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Education for Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Addis Ababa

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Research Article

Keywords: Unaccompanied Minors, Migrant children, Educational enrolment, Caregiving

Posted Date: July 14th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10077373/v1

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Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Abstract

Purpose

This research is conducted to understand the level of accessibility of education for unaccompanied internal migrant children coming from different parts of the country to Addis Ababa.

Method

the research is a qualitative case study research. Purposive, opportunistic, and snowball sampling techniques are used for selecting participants in this research. Migrant children, Social workers, officers from the Women and Social Affairs Bureau, and school principals participated in this research. KII, FGD, and document analysis are used as major data-collecting tools. The emic and ethic approaches of data analysis have been used in the data analysis and MAXQDA software is used. A descriptive way of data presentation is used

Result

the research result revealed that education is less accessible for unaccompanied migrant children. This is associated with a very low enrolment rate, high dropout rate, and low academic achievement. The research also revealed that there is too little awareness of ensuring accessible and quality education for these groups of children among officials, education leaders, school principals, and teachers. The result also revealed that there is too little initiation among CBOs, FBOs, and CSOs for helping these children access education. The result also indicates a gap in the inclusivity of the education for unaccompanied migrant children and a gap in the teacher education curriculum in equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to help these groups of students. The core barriers to the decreased enrolment rate of unaccompanied minors are cultural, economic reasons, and rigid school policy.

Implication:

improving access and quality of the education for unaccompanied migrant children relies on: changing the mindset of concerned stakeholders, amending the policy and other legal frameworks, reviewing the teacher education curriculum, establishing harmonized working platform among concerned stakeholders, and placing strong data management and regulatory mechanism.

Background

1.1 Core Issues in Child Migration

The number of child migrants is increasing globally at an alarming rate (UNICEF, March 2021; Ramya Subrahmanian & Andrew Geddes, 2024). According to the UNICEF report, in 2021 there were thirteen million refugee children and nine hundred thirty-six asylum-seekers. The report noted that there were a total of 31 million migrant children and from these migrants seventeen million of them are IDPs who are forcibly displaced. The same figure is also reported in Africa in which Giulia Spagna and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, (2015) reported that of the total migration in Africa, 31% of them are children. According to this source, Djbouity is the key transit country for migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf countries. The source indicated that thirty percent of these migrants are below 18 years of age. Considering the overall picture throughout the continent, the major migration routes are the Northern route that takes to Europe through North Africa (Central Mediterranean), the Southern route that takes to South Africa after crossing countries that are found between Ethiopia and South Africa, and the Eastern route which takes to the Middle East and the Gulf countries by crossing the red sea from Djibouti or Somali Land to Yemen. Most of the migrants that travel through the Eastern route mainly aspire to go to Saudi Arabia (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019; Save the Children 2021). These sources and the report produced by IOM (2021) indicated that most international migrations take place through the Eastern route. Carson, (2019), indicated that most of the unskilled international migrants are aspiring to travel to the Gulf countries mainly to the United Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Child migration in Ethiopia can be classified into local and international. The report produced by Save the Children (2021) described Ethiopia as an origin, transit, and destination for most of the migrations in the Horn of Africa region. The reviewed literature for this research informed that the flow of migrants dominantly resembles from rural to urban areas. This originated from the need to establish an urban non-agricultural life (Carson, 2019; IOM, 2020; Save the Children, 2021). International migration is dominantly orchestrated by a network of smugglers and traffickers which is conducted through the various exit corridors to neighboring countries. The migration of children in Ethiopia is also surging due to the ongoing conflicts and natural disasters like drought (Ramsak & Demissie, 2023). In 2024 there were more than 720,000 displaced children due to the ongoing conflict in different parts of the country (UNICEF, 2021). Save the Children (2021) indicated that migrants in the Eastern route are vulnerable to forced or voluntary repatriation. This source described the recent mass deportation activity implemented by the Saudi Arabia government has created a concern for the government of Ethiopia, and other concerned actors. Regarding the age range of most child migrants that travel through the East route is 13–17 years of age (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019; IOM, 2021). The later source indicated that there are some cases where children whose age is as young as eight travel alone.

Various governmental and nongovernmental organizations are working towards decreasing the number of migrants from the Horn of Africa to the rest of the world and availing protection for children on the move. Similar to this initiative the EU in collaboration with IOM launched an initiative for migrant protection and reintegration in the Horn of Africa in 2016. This project is mainly designed to intervene in the migration of individuals from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan (IOM, December 2020).

