



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Effectiveness of government policy interventions towards enhancing access to pre-primary and primary education by street children in North Rift Kenya

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Abstract

An estimated 150 million children live on the streets globally, with many not enrolled in school. This growing issue requires urgent attention. UN Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 5, aims to eliminate educational disparities for marginalized groups like street children, emphasizing the need to address prejudice in education access. The Kenyan government has developed measures to improve all children's access to education, particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels, in light of its signature on the United Nations convention. Government funding for the creation and execution of policy initiatives targeted at improving the access to education for these socially marginalised populations has been consistently large. Many street children still do not go to school though. In this regard a study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of government policy interventions towards enhancing access to pre-primary and primary education by street children. The study used mixed method research and pragmatic paradigm. By using both purposeful and random sampling, a sample size of 322 was selected. The respondents comprised of Street children, county directors of education, quality assurance officers, officers in the Department of Children Welfare, urban primary school teachers, non-governmental organisations, and community-based organisations that assist street children. Data was collected using observation guides, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics as well as theme analysis were used to analyse the data, respectively. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between government policy interventions and street children's access to pre-primary and primary education in North Rift Kenya; specifically, the national pre-primary education policy had a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.711, while the inclusive education policy had a coefficient of 1.0. The research additionally demonstrated the necessity of reinforcing the involvement of other relevant parties in improving street children's access to pre-primary and primary education.

Keywords: Effectiveness; Government policy; Interventions; Access to education; Street children

1. Introduction

Education is a basic human right and the path to overcoming poverty. Ensuring that every child has access to high-quality education is a top goal in international policy agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Kaneva and Corcoran (2020), schools are portrayed as places where kids can feel like they belong and are promoted as the panacea for poverty due to the belief that education improves outcomes and transforms lives.

According to Povian, Gurza, and Dumitrescu (2014), education is unquestionably one of the most significant and highly prized aspects of societal progress worldwide. Our parenting and shaping of all our school-age children will determine whether future generations succeed or fail. It is imperative that we give these factors a lot of thought. As a result, all children ought to have affordable access to a top-notch education because they are the country's future (Boholano, 2013).

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One persistent social problem worldwide is the existence of street children. UNESCO estimates that 300 million children live on the streets of the world. Of these, 70 million people live in Africa, and their number is rising in tandem with the world population (UNESCO, 2019). By 2030, it is estimated that there would be 800 million street children, according to Action International (2010), cited by Goyal (2015).

Uthayakumar study on the realization of street children's right to an education, every country in the globe has to deal with the growing problem of children living on the streets. Because they live on the streets, these children's lives are incredibly precarious. They have trauma and limited access to social services, particularly opportunities for schooling (Uthayakumar, 2019).

Kenyan Constitution 2010 provides every child the right to free and compulsory basic education, all children of school age should ideally be attending school. This rule therefore suggests that all kids, particularly those from extremely low-income homes or backgrounds, should have the chance to attend school, even if they are homeless. This constitutional arrangement, additional government interventions in education policy, the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and the Africa charter on the rights and welfare of the child should ideally provide a supportive environment for all children of school-going age to attend school. The international community reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring access to and retention of universal primary education by the year 2015 during the 2000 World Educational Forum in Dakar. In his vision statement at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the UN Secretary General stated that education is a basic human right. It has had a special place in people's hearts and minds all around the world for a very long time, and for good reason." Education has always been a source of human dignity and empowerment as well as a means of advancing social, economic, political, and cultural growth. But today's education system is appalling, rife with inequalities and unprepared for the demands of the twenty-first century. The attainment of basic skills is a prerequisite for the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone. These skills are essential for the realization of children's rights to excellent education. In short, this means that every child should be able to complete elementary school and learn the basic minimum skills related to reading, mathematics and other 21st-century competencies. Through this, they will be able to resume their sense of personal dignity and play a major role in sustainable development.

Education is the cornerstone of responsible behavior, good citizenship, and personal and societal growth, as agreed upon during the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Nairobi, Kenya in 2022. It is a basic human right and the best shield against unemployment and poverty. But for our towns and cultures to reap these benefits, the Commonwealth needs inclusive and top-notch educational institutions as reiterated during the conference. In order for all students including girls, members of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and those with special needs to benefit from an improved and resilient educational system, resources needs to be allocated fairly.

The Kenyan government has persisted in making large investments in the education sector in order to guarantee that every child of school age attend class and obtains a top-notch education. Kenya allocates nearly 22% of its education budget—or 5% of its GDP on average—to the basic level of education (The Conversation Academic Rigour Journal, Nov 2014). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (GOK, 2023) reports that in the fiscal year 2022–2023, education received 544.4 billion shillings, or 27% of the entire budget.

Pre-primary and primary school access is impeded for street children, a problem that has been addressed by several intervention programmes. Government laws pertaining to inclusive education, free primary education, special needs education, non-formal education, and 100% transition from primary to secondary education mandate that all children attend basic education.

