks associated with participating in this study, your responses will contribute to a better understanding of the role of the Catholic Church in the transformation and reintegration of street children. The findings may help policy makers, church institutions, and community stakeholders improve programs and strategies aimed at supporting vulnerable children like Aguu and strengthening rehabilitation initiatives. If you agree to participate, I kindly request you to please complete the questionnaire and/or interview honestly and thoughtfully. The questionnaire and interview will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. To facilitate the timely completion of this research, I would appreciate it if you could

please return the questionnaire you completed at your earliest convenience.

For any clarification or inquiries, please feel free to contact me on +256707951321. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. Your contribution will greatly support the success of this study.

Sincerely,



Michael Oringa.

0417 893 600 (General)
0417 893 602 (Permanent Secretary)
permasec@education.go.ug
www.education.go.ug
For any correspondence on this subject, please quote ADM/48/118/01

The Republic of Uganda
Ministry of Education and Sports

Ministry of Education and Sports
P.O. Box 7063
Kampala, Uganda
Embassy House
King George VI Way

8th July 2026

The Head of Department-Post Graduate Studies in Education
Faculty of Education
Catholic University of East Africa
KENYA

CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON CATHOLIC CHURCH'S INTERVENTION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF STREET CHILDREN IN AGUU NOTHERN UGANDA

The Ministry of Education and Sports acknowledges receipt of your letter dated 11th June 2026, regarding clearance of Mr. Michael Oringa- Reg No.106467 to conduct research on Catholic Church intervention in the transformation of street children in Northern Uganda.

This is to inform you that the Ministry has No Objection to your request and has therefore cleared the conduct of research in the selected region in Uganda.

You are hereby requested to adhere to the guidance of the Research Ethics Committee, Uganda Christian University and the National Council for Science and Technology.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dr. Kedrace R. Turyagyenda
PERMANENT SECRETARY

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

Faculty of Education

Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education

Our Ref: CUEA/DVC-ACAD/FOE/PGSE/NACOSTI/22/JUNE 2026

11th June 2026

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS
P.O BOX 7063
KAMPALA - UGANDA

No objection. Please
go ahead and
try to work with
the local authorities
and police where
necessary.

RE: MICHAEL ORINGA - REG NO. 1064067

I wish to introduce to you **Michael Oringa** a PHD student at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi – Kenya; and request you to assist him accomplish his academic research requirements.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
15 JUN 2026
DEPUTY RESIDENT CITY COMMISSIONER
PECE - LAROO DIVISION

Michael 's area of specialization is Administration and Planning. Every student in the programme is required to conduct research, write a report/dissertation and submit it for examination in the final years of study. Accordingly, **Michael's** research proposal has been approved and he will conduct research on the following topic:

"***Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.***"

Thanking you in advance for according **Michael** the assistance he may require to conduct his research successfully.

Sincerely,

H.C.D.
1 JUN 2026

DEPUTY RESIDENT CITY COMMISSIONER
15 JUN 2026
BARDEGE-LAYIBI DIVISION

Recommended to continue with data collection

Sr. Prof. Elizbeth Nduku
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

Faculty of Education

Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education

Our Ref: CUEA/DVC-ACAD/FOE/PGSE/NACOSTI/22/JUNE 2026

11th June 2026

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS
P.O BOX 7063
KAMPALA - UGANDA

Forwarded for Consideration and Permission granted.

CHANCELLOR OF LIRA DIOCESE

RE: MICHAEL ORINGA - REG NO. 1064067

I wish to introduce to you **Michael Oringa** a PHD student at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi – Kenya; and request you to assist him accomplish his academic research requirements.

Michael 's area of specialization is Administration and Planning. Every student in the programme is required to conduct research, write a report/dissertation and submit it for examination in the final years of study. Accordingly, **Michael's** research proposal has been approved and he will conduct research on the following topic:

"***Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.***"

Thanking you in advance for according **Michael** the assistance he may require to conduct his research successfully.

Sincerely,

H.O.D. 1 JUN 2026

18 JUN 2026 Received

Permission granted. NB:- Comply with all ethical & administrative requirements.

