



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STREET CHILDREN AND CRIME: A CASE OF NAIROBI CITY COUNTY- KENYA**

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**Accepted: June 18, 2022**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The menace of street children and crime is a global phenomenon. Street children and crime are on the rise due to the tough economic times which deprive street children of the opportunity to attend school and their basic needs. Without proper education and being underage, most street children cannot meaningfully participate in viable economic activities. Dysfunctional family relationships in homes marred by violence, the prevalence of abusive parents and absence of responsible guardians, high poverty rate, and high illiteracy rate contribute to the problem of street children. The study sought to find out whether there is a relationship between street children and crime in Nairobi City County. It adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised four groups of respondents; street children, small and medium business owners in Nairobi City, ordinary citizens and law enforcement officers. The study employed stratified simple random sampling to sample the respondents. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods. To assess the link between street children and crime a multiple linear regression analysis was done. The findings of the study established different types of deprivation experienced by street children. 43 respondents (100%) of the business persons indicated that nutrition deprivations were common among street children. The respondents also agreed that shelter deprivation (38 respondents; 88.4%), health deprivation (32 respondents; 74.4%), and source of income deprivation (27 respondents; 62.8%) were experienced by the majority of the street children. nutritional deprivation (23 respondents; 53.5%) and shelter (22 respondents; 51.2%) deprivation, to a very large extent, led street children to commit crimes. The study recommended that sustainable education and public awareness be enhanced across each community to encourage society to take up the responsibility to care for street children. The County Government of Nairobi City County, in collaboration with the National Government, NGOs, the community, and well-wishers, should work together to strategically cater to the needs of street children. This includes the provision of the basic needs such as food, shelter, and children's social needs, which were identified as key drivers of the rise in the number of street children Nairobi County.*

**Key Words:** Deprivation, Street Children, Crime Prevention, Crime Management

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**CITATION:** Cheserek, S. K., & Kavivya, C. (2022). Relationship between street children and crime: A case of Nairobi City County- Kenya. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 9 (2), 1453-1478.

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## INTRODUCTION

Street children and crime has been one of the greatest challenges for authorities across the globe, especially in big cities. As the proliferation of street children increases, incidences of crime have been on the rise. Most of the streets in the big cities are prone to crime, which is committed by street children (Dutta, 2018). Since street children are unable to access education and sustainable income activities, they are disconnected from employment opportunities and decent housing (Ferguson et al., 2009). As a result, they indulge in delinquency as a way to survive. Governments have not adequately handled the state of affairs for street children, and as a consequence, cases of crime committed by street children have increased.

All children across the world need adequate guidance, protection, and care to facilitate positive emotional well-being and health, particularly during the early ages. The community, parents, and guardians have the responsibility of caring for and protecting every child (UNICEF, 2016). According to (ERNEST, 2017), it is the responsibility of the community and every home to inculcate attitude, cultural skills, and improved methods of thinking in children. The childhood period is the most sensitive time where the children depend on the family for basic needs required for survival. However, in today's society and in particular in developing Nations, many children are abandoned due to the loss of their parents to natural disasters, pandemics, diseases like HIV/AIDS, or absentee parents. This gives precedence to children who at an early age take up roles like adults and try fending for themselves in the streets, hence the term, street children.

According to (UNICEF, 2013), there are three sub-categories of street children: Street working children, street living children, and children of street living families. Street working children are the boys and girls who spend the majority of their time working on the street to earn a livelihood for their families or themselves but they do not live in the streets, they have homes where they go back.

Street living children are the boys and girls who live alone on the Streets. The children of street living families are the boys and girls who live with their families in the streets. These categories of unique street children are, therefore, the study's unit of analysis for they may be easily radicalized, human trafficked, or otherwise.

The correlation between street children and crime is not a new phenomenon world over. (Manzuma & Hasna, 2012), in their study in Bangladesh found out that a good number of street children in Bangladesh's capital are involved in criminal activities such as stealing, hijacking, pick-pocketing, drug abuse, rape, vandalizing public property, and other forms of mischief. (Rizzini & Butler, 2014), revealed that the majority of street children in Brazil took part in crime since they felt discriminated against, violated, and excluded from society. Hence in accordance to (Dena, 2017), to understand crime by street children, it is important to understand the violence against them in the form of symbolic violence. According to (Hughes, 2014), symbolic violence is the assault on human dignity and an individual's sense of worth. In such a situation, since the older street children have limited opportunities to earn some form of livelihood through begging and vending, they may easily indulge in criminal activities such as assaulting and robbing people, an assumption that has been supported by many studies with regards to street children (Beazley, 2003).

(Human Rights, 2018), linked street children with crime through a study on drug abuse among street children in India. The study supports that street children abuse drugs to quell hunger and escapism; anesthetize the emotional and physical pain as an activity of bonding associated with street gang culture and friendship. The study further adds that street children take drugs to keep themselves alert for any possible violence and awake for work. It also facilitates sleep during cold nights. These, among other undertakings, are very dear to them and most often they would turn into crimes such as theft, robbery, and mugging to maintain the lifestyle. In

countries like Brazil, drug abuse by street children is criminalized by the justice system which confines them to institutions of adolescent offenders.

(Marcus & Ronald, 1998), reinforces the relationship between street children and crime in that, the real criminals in the society who are not street children convert street children into criminals because they are small in size and can enter into small spaces and climb into windows, to help in committing burglary. Also, they can engage in pick-pocketing easily. Many street children are gullible to engaging in criminal activities that adults may not be willing to undertake. The study adds that street children can easily be bought by small gifts of food and drugs and that they are expendable and can easily be sacrificed in the event of a crime gone sour.

In Kenya, the situation of street children mirrors that of other developing nations. Most of the people who live on the streets are children (below 18 years). Notably, the number of female street children is increasing rapidly. The male street children are commonly referred to as “parking boys”, and they survive by engaging in a range of odd jobs including collecting garbage for sale, pick-pocketing, begging in the streets, and helping the motorists to park their vehicles (Ochola, 2016).

Female street children survive by engaging in limited activities; prostitution and begging. (Ochola, 2016), a study targeting street girls in Nairobi revealed that approximately 90% of the female street children ran away from their homes because of alcoholism and verbal and physical abuse. Further, (Ochola, 2016), established that more than 50% of street girls come from single-parent households who are low-income earners. (Manzuma & Hasna, 2012), in Ethiopia revealed that the phenomenon of the increasing number of street children is a result of increased poverty among the families.

Kenya has more than 46,000 street children (KNBS, 2019). These street boys and girls face enormous challenges including street pornography,

radicalization, drug abuse, HIV/aids, early teenage pregnancy, abuse of their human rights, and high poverty index. They have little or no hope of securing themselves other than by way of juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is a response to deprivation by street children, this implies that in circumstances where poverty is perceived as being unfair, in comparison to other individuals, it generates discontentment which in turn becomes a driver for committing a crime (UNCHS, 2010).

Crime life could be one way of expressing their discontentment. However, the nexus between discontentment and crime among street children has not been exhaustively established from a crime-associated field. This study, therefore, attempted to analyze the nexus between street children and crime in Nairobi city.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many children feel the need to go to the street to earn an income by all means possible because of the high cost of living and increased poverty among the families living in Nairobi County. During the Corona pandemic, many parents lost their sources of income which led to a surge in the number of street children and increased cases of criminal activities in Nairobi City. It is not feasible for street children to find employment because they don't have skills and formal training and the laws of Kenya outlaw child labor. As such, street children are forced to live in the streets and fend for themselves using outlawed mechanisms such as engaging in crime and/or delinquency for survival. Besides, street children come from dysfunctional families, suggesting that re-joining host communities is a tall order. The circumstances faced by street children stimulate the survival mentality, where they can engage in any activity as long as it ensures their survival. Survival in the streets entails joining gangs for security and a sense of belonging, drug abuse to numb the pain, anger, and hunger, petty crime to get food and daily necessities, and organized crime syndicates to get by and survive. This narrative is similar across different cities in developing countries (Opondo &

Kiprop, 2018). In that regard, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between street children and crime in Nairobi County to suggest effective intervention mechanisms which can be implemented to rehabilitate street children and lower crime.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to determine the relationship between street children and crime: a case of Nairobi City County - Kenya. The Study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- To assess the effects of deprivation on crime among street children in Nairobi City County
- To determine the demographic factors of street children contributing to crime in Nairobi City County
- To explore challenges in efforts to prevent and manage crime among street children in Nairobi City County

The study was guided by these research questions:

- What are the effects of deprivation of street children on crime: a case of Nairobi City County - Kenya?
- What are the demographic factors of street children that contribute to crime: a case of Nairobi City County - Kenya?
- What are the challenges facing the efforts to prevent and manage crime by street children: a case of Nairobi City County - Kenya?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Deprivation of Street Children and Crime**

There are different types of deprivation faced by street children that lead them into engaging in criminal activities. (Gordon et al., 2013), identifies five dimensions of deprivation by street children; access to sanitation facilities and safe water for drinking, shelter, information, education, and nutrition. These dimensions are used to determine the deprivation status of the street children that drives them to crime.