In Kenyan cities and metropolitan areas, nearly all homeless children do not attend school despite the introduction of such improvements to the education policy. Street children should be able to attend school more easily if these policy actions lessen the responsibilities and remove barriers to education. There are also still other reasons why school-age street children were not attending school, even in the conducive atmosphere created by government policy initiatives and other international conventions."

Governments world over have focused a lot of attention on access and transition. However, research suggests that concerns have been raised concerning the quality of instruction given even after FPE was implemented in these respective nations (Deining, 2003; Oketch & Somerset, 2010).

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere advocated for a self-reliance strategy in education back in 1967 during the Arusha Declaration, believing that all children would unavoidably attend primary school and be prepared to participate in productive

occupations after completing their primary education. However, as time went on, social and economic conditions changed, which led to an annual increase in the number of children moving to cities (Nyoni, 2007). Roughly 46% of Tanzania's population was under the age of 15, with about 26% residing in cities (Ibid). Because of this, there has been an increase of street children since the early 1990s for a range of reasons that vary by location.

According to Rweboshora (2002), the effects of HIV/AIDS and household poverty are two of the primary causes of this problem. A 2010 Mkombozi poll found that the percentage of street children is rising, with 22% of them dropping out of school to live on the streets because they can't afford to pay for their education. Furthermore, young people who labour and live on the streets are vulnerable to serious and pervasive rights breaches. Apart from facing difficulties in accessing essential services, street children were subjected to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. This resulted in their social marginalisation and hindered their ability to get basic services such as education.

Anna (2014) discovered that policy interventions need to be reexamined and that street children's non-attendance at school is a cause for concern in her study on the effectiveness of intervention strategies employed to address the issue of street children in Dar es Salaam. This fact informs the notion of this study, especially for Kenya as Anna's study was carried out in Dar es Salaam. It is still required to assess how well policy intervention measures addressed the challenges they were intended to address after they were put into place.

The Kenyan government has significantly improved the legal framework's acknowledgement and defence of children's rights during the previous 20 years. With the adoption of the Children's Bill Act in 2001, Kenya revised its legislation pertaining to children, bringing into national law some provisions of the African Charter and the 1990 UN International Convention on the Rights of the Child. During the 2010 constitutional change, a few rights for children were officially guaranteed by the constitution. All of these regulations were set in place to protect street children from the many vices of society and to prevent them from going to live on the streets, even if it doesn't seem like much has been accomplished. The right to education is one of their fundamental rights. As the global population rises, so does the number of street children; this decade will witness the birth of the largest generation of children in history, predicts Casa Alianza (2004).

Key principles for resolving the issue of street children are contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Kenya has ratified and implemented. As per the convention on the rights of the child, "every child has the right to quality education that is relevant to his or her individual life and personal development," for example. Thus, the convention's viewpoint on great education takes into account children's cognitive needs in addition to their physical, social, moral, emotional, and spiritual development (UNICEF; 2015, ANPPCAN, 2014). Thus, denying street children access to school is considered a violation of their fundamental human rights (UNICEF, 2013). The conventions have safeguarded, among other things, children's rights, best interests, and participation in relevant decision-making processes—including their rights to recovery, reintegration, and compensation. It has also raised awareness among the general public, especially youngsters, about preventive measures and the negative effects of the offences listed in the OPSC through information, education, and training.

The aforementioned makes it clear that the state has a responsibility to give every child the support they require in order to receive an education. With an education, every child would have access to all other rights as stated in the CRC and other UN accords. Kenya's adoption of the UN convention on the rights of the child marked a momentous turning point in the defence and advancement of children's rights and welfare in that country (The National Council for Children's Service, 2015). Kenya has made tremendous strides towards defending children's rights in spite of several challenges. However, more work needs to be done to create the systems for coordinating and allocating enough money to promote children's rights both locally and nationally, especially when it comes to street children's education.

1.1. Policy Interventions

Education, which is regarded as one of the essential human rights, is widely acknowledged as a means of providing children living in low social conditions with a better life. Street children sometimes experience embarrassing challenges in their everyday lives, which increases the likelihood that they will be unable to attend school or that those who may have been able to enrol would drop out. These children are forced by circumstance to work instead of attending school or just engaging in age-appropriate constructive games and activities. In general, their performance has suffered even if some of them have chosen to live on the streets rather than go to school. Many government policy efforts have been implemented over time to ensure that all children enrolled in school receive a basic education and to expand educational access. However, several writers have found it consistently difficult to identify effective policy interventions and methods for street children (Radmard & Beltekin, 2014).

Some poor families are forced to live and work in extremely difficult conditions on the streets in many developing nations across the world due to social, economic, and political concerns. Their children—known as "street children"—cannot attend school as a result of this issue, depriving them of an education and leaving them vulnerable to harassment, prostitution, and other vices (Radmard, & Beltekin, 2014).