Sr. Prof. Elizbeth Nduku
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

Faculty of Education

Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education

Our Ref: CUEA/DVC-ACAD/FOE/PGSE/NACOSTI/22/JUNE 2026

Please render him the assistance.

For: District Chairperson
Gulu District Local Government
P. O. Box 2, Gulu

DR. OF PETER
VICHAIRMAN
19/6/2026

11th June 2026

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS
P.O BOX 7063
KAMPALA - UGANDA

RE: MICHAEL ORINGA - REG NO. 1064067

I wish to introduce to you **Michael Oringa** a PHD student at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi – Kenya; and request you to assist him accomplish his academic research requirements.

Michael 's area of specialization is Administration and Planning. Every student in the programme is required to conduct research, write a report/dissertation and submit it for examination in the final years of study. Accordingly, **Michael's** research proposal has been approved and he will conduct research on the following topic:

*"**Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda**."*

Thanking you in advance for according **Michael** the assistance he may require to conduct his research successfully.

Sincerely,

CUEA UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA H.O.D. 1 NOV 2026 POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION NAIROBI

Sr. Prof. Elizbeth Nduku
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

Faculty of Education

Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education

Our Ref: CUEA/DVC-ACAD/FOE/PGSE/NACOSTI/22/JUNE 2026

11th June 2026

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS
P.O BOX 7063
KAMPALA - UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
28 JUN 2026
KITGUM DISTRICT
DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON
25 JUN 2026
PADER DISTRICT

RE: MICHAEL ORINGA - REG NO. 1064067

I wish to introduce to you **Michael Oringa** a PHD student at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi – Kenya; and request you to assist him accomplish his academic research requirements.

Michael 's area of specialization is Administration and Planning. Every student in the programme is required to conduct research, write a report/dissertation and submit it for examination in the final years of study. Accordingly, **Michael's** research proposal has been approved and he will conduct research on the following topic:

"***Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda.***"

Thanking you in advance for according **Michael** the assistance he may require to conduct his research successfully.

Sincerely,

H.C.B.
1 JUN 2026

Sr. Prof. Elizbeth Nduku
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION

COMBONI SAMARITANS OF GULU
P. O. BOX 963, GULU. (UGANDA)
"LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVED YOU"

17th June 2026

The
Catholic University
Of Eastern Africa
Faculty of Education

Dear MICHAEL ORINGA – REG NO. 1064067

\

ACCEPTANCE LETTER TO INTERVIEW "STREET CHILDREN/YOUTH" UNDER THE CARE OF OUR PROJECT.

Following the introduction letter issued to you from your university to stakeholders to allow you carry out your research on " Catholic Church's Intervention in the Transformation of Street Children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda" and later submit a dissertation as part of your examination, Comboni Samaritans of Gulu therefore accept and give you access to interview its beneficiaries.

The Organization therefore request that at the end of your research to you share with the organization a copy of your research finding to help the organization strategize for future support to the same group. You can use this email : combonisamaritan@gmail.com

Thanks, Yours

COMBONI SAMARITANS OF GULU EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 17 JUN 2026 P.O BOX 963, GULU UGANDA

Opiyo Masimo
Executive Director
Mobile: +256 787070807
Whatsap: +393314975413
Email: masimolwanga@gmail.com

APPENDIX II: Informed Consent

Taking Part in the Study

Please read the statements below carefully and indicate your response by ticking (✓) the appropriate option.

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the information provided about this research project.

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research project.

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

I understand that my participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

I understand that the information I provide may be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs; however, my identity will remain confidential and anonymous.