Shelter deprivation is living in an overcrowded dwelling with an earthen floor, without any flooring

material (Gordon et al., 2013). The most common sleeping areas for street children are the doorsteps of buildings in the streets or empty commercial buildings, under trees while others sleep and sun away on the bank of streams. Others seek shelter in old railway stations, bus terminus, and any place where space is available, however deplorable it could be. This is a matter of extreme deprivation and not of choice.

Street children's bases consist of pieces of dirty cardboard and polythene on the ground, some rags and torn pieces of cloth, pieces of old dirty plastic and metallic plates, cups, and cooking pots. Although the study by (Gordon et al., 2013) evaluated how shelter deprivation leads to crime, the study was not based in Nairobi City County, where the severity of deprivation is elaborate among the street children to whom the street is of centrality in their life for they don't have any choice of livelihood away from the streets.

Health and Nutrition deprivation is the worst form of deprivation that is likely to push street children to crime. According to a report by (ZIMSTAT, 2016), two health dimensions are considered of great need; mandatory children vaccination and the repeated phenomenon of untreated childhood diseases particularly acute respiratory infections and diarrhea. Although it is recommended that children be vaccinated, this need is not met by children living on the street because they lack access to medical facilities. This report was however based in Zimbabwe and thus cannot be generalized to a similar study in Kenya due to differences in the number of street children. (Moreira et al., 2018), observed that nutritional deprivation is a determinant in street children's livelihoods and affects the decisions they make in their daily living. Street children don't have diversity in their diets; the quantities and frequency consumed are generally less as compared to the children who reside at home. Moreover, this food is not always hygienic since some children collect food from waste bins which are in a bad state by all means and standards. However, using the proceeds of

crime a time they buy their food or beg for food from the general public thus the source of conflict and irritation as a public nuisance. Also, street children sometimes receive food at drop-in centers through the good gesture of Samaritans and non-governmental organizations. They prefer to be on the streets where they could easily access the public to beg for food, money, and any consumables at the same time. If that is not forthcoming or yielding the desired results, some street children resort to crime and violence (Moreira et al., 2018). However, (Moreira et al., 2018), did not assess how demographic factors of street children contribute to crime, a second objective of the current study.

Income deprivation is another form of severe deprivation that is a contributory factor to crime among street children. The main strategy for livelihood for street children is engaging in the informal economy. Some street children engage in legal work but those who don't want to work engage in crime for their daily provision (Gordon et al., 2013). Notably, the majority of street children obtain income from begging which constitutes street children's exploitation and abuse. Further, some street boys and girls hawk airtime, brooms, and sweets while others are employed by shop owners to empty their waste bins, distribute flyers, and clean vehicles for motorists. Another fraction of the street children are used by public service vehicle owners, drivers, and touts to tout for customers while most girls are sexually exploited to get an income. When all the above methods are constrained the street children turn to crime and mugging to get an income as a means of last resort and the cycle becomes vicious (Moreira et al., 2018).

#### **Demographic Factors of Street Children that Contribute to Crime**

The literature reviewed reveals various characteristics of street children that cut across both developing and the developed countries and they revolve around gender, age, culture, health, and security among others. Concerning gender

representation, the male gender composes the highest number of street children (Le Roux, 2016) and (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016). (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), notes that females have the least representation among street children; this may be attributed to cultural norms where girls are protected more in the family setting. Moreover, with regards to the girls who escape from home, most end up working as servants in homes or are captured by pimps; this is the case since they are subject to be victimized by the boys on the street and they prefer to reside in any other place other than the street. The study by (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), was however not focused on crime by street children; the goal of this study.

With regards to age, the majority of street children start living in the streets at the age of 9 and 12 years and they live in the street until they are 15-16 years. When the street children are older, they delve into looking for more stable jobs that pay well (Rizzini & Butler, 2014). Moreover, it is established that street children do not pay any attention to morals and culture; this is attributed to the fact that they live away from their families. (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), support this assertion by explaining that a street child is a boy or girl who is roofless or homeless and is culturally rootless. This could also be attributed to the street children's higher inclination to engage in crime. Concerning their health, street children are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDs as a result of engaging in unprotected sexual behaviors. As established by (Rizzini & Butler, 2014), street girls are at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, since they offer sexual favors to the boys in exchange for security, hence do not have the power to bargain for safe sex. The study by (Rizzini & Butler, 2014), is limited since it is based in Brazil, which is a developed country, while this study is based in Kenya, a developing country.

Concerning social networks, children that lack family ties form juvenile delinquent peer groups. Often, these groups play an essential role in juvenile gangs and families and are a source of emotional

and economic support and solidarity for all of the members. (Le Roux & Smith, 2016), noted that each of the delinquent juvenile groups has a leader who is respected and obeyed by each member of the group, a reflection of the good organization of the group. The study by (Le Roux & Smith, 2016), was based in South Africa leaving a research gap to be filled in other parts of Africa including Kenya and specifically Nairobi City County.

### **Challenges Facing the Efforts of Prevention and Management of Crime by Street Children**

There have been numerous knee-jerk attempts by some stakeholders ranging from the government, Non-Governmental organizations, the community, and independent individuals in trying to manage the problem of street children with minimal success in both the developed and developing countries. The government as represented by the social welfare departments and agencies has the responsibility to help the community members who have social problems. Social welfare department ought to have concern for the street children's welfare by offering programs to help them. These programs are inclusive of providing education, shelter, vocational training, food, and healthcare services to street children who face social challenges. The extent to which the social welfare department achieves its mission is an issue for debate. Studies like (Barkat et al., 2012), reveal that most of the initiatives advanced by the government are synonymous with substandard accommodation facilities. For instance, in their assessment in Bangladesh, they found that children were kept in temporary shanty structures. The homes were not conducive to offering the needed support to the children. For example, the environments of some homes were found to be dirty and unhygienic while others did not have the necessary amenities. The supply of water and electricity was inadequate while all of the facilities were established to be understaffed with three to four staff members and with little to no vocational training institutions. This exposes the chronic problem of under-resourcing

and general insensitiveness to street children issues.

The other common problem rampant in the management of street children is unqualified staff. The issue of competence was rife in a study done by (Ochola, 2016). The study established a gap, where for most government initiatives to harbor street children there was understaffing and unqualified staff to handle street children once brought in for rehabilitation. Most staff in the institutions meant to rehabilitate had either worked as matrons in schools or as nurses in hospitals and had retired. Further, they had no pre-requisite training on how to handle street children who engage in crime. The author opines that poor policies to address the challenge of street children and crime is a major concern because most Acts of parliament delegate the mandate for children's rights to Non-Governmental organizations most of which are underfunded and face a lot of political interference which act as a hindrance to making any meaningful progress in the management of street children and crime. This interference phenomenon is almost replicated across the globe. The study presented a research gap since it did not assess how demographic factors of street children contribute to crime. Moreover, the study was wide since it focused on the entire country while the current study was specifically focused on Nairobi County.