The educational backgrounds of the street children can differ between countries. According to a census on street children and street mothers that the department of social affairs conducted in collaboration with two local NGOs, Catholic Action for Street Children (CASC) and Street Girls Aids (SAID), in an effort to improve their living standards, 41.6% of street children had dropped out of school, many of them within the last 15 years, and 58.4% had never attended school at all. The percentage of street adolescents who used drugs or alcohol was 3.6% and 6.8%, respectively. It is a fact that many children throughout the world do not go to school and live on the streets; this is something that everyone should be concerned about.

With so many children growing up to be adults lacking even the most basic knowledge and life skills, society will probably have trouble handling this population in the future. Therefore, governments must increase their policy interventions to promote education for street children in order to instill the essential principles of good citizenship, raise the standard of living for their population, and progress the nation as a whole.

One of the most evident indicators of poverty in any country is the growing number of children living on the streets, begging, scavenging, and praying for favours while their classmates attend school. Due to the increasing importance that many countries have placed on education in recent years, budgets for education have been distributed more liberally in many developing countries. Despite this financial commitment to education, the problem of the high number of street children who are not attending as needed by the several laws and legal procedures to promote their reintegration into school settings seems to be unabated.

The concept of homeless children is a global problem with multiple interpretations. That being said, not much is known about what it means for a street kid to attend school or not. Yohanes (2015) summarised the three primary strategies used by Indonesian families and communities to address homelessness in children: family-based strategies, children's family caravan facilities, and street-based strategies. In a street-based approach, children living on the streets receive supervision and counselling in addition to talking to them and listening to their problems. This tactic aims to provide children with moral values, insight, and vision while protecting them from the negative impacts of living on the streets. With the Children's Friendly Caravan Center-based approach, street children are provided with a safe haven in a central area, a hub for activities, or a place to live at a designated period. Thus, education is one of the services provided to children living on the streets. The family and community-based approach is an additional tactic that aims to prevent children from ending up on the streets by giving families and communities the resources they require instead of the children. This tactic aims to increase family and community members' awareness of their responsibilities in resolving problems with homeless children. This is a non-formal education programme that can be used anywhere (Yohanes, 2015).

1.2. Government Policy Interventions in Kenya

1.2.1. Policy of Free Primary Education in Kenya

Kenya's government pledged to put into effect Education for All (EFA) by 2015 and Universal Primary Education by 2005. In order to do that, free elementary education was implemented. The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 and the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 were cited as the inspiration for the FPE when it was originally presented. Free Primary Education (FPE) led to a notable increase in primary school enrollment. While many children remained to live on the streets, there were some street children who were enrolled in schools.

Kenya's government did away with school fees for kids in Standards One through Four in 1974, hence the 2003 implementation of the FPE project was not the country's first effort at achieving UPE. The prohibition on school fees was extended to cover Standards five through seven in 1978 and then brought back in 1979. The number of children enrolling in elementary school, particularly in Standard One in 1981, was significantly impacted by initiatives to eliminate school fees (Ohba, 2009). However, after tuition costs were eliminated in 2003, some academics claim that enrollments declined and dropout rates climbed for one to two years (Oketch & Somerset, 2010). This problem was associated by experts with a reduction in educational quality caused by high student enrollment, overcrowding in classrooms, a lack of textbooks, and a teacher shortage (Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezech, 2010).

It was estimated that, had it not been for the effort, one million children—mostly from rural, semi-arid, and slum areas—would not have been enrolled in schools that year, despite Kenya's 2003 vow to provide free primary education (Sivasubramaniam 2006). Moreover, 1.2 million of Kenya's 2.6 million orphaned children have lost parents to HIV/AIDS, according to UNICEF (2011). A great number of children have also lost their parents to diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. Many of these children are then adopted by other family members who are unable to provide for them, usually older siblings or grandparents who are elderly or poor. The majority of these people end up living as "street children" and being homeless. When social services are not provided by the government or the civic society, children often end up spending the majority of their days on the streets.

After the government of Kenya implemented Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, school fees were no longer a barrier to primary education for impoverished children. In only a single year, enrolment increased by 17%. FPE was expected to be a programme that, in the long run, would be available to all beneficiaries and allow all school-age children the chance to obtain high-quality basic education for the duration of their schooling in order for it to be effective and long-lasting. Although there is some information available, it is by no means all-inclusive on FPE's impact on education.

With the implementation of FPE, there was an increase in the number of "over-age" street children and those who dropped out of school to work, numbering in the tens of thousands. These individuals required immediate attention and care. Although exact numbers are not yet known, first estimates show astounding quantities. For instance, only about 500 of the 5,000 additional students who registered in schools after FPE was implemented were of "normal" school-going age in Nairobi's Mukuru slum neighbourhood. Many other marginalised youngsters, meanwhile, could not even get to attend school. While some schools have truly full enrollment, others simply refuse to accept students who don't fit the required uniform, are untidy, or come from the "wrong background," which typically refers to "street children."

Even though enrollment is free, many, if not all, street children cannot afford to attend conventional schools due to the numerous hidden costs associated with education, including textbooks and uniforms. Furthermore, for the many street children whose poverty forces them to live on the streets, attending school would mean taking time away from their sources of income. Even if it is wrong for a child to work in a way that hinders their education, it is impractical to prevent street children from working and attending full-time schools when their families rely on them to survive.

There is evidence that FPE was introduced in Kenya in January 2003, barely one month before courses started. Thus, teacher consultation time was severely constrained and expeditious implementation was prioritised (Somerset, 2009). Consequently, teachers had little to no opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new FPE policy. The policy's poor implementation was caused by a high student-teacher ratio, insufficient financing, and a dearth of instructional and learning resources. The Government of 2005 proposed developing comprehensive guidelines for education policy, ECDE, and service standards through the use of session paper N0. When developing this policy framework, it was crucial to take into account the importance of investing in young children in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, increasing universal school enrollment, reducing maternal mortality, and establishing gender equality (Karanja, 2015).

With the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) programme in 2003 and the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) programme in 2008, the number of students enrolled in our institutions went from 6.7 million in 2003 to over 12 million in 2015. Despite this, an estimated 1.9 million primary school-age children (ages 6 to 13) and 2.7 million school-age children (ages 14 to 17) were still not enrolled in school, according to the 2009 Kenya Household Population Census (KHPC).

Article 43 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution states that every citizen has the right to education, while Article 53(b) states that every child has the right to free, obligatory education. This is made possible by Section 39(c) of the Education Act 2013, which mandates that the Cabinet Secretary ensure that children who are members of marginalised, vulnerable, or disadvantaged groups are not subjected to discrimination or prevented from pursuing and completing their education.

According to Haddad and Demsky's (1995) approach, the FPE policy should go through two stages: proclamation of the policy option and execution. This may have resulted in the neglect of crucial actions that may have raised teacher involvement, like developing the agenda and identifying issues, planning the execution of policies, reviewing and revising them, and creating new policy cycles.

Since the FPE scheme was launched quickly, not all of the expected beneficiaries—including school-age street children—were contacted or given due consideration. This may help to explain why the number of school-age children

living on the streets was rising despite such government initiatives that would typically encourage youngsters to enrol in schools.

1.2.2. Policy on Inclusive education in Kenya

Inclusive education is providing every child of school age with the opportunity for education. Prejudice against the education of street children endures in Kenyan schools despite inclusive education policy norms. The aim of inclusive education was to create a community that was compassionate providing care, and supporting, where all children's needs could be fully met and to turn schools into places where all children could learn. Since inclusive schools provide an inclusive education as opposed to "regular education" and "special education," all students are encouraged to learn alongside one another there. Put another way, it ensures that all children may learn and participate in a same setting and situation while being inclusive of them all. In a nutshell, inclusive education is the process of enabling all children old enough to go to school, including those who were previously not allowed, like street children, to learn and participate in regular classroom environments.

Inclusive education cannot be implemented in a predictable way until the essential policy elements governing the implementation process are in place (Schuelka, 2018). This is necessary in order to carry out policy objectives, as educational institutions serve as the framework for policy implementation. Some of the difficulties with inclusive education policy practices that surface after adoption are a result of mistakes made during earlier stages (Gallup, 2017). Effective implementation of inclusive education policy requires school transformation and systemic adjustments in order for kids to receive instruction in a mainstream school (Schuelka, 2018). Mulugeta (2015) identifies five factors which influence the policy's enforcement process: partners' and policy consumers' support, whose interests are affected by the policy; implementers' commitment to the policy; their ability to carry it out; and the content and environment in which the policy must be implemented (Puhan et al., 2014; Tesfaye et al., 2013). The emergence of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the 1980s and 1990s had a direct impact on inclusive education. Prior to this, CSOs faced numerous challenges, such as a lack of a clear national framework, inadequate cooperation, and hostilities between NGOs and the government (Kameri-Mbote, 2000).

Because civil societies played a significant role in Kenya's democratisation process and helped the government rise to power, the newly formed government there had an impact on them after the election in 2002 (Kibwana 2004). The Government's enhanced cooperation with CSOs has kept their authority in check, even though their influence in policymaking has expanded owing to the recent developments (Mulama 2006). CSOs and the government must have a solid working relationship if they are to be more effective at what they do. CSOs have a big responsibility in this field because the government might not have enough funding to meet the demands of education. CSOs typically pay for the indirect costs of schooling in addition to reaching out to a greater demographic of underprivileged adolescents in rural and slum areas (Ogachi 2002). However, many CSOs concentrate on the non-formal education (NFE) sector, especially when dealing with street and other disadvantaged children. CSOs face a variety of challenges as a result of their lack of finance (Sivasubramaniam, 2006).

Implementing inclusive education strategies in public schools is complicated by a number of structural change difficulties, per a study by Bibiana et al. (2020). The findings suggest that there may be a link between the poor implementation of inclusive education policy and the challenges associated with structural change. The study concluded that the lack of effective changes in structure strategies was one of the main obstacles to the adoption of inclusive education policies in secondary schools. However, because inclusive education was meant to cover all educational levels, this has created the possibility that when policy initiatives relevant to the access of pre-primary and primary school for street children are put into place, the same problems can surface.

Since then, city education departments, NGOs, and local governments have established rehabilitation centres for "street children". The institutions realised that street children who live and/or work due to family dissolution and poverty (BRC, 2004). For these children, they established facilities or centres that provide rehabilitation together with pleasure, healthcare, and education. Among the government centres in Kenya are the Eldoret Rescue Centre, Bahati, Pumwani, Kayole, and Joseph Kang'ethe. Despite this, the groups indicated above face social, technological, and cultural barriers that prevent them from fully achieving their goal of helping, teaching, and rehabilitating "street children." Still, there are still street children in this country, and solving the problem will take time and proven strategies.

1.2.3. The National Pre-primary Education Policy (2018)

The 2010 Kenyan constitution guarantees every child several rights, one of which is education, as stated in the Bill of Rights. Article 53 of the constitution lists children's basic rights, which include the right to free and obligatory basic education. Basic education is generally understood to include pre-primary, elementary, and secondary education.

Moreover, Article 54 guarantees every child the right to use educational facilities and establishments. The state is mandated by the constitution to ensure that young children receive appropriate developmental education. In addition, affirmative action programmes that give disadvantaged individuals special consideration in the economic and educational realms must be implemented by the state in order to achieve equality and inclusivity.

The Kenyan government accepted the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, which calls on states to ensure inclusive, egalitarian, high-quality education and to promote possibilities for lifelong learning for everyone. In order for all boys and girls to be ready for primary school, Goal 4.2 mandates that they have access to high-quality pre-primary education and early childhood development care by 2030. After realising the importance of pre-primary education and consulting with county governments and other development partners, the Kenyan government drafted the National Pre-Primary Education Policy in 2017.

The National Pre-Primary Education Policy refers to the early learning opportunities, early stimulation, and care provided to children prior to their enrolment in grade one. The main focus of this strategy is on pre-primary education and training services for teachers, students, and other carers. This policy, which aims to assist children in achieving the most age-appropriate competencies in their cognitive, effective, socioeconomic, and psychomotor domains, was created in response to the dire need for excellent, inclusive, fair, and age-appropriate pre-primary education (National Pre-Primary Education Policy, 2018).

The National Pre-Primary Education Policy's early childhood development education and training provisions are to be in compliance with the Kenya Vision 2030, the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, and other international accords. Furthermore, as the County Government strives to execute its constitutional duty to provide pertinent and superior pre-primary education, the policy provides a framework for reference. The fourth schedule assigns the National Government the task of developing education policies, standards, curriculum, tests, and university charters, while the County Governments are in charge of pre-primary education, village polytechnics, home craft centres, and child care facilities.

Through policies and activities, the National Government still places a high priority on pre-primary education. Due to the application of these initiatives, enrolment increased from 2.71 million in 2012 to 3.2 million in 2016, improving access to education across the country. Even with these encouraging figures, there aren't many data points available for street kids in this age range. The policy states that all children must be eligible for admission after turning six, and that no exams or interviews will be used to evaluate a child's eligibility for admission to Grade 1. It also requires that there be no fees for any public pre-primary school.

The national pre-primary education policy created guidelines for managing many aspects of providing all children (including street children) with quality education services at this level. This makes an assessment of the National Pre-Primary Education Policy's (2018) effects on enhancing school-age street children's access to pre-primary education necessary.

1.2.4. Special Needs Education Policy of 2009

The Kenyan government recognises that students with special needs education is an essential subsector that will accelerate the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on "Policy Framework for Education, Training, and Research" outlines the objective of our education sector as a major enabler of our children. All children, including those with special needs and those living on the streets of Kenyan cities and metropolitan areas, will be provided with high-quality education that is both accessible and relevant to their everyday lives in order to achieve this aim.

People in the education field have long been confused by the essential question of what kind of education to give street children, especially in light of the children's different skill sets. Education has historically been separated into two categories: general education and special education. Authorities and specialists have been doubting for some time now if this was the ideal approach to educate kids in a circumstance where their learning styles differed. It used to be believed that kids with various needs, especially those with special needs, need teaching in different classrooms. Lack of knowledge, educational access, and technology led to the first separation of exceptional, challenged, and impaired children from regular children. General education was raised as a result, and "Special Schools" for the disabled were established. The practice of segregating schools has drawn a lot of criticism within the last thirty years. There is currently a growing understanding that integrated education need to be provided instead of instruction that is segregated. Because of this, efforts have been made in this area, particularly in the past 20 years, and the term "inclusiveness" has led to the emergence of other distinct categories of children, such as street children. On the basis of

this, government initiatives have been developed to address the same. What has to be looked at now is how well the same policy measures are applied and work to address the inadequacies that have been brought to light.

Access to education for kids who have spent the most of their life on the streets might be classed under a distinct category once it was realised that these kids deserve different treatment than kids who attend regular schools. These children belong to a "special" group that needs special education due to social features that may deviate from societal norms. Therefore, the kind of instruction provided to them ought to be designed to encourage as many of them to enroll in school as possible, rather than denying them access to education. Rather than being subjected to sudden, potentially demoralizing adjustments, street children should get flexible schooling that will aid in their eventual reintegration into society.

Therefore, it is important to promote and encourage interventions in education policies as a way to motivate children, especially those from underprivileged groups, to attend school. However, inadequate access to high-quality education services will lead to education that is below par (Global Thematic Consultation on Education and the Post-2015, Development Framework, 2013). Without a doubt, street children will continue to have difficulty meeting the national education targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On the other hand, there has been a significant increase in the number of unschooled street children in Kenyan urban centers, which include towns in the North Rift Region such Eldoret, Kitale, Kapenguria, and Kapsabet. Street children's time working diverts them from their schooling since they are aware that they are vulnerable to both physical and psychological exploitation (dangers from narcotics, human trafficking, and sexual predators). The policy measures concerning their reintegration back into the classroom and access to education need to be reexamined and strengthened.

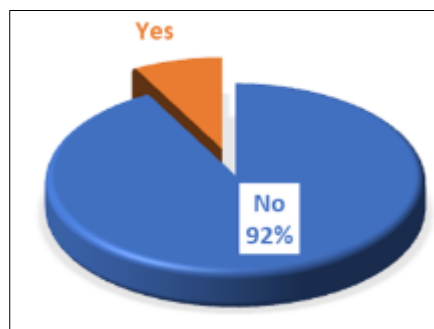
2. Materials and methods

The study used mixed method research and the pragmatic paradigm. By using both purposeful and random sampling, a sample size of 322 was selected. The respondents comprised of Street children, county directors of education, quality assurance officers, officers in the Department of Children Welfare, urban primary school teachers, non-governmental organisations, and community-based organisations that assist street children. Data was collected using observation guides, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics as well as theme analysis were used to analyse the data, respectively.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. Effectiveness of government policy interventions

To assess the level of effectiveness of the Government Policy Interventions towards enhancing access to pre-primary and primary education by street children, the respondents were asked questions related to the adequacy of Government policy interventions and the influence by the visitations and monitoring by Government officers from the Ministry of Education. The street children were also asked if in their opinion the Government had put in place adequate policy interventions that could make it appealing for them to attend school. Findings are presented in Figure 1;



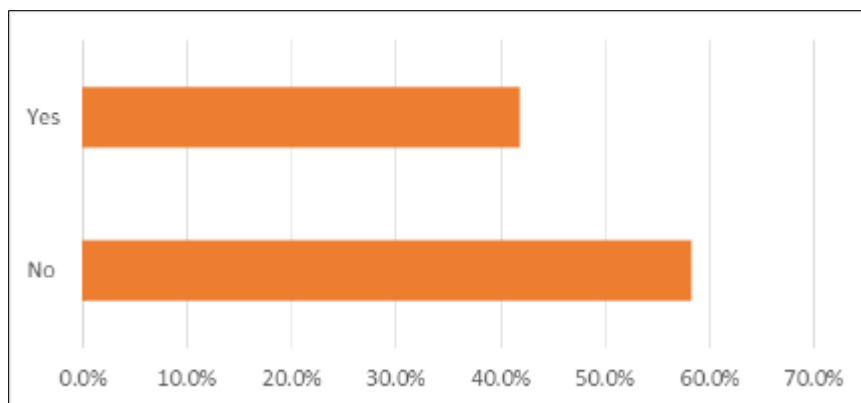
(Source: Research field 2023)

Figure 1 Adequacy of Government policy interventions

Figure 1 gives the respondents' views about the adequacy of Government policies towards influencing them to attend school. The findings indicated that majority 222 (92 %) of the respondents indicated that the Government policies were not adequate whereas 19 (8 %) indicated that the Government policies were adequate.

3.2. Influence by government officers

The respondents were asked whether the visits by the Government officers influenced or persuaded them to attend school and their responses were as indicated in Figure 2;



(Source: Research field 2023)

Figure 2 Influence of the Government officers

Figure 2 shows that; 39 (58.2 %) of the respondents indicated that despite the Government officers' visitation to the street, the visits did not influence their interest to attend school, 28 (41.8 %) indicated that the Government visitation contributed to their interest to attend school. The major challenge for street children not to enroll in school was lack of money for the school materials hence the problem remained unsolved despite the visitation from the Government officers from the ministry of education.

3.3. Responses from teachers

Teachers' responses on the contribution of Government policy interventions towards enhancing access to pre-primary and primary education by street children were sought for.

3.3.1. Contribution of government policy interventions

Respondents were asked to rate on the levels at which the existing policy interventions had enhanced access and retention of street children in pre-primary and primary education in specific aspects. Their responses were as enumerated in Table 1;

Table 1 Contribution of policy interventions in enhancing access to education

Variable	Free Primary Education Policy		Pre-primary Education Policy		Inclusive Education Policy		Special Needs Education Policy	
	Frequency (45)	Percentage (100%)	Frequency (45)	Percentage (100%)	Frequency (45)	Percentage (100%)	Frequency (45)	Percentage (100%)
Strongly Disagree	18	40%	19	42%	9	20%	12	27%
Disagree	17	38%	11	24%	24	53%	25	56%
Neutral	6	13%	13	29%	7	16%	5	11%
Agree	4	9%	2	4%	4	9%	3	7%
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	17	38%	18	40%	4	9%	13	29%
Disagree	22	49%	15	33%	30	67%	23	51%

Neutral	5	11%	11	24%	7	16%	6	13%
Agree	1	2%	1	2%	4	9%	3	7%
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	9	20%	16	36%	12	27%	15	33%
Disagree	27	60%	20	44%	21	47%	20	44%
Neutral	6	13%	8	18%	10	22%	8	18%
Agree	3	7%	1	2%	2	4%	2	4%
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	19	42%	18	40%	9	20%	14	31%
Disagree	19	42%	18	40%	24	53%	20	44%
Neutral	4	9%	8	18%	9	20%	7	16%
Agree	3	7%	1	2%	2	4%	4	9%
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%

Table 1 represents the ratings from the head teachers and teachers about the contribution of various education policies in enhancing access to pre-primary and primary education by the street children. Free-primary education policy, the national pre-primary education policy, inclusive education policy, special need education policy and non-formal education policy were assessed and reported as follows;

Free primary education policy

Responses of teachers on free primary education policy towards enhancing Enrollment of the street children to pre-primary and primary school education indicated that 18 (40 %) of the teachers strongly disagreed that this policy enhanced access to education by street children. 17 (38 %) of the teachers disagreed that this policy enhanced access to pre-primary and primary education by street children while 6 (13 %) of the teachers were neutral in that they neither agreed nor disagreed. 4 (9 %) of the teachers agreed whereas none of the teachers strongly agreed that free primary education policy enhanced enrollment at primary education by street children.

On retention of street children in school by free primary education policy 22 (49 %) of the teachers disagreed, 17 (38 %) of the teachers strongly disagreed, 5 (11 %) were neutral while 1 (2 %) of the teachers agreed that free primary education policy enhanced retention at primary education by street children.

On whether free primary education policy enhanced completion rates by the street children; 27 (60 %) of the teachers disagreed, 9 (20 %) strongly disagreed, 6 (13 %) neither agreed nor disagreed while 3 (7 %) and 0 (0 %) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the free primary education policy enhanced completion rates at primary education by street children.

Teachers were asked on whether free primary education policy enhanced Transitioning of the street children in school and 19 (42 %) of the teachers strongly disagreed, 19 (42 %) disagreed, 4 (9 %) neither agreed nor disagreed whereas 3 (7 %) agreed that the free primary education policy enhanced transitioning in primary education by street children.

National pre-primary education policy

Teachers were asked whether the national pre-primary education policy enhanced enrollment of the street children in school and 19 (42 %) of them strongly disagreed, 13 (29 %) neither agreed nor disagreed, 11 (24 %) disagreed while 2 (4 %) agreed that pre-primary education policy enhanced enrollment at pre-primary education by street children.

On whether the national pre-primary education policy enhanced retention of the street children in school, 19 (42 %) of the teachers strongly disagreed, 15 (33 %) disagreed, whereas 11 (24 %) and 1 (2 %) neither agreed nor disagreed and agreed respectively that pre-primary education policy enhanced retention at pre-primary education by street children.

Teachers' responses on whether the national pre-primary education policy enhanced completion of studies by the street children indicated that 20 (44 %) of them disagreed with the claim, 16 (36 %) strongly disagreed, 8 (18 %) were neutral and 1 (2 %) agreed that pre-primary education policy enhanced completion at pre-primary education by street children.

The responses on whether the national pre-primary education policy had enhanced Transitioning of the street children, 18 (40 %) of the teachers strongly disagreed with the claim, 18 (40 %) disagreed, 8 (18 %) were neutral, 1 (2 %) agreed whereas none strongly agreed with the claim.

Inclusive education policy

Teachers were asked to comment on whether inclusive education policy had enhanced enrollment of the street children in pre-primary and primary education and 24 (53 %) of them disagreed, 9 (20 %) strongly disagreed, 7 (16 %) neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 (9 %) and 1 (2 %) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that inclusive education policy enhanced enrollment at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

On the claim that inclusive education policy had enhanced retention of the street children in schools, 30 (67 %) of the teachers disagreed, 7 (16 %) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4 (9 %) strongly disagreed and another 4 (9 %) agreed that inclusive education policy enhanced retention at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

Teachers' responses on the claim that inclusive education policy had enhanced completion of studies by the street children indicated that 21 (47 %) of the teachers disagreed, 12 (27 %) strongly disagreed, 10 (22 %) were neutral and 2 (4 %) agreed that inclusive education policy enhanced completion at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

The claim that inclusive education policy had enhanced transitioning of the street children to the next class or grades shows that 24 (53 %) of the teachers disagreed while those who strongly disagreed and those who indicated neutral tied with 9 (20 %). Subsequently, 2 (4 %) and 1 (2 %) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that inclusive education policy enhanced transition at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

Special needs education policy

Majority of the teachers 25 (56 %) disagreed with the claim that Special needs education policy enhanced enrollment of the street children in pre-primary and primary education while 12 (27 %) of them strongly disagreed. 5 (11 %) neither agreed nor disagreed whereas 3 (7 %) agreed that special needs education policy enhanced enrollment at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

On retention, many teachers 23 (51 %) of them disagreed with the claim that special needs education policy enhanced retention of the street children in pre-primary and primary education while very few of them 13 (29 %) strongly disagreed. An even smaller number of the teachers 6 (13 %) neither agreed nor disagreed while 3 (7 %) of them agreed that special needs education policy enhanced retention at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

On the claim that special needs education policy had enhanced completion of studies by the street children, 20 (44 %) of the teachers disagreed, 15 (33 %) strongly disagreed, 8 (18 %) neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 (4 %) agreed that special needs education policy enhanced completion at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

On the claim that special needs education policy had enhanced transitioning of the street children to the next class or grade, 20 (44 %) of the teachers disagreed, 14 (31 %) strongly disagreed, 7 (16 %) were neutral and 4 (9 %) strongly agreed that special needs education policy enhanced transition at pre-primary and primary education by street children.

3.4. Anova mean difference between policy intervention and enrollment

The calculated p value = 0.773 was found to be greater than 0.05 (i.e. $p > 0.05$) and therefore there was no statistically significant in the mean difference between Government policy interventions and enrollment by street children in primary education.

Table 2 Demonstrates the mean difference between policy intervention and enrollment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.007	1	0.007	0.083	0.773
Within Groups	20.798	239	0.087		
Total	20.805	240			

(Source: Research 2023)

3.5. Anova level of contribution of free primary education policy

Table 3 Demonstrate the means on the level of contribution of free primary education policy

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.726	3	0.575	3.897	.015
Within Groups	6.052	41	0.148		
Total	7.778	44			

(Source: Research 2023)

There was significant relationship between the means of level of contribution of free primary education policy in access to primary education the $p = 0.015 < 0.05$ hence significant. The findings therefore implied that the free primary education policy played a vital role in access to primary education by the street children.

3.6. Pearson Coefficient Correlation

Table 4 Pearson Coefficient Correlation

		Inclusive education policy	Completion	Transition
Completion	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000**	0.000
	N	45	45	45
Transition	Pearson Correlation	0.789	0.643	0.773
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000**	0.000	0.000
	N	45	45	45
Contribution of National pre-primary education policy	Pearson Correlation	0.711	0.514	0.807
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	45	45	45
Retention	Pearson Correlation	0.862	0.616	0.822
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.000	0.000**
	N	45	45	45
Completion	Pearson Correlation	0.821	0.529	0.910
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000**
	N	45	45	45
Transition	Pearson Correlation	0.788	0.631	0.734
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000**	0.000	0.000
	N	45	45	45
	Pearson Correlation	1	0.789	0.843

Contribution of inclusive education policy	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	45	45	45
Completion	Pearson Correlation	0.789	1	0.627
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	45	45	45
Transition	Pearson Correlation	0.843	.627	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.000	
	N	45	45	45
Retention	Pearson Correlation	0.898	0.838	0.714

(Source: Research 2023)

The Pearson correlation coefficient of the level of contribution of inclusive education policy towards access to pre-primary and primary education was strongly positively correlated having a correlation coefficient of 1.0

The level of contribution of National pre-primary education policy towards access to pre-primary and primary education was positively correlated having a Pearson correlation lemma of 0.711

The completion, transition and retention were also positively correlated in reference to the contribution of inclusive education policy towards access to pre-primary and primary education for street children.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, although government policies have been implemented, compliance with them is something that needed to be strictly enforced and supervised. The study found that many stakeholders in education are not carrying out their duties as successfully as they should have when it came to monitoring the execution of policy measures aimed at facilitating street children's access to pre-primary and primary education. Therefore, in order to facilitate the execution of the Government Policy Interventions, the Government or the Ministry in charge of education need to devise procedures for sensitising and mobilising all stakeholders. A collaborative initiative between all stakeholders should be embraced and a joint initiative for government policy design, enforcement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation be adopted.

Recommendations

- There is need for the government to improve the process by which policies are implemented, enforce compliance with policy requirements, and seek to mitigate societal problems that lead school-age children to choose to live on the streets.
- There is need for Civil-based organisations, non-governmental organisations and government to strengthen collaboration for effective policy changes towards enhancing street children's access to pre-primary and primary school.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that there are no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this study. All efforts were made to ensure impartiality and objectivity throughout the research process, and no financial, personal, or professional interests influenced the study's outcomes or conclusions.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to in this study. A research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), ensuring compliance with national research regulations.

Statement of informed consent

Approval was sought from the County Commissioner and County Education Officers, further ensuring that all relevant authorities were informed and involved, promoting ethical research practices and safeguarding participant welfare.

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