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

By signing below, I confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of the Researcher: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX III: Assent Form

Dear Parents/Guardians,

RE: REQUEST FOR ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

I am Michael Oringa, a PhD student at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi-Kenya. I am writing to seek your permission for your child to participate in a research study titled: "Catholic Church's intervention in the transformation of street children (Aguu) in Northern Uganda". Your child's participation in this study will greatly contribute to our understanding of this important issue and may help inform strategies to get children out of streets. As minors, I understand that your child may not be able to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research study. Therefore, I am seeking your assent as parents/guardians to allow your child to take part. Participation in this study is voluntary, and your child may withdraw at any time without consequence. Be assured that all information provided will be kept confidential, and the findings will be used for academic purposes only.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, please sign this assent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at +256707951321. Thank you for considering this request and your support is appreciated in advancing our understanding of this important topic.

Name of the child……. Date……

Parent's/Guardian's signature……Date……

APPENDIX IV: Questionnaire for Street Children (Aguu)

Section A: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement.

1. Age

   ☐ 1–5 years ☐ 6–10 years ☐ 11–15 years ☐ 16–20 years

   ☐ 20 years and above

2. Gender

   ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Currently living on the street.

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Duration on the street and before entering the rehabilitation program.

   ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ More than 5 years

5. District of residence: _____

6. Current living arrangement.

   ☐ Church shelter ☐ Foster family ☐ Own arrangement

   Other (specify): _____

7. Participation in Catholic Church rehabilitation program

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

Section B: Psychosocial Counseling Support

Please indicate your level of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) 2 = Disagree (D)

3 = Neutral (N) 4 = Agree (A) 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I have received counseling or spiritual guidance through the Church rehabilitation program.					
2	I regularly participate in counseling or spiritual activities organized by the Church and have improved my social life and coping strategies.					
3	The psychosocial support provided by the Church has improved my emotional well-being and empowered me.					
4	The Church has provided me with a safe and stable shelter during my rehabilitation process.					
5	Counseling support from the Church has positively influenced my behavior and interactions with others.					

Any other……..

……

……

Section C: Role of Formal Education

Please indicate your level of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) 2 = Disagree (D)

3 = Neutral (N) 4 = Agree (A) 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am currently enrolled in a school or educational program supported by the Church.					

2	The quality of education provided through the Church-supported program is satisfactory because of health and good diet.					
3	I have acquired new knowledge, life skills, good morals and values through Church-supported educational programs.					
4	The education I have received has improved my confidence and personal development.					
5	Educational programs have helped reduce my involvement in risky behaviors.					

Any other……..

……

Section D: Role of Vocational Skills Training

Please indicate your level of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) 2 = Disagree (D)

3 = Neutral (N) 4 = Agree (A) 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I have participated in vocational skills training programs offered by the Church.					
2	I have learned practical vocational skills like carpentry through the Church's training programs					

3	I feel confident in using the vocational skills I learned to earn a living in the future.					
4	Vocational training has improved my sense of independence and self-worth.					
5	The vocational skills I acquired have contributed to positive changes in my daily life.					

Any other……..

……

……

Section E: Influence of Family Tracing and Reintegration

Please indicate your level of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) 2 = Disagree (D)

3 = Neutral (N) 4 = Agree (A) 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I have been reconnected with my family through the Church's intervention.					
2	My family has been supportive since I was reintegrated into the family.					
3	Family reintegration has improved my social behavior and sense of belonging.					
4	I have faced challenges in rebuilding relationships with my family after reintegration.					

5	I feel valued and involved in my family and community after the reintegration process.					

Any other……..

……

……

Thank you!

APPENDIX V: Interview Guide for Religious Leaders, Cultural Leaders and Community Leaders

Instructions: Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing probing questions to explore participants' perspectives in depth.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender

   ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: ___ years
3. Leadership role: _____
4. Years of experience in community, cultural, or religious leadership.

   ☐ 1–5 years ☐ 6–10 years ☐ 11–15 years ☐ More than 15 years

5. Type of organization or institution.

   ☐ Church ☐ Community-based organization ☐ Cultural institution

   Other (specify)_____

6. District of operation: _____

Section B: Psychosocial Counseling Support

1. What kind of psychosocial support does the Church provide to street children (Aguu)?
2. In your experience, how effective are these interventions in improving the children's emotional well-being and behavior change?
3. How accessible are counseling support services to street children in the community?
4. What challenges do you observe in delivering psychosocial support to street children?
5. How does the Church ensure continuity of psychosocial support for street children who complete rehabilitation programs?