(Opondo & Kiprop, 2018), revealed that there was mismanagement of resources, skewed priorities, and poor policies to address the challenge of street children and crime in Kenya. Most of the funds channeled towards such programs never perform their intended purposes as most of the money is diverted to individual's pockets and accounts leading to the plight of street children without much being done. Corruption is rampant in such initiatives and institutions. The authors revealed that community projects conceived to achieve such vital social goals mostly die a premature death due to a lack of buy-in from various community stakeholders and a lack of proper structures and vibrant policies for such initiatives.

Unprofessionalism and selfish interest get in the way and most concerned stakeholders start pushing their agendas and even politicize the process or use such platforms to launch their political careers with minimal regard to the plight of the millions of children in the street. Furthermore, relapse of street children programs makes it a challenge for lack of research knowledge that is empirically generated and globally acceptable. Most street children after being adopted and absorbed into the rehabilitation centers develop tendencies of going back to the street life. Their old habits die hard and transitioning to a different life becomes difficult for them. Although the study was based in Kenya, it targeted Kisumu City. This presented a gap for a similar study to be conducted in other towns in Kenya including Nairobi City.

#### **Interventions Established to Reduce the Level of Crime by Street Children**

Several interventions have been suggested by various stakeholders as to what would constitute sound interventions to curb and reduce the challenge of street children and crime. (Ennew, 2003), suggests that stakeholders and professionals should look to offer economic support to the street children and respect their economic independence rather than only paying attention to rescuing the street children from the street life.

They further suggested that this can be addressed through programs and policies that respond to the needs of the street children by offering formal life skills, education, and vocational training. Moreover, the national and county government, NGOs, academic scholars, and financial institutions should intervene with credit programs to support vulnerable members of the society, as this will help prevent children from migrating to the streets.

Another focus should be on policy and advocacy whereby (Schurink, 2016), suggests that street children need to be encouraged to participate in the formulation of policies and decision making especially in matters that directly influence their lives. Advocating for street children concerning their families and communities directly addresses

the cause of the challenges experienced by these children. In addition, there is a need to integrate policy-making to come up with effective and successful solutions. Public and societal awareness needs to focus on changes to be adopted by NGO networks and community collaborations. The study was based in South Africa presenting a research gap for a similar study to be conducted targeting other African states about interventions implemented in addressing the challenge of crime by street children.

In addition, (Schurink, 2016), revealed that the prevention of the issue of street children at the community, county, and national level needs to pay attention to the provision of basic needs, creation of relevant employment opportunities, provision of basic services, advocacy, strengthening the social capital and improving the school and home environment. (Choi & Annon, 2011), on the other hand, thought that community members should be made aware of the relationship between street children and crime through awareness campaigns and advocacy geared towards helping the community embrace them and avoid stigmatizing the ex-street children (transformed group).

(Susan et al., 2011), postulated focusing on the reintegration of children living on the streets as a result of environmental instability in their schools, society, and families. Hence, the street children need to reunite with their families in the assumption that all street children have to go back to their original homes and their families inducted on the need for the willingness to accept them back unconditionally and given an identity of social love among other family members and children. The government should shoulder such responsibility through its social welfare systems. Furthermore, when the strategies of reuniting the street children with their families are not effective, adoption, fostering of the children and community homes can be implemented as alternatives. The street children ought not to be rushed to be reintegrated into the formal system of education since they may need or even favor an informal system of education with a



curriculum that covers vocational training, numeracy, and survival life skills that may be relevant and applicable in their own lives. The study is limited in time as it is dated more than five years ago necessitating a need for an up-to-date study on the interventions that can be implemented to end crime by street children.

(Mosa, 2011), postulates that support efforts around networking and institutional operations to intervene in the plight of street children. NGOs play an essential role in programs steered towards ending crime by street children by supplying the services to the society that the county and national governments cannot afford. Notably, the NGOs role is not adequate to have a significant influence in lowering the number of street children in a specific nation. Working hand in hand with the County and national government among other service providers may be of assistance to the NGOs in addressing the challenge of street children. In addition, the families affected need to be involved in developing measures to prevent the occurrence of crime by street children as active and key stakeholders. The study targeted interventions implemented in Egypt, a state in Northern Africa. This study filled a geographical gap by studying the interventions implemented in Kenya to eradicate crime by street children.

According to (Dybicz, 2005), interventional strategies should focus on the primary prevention initiatives and programs such as educating and alerting the society on the need to desist from domestic violence and bullying in schools. Further, involve them in secondary prevention programs targeting children and the youth identified by justice systems as at risk of engaging in criminal activities. In addition, attention should be paid to tertiary prevention programs referring to street children within the criminal justice system and reuniting them with their communities to keep the community safe. Community safety refers to a range of activities that must be addressed to enable safe urban cities and communities with results that benefit society by lowering the rate of crime. The

prevention of crime is a police terminology while community safety is used to symbolize a wide range of interest in the consequences of crime. Using strategic techniques enables practitioners and policymakers to create interventions for the identified problems, confronting them from different interventions, and finding a balance between long-term and short-term objectives while protecting the basic human rights of street children (Dybicz, 2005). The study is however dated more than ten years ago; therefore, do not provide up-to-date information in consideration of the changes that have occurred over the years.

Preventing crime sustainably can be associated with sustainable livelihoods and development (life, liberty, and happiness) in the sense that it meets present needs without compromising the needs of future generations which should be relevant in low-income and middle-income nations. Thus, more efforts should aim at increasing the resources and capacities of street children, offering opportunities for the generations to come, and assisting in increasing inter-generational capital. Sustainable strategies for crime prevention beyond those implemented by the government are an essential part that contributes to sustainable development across the generations and is sensitive to street children's needs.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Differential Association Theory**

This theory was introduced by (Sutherland, 1939) and it posits that people learn the values, mindsets, methods, and rationales for criminal conduct through interaction with others. This concept is particularly true of delinquent behavior. This is because differential association raises the chances of an individual being associated with other individuals who engage in similar behavior (Murray, 2017). In the case of this study, if street children interact with criminals, it is easy for them to emulate the actual criminals or gangs. Hence to conform to the livelihood of the society, the street children may engage in criminal behaviors. Additionally, (Besemer et al., 2017) argue that

individuals may be pushed to emulate specific behavior such as being criminals as a result of the environment.

Notably, differential association affects different people differently. For instance, street children of a younger age may be affected by differential association, among other compelling factors, since their personality is not yet fully developed as compared to older street children who understand themselves better. Moreover, differential association is more effective among disadvantaged groups (Besemer et al., 2017). In society, street children are a disadvantaged group since they do not have any source of income. Therefore, this may push them to conform and engage in criminal activities like their elder kind. This theory was of importance to this study since it aims at explaining

that an individual will choose the criminal path when they learn that law-breaking rewards more than law-abiding. This tendency will be reinforced if social association provides active people intimate to the juvenile's life. The earlier in life an individual comes under the influence high-Status people within a group, the more likely the individual is to follow in their footsteps.

The theory is however not absolute in explaining the relationship between street children and crime since not all street children engage in criminal activities. A significant number of street children earn their living by working hard, some have reformed by way of nurtured talents and sports to the tune of influencing others; save for charitable interventions by the government and Non-Governmental organizations.