Child migration can be classified into voluntary or forced based on the nature of the displacement and reason for the relocation. The core causes for child migration are violence, political instability that involves war and conflict, natural disasters like draught and flood, poverty, an act of injustice and impunity, a practice of discrimination and inequality, and lack of access to education (KIND, 2024; Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç, 2022). A pursuit of an urban life due to media and peer pressure is also identified as a factor for rural to urban migration.) Children also engage in migration in situations where there is a need to claim autonomy and escape from domestic violence by their parents or the usual caregiver (Iman Hashim and Dorte Thorsen,2011). This includes conflicts and physical aggression between parents and family separation.

The age of the child during migration has a decisive role in the quality of the decision made(Beck et al., 2012). Additionally, gender-related migration is indicated as another factor. According to Iman Hashim and Dorte Thorsen, (2011), boys are known to have a wider social network that motivates and makes them migrate higher than girls. Despite this Carson, (2019) argued that boys often has low migration experience than girls as they are considered as the inheritor and guardians of their parents wealth. Thus, girls and women's are referred to be the most active in migration in contrast with boys and men. Irregular and illegal child migration is exacerbated by the delicate coordination between brokers and smugglers. To make the matter worse there are cases where parents or member of the family engage in facilitating this process. Often economic reasons are the driving forces for parents or the usual caregiver to engage children in migration. Often children migrate from rural to urban areas and usually migrate unaccompanied by their biological parents or the usual caregiver. This is acknowledged in the report released by UNICEF (March 2021).

Migrant children likely face traumatic experiences that range from physical, social, emotional, psychological, and economic. The sum of these crises may put these children to experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç (2022) asserted this reality and indicated that children on the move face a challenge to satisfy their necessities. From the various needs that the children faces a challenge to satisfy are food, shelter, medication, protection, care, and education.

As it was indicated above children under migration status are unable of accessing education. The report produced by UNICEF (March 2021) classifies the likely challenges that are faced by migrant children into three stages which are macro, meso, and micro levels. According to this report, the macro level is mainly associated with the inaccessibility of education due to restrictive policy and legal frameworks. On the other hand, Meso-level is related to the unpreparedness of the teacher to teach students from a diversified background most specifically about lack of the skill and preparation to teach multilingual and multicultural students. The micro-level is associated with the different environment and knowledge gap which arises from the side of the migrant children. Some of the identified gaps are cultural differences, language barriers, and lack of orientation concerning the education system in the host country.

Therefore, this research aspires to understand the level of accessibility of education for urban unaccompanied migrant children in Addis Ababa and identify the key challenges that hinder the enrolment and academic achievement of these children. Hence, the research question this research stands to answer are:

1. How do accessibility of the education for migrant children in Addis Ababa explained?
2. What are the major challenges that affect the enrolment and academic achievement of migrant children in Addis Ababa?

Methods

This research is a qualitative case study in which the Critical Paradigm is the paradigm used to investigate the accessibility of education for migrant children. This research paradigm is used because the research investigates issues related to rights, justice, and social accountability from the viewpoint of education for migrant children. The research examines the experience of migrant children in Arada Sub-City, in Addis Ababa. Arada Sub-city is one of the eleven sub-cities in Addis Ababa and it is found in the center of the city. Hence, the sub-city is a typical representative for urban and business area where it is identified as one of the core destination sites for migrant children.

2.1 Participants and Sampling

The participants involved in this research are seven migrant children who are selected through an opportunistic sampling technique. This technique contributes to the flexible approach in participant selection by allowing on-the-spot decisions. The specific areas where these children are traced are known as *Arat Kilo* and *Eri Be Kentu*. Two primary school principals are also included in this research and they are selected through purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique is used to include the primary schools that are found in the areas were the informant children are found. As the responsibility of managing the issues of migration and migrants is under the mandate of the Women and Social Affairs Office in the aforementioned sub-city, one officer from this office participated in this research. The selection of this participant was made using purposive sampling technique. Additionally, one social worker participates in this research from a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). A snowball sampling techniques has been used to identify this NGO and the reason that made this organization eligible to be included in this study is its significant involvement in the education and reunification of migrant children in Addis Ababa in General and Arada Sub-city Specifically. The selection of this respondent was made using a purposive sampling technique.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools employed in this research are focus group discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII), and document analysis. Two FGDs were conducted with the respondent migrant children. Hence, 4 children took part in the first round and 3 participants engage as an informant in the following round. A KII is conducted with the rest of the participants. The KII is conducted with all these participants in their office and a prior appointment was made before the interview date. A guide was

developed for the FGD, interview, and the document analysis. The documents reviewed in this research are the school policies and guidelines that entails the enrolment of students in each school and the data concerning migrant children that are accessed in the Women and Social Affairs office and the NGO where the respondent works.

2.2 Data Analysis

A qualitative data analysis technique was implemented for the analysis of the data obtained in this research. Hence, a transcription of the audio data takes place after careful listening to the audio files. The field notes are also properly recorded and the data obtained from the FGD, KII, and document analysis are properly organized. Next to this, initial codes are given to gather the data with similar characteristics together. This led to the emergence of extended codes and finally, the extended codes shrink to fewer codes as most of the data with similar characteristics bring back together. A deductive data analysis approach was used in all these processes. Explanatory data analysis strategies are used in which the meaning of each data was examined from the viewpoint of the research questions. The research is also guided by the narrative data analysis technique. Using this qualitative data analysis technique enabled to narrate the personal experiences of each participant's children in this research on accessing education and examines its alignment with the responses obtained from the officials in the various organizations. Hence, this technique helps to properly understand the phenomenon from the viewpoint of respondents. The researcher examined the implication of the data obtained in contrast with the existing literature on education for children in migration. Finally, by incorporating the insights of the researcher the report was produced having a descriptive form. The details of the data analysis procedure are discussed in the following figure.

2.4 Ethical Procedures

As the research is conducted on vulnerable minors maximum care is given for the participant children as per the existing standards. All participants are given a description of the purpose of the research as well as their role and only those who give their written consent participated in this research. The FGD is conducted in the presence of the social worker who is familiar to them and this helps to safeguard the children from any form of harm. The social worker is made to sign consent on behalf of the children. The principle of anonymity and confidentiality is implemented during writing the report of this research.

Ethics approval

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kotebe University of Education and it is approved on December 11/2024 the ethical guideline that is being followed is the Research and Publication (RPG) guideline and the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent to participate

The participant adults are offered an informed consent freely and the respondent minors engage in this study with the informed consent and presence of the social worker in Arada sub-city who is responsible

for the caregiving of unaccompanied migrant children.

Results

3.1 Background information about the respondent children

The researcher meets children 1, 2, 3, and 4 around Arat Kilo and children 5, 6, and 7 around Eri Be Kentu. The total number of respondent children who took part in this study were seven. All engage in street business in which two of them (Child 2 and 3) engage in shoe shining whereas Child 1, 4, and 5 sell lottery tickets. The remaining two (Child 6 and 7) engage in a commercial weight measuring activity in the streets using a mobile weight scale.

Table 1: Background information of the respondents

Child number	Age	The area where they used to live before	Number of years they live in Addis Ababa	Weather they have the experience of engaging in a re-migration
1	14	Boditi/ Wolaita	2	Yes
2	11	Sodo/ Wolita	1	No
3	13	Sodo/ Wolita	1	No
4	15	Boditi/ Wolaita	3	Yes
5	10	Boditi/ Wolaita	1	No
6	11	Sodo/ Wolita	1	No
7	13	Sodo/ Wolita	1	Yes

Child 1 completed grade four when he was in his area of origin but he dropout his education in a desire of making money by coming to Addis Ababa. The second child attended education up to grade five and the third child attends education up to grade four. The fourth child attends his education up to grade two whereas the fifth child attends his education up to grade two. The sixth child attends his education up to grade three and the seventh child attends his education up to grade two.

When I was in Boditi, I enrolled up to grade two and my friends and members of my family often speak about the benefit of engaging in income-generating activity and denounce the relevance of spending time in education. Hence, I drop out of my education and start a business. I worked a shoe-shining job. I then came to Addis with my relative because we use to hear that there are plenty of opportunities here (Child Four).

All respondents drop out of their education and come to Addis Ababa in search of economic benefit. To cope with the house renting price in Addis Ababa the children indicated that they rent a house in groups and they prefer a house having poor quality with low renting price.