6. What improvements would you recommend in order to enhance psychosocial counseling support?

Section C: Role of Formal Education

1. How does the Church facilitate access to formal education for street children (Aguu)?
2. What is your perception of the quality of education provided through Church programs?
3. How has formal education contributed to the personal development of street children?
4. Do you think the education offered is sufficient to reduce engagement in risky behaviors? Why or why not?
5. What challenges exist in delivering education to street children in the rehabilitation program?
6. How could educational support be improved to better serve street children?

Section D: Vocational Skills Training

1. What types of vocational skills training programs does the Church offer to street children (Aguu)?
2. How effective are these programs in enhancing the children's economic independence?
3. In your observation, how do vocational skills influence the children's self-esteem and personal transformation?
4. Are there any barriers that limit street children from fully benefiting from vocational programs?
5. How do you evaluate the long-term impact of vocational training on the children's livelihoods?
6. What recommendations would you provide to strengthen vocational training programs?

Section E: Family Tracing and Reintegration

1. How does the Church facilitate family tracing and reintegration for street children (Aguu)?
2. In your view, how successful are these efforts in restoring family relationships?
3. What challenges do you observe in reintegrating street children into their families?
4. How do family reintegration efforts affect children's social behavior and sense of belonging?
5. How do you support families to maintain a positive relationship with the child after reintegration?
6. What strategies would you recommend in order to improve family tracing and reintegration programs?

APPENDIX VI: Work Plan

Phase	Activity	Task	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Proposal development	Development of the research proposal	Conduct literature review I identify gaps associated with the Topic Curate research objectives Design methodology Conceptual framework	Two months January to February 2026	Approved research proposal by the CUEA-Postgraduate Department of Education
Defense	Research proposal defense	Proposal defense Corrections	March to April 2026	Approved research proposal by the CUEA-Postgraduate department of Education
Ethical approval and preparation of research	Obtain ethical clearance and plan for data collection	Seeking ethical approval from the university - CUEA Ministry of Education and Sports – Uganda Develop a piloting tool for validity and reliability	2 weeks April 2026	Ethical approval granted and validated research tool
Data Collection	Data collection and fieldwork	I identify and recruit participants Administer structured questionnaire	4 weeks May 2026	Collected and verified quantitative and qualitative data

		Ensure data accuracy and completeness		from the field
Data analysis	Statistical analysis and interpretation Thematic analysis and presentation	Data cleaning Coding Input data into SPSS Transcribing – qualitative data Conduct descriptive and inferential analysis Interpret findings based on objectives – quantitative/qualitative Writing chapter 4-5	4 Weeks June 2026	Successfully analyzed chapter 4-5 Effect corrections from the supervisors Get ready for final defense
Dissertation writing and review	Drafting and retouching thesis	Write and refine dissertation chapters Chapter 1-5 Including input from supervisors Retouch and finalize the project	1 Week July	Completed dissertation writing Get ready for final defense
dissertation defense corrections and publication	Presentation and examination	Submit the final dissertation for examination Prepare and conduct an oral defense Address feedback from the examiners	3 Weeks July	Successfully defended and approved the final dissertation Publication

		Submit journal paper for publication		
Dissemination and publication	Sharing research results	Share results with key stakeholders Present results at academic conference	4 weeks August 2026	Publish final dissertation and policy recommendations

APPENDIX VII: Plagiarism Report

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I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT **MICHAEL ORINGA** REG NO: **1064067**, SUBMITTED A CHECK OF ANTIPLAGIARISM ON EVALUATION OF **CATHOLIC CHURCH'S INTERVENTION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF STREET CHILDREN (AGUU) IN NORTHERN UGANDA. A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN EDUCATION AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA.**

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APPENDIX XIII: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970 table

Table for Determining Sample Size for a Given Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size
"S" is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

APPENDIX IX: Map of Uganda showing the selected disticts: Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira