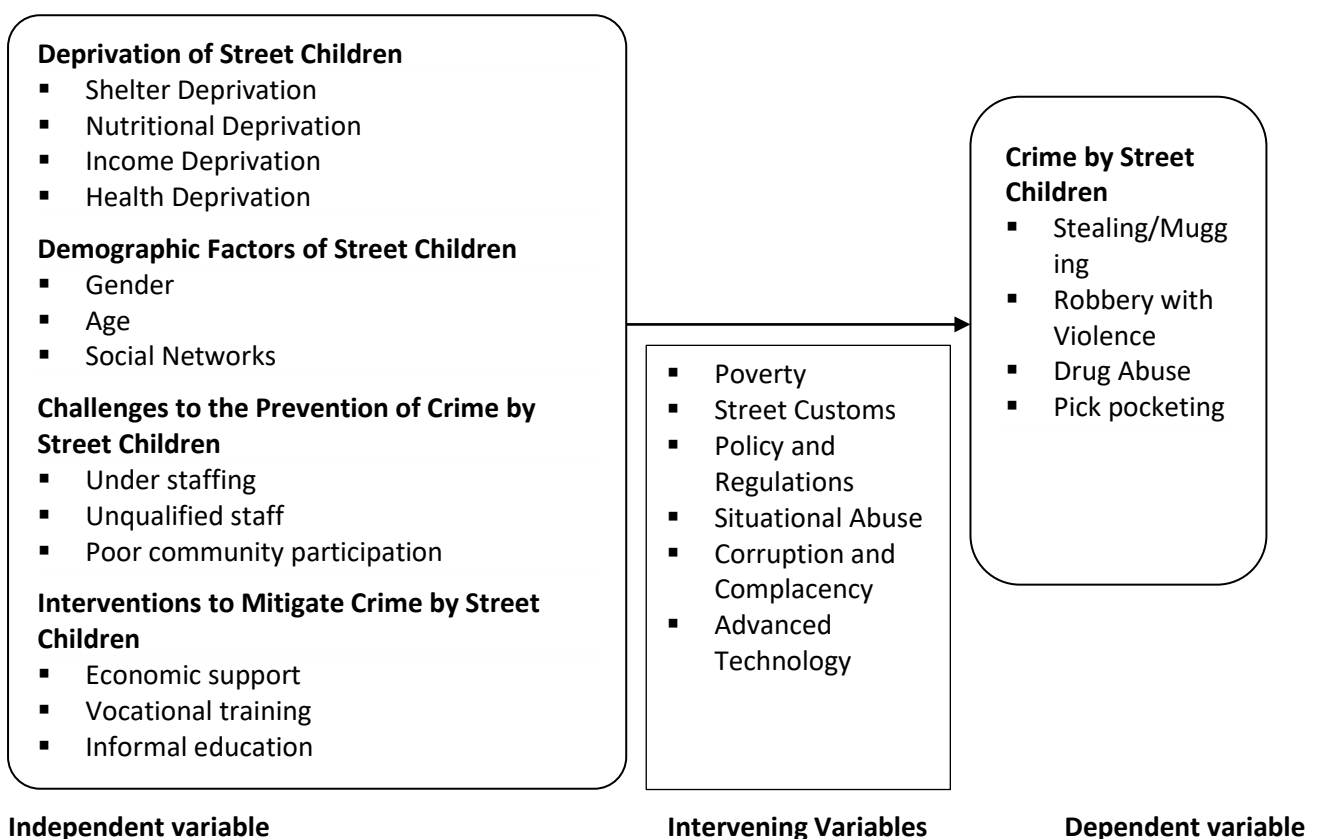


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the association between street children and crime in Nairobi City. The study was undertaken within Nairobi City County, the capital city of Kenya. It is one of the 47 administrative and political Counties in Kenya. The research focused on four groups of respondents namely the street children, small and medium business, ordinary citizens, and law enforcement officers. The study targeted the street children since they were the main interest of the study. The study employed stratified simple random sampling to sample the respondents.

The Semi-structured questionnaires were used in collecting primary data from the SME owners since they enhance the confidentiality of respondents since filling out the questionnaires did not require them to indicate their identity. An interview guide was utilized to collect primary data from law enforcement officers. The interview guide facilitated face-to-face discussions with the law

enforcement officers. The study used content validity to establish the credibility of the research tools.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in this study. Qualitative data was collected from the FGD and the interview guide, while quantitative data was collected from the questionnaire.

The use of software saved a lot of time and improved the clarity of the qualitative analysis. Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) and NVivo were important in the analysis of transcripts from FGDs and interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analyses.

## RESULTS

### Deprivation of Street Children and Crime

Concerning this objective, the participants were asked to identify the types of deprivation that motivate street children into engaging in crime. The results were as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Types of Deprivation by Street Children**

Parents Gender	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Source of income/wage deprivation	27	62.8	16	37.2
Shelter deprivation/scarcity	38	88.4	5	11.6
Nutritional deprivation/scarcity	43	100	-	-
Health deprivation	32	74.4	11	25.6

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 1 showed findings of the different types of deprivation experienced by street children. 100% of the business persons indicated that nutrition deprivations were common among street children. The respondents also agreed that shelter deprivation (88.4%); health deprivation (74.4%); and source of income deprivation (62.8%) were experienced by the majority of the street children. The findings were similar to results by (Gordon et al., 2013), who identify five dimensions of

deprivation by street children; access to sanitation facilities and safe water for drinking, shelter, information, education, health, and nutrition.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which the above deprivations could lead to crime among street children (On a scale of 1-4 where 1= Very large extent, 2= Large extent, 3= Some Extent, 4= No extent). The findings were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Deprivation of Street Children and Crime**

Deprivation and Crime	1		2		3		4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Source of income/wage deprivation	13	30.2	17	39.5	5	11.6	8	18.7
Shelter deprivation	22	51.2	12	27.9	9	20.9	-	-
Nutritional deprivation	23	53.5	5	11.6	15	34.9	-	-
Health deprivation	16	37.2	14	32.6	13	30.2	-	-

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 2 indicated that nutritional (53.5%) and shelter (51.2%) deprivation to a very large extent led to crime by street children. This may be attributed to the fact that the survival of all human beings including street children is embedded in the ability to have access to basic needs which include food and shelter. The respondents explained that the street children mainly sleep in front of shops, at the bus stations, and in the drainage system since they have nowhere to sleep. The findings were similar to results by (Gordon et al., 2013), who observed that the most common sleeping areas for street children are the doorsteps of building in the streets or empty commercial buildings, under trees while others sleep and sun away on the bank of streams, this as a matter of extreme deprivation and not of choice. Such sleeping places and prevailing environment are a sheer violation of the street children's UNCRC 1325 right to shelter.

Health deprivation (37.2%) and income deprivation (30.2%) were also identified to contribute to a large extent of crime by street children. The health deprivation explained by the respondents is brought about by the fact that street children do not have easy access to medical facilities and hospitals. According to (ZIMSTAT, 2016), although it is recommended that children be vaccinated, this need is not met by children living on the street.

Moreover, most street children do not have any source of income. Most employers are hesitant to employ street children due to the stereotype attached to street children that they are drug addicts, lazy, and cannot sustain a job. These findings were supported by data collected from the

focus group discussions where the street children agreed that the lack of food, shelter, health, and source of income contributed to them being in the streets. The phenomenon of an increased rate of street children in Nairobi County shows failure in society since it has the mandate of taking care of all children. However, as evidenced by the findings, in today's society and in particular in developing Nations many children are abandoned due to loss of their parents to natural disasters, pandemics, HIV/AIDS, and absentee parents. The loss of parents as observed during the focus group discussions has resulted in many children becoming homeless and live in the street. The following are verbatim statements from the respondents:

*"I came to the streets after the passing of my parents. My relatives did not want to take me in, maybe because of the tough economic situation experienced by most families in Kenya. This resulted in me coming to the streets to see whether I can survive", (FGD Street Child 037, 2021).*

*"My coming to the streets was driven by the fact that I come from a poor family that can hardly feed all of my siblings. Therefore, since most of the nights we slept hungrily, I opted to turn to the streets to beg and see if I can get anything whether food or money to help feed my other siblings", (FGD Street Child 091, 2021).*

From the FGDs it was evident that the lack of basic needs at home or demise of parents leads children at an early age to take up roles like adults and try fending for themselves in the streets. The findings concur with the results by (Gordon et al., 2013), that health and nutrition deprivation is the worst

form of deprivation in the 21st century that pushes street children to crime.

