

Is It Okay to Reintegrate Institutionalised Orphan Students into Families? Teachers' Perceptions in Urban Secondary Schools, Tanzania

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Abstract

Various studies campaign for the reintegration of institutionalised orphans into families due to psychosocial difficulties children face in orphanages. However, teachers' perceptions of reintegrating institutionalised orphans were not well documented by empirical studies, which were covered by the study. Moreover, a qualitative approach and multiple case studies were employed. Likewise, a purposive and simple random sampling technique was employed to obtain 24 research participants. Moreover, in-depth interviews were employed to collect data from participants. Following these procedures, findings revealed that reintegrating orphans into families is significant for orphans for bonding purposes, understanding the culture of families, freedom of expression, and securing rights of property inheritance. Meanwhile, teachers perceived that it is challenging to reintegrate institutionalised orphan students since some orphans do not have families, economic difficulties facing families, and the increasing distance from home to school. In this regard, they suggested that, for proper reintegration of institutionalised orphan students, reintegration should be done when orphans have graduated from studies. Furthermore, the study recommended that policies and laws governing orphanages should be regulated to enable orphans to remain in the orphanages and progress with their studies regarding attaining the legal age for reintegration.

1.0 Introduction

The reintegration of children from institutions into families varies from the global to the local contexts. In Europe and Central Asia, for instance, the reintegration process started in 2000 for children with disabilities; the government and civil society organisations strongly supported the movement to stop establishing large-scale institutions and adopt family-based care systems (UNICEF, 2019). In sub-Saharan Africa, the programme for reintegrating children with their families started earlier than in Europe and Asian countries. In Ethiopia, for example, in 1996, the government successfully reintegrated about one thousand children into foster care, kinship, and biological relatives (The Faith to Action Initiative, 2016). Moreover, in Sudan, in 2003, the government rejected institutional care for vulnerable children. As a result, about 3934 children were reintegrated into their communities (UNICEF and GoM, 2019). Following this trend, in 2019 the Tanzanian government formulated a national guideline for reintegrating institutionalised children into families and communities, which emphasised that all children should be raised in families (MoHCODGEC, 2019). Despite efforts made in the country, the guideline did not capture teachers' views on reintegrating orphans into families, which draws attention to this study. Reintegration is the process by which a separated child returns permanently to their family and community of origin to ensure complete security and care (Delap & Wedge, 2016). Therefore, in the context of this study, reintegration is the process of preparing children to reunite with their living parents, guardians, relatives, and other community members, and helping them maintain bonds and cope with their ancestral environment after leaving the orphanage (Vedasto et al., 2026).

1.1 The Value of Family on Children's Care

Every child has the right to grow up in a stable home setting where a family remains an essential entity in providing children care, nurture, socialisation, and health support (UNICEF Kenya, 2024). Then, the family environment provides love, connections, and a sense of belonging to a community of people. In addition, a child learns and participates in cultural traditions, shared history, and social skills that help them interact effectively with others (Faith to Action Initiative, 2022). Moreover, families are crucial in offering guidance and direct assistance in the form of food, clothes, and medical care, and by creating livelihoods, offering material support, and expanding access to essential services, families can be reinforced, and separation can be avoided (Faith to Action Initiative, 2024). Subsequently, children's interactions with family members in their homes and communities primarily help them build the language, customs, and abilities they will need as adults, as well as absorb cultural patterns and moral values (Faith to Action Initiative, 2022).

Indeed, studies show that the family setting provides love, care, protection and cultural aspects to children. However, institutions under private or public management do not provide a child with a family setting (van IJzendoorn et al., 2020). In this regard, a family should be a predominant model for caring for orphan children in the absence of their biological parents, and the removal of children from their birth families should be the last option; whenever possible, it should be temporary for the best interest of the child, and the decision to return to families and communities should be regularly reviewed (UN, 2019).

1.2 Reasons for Children to Separate from Families

Children all over the world separate from their families and decide to live in orphanages due to neglect, abuse, and exploitation. However, poverty is the primary reason for these children to live in these institutions because the majority of care providers fail to meet their basic needs like food, shelter, and educational materials (The Faith to Action Initiative, 2016). Likewise, family members place children in orphanages due to a lack of support in health care, education, and day care facilities (Faith to Action Initiatives, 2014). For instance, in Indonesia, children placed in orphanages are not orphans since about 90% have at least one living parent and 56% have both living parents (Browne, 2017). On these grounds, placing children in orphanages with living parents explains the misuse of public funds, the denial of parental responsibility, and the corruption of orphans' rights. In sub-Saharan Africa, children separate from families because blood relatives cannot manage to look after them in the absence of their biological parents (Pensulo, 2018) as Kanjanda (2014) in Zimbabwe presented that family disharmony, disintegration, and slackness in moral values and social stratification changed the family structure of caring for orphans in Africa, orphans are seen as outsiders and second-class citizens in the family.

Nevertheless in Zambia, orphanages were perceived as a better place for orphans to live due to economic hardship that limits many families' ability to afford essential resources like food and educational costs (Januario et al., 2016). Tanzania, like other African countries, most children separated from their families include excessive poverty, the death of one or both parents, child neglect, household conflicts, drug abuse, child abuse, and children's school dropout (MoHCODGEC, 2019).

In general, poverty has been reported as the leading factor in children leaving their families to seek support in orphanages. However, the United Nations General Assembly of 2019 emphasises that poverty should not be the reason for excluding children who are parentless from their birth environment; guardians and other primary caregivers should take the responsibility of providing support to these children in the absence of their parents for the child's benefit (UN, 2019).

1.3 The Research Gap

Most studies conducted in orphanages worldwide and in Sub-Saharan Africa concentrated on the psychosocial challenges of orphans and the experiences of caregivers in supporting orphans (Vedasto et al., 2023; Hercker et al., 2022; Christopher & Mosha, 2021; Makuu, 2019). Few studies presented the values of a family on child care and development (UNICEF Kenya, 2024; Faith to Action Initiative, 2022; UN, 2019). However, these studies did not address teachers' perceptions regarding the reintegration of orphan students into their families, especially in urban secondary schools. In this sense, the study was conducted to fill the knowledge gap while acknowledging that reintegration experiences and educational outcomes may be impacted by urbanisation, socio-economic pressures, and changing family structure.

2.0 The Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into their families of origin. Specifically, the study: I) explored teachers' perceived benefits for reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into their families and communities of origin; II) explored teachers' perceived challenges for reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into families; III) examined measures for improvement for reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into their families of origin.

3.0 The Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study: I) what are teachers' perceived benefits for reintegrating institutionalised orphan students into families? II) What are teachers' perceived challenges for reintegrating institutionalised orphan students into families? iii) What are measures for improving the reintegration of institutionalised orphan students?

4.0 Methods

4.1.1 Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative approach to obtain views and opinions from secondary school teachers concerning their perceptions for reintegrating orphan student into families as Omari (2011) suggested that in a qualitative approach, the study is conducted in a natural setting and primary data is collected directly from the field. Moreover, multiple case study design used to conduct this study whereby three Secondary schools available in Temeke Municipality in the Dar es Salaam Region were

involved to the study. Moreover, unstructured interviews were employed to collect in depth information from participants and informants by using purposive sampling techniques.

4.1.2 Study Location

The study was conducted in three Secondary schools available in in the Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania. The Dar es Salaam Region was selected for the study because of having many orphanages and children living in the institutions (Vedasto et al., 2026; Christopher & Mosha, 2021; Makuu 2019).

4.1.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

A purposive-simple random sampling technique was employed to obtain 24 participants and three secondary schools available in Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam Region, where institutionalised orphans used to attend for learning. Regarding teachers’ demographic characteristics, most of the teachers who took part in the study were aged 20–29 (03), 30–39 (10), 40–49 (07), and 50–59 (01). In terms of gender, women were (11), and men were (10). The findings indicate that gender balance was observed among the participants of this study. In terms of educational background, most of the participants had earned a bachelor's degree, while a minority had a master's degree (04) and a diploma in education (02). Moreover, the majority of participants had over 11 years of teaching experience, whereas the minority had between 1–5 years and 6–10 years, respectively. The findings indicate that participants in the study had sufficient working experience to present the required information. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the data.

Table 1.1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics of Participants			
Age group	Gender	Education	Working experiences
20–29 years 03	Male 10	Diploma 2	1–5 years 06
30–39 years 10	Female 11	Degree 1 5	6–10 years 03
40–49 years 07		Masters 04	11 years+ above 12
50–59 years= 01			

4.1.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis method suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) was used to analyse qualitative findings whereby the recommended six steps such as information gathering, assessing thoroughness using field notes and audio data, categorizing data, coding descriptions, developing themes, and the last step of data interpretation and reflection were followed during data analysis.

5.0 Findings

Teachers presented different perceptions of families covering teachers’ perceived benefits and challenges for reintegrating Orphan Students into families and measures for improvements.

5.1 Teachers' Perceived Benefits for Reintegrating Orphan Students into Families

Findings revealed that teachers perceived that it is okay to reintegrate orphan students into their families because the family environment is a better place for a child to grow in the absence of biological parents compared to the orphanage setting because of love and bonding purposes, securing rights of property inheritance, cultural preservation and maintaining freedom of expression for boosting children's self-esteem.

5.1.1 Love and Bonding Purposes

Findings revealed that teachers perceived orphans to be reintegrated into families for bonding purposes with their relatives since they viewed that orphans continued staying in the orphanages in the long run are likely to lose bond, attachment and affection from family members. To emphasise this, one teacher in excerpt 1 presented her views by saying that:

Excerpt 1

"Reintegrating orphans into family is a good thing, especially at early ages because the child has the opportunity to know siblings and values of the family. For example, one of my siblings took children in the orphanage. Still, when they returned to the family, their behaviour had changed, and they could not listen to and obey adults; they were confused with family rules, the issue of obedience became a challenge" (A teacher aged 52 from school C).

The findings in excerpt 1 indicate that teachers perceived a family as a better place for orphans to grow, enabling them to know their siblings such as uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and grandparents. Findings also revealed that orphans living in orphanages have limited interaction with their brothers, which might lead them to get lost with their brotherhood. Therefore, reintegration is a better way of enabling orphans to be familiar with the family members and understand the values of a family.

5.1.2 Securing Rights of Property Inheritance

Findings revealed that teachers viewed orphans as being reintegrated into their families after graduating from studies to enable them to secure their basic rights of property inheritance, since continued staying in the orphanages, their properties are likely to remain permanently in the hands of relatives. Meanwhile, findings revealed that enabling orphans to manage to secure their property rights is one way of getting resources for academic development, as one teacher in excerpt 2 emphasises:

Excerpt 2

"A child who is away from his siblings may lack his basic rights such as the right of property inheritance which can benefit other siblings; therefore, the idea of returning orphan students into families is good

because education can be a problem because a child may not get his basic rights such as school supplies” (A teacher aged 40 from School A).

The findings in excerpt 2 indicate that teachers perceived reintegration is beneficial to orphans for the purpose of securing their basic rights of inheriting properties left by their biological parents; since these children continued staying in the orphanages, their properties are likely to be corrupted by relatives. Meanwhile, findings indicate that orphans securing such rights may help them access educational materials for their career development since, while remaining in orphanages; they may have a problem with educational facilities.

5.1.3 Freedom of Expression

Findings revealed that teachers perceived that a family environment makes a child have freedom of expression more likely than that of orphanage settings, since in a family a child is free to ask questions, make arguments and discuss with family members. Meanwhile, in orphanages, mostly children receive directives from caregivers and other staff, whereby they respond accordingly with minimal chance of making arguments. Therefore, a lack of such freedom may also affect the child in school by causing fear in asking questions to teachers and having discussions with fellows, which might have negative impacts on their academic progress. For instance, in excerpt 3, one teacher emphasises by saying that:

Excerpt 3

“A child’s courage is developed within a family; and the orphanage’s setting cannot be the same as such of that of family environment since children grow up very constrained, the freedom to express, question and inquire about various things does not exist, when a child has something of his own, sometimes he does not say it, probably there is no one to listen and provide help” (A teacher aged 37 from school B).

The findings in excerpt 3 indicate that, in the orphanages, orphans had limited freedom of expression, which directly affected their confidence in interacting with the school environment in the aspects of asking questions, engaging in dialogue with fellows and self-expression. The findings further imply that orphans' failure to grow in families where aspects of democracy are built means they are likely to have limited courage in solving problems related to academic matters. In this regard, teachers viewed that it is better to reintegrate orphans into families for the purposes of building roots of democracy for today and the coming generation.

5.1.4 Cultural Preservation

Findings revealed that teachers preferred orphans to be reintegrated into families for learning cultural aspects like language, rituals, and taboos because in the orphanages, children are from diverse societies with different cultural backgrounds and have difficulty having a chance to learn their cultural values. Further, findings revealed that orphans continued staying in the orphanages; they are likely to lose cultural identity, which is significant in their social welfare development. To cement this information, the head of school in excerpt 4 presented that:

Excerpt 4

"In my opinion, it is better for children to be sent home so that they can learn the traditions and customs of the family through their grandparents for good upbringing, and a large percentage of children, especially those who are disturbing here at school, do not come from a family. If the child continues to stay in a residential area, he will completely miss the taste of family culture. (Head of school aged 46 from school A).

Likewise, similar findings were presented by another teacher in excerpt 5 by saying:

Excerpt 5

The family keeps the child close to relatives; it is easy to help and have a family network for the benefit of his future development. Then, when a child is raised in a family, cultural background is not lost, for example, language, habits and taboos. Therefore, the issue of children returning home is a good thing" (A teacher aged 29 from School C).

The findings in excerpts 4 and 5 indicate that teachers' views towards reintegrating orphans into families were influenced by cultural reasons, making a child living in a family, issues related to family culture are likely to be preserved. Nevertheless, they perceived that children who lack family culture mostly became stubborn in schools since, in the orphanage, children lack a potential figure to correct their mistakes compared to the family environment. In this regard, they preferred orphans to be reintegrated into families since, if they continued staying in orphanages, they are likely to lose their cultural values.

Generally, findings revealed that teachers perceived it beneficial for orphaned students to reintegrate into families for behavioural modification, understanding their culture, right freedom of expression, to know their siblings and securing basic rights of property inheritance, since continued staying in the orphanages, such aspects are difficult to achieve.

5.2 Teachers' Perceived Challenges for Reintegrating Orphan Students into Families

Findings revealed that teachers presented different perceived challenges which might be associated with reintegrating orphans into families, like financial difficulty in families, children's maltreatment in families, the increase of distance to school, and difficulty in behavioural modification.

5.2.1 Financial Difficulty in Families

Findings revealed that teachers perceived reintegrating institutionalised orphans into families as a threat due to financial difficulties facing families. Therefore, reintegrating a student into a family with substandard living conditions increased the likelihood that the child would drop out of school because they could not afford the tuition and other educational costs. To emphasise this, one teacher in excerpt 6 said:

Excerpt 6

"If a student returns to a family whose economy is poor, this issue can affect his academic development, as some students may completely drop out of school due to lack of educational needs such as fees, and other school supplies. Similarly, if a student was being supported with fees and school supplies such as pens, notebooks and books once he leaves the orphanage, the support may be stopped completely" (A teacher aged 31 from school C).

The findings in excerpt 6 indicate that teachers perceived families' financial situation as a barrier to reintegrating orphans because of concerns that it might impact their academic progress because some families might not be able to give these orphans the educational materials that are readily available in an orphanage. Therefore, lack of educational essentials may lead the majority of orphaned students to drop out of school, a situation which might increase illiteracy among vulnerable children within the nation. Furthermore, findings indicate that teachers viewed the major problem that led orphans to run from families as poverty; therefore, if such a problem has not yet been solved correctly, taking these children back into families is like burning their dreams.

5.2.2 Some Orphans have no Families

Findings revealed that some orphans have difficulty reintegrating into families since they have no relatives. Likewise, findings revealed that teachers were attached to the orphaned students who left orphanages without having families, and they contributed money to give them accommodation in progressing with studies. To underline this, one teacher in excerpt 7 said:

Excerpt 7

Most orphans living in shelters do not have relatives, or if they do have relatives, they do not know where they are from. For example, if a child was picked up from a bag in the bush and taken to a shelter, do you think it would be easy to find his relatives? It is another difficult issue where such a child will have to spend his entire life in a shelter where his basic needs such as education, upbringing and starting a family will be taken care of by caregivers in the shelter (The head of school aged 46 from school B).

Another teacher presented similar views in excerpt 8 by saying that:

"I completely disagree with the issue of orphaned students being removed from the orphanage and sent into families, especially before they have completed studies. For example, we once had a student who joined form five at this school; caregivers did not accept him to live in an orphanage on the basis that he had turned eighteen years. At first, he stayed with his friend, but when we knew the situation, arrangements were made to donate money through our social fund and put him in a hostel; he studied until he finished Form Six" (A teacher aged 44 from school A).

The findings in excerpts 7 and 8 indicate that teachers' opinions about reintegrating orphans into their families were adversely impacted by the fact that some orphans have no families. Teachers believed that

an orphanage was a suitable place for orphans to remain, and it is impossible to reintegrate these children with unknown family members, since doing so would probably have an impact on their academic progress.

5.2.3 Children's Maltreatment in Families

Findings revealed that teachers perceived that orphans being reintegrated into families they are likely to suffer maltreatment. Likewise, they perceived that the provision of security and protection from community members and government authorities made them believe that orphanages were a better location for orphans to reside while continuing with studies. For example, during conversation in excerpt 9, one teacher said:

Excerpt 9

"In the orphanages there are orphans who left families because of facing physical and sexual abuse; today if you tell these children to return to a family like this they cannot accept because they will be remembering the pain and events that made them run away" (A Teacher aged 31 from school B).

The findings in excerpt 9 indicate that the presence of alleged abuse in families made it difficult for teachers to support the idea of reintegrating orphans into their families by pointing out psychological issues that could have an impact on the students' academic performance. The findings also indicate that children who witnessed abuse in families are more likely to be reluctant to return home because of the traumatic infections associated with such experiences. Additionally, findings revealed that orphans are likely to suffer a variety of abuses in families, causing them to refuse to return home once they reach the legal age for reintegration.

5.2.4 The Increase of Distance to School

Findings revealed that, after reintegrating orphans into families, the distance between the home and the school may increase, which could have an impact on school student attendance. For example, in some schools, students were collected in camps to get ready for exams, particularly in form two and form four classes. Therefore, teachers believed that when orphans are reintegrated into families, the distance between the school and the home may increase, which could cause students to skip out on school. To emphasise this, one teacher in excerpt 10 said:

Excerpt 10

"Here at school, we have a camp system, especially for students who are close to examinations, so if students are reunited with families in other regions, they will not be able to attend the ongoing training, since the distance between the school and the family may increase, which may affect their academic development" (A teacher aged 37 from school A).

The proceedings in excerpt 10 indicate that reintegrating orphans into families may have an impact on training programmes implemented by schools to enhance academic achievement because it may result

in a greater distance between the school and families. Findings also indicate that Students may thereby miss the scheduled events, which could have a detrimental effect on their academic performance. In this regard, they thought that such students, instead of being reintegrated into families, would benefit more from continuing with education while remaining in the orphanages.

In general, findings revealed that teachers perceived negatively reintegrating orphaned students into their families by giving reasons that some orphans do not have families. Other perceptual reasons were that they feared that they may suffer from maltreatment and abuse, and that they had an increased distance from home to school,

5.3 Measures for Improvements: Suggestions from Teachers

Teachers presented different suggestions concerning perceived challenges for reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into families. For instance, they suggested that the reintegration programme should not involve orphaned students, since the change of environment may affect their academic performance.

5.3.1 Reintegrating Orphans after Studies

Findings revealed that teachers suggested orphans should be reintegrated into their families after graduating from studies, at least from Form Four and vocational studies, since going back into families without finishing studies may lead the majority to drop out of school. Moreover, they viewed that reintegrating graduate orphans will help them to be independent after the institutional life rather than being reintegrated without graduating from their studies. To emphasise this, one of the teachers in excerpt 11 suggested that:

Excerpt 11

“A child should be reunited with his family after completing basic education, that is, form four, because if he is removed from the home before completing his studies, he can drop out of school on the way if the family he was adopted from will not have time to follow up with him academically” (A male Teacher aged 31 from school C).

Similarly, another teacher in excerpt 12 suggested that:

Excerpt 12

“It is better for a child to be raised in orphanages until he completes his studies and is able to be independent on his own than to be returned home still needing educational support such as fees and school supplies. For a child who was living in a home while studying, once he is returned to the family, it may be difficult to provide educational support because the priority for most stakeholders is to help children who are in a home” (A teacher aged 40 from School A).