Our house is located around Ferensay and four of us live in that house. We will equally share the payment for the house rent. The house is not that expensive because it is far from the main road and near to the bushes. The floor is made of mud (Child 4)

Children 1, 2, 3, and 4 leave their homes at 7:00 am every morning and often return back home around 8:00 pm. According to Child 1, he and Child 4 will relatively get fatigued in contrast with their friends (Child 2 and 3) as they travel long distances to sell the lottery.

The children reported that they face different challenges in their current life. The most reported cases were hunger, physical abuse that includes taking their money and/ or lottery tickets by force, malfunctioning of their weight scale causing a reduction in their earnings and hunger that resulted from being unable of affording the price of a meal to eat three times a day. The children also reported that they are often physically drained due to the long walk that they engage in each day. The unpredictability of their earnings in each day and the decrement in their income also sometimes make them unable of paying their rent in the due date which leads them to a conflict with the house owner. The children also reported that the demand for financial support that comes from their parents puts them in a stress.

3.1 Accessibility of Education for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

All the respondent children indicated that they are not enrolling in education and the reasons for this are various. Internal factors are the cause of not enrolling in education for most of the children. Respondent children 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 reported that they wished to keep doing their current duty in the day time than going to school. Their reasons were they need to make money for living and support their parents and siblings. From their response, it is understood that the children's preference in wishing to keep their current money-making activity is not originated from a lack of interest in education. Rather, their reason is embedded in economic factors and all asserted that they have an interest to enroll in education if their economic demands are met.

Yes, I need to go to school but if I don't engage in money-making activities and earn income I will not cover the expenses for my living such as house rent and food. Additionally, our parents expect financial assistance. They will get sad if we fail to support them and our siblings at least once a year. So, we need to keep doing this job to fulfill their demands. But, if we get assistance on these I would love to return back to school (Child 6).

These children are also requested concerning the reason why not they enroll in the night modality and in alternative basic education (ABE) programs that are given at night. In replying to this, children 2, 3, 4, and 7 indicated that they will get fatigued due to their daily activity and could not go to school at night as they wish to eat dinner and get rest. In strengthening this statement, Child 4 noted that he ends his work around 7 pm and this prevents him from considering the ABE program as an option. Concerning this the report by UNICEF (2017) listed three reasons why children on the move failed to attend education. According to this source, the core reasons are assuming a temporary stay in the host environment,

frustration with the kinds of suffering the children think to experience in schools and psychological related factors.

Different from the above children, child 1 and Child 5 indicated that they need to enroll in education and requested the staff of governmental schools if they can enroll or not. The issue they raised as a challenge is they are told to bring an adult guardian who has an ID issued from Woredas in Addis Ababa. Despite this, both noted that there is no one having this status and can support them.

I requested the staff of the school concerning the procedures for applying to enroll in their school. They told me that I need to bring my official educational transcript from my previous school and to bring a guardian who has an ID. Even if I fulfill these requirements according to the individuals my admission is dependent on the available space (Child 1).

Both children noted that they will not prefer to enroll in the education provided in the night modality. Their reason is as they get fatigued due to their work each day they prefer to get rest and get ready for their duty the next day. The respondent school principals also acknowledged the prevalence of an experience demanding newly registered students show up with their guardian or a person to contact during an emergency having an ID.

Requesting to bring a guardian having their ID is among the common criteria for the registration of new students. This is not something to compromise because there needs to be someone to be contacted if the student faces an emergency or commits a violation. We know that this limits unaccompanied minors from enrolling in education and I believe there needs to be some kind of changes for enabling unaccompanied minors to access education (School Principal 1).

The respondent from the NGO also noted this gap and indicated that the children who live in their center will not face such challenges as the organization facilitates such kinds of services for the students from their center. Likewise, the respondent from the MoWSA office asserted that this is creating a challenge for migrant children to enroll in education. Despite this, the officer noted that there is no tangible effort made by their office to bring a solution for this. According to this respondent majority of child migrants are not enrolling in education. In supporting this results the report produced by UNHCR, (2015) and UNICEF (2017) noted that migrant children either did not attend education or attend rarely.

3.2 The barriers to the educational enrolment of migrant Children

The research result revealed that education for migrant children is inaccessible or rarely accessible for unaccompanied migrant children who live in Addis Ababa. The research understands that different barriers made accessing education for unaccompanied migrant children difficult. The barriers that are identified in this research are presented in the following seven sections.

3.2.1 Culture and the Success story of others

The respondent children noted that there is parental and societal pressure on children in their area of origin in encouraging children to engage in income-generating activities. The other factor indicated by these respondents is the tempting stories of elders who have previous migration experience. The content of this story mainly lies in explaining the economic benefit of making business in urban areas and encouraging young children to engage in such kinds of activities.

I am the third child of my parents. Both my elder brothers come to Addis Ababa before me and they are the ones who brought me here. When I was in our home with my parents they used to visit us once a year sometimes twice. Whenever they come home they will purchase so many things for us and our parents. I often see them when giving money to our parents. Our parents will get happy with their actions and bless them. This inspired me to come to Addis Ababa and do the same. Now, I think I am contributing something in supporting my parents. My elder brothers wanted me to keep doing this job and they do not encourage me to go back to school. Currently, the elder one returns back to Sodo and starts a trade business whereas the younger one is now a married man and lives in the suburbs of Addis Ababa. So, I currently live with my friends (Child 7).

The respondent official from the NGO also confirmed this to exist and testifies that most of the children in their center come to Addis Ababa due to the motivation and encouragement they get from their parents or other family members. According to him families usually tell their children about the bravery of a child who engages in business-making activities at an early age and save money for their later life.

The migrant children from the Southern part of Ethiopia who are found in our center informed us that their parents and neighbors usually talk about the economic assistance they get from their children who work in Addis Ababa or Abroad and embrace them. The parents often set this as an example to motivate their younger children. This in turn made the younger ones motivated to follow in the footsteps of their elders. The reality is different from this. There are many children in our center who came to Addis Ababa having such a mentality but faced a devastating street life where they were vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, engage in prostitution, addiction, facing hunger, and illness (a respondent official from a local NGO).

Hence, the research result revealed that there is a culture of embracing the activity of engaging in money-making activity at the expense of the student's time to attend their education. This in turn diminishes the interest of children to enroll in education and diverts their attention. Hence, it serves as a primary driving force for many young children for engaging in migration by dropping their education.

3.2.2 Economic Reason

Economic-related factors are presented by respondents as a cause for migration and a barrier to unaccompanied migrant children enrolling in education after they migrate to Addis Ababa. According to the officer from MoWSA and the official from the local NGO, poverty is the core reason that encouraged most parents for motivating their children to migrate. In favor of this opinion, a respondent child noted

that his parents are not able to fulfill his needs and this made him eager for engaging in money-making activities.

Often my parents are not able to purchase the things which I needed including learning materials. They even sometimes face hard in availing adequate food for us. Therefore, I start to work and assist them. That is why I needed to keep doing my current job. No one can economically support me and my family so that I can resume my education (Child 2)

The results revealed that the migrant children are engaging in commercial business not only to cover their expenses but they are also sharing the economic burden of their families. These did not able children to think of returning back to school by dropping the street business they are currently engaging in.

3.3.3 Fatigue and lack of time for schooling as a result of the business the children are engaging

The respondent children noted that they could not go to school in the regular program as they work the whole day to cover their expenses and support their families. Hence, they have no time to go to school. The other barrier that prevents unaccompanied migrant children from enrolling in education is the workload each day that the children engage in. Most of the children asserted that they will get fatigued and could not think of enrolling even in the ABE programs that are given in the nighttime. Hence, the respondent children noted that they prefer to get a rest so that they can make themselves ready for their work the next day than going to school.

3.3.4 Rigid policy of schools

As it was exhaustively discussed in the above the rigid policy of schools in requesting children to bring their adult guardian or caregiver for registration prevents unaccompanied migrant children who want to enroll in education. Additionally, some respondent students and the school principals referred that schools request students who want to resume their education from the grade level where they paused to bring their official transcripts for the grades they enrolled previously. Despite this, the respondent children reported that children engaging in business-making activities often have no time to go back to their hometown and bring the official transcript. Additionally, most would not prefer to spend money on transportation and other expenses when they travel to their home town for bringing educational transcripts. Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç, (2022); Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019); UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) also acknowledged the gap on preparedness of schools to accommodate migrant children. The report by Helvetas (2023) and UNHCR (2015) also ascertained that even if there is a workable policy the limitation among practitioners that arises from will or limited capacities may serve as the cause for the lack of access to education. In favor to this statement UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) noted that accessibility of education for migrant children depends on the commitment of the host environment and it is reflected in the existing school policies and systems. Likewise, UNICEF (2021) and Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019) recommended amending policies and legal frameworks to enhance the accessibility of education for children in migration.

3.3.5 Peer pressure

All the children and the official from the local NGO reported that children who want to enroll in education even in the ABE program face discouragement from their peers and become exposed to bullying. Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019) also asserted this and reported bullying as a core challenge for unaccompanied migrant children. Additionally, the respondent children reported that many friends are not voluntary to share the additional burden that emerged as a result of enrolling in education.

If I resume my education it will take some of my time. This might decrease the income that I currently earn. As we (the child and his friends) contribute an equal amount of money to pay the house rent none of them tolerate or support me if I am not able to contribute my share (Child 3)

Discussion

The core pushing factor for the respondent children to engage in migration is found to be economic reasons. This found to strengthen the causes indicated in different literature. Favoring this finding, economic reasons including poverty and large family size are found to be the major causes for child migration (Iman Hashim and Dorte Thorsen, 2011; Carson, 2019; IOM, 2020; Save the Children, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). Poor academic achievement and dropout are also noted to correlate with child migration (Save the Children 2021; UNICEF, March 2021). In addition violence and conflict that results instability, natural disaster, social exclusion, cultural pressures, geographical location, insufficient supply of basic services, substance abuse, a desire to experience rural life, family loss, family conflict and domestic violence, arranged marriage, a denial of going to school by parents or the usual caregiver, tempting promises from traffickers, and peer pressure (UNICEF, March 2021; Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç, 2022). The report released by Save the Children (2021) indicated that there is a high association between low educational attainments with high migration rate. According to these report children who have no access to educational enrolment, who have poor academic achievement or who dropout, their education are most likely to migrate. The report indicated that from the children that are going to engage in migration only 23% of them completed an education beyond primary level, 26% live with their parents, 66% live with their mother only and 57% of them are from poor family. Children in a large family may not get the focus from their parents concerning their needs (Helvetas, 2023).

On the other side the identified suffering of children who participated in this study found out to have a significant alignment with the reported sufferings in literature. Some of the sufferings reported are long hours of work with no payment; engagement in hard labor activities; a gap in satisfying their basic needs; illness; homelessness/ street life; substance abuse; sexual violence and engagement in commercial sex; physical violence; hunger and thirst; unemployment; detention; deportation; death; robbery; trafficking; stranded in a terrible situation without their will; unable of accessing various services including education (Carson, 2019; Save the Children, 2021; IOM, 2021). The report by IOM (2021) also indicated that smugglers and traffickers use these children as bargaining power to get a ransom. The contributing

agencies for the sufferings of children arise from different groups. Likewise, Save the Children (2021) revealed that smugglers, criminal gangs, armed groups, government officials, and other migrants are responsible for the occurrence of the aforementioned sufferings.

The core research questions of this study were identifying the status of migrant children in accessing education and understanding the core barriers for these children tom access education.

Based on this the research result found out that accessibility of education to migrant children in urban areas is found to be barely accessible and this is found to have a negative effect in the futurity of migrant children. Education for migrant children creates hope and a sense of engaged for their current life and draws a bright future. It is a tool to enable migrant children recovers from post-traumatic experience, and establishes new social networks. This is also asserted by Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç (2022). According to this source, schools are places for teaching language, culture, and social structure as these are critical for migrant children to assimilate into the new environment. UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) also reported that education has a vital role for migrant children to adapt to the new environment smoothly. Similar to the respondent children in this study literature suggests that children on the move are often engaged in migration dropping out of their education.

Favoring the result of this study, literatures asserted that there are hindering circumstances that prevent migrant children from enrolling in education (UNICEF, March 2021). According to this source, many migrant children either have very limited opportunity to enroll in education or are likely to drop out of their education.

The research result informed that cultural practices, tempting success story of others, economic factors that causes fatigue and dining time for schooling, and rigid school policies are found to be the core factors that made migrant children unable of accessing schools. This strengthens reports discussed in literature Economic factors and poverty are the core causes of migration and migrant children wish to engage in money-making activity than engaging in education (Iman Hashim and Dorte Thorsen, 2011; Carson, 2019; IOM, 2020; Save the Children, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). The gap related to language, social and culture, and insufficiency of school facilities and resources are also of the most reported challenges (Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç, 2022; Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). The other reported challenge is the problem related to psychological health problems (Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). In addition to the above limitations, the barriers listed by Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç (2022) are the lack of appropriate learning environment, the lack of guidance and counseling service, the lack of family support, economic problems, exclusion by peers, the lack of motivation, and lack of pre-school education. Similarly, Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019) mentioned the gaps concerning bullying. Absence of catch-up classes are also another gaps that unable migrant children access education (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019).

Understanding all these limitations UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) called for special support for migrant children. Realizing quality and accessible education demands critical and planned intervention. Placing a school system that can be easily accessed by migrant children is found to be one of the critical intervention UNICEF (2021). Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019) underscore the need of amending policies and legal frameworks that favor the needs of migrant children. This source also calls for enabling teachers to have a sound body of knowledge and experience to teach multicultural, multilingual, and marginalized students; introducing alternative learning platforms to benefit children that cannot access formal education, equipping schools with supplies including school meals; ensuring the school system to promote the maximum participation of children. Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç (2022), Carla Camila Lara & Louis Volante, (2019) and UNICEF (2021) emphasized the criticality of availing language aid platforms and collaboration between concerned stakeholders in availing education for children in migration. Additionally, Özlem Yüksek Telsaç, Savaş Karagöz, & Cüneyt Telsaç (2022) indicated the necessity of making interdisciplinary collaborations, providing economic support for children in migration, being conscious about knowing the factors that cause migration, caution on security concerns and removing the lack of a learning environment. As there is a high migration influx of children to Addis Ababa it is very critical to examine how far the above support systems are available to enable migrant children access education.

Conclusion and Implication

Unaccompanied migrant children are the most disadvantaged students and their migration has an impact on their current and future life. Most of these children will engage in hard labor activities and are exposed to addiction, physical and sexual violence, illness, and unable of accessing various services. This is also acknowledged in a report disseminated by Helvetas (2023). This poses a protection risk to the children and could bring a lasting effect on them. Resolving this demands a concerted effort and UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) calls for special support for such kinds of children. One of the core support systems is education. Education is a tool to heal PTSD, create a sense of engagement, help children interact properly with society, and lay the foundation for a bright future. UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, (2019) also acknowledged that schools are centers to avail multiple services for unaccompanied children. The unaccompanied children that are addressed in this research are losing this opportunity. This puts the children to live in similar statuesque in their current and later life. In addition to the harm the children face in their life, their failure to enroll in education would have an impact on the peace, economic, social, and political situation of a nation. Economically disadvantaged and illiterate children are close to engaging in activities that may contribute to the disruption of peace. Additionally, the prevalence of a high number of illiterate populations critically affects the economy of a country. Therefore, the research result noted that the accessibility of education for migrant children is found to get less focus. The core manifestation of this is the rigid school policy and poor support mechanism for unaccompanied migrant children. The other important result is the lack of coordination between concerned stakeholders in establishing a comprehensive support system. The necessity of concerted

effort is also discussed in the report discriminated by Helvetas (2023). Therefore, the results of this study imply the need to:

a) Establish a comprehensive data management system on the number of unaccompanied minors, their demographic information as well as academic history.

b) Design a strategy that can resolve the rigid school policy that sets bringing a guardian or emergency contact person as a mandatory criterion. One strategy to consider as a solution for this is amending the guideline in a way that can favor unaccompanied minors and establishing a department in MoWSA or education offices that monitors the implementation of it.

c) Declaring back to school campaign and trying to bring back many unaccompanied children to school.

d) Establishing a collaborative working platform among all concerned stakeholders such as governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, CSOs, FBOs, and CBOs to respond properly to the various needs of unaccompanied children including ensuring unaccompanied migrant children access education, resolve the root causes that made children migrate by dropping their education, availing economic assistance and protection schemes for unaccompanied migrant children. So that they can attend to their education properly.

Declarations

Funding: The researcher receives no funding to undertake this research from any organization or individual.

Financial Interests: None

Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kotebe University of Education and it is approved on December 11/2024.

Consent to participate:

a) Adult Participants: The participant adults are offered an informed consent

b) Minor participants (Children under 16): For participants under the age of 16, informed consent is secured through their primary caregiver or assigned social worker. As the legal guardians and advocates for these street children, these professionals are fully briefed on the objectives, risks, and benefits of the program. The social worker reviews the details with the participant, granting consent on their behalf

while actively prioritizing the child's best interests, emotional safety, and right to withdraw without penalty.

Consent to publish: The participants are informed that the data they are going to offer will be used for the research purpose that includes publishing and reporting.

Data availability: The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to the need to preserve the anonymity of the participants but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Clinical Trial Registration number: This study does not involve clinical trial. Thus, clinical trial registration is not applicable

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Figures

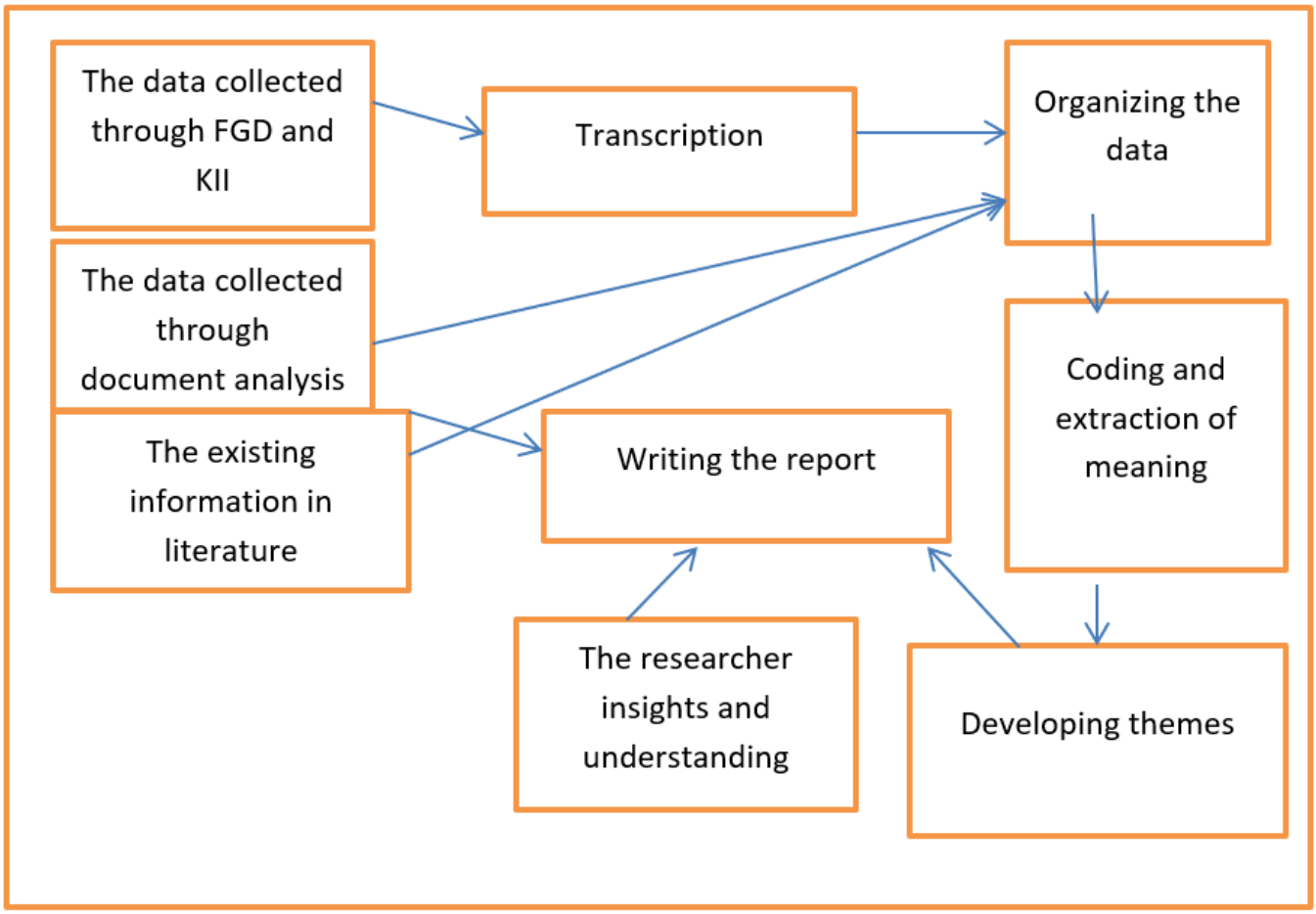


Figure 1

Chart 1: The data analysis framework employed in this research (*developed by the researcher*)