The street children who took part in the FGDs were asked whether they had any source of income. Most of the street children revealed that they do not have a stable source of income but rather depend on well-wishers and good Samaritans. Others explained that they rely on odd jobs that they seek from the business persons in the CBD of Nairobi County. The following are verbatim statements from the street children:

*"I don't have any source of income, but at times I seek casual jobs to wash car windows", (FGD Street Child 109, 2021).*

*"I have work sweeping in front of two shops in the CBD. The employer is good and kind. She understands I have a child who needs to eat. I look forward to working hard and getting another job that can pay better for me to move out of the streets and look for a house to rent even if it will be in Kibera", (FGD Street Child 218, 2021).*

From the focus group discussion, it was noted that most of the street children did not have any formal source of income but rather relied on casual work that they could get. They explained that some of them sell candy to try and make a living. Mostly younger street children were trusted to sell the different types of candy since customers are more likely to feel pity for them, unlike the older street boys and girls. The older street boys sought to earn money by carrying luggage for the citizens in Nairobi City for a small fee. The results concurred with findings by (Gordon et al., 2013), who established that the main strategy for livelihood for street children is engaging in the informal economy. Some street boys and girls hawk airtime, brooms, and sweets while others are either employed by shop owners to empty their waste bins or to distribute flyers or clean vehicles for motorists. Street children who do not work get involved in crime for their daily provision. The girls who took part in the focus group discussion indicated that getting any source of employment was hard for

them as a result of their gender; therefore, most of the street girls relied on the street boys to provide for and protect them in exchange for sexual favors.

*"As girls, we have more financial needs, unlike the boys. These needs have pushed us to turn to prostitution to simply purchase women's products and to survive. It is demeaning but it is the only way to earn some money as a street girl in Nairobi County", (FGD street child 202, 2021).*

The data collected indicate that a source of income is difficult for street children irrespective of gender. However, it was revealed that the street girls have difficulties getting any source of income since they are not as energetic as the street boys to engage in some of the casual work offered to the boys such as becoming matatu touts. The findings are similar to results by (Moreira et al., 2018), who indicated that most street girls are sexually exploited to get an income.

From the Focus Group Discussions, street children explained that, unlike other people, street children live for the current day; they do not make any plans since they are not aware of where they are going to get their next meal. The circumstances that street children deal with has stripped them of hope as was expressed by some of the respondents, lack of home and basic needs have pushed them to turn to crime. One of the street children said:

*"Most times we try to make ends meet by asking for casual jobs, but most people are not willing to entrust us with employment. Also, whenever we borrow money or even food on the streets, we are either arrested by the police for disturbing people or in some cases insulted because of how we look and how society perceives us"*

*"We have lost hope that is why it is easy for us to engage in criminal acts regardless of its outcome to survive for the day", (FGD Street Child 231, 2021).*

The data gathered revealed that before engaging in criminal acts, the street children try to earn some form of living or live honestly by simply asking for help. However, when these strategies fail as

observed by (Moreira et al., 2018), the street boys and girls result in crimes to survive and sustain themselves. They use proceeds of crime to buy food for a day or two, notably; they expressed their shame for engaging in crime. The following are verbatim statements from the street children:

*“I have been in the streets for around 4 years. I would like not to become a criminal but what should I do when I am hungry and no one is willing to help me. I turn to crime because, while it is illegal, it is the only way I will get some food to eat and not sleep hungry”* (FGD Street Child 303, 2021).

Based on the Focus Group Discussions, street children don’t have diversity in their diets, and the quantities and frequency consumed are generally less compared to the children who reside at home.

**Table 3: Demographic of Street Children and Crime**

Demographic of Street Children and Crime	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Age	29	67.4	14	32.6
Gender	41	95.3	2	4.7
Social Networks	35	81.4	8	18.6
Security status	39	90.7	4	9.3

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 3 showed that the demographics of street children influence crime. 95.3% of the respondents agreed that gender facilitated the likelihood of street children indulging in crime. The business persons explained that the rate at which the street boys and street girls engaged in criminal activities differed. According to 88.4% of business persons, boys engage in crime more compared to the girls. This may be attributed to the fact that the street boys are more as compared to the street girls. The male gender composes the highest number of street children according to (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016). Moreover, from a traditional perspective, the business persons argued that the street boys feel responsible to provide for their fellow street girls who find it difficult to get any source of income. Moreover, the respondents indicated that they are more energetic and faster to engage in crime as compared to the street girls. These

Moreover, this food is not always hygienic since some children collect food from waste bins which are in a bad state by all means and standards. According to (Moreira et al., 2018), by sheer luck, street children sometimes receive food at drop-in centers through the good gesture of Samaritans and non-governmental organizations.

### **Demographic of Street Children and Crime**

The second objective of the study sought to assess the effect of demographics of street children on crime: a case of Nairobi City County - Kenya. This was important since then (UNCHS, 2010), observed that street children are at risk of engaging in illegal and dangerous activities including radicalization, gang activities, theft, and crime. Data on the effect of demographics of street children on crime was presented in Table 3.

differences in capability and capacities between the street boys and street girls have impacted the extent to which the different genders engage in crime.

The street children who took part in the focus group discussions also agreed that often the street boys engage in crime more as compared to the street girls. The following are verbatim statements from the street children:

*“Street boys are more likely to engage in crime since they are stronger than the street girls”,* (FGD Street child 291, 2021).

*“It is difficult to find a street girl engaging in crime since we are more vulnerable than the street boys. However, when need be, we have no choice but to participate to get some food”,* (FGD Street child 063, 2021).

The verbatim above shows that both street boys and street girls engage in crime, however, the prevalence is high for the males as compared to the females. According to (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), females have the least representation among street children; this may be attributed to cultural norms where girls are protected more in the family setting. Moreover, with regards to the girls who escape from home, most end up working as servants in homes or are captured by pimps; this is the case since they are subject to be victimized by the boys on the street and they prefer to reside in any other place other than the street

90.7% of the respondents revealed that security status was a motivator for street children to engage in crime. The business persons explained that it is inherent for all human beings to want to feel the same. The same applies to street children whether it is in the form of economic safety or nutrition safety. Based on the findings gathered it was revealed that the drivers for street children to engage in crime are food and income insecurity. The business persons indicated that most of the street children simply want to feel safe in the sense that they can get a meal or simply earn a living. When the capability and capacity of street children to feel secure are taken into account, chances are they will engage in criminal activities to attain different forms of security. The need for safety was observed to be vulnerable among the street girls. (Rizzini & Butler, 2014), argue that the street girls are at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases since they offer sexual favors to the boys in exchange for security, hence, do not have the power to bargain for safe sex.

Data collected using the questionnaires indicated that social networks contribute to crime by street children. 81.4% of the business persons who filled the questionnaires indicated that the social networks of street children play a critical role in determining whether or not they would engage in criminal activities. According to (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), street children do not pay any

attention to morals and culture; this is attributed to the fact that they live away from their families.

From the collected data, 34.9% of the business persons explained that the street children often work in groups. One of the business people reminisced of how she was attacked once by a group of four street boys and one street girl who appeared to be the leader of the group. This concurs with (Le Roux, 2016), who noted that each delinquent juvenile group has a leader who is respected and obeyed by each member of the group, a reflection of the good organization of the group. According to the respondent, it was terrifying to see young people engage in such behaviors. The likelihood of street children in a social network engaging in crime is facilitated by the fact that they feel secure in numbers and they are bold due to the increasing numbers. From document analysis, it was revealed that each gang operates differently, (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), which added that street girls in comparison to the street boys, form juvenile gangs differently. The juvenile girl gangs usually include an older girl who has a sexual relationship with an older boy or a security guard within the vicinity of the residence who protects the girls in return. This juvenile behavior cuts across most cohorts in developing countries (UNCHS, 2010). This correlates to the earlier finding which indicated that security status does impact the prevalence of street children engaging in crime. The findings are similar to results by (Rizzini & Butler, 2014), that children that lack family ties form juvenile delinquent peer groups.

With regards to age, 67.4% respondents argued that it does impact the prevalence of crime by street children. The business persons explained that the prevalence of older street children engaging in criminal activities is a result of the strength they possess as compared to the younger street children. However, 27.9% of the business persons echoed that at times, the older street children use the younger street children to break into small spaces to steal or to ward off their victims. Therefore, as much as the younger street children do not take a

direct role in criminal activities, oftentimes, they play an indirect part that allows the older street children to engage in crime.