The findings in excerpts 11 and 12 indicate that living in orphanages for orphaned students was viewed as a practical solution for enabling orphans to fulfil their academic dreams in the absence of their biological parents. They suggested that orphans should continue living in the orphanages. In contrast, they should continue their studies because in orphanages different people emerge to support them with essential educational materials; if they reintegrate these orphans without graduating from their studies, they might drop out of their studies.

5.3.2 Reviewing Laws and Guidelines

Teachers suggested that the responsible governmental authorities should review and regulate laws and guidelines that guide the reintegration of institutionalised orphans, since at the age of eighteen years orphans are still young and find it difficult to establish their independent life. Meanwhile, they viewed that, at eighteen years, these children are at different levels of studies in which the process of reintegration is likely to affect their academic progress. In this regard, they requested to extend the period of orphans to stay in the orphanage to 21 years. To emphasise this, one teacher in excerpt 13 suggested:

Excerpt 13

The government should review the child law that requires a child to leave the orphanage when he reaches the age of eighteen to help him complete his studies while still living in the home. The age of a child staying in the home should be increased to 21 years; he will have been able to recognise himself and start being independent. At 18 years old, that orphan is still young, and the ability to recognise himself and make decisions for himself is still very low (A male teacher aged 35 from school B).

Another teacher in excerpt 14 suggested:

Excerpt 14

"Policies and laws regarding the reunification of orphans and their families should be reviewed and revised so that society understands the reasons for encouraging a child to be reunified with his or her family. Similarly, the age at which a child is reunified with a family should be reviewed, and the child should be reunified with a family after completing primary or college education" (A male teacher aged 31 from school A).

The findings in excerpts 13 and 14 indicate that the age set by the government for the child to be reintegrated into families was a challenge to the majority of orphans who were proceeding with their studies because the proposed age was that the majority of orphans were in secondary and vocational studies. Therefore, continuing to have such laws and guidelines jeopardised the academic progress of these children, as they were forced to join their studies without completing them. In this regard, teachers believed that regulating existing laws and guidelines is a better way of enabling orphans to acquire basic education while living in the orphanages.

5.3.3 Cooperation to Raise Children in Orphanages

Findings revealed that teachers suggested that in order to facilitate children's reintegration, caregivers in orphanages and relatives in families should cooperate in raising these children. They viewed that the cooperation between the two parties will enable the child to be familiar with family members at the time of staying in the orphanage, which might be easier for him to join the family after attaining the legal age for reintegration. To cement this information, one teacher in excerpt 15 said:

Excerpt 15

"The family and the home should cooperate in raising and supporting the child while he/she is continuing his/her studies; the issue of returning him/her to the family cannot help him/her academically" (A female Teacher aged 39 from school B).

The findings in excerpt 15 indicate that cooperation between family members and orphanage management is the solution for the child to be reintegrated into families because such cooperation can reduce obstacles that could emerge at the time of reintegration. In this regard, they suggested a mutual relationship between these two parts for smooth adjustment of orphans into their families of origin.

In Summary, findings revealed that teachers perceived it as beneficial for orphaned students to reintegrate into families for bonding purposes, understanding their culture, freedom of expression and securing basic rights of property inheritance. Conversely, they perceived that it is not okay to reintegrate orphaned students into their families because some orphans do not have families, maltreatment and abuse in families, increasing the distance from home to school and financial difficulties facing families. In this regard, they suggested that orphans be reintegrated after studies, cooperation between families and orphanages in caring for orphans and laws governing orphanages to be regulated to facilitate smooth movement of children from orphanages into their families and communities of origin. Figure 1.1 summarises information.

6.0 Discussion

The study helps to understand teachers' perceptions of reintegrating orphan students into their families in the Tanzanian context. Following existing policies, laws, programmes and reintegration guidelines findings indicate that some teachers perceived positively reintegrating institutionalised orphaned students into their families as a way of enabling majority of children learn their cultural values like language, norms and taboos as The Faith to Action Initiative (2016) viewed that in families, a child learns and participates in cultural traditions, shared history, and social skills that help them interact effectively with others. They perceived that if orphans continued living in the orphanages without interacting with their family environment, their cultural values are likely to be corrupted, as Faith to Action Initiative, (2022) suggested that children's interactions with family members in their homes and communities primarily help them build the language, customs, and abilities they will need as adults, as well as absorb cultural patterns and moral values.