The business persons argued that the street children who undertake criminal activities range in age from 11 years to 18 years. The findings agree with results by (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 2016), that majority of the street children start living in the streets at the age of 9 and 12 years and they live in the street until they are 15-16 years. When the street children are older, they delve into looking for more stable jobs that pay well: this is according to a study done in Brazil by (Rizzini & Butler, 2014).

### Challenges Facing the Efforts of Prevention and Management of Crime by Street Children

The third objective of the study was to determine the challenges facing the efforts of prevention and management of crime by street children in Nairobi City County. Quantitative data was collected from the business persons using a questionnaire. The respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the following statements hindered efforts to eradicate crime by street children. The findings are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Challenges Facing the Efforts of Prevention and Management of Crime by Street Children**

Challenges	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Poor programs for street children rehabilitation	41	95.3	2	4.7
Sub-standard accommodation in the rehabilitation facilities	43	100	-	-
Incompetent street children’s handlers	35	81.4	8	18.6
Poor policies on rehabilitation of street children	29	67.4	14	32.6
Under-funding to rehabilitate street children	36	83.7	7	16.3
Corruption by officials with the responsibility to rehabilitate street children	39	90.7	4	9.3
Relapse by street children	40	93.0	3	7.0

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 4 showed that 95.3% business persons agreed that poor programs for street children rehabilitation were a challenge in ending crime in Nairobi City County. The respondents explained that the government ought to have put in place effective programs to rehabilitate street children. The same notion was echoed by the law enforcement officers during the interview guide who argued that the menace of street children in Nairobi City County is high since the street children rehabilitation programs launched were ineffective. More to the rehabilitation programs being ineffective, 100% of business persons argued that they had poor accommodation and 81.4% respondents argued that the handlers of the rehabilitation facilities were incompetent. This is an indication that there is a need to analyze the state of street children’s rehabilitation programs in Kenya. The findings are similar to (Barkat et al., 2012), that most of the initiatives advanced by the government are

synonymous with substandard accommodation facilities. According to the authors, the street children were kept in temporary shanty structures. (Barkat et al., 2012), also found that most street children rehabilitation facilities were established to be understaffed with three to four staff members and with little to no vocational training institutions.

Other challenges cited included corruption by officials mandated to operate the street children rehabilitation programs. 83.7% of business persons cited underfunding of street children rehabilitation programs and a lack of proper policies in establishing street children’s rehabilitation programs as some of the challenges in the already existing rehabilitation centers and their effectiveness to ensure that street children do not relapse back to the street. (Opondo & Kiprop, 2018), found that mismanagement of resources, skewed priorities, and poor policies are evident



when it comes to addressing the challenge of street children and crime in Kenya. Most of the funds channeled towards such programs never perform their intended goal as most are diverted to individuals' pockets and accounts leading to the plight of street children rising without much being done. The respondents were also asked to indicate

the extent to which the following challenges are a hindrance in the prevention and management of street children and crime (On a scale of 1-4 where 1= Very large extent, 2= Large extent, 3= Some Extent, 4= No extent). The findings are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Challenges Facing the Efforts of Prevention and Management of Crime by Street Children**

Challenges	1		2		3		4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poor programs for street children rehabilitation	35	81.4	6	13.9	2	4.7	-	-
Sub-standard accommodation in the rehabilitation facilities	41	95.3	2	4.7	-	-	-	-
Incompetent street children handlers	15	34.9	20	46.5	4	9.3	4	9.3
Poor policies on rehabilitation of street children	11	25.6	18	41.9	5	11.6	9	20.9
Under-funding to rehabilitate street children	22	51.2	14	32.6	7	16.2	-	-
Corruption by officials with the responsibility to rehabilitate street children	33	76.8	6	13.9	4	9.3	-	-
Relapse by street children	39	90.7	1	2.3	3	7.0	-	-

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 5 showed the extent to which different challenges deterred efforts to prevent and manage crime by street children. 81.4% of the respondents echoed that poor rehabilitation programs for street children hindered efforts to eradicate crime. 34.9% strongly agreed that the existing rehabilitation facilities had poor accommodation and the staff were incompetent. These challenges hinder the prevention of crime by street children as it contributes to their relapse. Rehabilitation centers are very sensitive facilities that require competent staff. Therefore, operating a rehabilitation facility without competent employees does not help the street children but in some cases can lead to more harm as the street children do not feel a sense of belonging because they are not understood. As indicated early, street children, just like all human beings seek to belong in a social group, therefore, incompetent personnel may not have the patience to welcome the street children and provide a favorable environment for them. This often leads to

the relapse of street children as indicated by the respondents. The finding concurs with results by (Ochola, 2016), that government initiatives to harbor street children were understaffed and had under qualified personnel to handle street children once brought in for rehabilitation. Most staff in the institutions meant to rehabilitate had either worked as matrons in schools or as nurses in hospitals who had retired. Further, they had no pre-requisite training on how to handle street children who engage in crime

The respondents 76.8% agreed to a very large extent that corruption by officials with the mandate of rehabilitating street children. This finding was backed up by the law enforcement officer who explained that the officials who have the responsibility to rehabilitate street children take advantage of the fact that the public does not follow up on their actions hence using the finances for their interests. This is even though the finances

provided by the government to rehabilitate street children are already inadequate as agreed by 51.2% respondents. During the interview guide, the security officers explained that the money allocated by the government to rehabilitate street children is inadequate to end the menace of crime by street children. This is similar to results by (Opondo & Kiprop, 2018), that unprofessionalism and selfish interest get in the way and most concerned stakeholders start pushing their agendas and even politicize the process or use such platforms (street children rehabilitation programs) to launch their political careers with minimal regards to the plight of the millions of street children.

From the data collected 25.6% of the business persons echoed those poor policies on the rehabilitation of street children as a challenge in ending crime in Nairobi City County. The law enforcement officers also added that although the Kenyan constitution states that all children have a right to food, shelter, security, and health; it is only

good on paper, since in practice, these basic needs are not met especially. One of the law enforcement officers gave an example of the National Youth Service which was launched in 2009 but failed since while the young people were rehabilitated, they did not get employment and hence relapsed back to the street. This is an indication that better policies are required to ensure that rehabilitated street children do not relapse to the streets. According to (Ochola, 2016), poor policies to address the challenge of street children and crime is another challenge as most Acts of parliament delegate the mandate for children's rights to Non-Governmental Organizations most of which are underfunded and face a lot of political interference which act as a hindrance to making any meaningful progress in the management of street children and crime

The business persons were asked to indicate the crimes street children are likely to commit. The findings are as indicated in Table 6.

**Table 6: Crimes Committed by Street Children**

Crimes Committed by Street Children	N	%
Stealing	35	81.4
Pickpocketing	37	86.0
Robbery with Violence	22	51.2
Drug abuse	43	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 6 showed that 100% of the business persons observed that street children indulged in drug abuse. According to the respondents, most of them have abused "glue" which is a drug substance. The business persons added that some of the street children have moved to use cigarettes and alcohol. 86.0% of the respondents indicated that street children engage in pickpocketing. The business persons explained that pickpocketing is somewhat easier than stealing since Nairobi City County; a congested town is a good mark for such activities. 81.4% business persons added that the street children engaged in stealing. However, the respondents argued that stealing activities are often undertaken by social gangs and social networks.

This is attributed to the belief that stealing is easier when a group is involved as it provides an added advantage. The 51.2% respondents also indicated that in worse scenarios, the street children engage in robbery with violence. According to the respondents, the indulgence of street children in such activities has limited the efforts taken by the government, well-wishers, and non-governmental organizations to end crime in Nairobi County. This is because these behaviors are already entrenched in street children, hence difficult to stop or eradicate. The findings agree with outcomes by (ZIMSTAT, 2016), that street children engage in different criminal activities posing a challenge in their rehabilitation and in ending crime.

Another challenge that was identified was that the street children have stayed on the streets for many years. On average, the street children who took part in the focus group discussions revealed that they had stayed in the streets for over five years. This is an indication that most of them view the streets as their home. Therefore, convincing the street children who have stayed on the streets for a long time to be rehabilitated or to stop engaging in criminal activities can be a daunting task. The findings concur with observations by (Gordon et al., 2013), that it is difficult to rehabilitate street children who have stayed on the streets for many years.

From the interview guides, the law enforcement officers indicated that at least once a week, they receive reports of criminal activities undertaken by street children. They explained that many times, people do not report cases of crime committed by street children, therefore, the number of street children engaging in crime may be higher since most are not reported.

#### **Interventions Established to Reduce the Level of Crime by Street Children**

The fourth objective was to assess the intervention established to reduce the level of crime by street children. The objective was analyzed by asking the business persons and victims whether they were aware of any intervention implemented to end crime by street children. Results showed that 28% respondents indicated that they were aware of intervention meant to reduce the level of crime by street children in Nairobi while 72% indicated that they were not aware of any intervention implemented to end crime by street children. The findings showed that while the business persons in Nairobi City are aware of the challenge, they do not know the interventions that have been put in place by either the government or non-governmental organizations to reduce crime in the county. This represents a moral failing by the society in Nairobi that ought to be concerned with the well-being of all children including those residing in the street. Further, it shows a moral failing by the government

whose mandate is to ensure that all of its citizens have access to basic needs including shelter, health, and nutrition which were earlier identified as motivators for children to migrate into the streets. (Choi & Annon, 2011), argues that community members should be made aware of the relationship between street children and crime through awareness campaigns and advocacy geared toward helping the community embrace them and avoid stigmatizing the ex-street children (transformed group).

Business persons who were aware of the interventions implemented to reduce crime committed by street children indicated that among the initiatives they have heard of included transferring the street children to orphanages where they can be rehabilitated and have easier access to basic needs. According to (Schurink, 2016), provision of basic needs, and provision of basic services are among the most effective interventions that can end crime by street children. This is because most street children engage in crime to simply get the basic needs and services such as food, nutrition, shelter, and healthcare.

The business persons also added that they have heard of well-wishers who take the street children back to school for education or in some cases vocational training. However, the 66.7% business persons contemplated that the interventions implemented have not been effective. The business persons argued that a good number of the street children taken to child orphanages and children's homes often ran away and came back to the streets since the majority of the children's homes are not well equipped and financed. The respondents explained that due to the impoverished state of some of the children's orphanages in the country, most of the children prefer going back to the street to find their way and to beg from strangers. Notably, 33.3% of the business persons explained that the interventions were successful, especially those undertaken by NGOs. The business persons explained that they have heard cases of NGOs sponsoring street children up to the higher

education level and the children turn out to be respectable members of the society. However, the respondent noted that such incidents are rare since the NGOs working alone without assistance from the government cannot have a meaningful impact in terms of rehabilitating the majority of the street children. This finding is comparable to a study done by (Choi & Annon, 2011), who stated that NGOs play an essential role in programs steered towards ending crime by street children by supplying the services that the County and National governments cannot afford the society. This is because NGOs are engaged in prevention initiatives and programs, such as educating and alerting society on the need to desist from domestic violence and bullying in schools.

The respondents were asked to suggest interventions that they think could effectively lower the rate of street children committing a crime in Nairobi County. All of the business persons 100% indicated that there are better interventions that the national government, county government, society, and organizations can engage in to end the menace of crime by street children. The intervention listed by the business persons included enrolling the street children in rehabilitation centers. 23.3% of the respondents argued that most street children take drugs and in particular “glue”, therefore, they recommended that the street children should be rehabilitated first to end their dependency on the drug substance. The business persons explained that rehabilitating the street children is more effective since it provides an opportunity for the individual to start with a clean slate without feeling the need to turn back to substance abuse. This notion was supported by the street children in the focus group discussion who agreed that they would be open and willing to join a rehabilitation center. The following are verbatim statements collected during the Focus Group Discussions from the street children:

*“I have had the opportunity to go to a children’s home, but I had to escape and come back to the streets since I am hooked on glue, and it is not*

*allowed in the orphanages”, (FGD Street child 054, 2021).*

*“I would like to join a rehabilitation center, but no people are willing to take a person they don’t know and pay for the medical cover”, (FGD Street child 123, 2021).*

The focus group discussions revealed that the majority of the street children in Nairobi City County’s Central Business District relied on the drug substance “glue” which limited their capacity to be integrated into the host society and/or family without being rehabilitated first. Moreover, the fact that very few people and organizations are willing to take the street children to rehabilitation centers only cements the face of these individuals to remain on the streets. The finding was similar to findings by (Ochola, 2016), who established that effective rehabilitation of street children can contribute to the individuals deciding to leave the streets and seeking other alternatives for survival.

34.9% respondents added that re-integration of the street children with their families and relatives can be an effective strategy in reducing crime in Nairobi County if implemented appropriately. The businesspersons argued that while the unification of street children may be effective, it only works if the families are willing to take the street children back and welcome them into society. However, 7.0% of the business persons cautioned that not all street children can be reunited with their families as some were born in the street, and thus do not know their origin. Despite this limitation, the respondents argued that the re-integration of the street children with their families would be effective in reducing crime committed in Nairobi County. From the focus group discussions, the street children were also asked to consider reuniting with their families.

The street children argued that most of them ran away from home since their families were either financially unable to support the family or chased them away from home for different reasons. The focus group discussions revealed that re-uniting the street children with their families would be difficult

since once re-united, due to the lack of support from their own families, the street children prefer to go back to the streets. The findings contradict the results by (Kristen & Joanna, 2012), that street children need to reunite with their families. Furthermore, the author argues that when the strategies of re-uniting the street children with their families are not effective, adoption and fostering of the children and community homes can be implemented as alternatives. The findings of this study however found that most of the street children favored the notion of being educated and trained compared to reuniting with their families. Three of the street children said the following:

*"I have been reunited with my family, but I decided to come back to the street since my parents and siblings mistreated me"* (FGD Street child 135, 2021).

*"I would like to be reunited with my family but the last words my mother told me when I was running away was never to go back to her house, now the streets are all I know"* (FGD Street child 082, 2021).

*"Most of my friends who had the opportunity to be reunited with their families come back to the streets since their families and community do not accept them as individuals of the society"* (FGD Street child 008, 2021).

The focus group discussion revealed that the community or family ostracism and rejection faced by the street children from the society was a key motivator for their return to street life after being reunited with their families. The findings concur with results by (Mosa, 2011), who established that attention should be paid to tertiary prevention programs referring to street children within the criminal justice system and reuniting them with their communities to keep the community safe.

The data indicated that 41.9% business people were of the view that educating the street children and creating awareness among community members on the importance of caring for street children could, possibly, help in lowering the rate of street children, henceforth reducing the rate of crime in the CBD of

Nairobi. Data collected from Focused Group Discussions also showed that the street children agree that if offered education or some vocational training that can help them secure a meaningful source of living would help lower their need to commit a crime. The street children from the Focus Group Discussions stated that most of them engaged in crime as a means of survival since they do not have anyone to offer them their basic needs and they have to survive. Therefore, it can be deduced that offering the street children some form of education or training equips them with the capacities to engage in different forms of employment, thus earning them an honest living and they do not have to turn to crime or illegal activities. This results is in agreement with a study conducted by (Ennew, 2003), who suggested that stakeholders and professionals should look to offer economic empowerment through education and vocational training to the street children and respect their economic independence rather than only paying attention to rescuing the street children from the street life.

Interviews with the law enforcement officers indicated that they arrested the street children reported for crimes in the CBD of Nairobi City County. The four law enforcement officers revealed that when the police arrest street children for committing any form of crime, the first step is usually to take them to rehabilitation centers in the county. According to the police officers, the rehabilitation centers that street children are usually taken to are located in Makadara, Kayole, Mjiwa Huruma, Joseph Kangethe, and ShauriMoyo. The police officers agreed that there was no need to take street children to juvenile centers since that would only worsen their circumstances; rather, they prefer taking them to the rehabilitation centers to get the help required. The interviewees explained that at the rehabilitation centers, street children are educated and receive different forms of vocational training to equip them with skills necessary to secure meaningful jobs. (Ennew, 2003), stated that reducing the rate of crime by street children can be

addressed through programs and policies that respond to the needs of the street children by offering education, both formal and informal life and vocational training.

Law enforcement officers were also asked to indicate the interventions the police sector had taken to end crime by street children in Nairobi County's Central Business District. The interviewees expressed that like the police, the sector's mandate is to protect and ensure the security of all citizens. Two of the interviewees explained that they have done this by ensuring security in the area and placing street children arrested for a crime in rehabilitation centers. Additionally, the police officers explained that in case they come into contact with families of street children, they do their best to reunite them. The law enforcement officers noted that the interventions of rehabilitating the street children have been partially effective. According to them, while the rehabilitation centers help the street children to come out of their substance addictions, it does not provide an opportunity for them to earn a living. This has resulted in many street children going back to the streets and returning to their old habits of substance abuse. (Susan et al., 2011), indicated that the street children ought not to be rushed to be reintegrated into the formal system of education since they may need or even favor an informal system of education with a curriculum that covers vocational training, numeracy, and life skills that may be relevant and applicable in their own lives. The following are verbatim statements from two of the law enforcement officers:

*"It is my opinion that the government should come up with a program that not only rehabilitates the street children but also offers them some form of employment, to deter their need of going back to the streets" (KI Police Officer 001, 2021).*

*"While the police force may want to reunite the street children with their families, efforts to do this*

*become a challenge in situations where the families have already disowned their children, therefore, the police do not have much power to force street children to go back home or even the families to take back their family members" (KI Police Officer 003, 2021).*

The interviews with the police officers indicate that while the police may want to protect the street children, their capability is limited. Therefore, the only interventions that can work effectively in eradicating crime by street children involved include all members of the society. This is because taking care of children is the responsibility of all the members of a community. This can be done by establishing policies that require all community members to take responsibility for street children. (Schurink, 2016), suggests that street children need to be encouraged to engage in the formulation of policies and decision-making, especially in matters that directly influence their lives. The government should integrate policy-making to come up with effective and successful solutions. Moreover, public and societal awareness needs to focus on change to be adopted by NGPO networks and community collaborations.

### **Linear Regression Analysis**

The study sought to establish whether deprivation of street children had a statistically significant effect on crime by street children. Only objective one of the study sought to test cause-effect relationship between deprivation of street children and crime. To achieve this, simple linear regression analysis was done used. The equation of street deprivation on crime stated as stated:  $Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$ , where  $\alpha$  =constant (intercept), X is the composite index of crime by street children,  $\epsilon$  = Error term. The p-value corresponding to  $\beta_1$ -  $\beta_4$  was computed and the test of association determined through P-value  $\leq \alpha$ , reject  $H_0$ . Table 7 details the results.

**Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Model Summary							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
1	.682 <sup>a</sup>	.465	.451	.67023			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Shelter, Nutrition, Income, Health							
ANOVA							
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	76.064	1	15.213	33.866	.000 <sup>b</sup>	
	Residual	87.596	42	.449			
	Total	163.660	43				
a. Dependent Variable: Crime by street children							
b. Predictors: (Constant), Shelter, Nutrition, Income, Health							
Coefficients							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.796	.365			2.180	.030
	Shelter	.185	.072	.152		2.563	.011
	Nutrition	.383	.093	.298		4.142	.000
	Income	.198	.073	.202		2.716	.007
	Health	.459	.103	.320		4.452	.000

Source: Field Data (2021)

As indicated in the model summary, the coefficient of determination demonstrated the degree to which the outcome variable can be explained by the changes in the predictor variables. The four variables that were studied, explained 46.5% of the variance in crime by street children. This, therefore, means that other factors not studied in this research contribute to 53.5% of the variance in crime by street children. Furthermore, the overall model was significant in predicting the relationship between the indicators of deprivation of street children and the crime by street children. The model has a goodness of fit to predict the association. The equation:  $Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$

Becomes

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Crime} = & .79.6 + .185 \text{ shelter} \\
 & + .383 \text{ Nutritional} \\
 & + .198 \text{ Income} + .459 \text{ Health} \\
 & + 0
 \end{aligned}$$

From the equation, it can be deduced that a unit change in shelter deprivation leads to an 18.5% increase in crime, whereas a unit change in nutritional deprivation leads to a 38.3% increase in crime by street children. Furthermore, a unit change in income will lead to a 19.8% increase in crime, while a unit change in health deprivation leads to a 45.9% increase in crime. This indicates that health needs/deprivation have the greatest influence on crime among street children followed by nutritional deprivation, income deprivation, and finally health deprivation.

Overall, the results indicate that 46.5 % of issues in security in Nairobi City County's central business district are as a result of street children deprivation.

Thus, to make the streets safe for the public, it is important that the deprivation of the families living in the streets should be ameliorated so that street children can rejoin their families or host communities. Controlling the level of street children deprivation can go a long way in keeping them out of the streets. For instance, meeting the shelter needs of the children living on the streets can potentially reduce the remaining deprivation.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study delved into the relationship between street children and crime. This is with the realization that street children population in Nairobi City County had been on a steady increase over the year, resulting in crime as a survival tactic, which is against the law. The justification for street children's indulgence in crime has been for the sake of survival. According to the study, the rise in street children has increased criminal activities within Nairobi City County. The study concluded that deprivation of basic needs such as food and shelter has driven many street children into crime. The deprivation of a source of income and health has also driven street children to engage in juvenile delinquencies.

Demographics of street children influence their prevalence of crime because, male and older street children engage in crime as compared to the females and younger street children. Social networks among street children were found to motivate the commission of a crime in the effort to ensure security. While a majority of the street children were found to likely engage in street crime, their prevalence differs per demographics.

Preventing and managing crime by street children have faced several challenges including ineffective street children rehabilitation programs, corruption by officials, poor financing, poor accommodation, and incompetent employees in the rehabilitation centers. The tendency of street children relapsing into the streets was identified as a challenge in the efforts of preventing crime committed by street children.

Different initiatives recommended to be put in place to reduce crime by street children, among the interventions suggested includes; establishing effective rehabilitation centers, reuniting street children with their families, educating and creating awareness to the public on the importance of caring for street children, and offering economic empowerment to street children so that they may gain their independence and lead a normal human life with dignity.

The County Government of Nairobi City County in collaboration with the National Government, NGOs, the community, and all genuine well-wishers should work together to strategically cater to the needs of street children. This includes the provision of the street children's basic needs such as food, shelter, and children's social needs, which were identified as key drivers of the rise in the number of street children in Kenya. By providing the basic needs, these street children may move away from crime and seek to better themselves by going back to school or reuniting with their families voluntarily.

The study strongly recommended that sustainable education and public awareness be enhanced across each community to encourage society to take up the responsibility to care for street children. Rejection by family members and friends has contributed to children turning into the street. Consequently, communities should be educated on the importance of taking care of their children, who are the leaders of the future. Therefore, initiatives on reaching out to street children should be rolled out by the County government of Nairobi City, the National Government, and NGOs to work hand in hand with the communities to end crime associated with street children.

This study further recommended that individuals mandated with the rolling out of rehabilitation and reintegration of the street children back into society should manage the allocated finances and resources effectively. This is because, if these officials appointed by the government do not allocate the resources appropriately, the number of street children in Nairobi City County will



continuously increase to unmanageable levels. Accountability and Integrity of officers working with street children programs should be done to ensure that funds meant for street children are well managed.

Finally, the study recommended that the Nairobi City County government, the National Government, and well-wishers establish more resourced and modern rehabilitation facilities for street children. The rehabilitation facilities should be able to help rehabilitate street children to find life skills and better living to deter them from returning to the street. Additionally, more rehabilitation centers for street children should be established in each sub-

county to accommodate the rising number of street children in Nairobi City County.

#### **Suggestion for Further Studies**

The study focused on the relationship between street children and crime in Nairobi City County. It targeted the residents of Nairobi City County, leaving a gap for a similar study to be conducted in other counties such as Mombasa City County, Nakuru City County, and Eldoret Municipality, where the number of street children and crime is on the rise. By focusing on other cities counties and municipalities, a better image of the issue of street children and crime in Kenya can be established further.

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