Subsequently, teachers perceived that orphans living continually in orphanages are likely to lose bonds and connections with their blood relatives, who have a strong value in maintaining bonds and connections with family members. Therefore, making orphans live in families helps orphans know siblings like brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, and grandparents. The findings aligned with the study done by Faith to Action Initiative (2022) that maintained that children raised in families receive the kind of love, care, and attention that is necessary for their well-being. In a similar vein, the Faith to Action Initiative (2016) presented that the family environment provides love, connections, and a sense of belonging to a community of people. Therefore, in order to create a strong bond within the family, orphans should be reintegrated into their families and communities of origin, as it was viewed as the most significant source of emotional support, love, attention, and moral guidance in a child's life is their family.

Conversely, findings indicate that teachers perceived negatively reintegrating orphaned students into families due to economic hardship facing many families. They also perceived that, when reintegrating orphans into their families, they are likely to miss daily basic needs such as food, shelter and accommodation due to the absence of breadwinners in families, as Rosenthal (2017) presented that orphans are placed in orphanages due to a lack of protection and support for families who live in extreme poverty and the lack of assistance in families. Moreover, Faith to Action Initiative (2016) presented that poverty is the primary reason for these children to live in these institutions because the majority of care providers in families fail to meet their basic needs like food, shelter, and educational materials. However, the findings contradict the study of Christopher & Mosha (2021) in Tanzanian orphanages, who found that orphans lacked physical and psychological needs due to a shortage of finances and psychological personnel. Additionally, Vedasto et al. (2023) presented that in the current context, orphanages are not a better place for orphans to live since they have more risks than a family's environment. In this regard, the United Nations General Assembly of 2019 emphasised that poverty should not be the reason for excluding children who are parentless from their birth environment; guardians and other primary caregivers should take the responsibility of providing support to these children in the absence of their parents for the child's benefit (UN, 2019).

Regarding measures for improvement, findings indicate that orphans should be reintegrated after graduating from studies, since once they are reintegrated while progressing with their studies, they are likely to drop out of school. They believed that orphans continued living in orphanages; they are likely to be supported with educational resources like fees, stationaries and school uniforms without any problems. The study findings aligned with the study conducted by Januario et al. (2016) in Zambia, who found that most vulnerable children were placed in Catholic-affiliated residential care because many families were not able to afford essential resources like educational costs. Likewise, the Faith to Action Initiative (2016) presented that orphaned children were placed to live in institutions because the majority of care providers fail to provide educational materials. However, findings contradict the study conducted by Vedasto et al. (2023), who found that in orphanages, orphaned children lacked necessities including educational resources. In this regard, glorifying orphanages as a better solution for accessing educational resources does not work in the current global context of an inclusive society, despite scholars having two wings concerning reintegrating these orphans into families. Therefore, stakeholders

should struggle to strengthen family-based care systems for the safety and benefit of these orphans, as UNICEF Kenya (2024) proposed that the long-term advantages of investing in a protective family and community setting include guaranteeing access to high-quality education, health care, and social protection support to help children realise their full potential and ensure that these children are happy and that their needs are being satisfied.

7.0 Implication of the Study

The study offers important new information about how Tanzanian urban secondary school teachers perceive the reintegration of institutionalised orphans into their families, considering that teachers primarily engage with students on a regular basis and track their intellectual, social, and emotional growth. In this sense, the findings of the study may be used by psychologists, child protection officers, teachers and other stakeholders in the field of children to regulate laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to the reintegration of children.

8.0 Limitations of the Study

The study's main drawbacks were that it only examined how teachers perceived reintegrating orphan students into families. However, the views of other important stakeholders who may offer a more comprehensive picture of the reintegration processes were not recorded, including caregivers, social welfare officers, family members, and orphanage managers. The study's conclusions were then limited to Tanzania's urban secondary schools. Because family structures, socio-economic circumstances, and access to social support services may differ greatly in rural secondary schools, difficulty generalising the study findings.

9.0 Conclusion

The results of this study contribute to our understanding of Tanzanian teachers' perspectives on reintegrating institutionalised orphan students into their families, especially in urban secondary schools, given that teachers are essential in identifying students' adjustment needs, offering psychosocial support, and working with families to support reintegration processes. Based on the roles performed, the results show that teachers thought family-based care was better than orphanage care because it allowed for bonding, cultural understanding, freedom of speech, and the protection of fundamental property inheritance rights. In the meantime, some teachers believed that it was unacceptable to reintegrate orphaned students into their families because some orphans do not have families, abuse and maltreatment in families, the distance between home and school is greater, and many families are struggling financially. They recommended that orphans be reintegrated after completing their education, that families and orphanages work together to care for orphans, and that laws governing orphanages be changed to permit orphans to reintegrate into families after completing their education.

Declarations

Authors' Contributions

All Authors were actively involved in the preparation, writing and submitting the manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this article

Funding

The authors declare no financial interests in any material discussed in this article.

Ethical Approval

The authors followed the research clearance procedures and secured a research permit from administrative authorities. Moreover, confidentiality, privacy, and beneficence for the researcher were undertaken positively.

Consent to participate

Participants were given verbal consent to participate in the study

Availability of data and materials

Data and materials included refer to this article

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Consent for publication

The authors have accepted the article to be published in this journal

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Figures

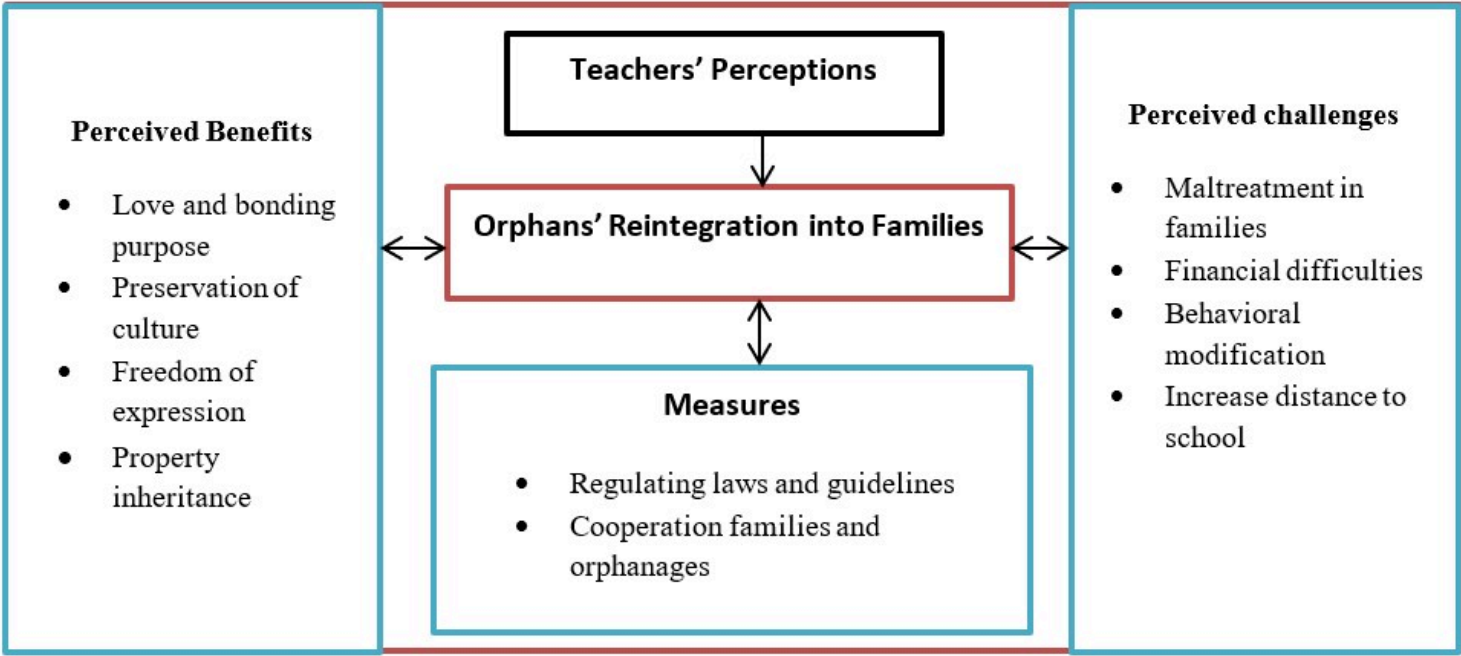


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework