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Reintegration Practice of Sexually Exploited Children in Zimbabwe: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract: This qualitative study provides valuable insights into the reintegration practices of sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. Phenomenology was used as the research approach to capture the lived experiences of participants from childcare institutions and sexually exploited children. The study was conducted in four research sites in Harare, Kadoma, and Mutare, and data were collected from 58 participants through interviews and focus group discussions. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants, and thematic data analysis procedures were employed to analyse the data. The study found that sexual exploitation was a prevalent issue in Zimbabwe, and victims of exploitation faced various challenges such as stigma, inadequate support, feelings of isolation, shame, fear, and other psychosocial problems. While Zimbabwe had several policies and guidelines related to the protection of children and rehabilitation and reintegration services, these policies were not comprehensive enough to standardise the services offered by rehabilitation centres. There was a lack of a specific policy to guide reintegration practices in Zimbabwe. The study concluded that there was a need to strengthen the reintegration framework in Zimbabwe by adopting an all-stakeholder approach to enhance the success of the reintegration practice. This would involve fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders involved in the reintegration process, increasing funding for reintegration services, and developing comprehensive policies and guidelines that address the specific needs and circumstances of sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. Such measures would go a long way in supporting the successful recovery and reintegration of sexually exploited children into their families and communities.

Keywords: Sexual Exploitation, Sexually Exploited Children, Reintegration, Reintegration Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Child sexual exploitation is not just a criminal offence but also a taboo in many parts of the world. While this phenomenon remains a stigmatising topic, the global consensus is that sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a gross violation of their rights and a grave health problem with significant consequences to their developmental trajectories. The prevalence of child sexual abuse and exploitation is difficult to ascertain primarily because the rates are particularly unclear, misrepresented, downplayed or simply ignored. Whereas addressing the problem of child sexual exploitation requires comprehensive and multifaceted approaches, traditional methods used to assist sexually exploited children focused on prosecution of perpetrators and protection from offenders among other preventive measures (Jordans *et al.*, 2012; & Ezilo 2014). Nevertheless, protection and preventive measures have not abated the problem as evidenced by the high prevalence rate of sexually exploited children in all parts of the globe. It can be argued that the inadequacy of protection and prevention measures against child exploitation is dented by the varied realities of the contexts in which sexual exploitation manifest themselves. Children are sexually exploited everywhere, in homes, neighborhoods and schools. The problem of sexual exploitation also gets accentuated within the

context of peers who also account for a significant portion of the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation against other children. What has proved apparent over time is that child sexual exploitation is a resilient problem that needs additional measures to strengthen and augment the existing protection and preventive measures. Significant investments in transformative methods such as rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration of victims could be the panacea to alleviate the painful experiences suffered by victims of child sexual exploitation.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) is the underpinning international legal framework for the protection of children around the world. This historic framework was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 and came into force by September 1990 (Fass, 2011; & Wadlow, 2022). The UNCRC is a by-product of the Convention on Human Rights which emanated from the desire to address the abusive realities of the 20th century wars and the ensuing commitments undertaken by world leaders to improve the wellbeing of humanity at large and the lives of children in particular. Under the realm of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN

proclaimed that children are entitled to special care and should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that they grow up to assume responsibilities within their communities and nations. The UNCRC comprises 54 Articles which speaks to the various rights bestowed to children. The 54 rights can be grouped into three general categories namely provision, protection and participation, also referred simply as three “3 Ps”. These three “Ps” can be used to describe a variety of children's rights that are covered under the UNCRC.

What is prominent in the UNCRC is the declaration that every child regardless of his or her circumstances, has the right to a variety of services including the right to be shielded from sexual abuse and exploitation. In its preamble, the UNCRC categorically states that “the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding” (UNICEF, 2020). Articles 34, 36 and 39 of the UNCRC specifically relate to this research study. Article 34 obligates each country to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. It also compels countries to take appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices and exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials (Wadlow, 2022). Article 36 states that “State Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.” The provision of Article 36 relates to this study in many ways. For example, the protection cited in Article 36 entails the application of all the 54 Children's Rights as embodied in the three ‘Ps’ which are; provision, protection and participation. On the other hand, Article 39 of the UNCRC states that;

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

This Article is at the core of this study. First, it recognises that by its nature, sexual exploitation of children damages their physical as well as their psychological wellbeing. Hence, the importance of taking steps to ensure recovery of the concerned victims. Second, Article 39 clearly outlines what must be done when dealing with child victims of abuse and sexual exploitation. In simple terms, this Article requires that all necessary steps be taken to aid in the physical and mental healing of the victim (UNICEF, 2022). Beyond healing, Article 39 places importance on the reintegration of

children who have experienced abuse and sexual exploitation.

The protection which is explicitly expressed in Articles 34, 36 and 39 constitute all the measures that must be taken by State Parties to shield children from being abused and exploited. On the surface, the provisions of these Articles look solid. However, sexual exploitation of children remains an enduring problem without any signs of subsiding. This problem is exacerbated by the scarce literature focusing on the reintegration services available to victims of child sexual exploitation. Evidence from studies focusing on the recovery and reintegration practice of children in sexual exploitation between the period 2000-2020 reveal gaps in literature in this area (Berelowitz, 2015; Devine, 2009; Macy & Johns, 2010; Surtees, 2013; & Cody, 2017). There is low awareness and a limited understanding of children's experiences of reintegration from the sexual exploitation problem, and what should be done to respond to it by professionals working with children who have been sexually exploited. This study contributes knowledge to bridge the gap in literature which exists in the reintegration practice and complements ILO's campaign against child sexual exploitation and contributes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conduct of this study was built on the ideas of the Bio-ecological Systems Theory (BEST) by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the psychosocial theory (PDT) by Erik Erikson (1964). The adoption of these two in this study helped in the development of novel insights into the reintegration practice of sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. The BEST was adopted as the key guiding theory while the PT complemented the key theory. The fundamental relevance of the BEST in the conduct of this study was that it explicates the importance of systems which cut across all aspects of human existence. This particular theory elucidates how bioecological systems influence human development over an individual's lifespan (Tudge *et al.*, 2022). As explained by Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006), the BEST comprises five nested ecological subsystem which they named the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems. Bronfenbrenner argued that throughout their development, children interact with each of the nested subsystems and they influence and are influenced by such interactions. This study analysed the five bioecological subsystems as elaborated by Bronfenbrenner. The analysis of these subsystems and their influence towards the outcomes of rehabilitation of sexually exploited children as well as their subsequent impact on the reintegration process.

On the other hand, Erikson's PDT comprises eight (8) stages of human development from birth to death. However, this study confined itself to the first five stages of this theory which Erikson named as trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs shame and doubt, initiative vs

guilt, industry vs inferiority and identity vs role confusion. Through these psychosocial stages, Erikson elaborated how children may experience crises at certain stages of their development. According to Erikson (1968), positive attributes are gained when a child overcome challenges at each stage. On the other hand, negative consequences may be experienced when a child fails to overcome certain stage specific challenges. When stage crises are unresolved, they may become a source of stress and malfunctioning in subsequent stages or a person's later life (Berk, 2004; Erikson, 1968; & Hoare, 2002). In this study, the PDT was used to illuminate how different childcare interventions promote or hinder the successful implementation of reintegration of children who have suffered sexual exploitation. Thus, understanding Erickson's psychosocial stages is important in childcare practices. The theory helped authors of this study to observe how institutional and guardian care, and their influence on the reintegration process. The researchers managed to determine whether the reintegration programs had mechanisms in place to assist children to adapt to life after their sexual exploitation experiences.

These two theories enabled the researchers to deepen their understanding of the complex issues around the reintegration practice from the lived experiences of the participants some of whom were victims of sexual exploitation while others were working with children who had suffered sexual exploitation. The ideas from the chosen guiding theories illuminated the gray areas around the studied phenomenon and helped the researchers in reaching study conclusions on the reintegration practice in Zimbabwe and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The reintegration of sexually exploited children has attracted increased focus by international organisations, child protection agencies and independent researchers in recent years. Despite the amplified attention, rigorous evaluations of these endeavors are rare and it is not always clear what lessons are being taught (Jordans *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, Interagency Group's guidelines on children's reintegration provides a comprehensive description of what constitutes the reintegration practice. According to their guidelines, reintegration is the process by which a child who is separated from their primary caregivers, transition back to his or her family and community (usually of origin), in order to receive protection and care and to find a sense of belonging and purpose in all spheres of life" (IGCR, 2016:1). Contemporary thinking is that reintegration is a multidimensional process that enable a return by the child, to the extent possible, to the life they were accustomed to before they suffered sexual exploitation (Bah *et al.*, 2022; & Villamartin, 2022). Reimer *et al.* (2007) described reintegration as a three-stage process involving a phase of pre-reintegration, reintegration and post-reintegration. These periods of time cover the initial steps taken in the run-up to either reunification with the

family. This is followed by the reunification and then reintegration, a process which continues right up to follow-up visits once the child has left the care institution. In agreement, Anthony *et al.* (2010) emphasised that reintegration is not a stand-alone programme or initiative delivered by one organisation. Rather, it is a complex process which involves multiple stakeholders and bodies. Despite the consensus on the importance of the reintegration process, Mbakogu & Odiyi (2021) observed that not every child affected by sexual exploitation eventually returns to their family or community. Some may move to an environment or situation where the child has the same opportunities as other children who are not victims (Santhya *et al.*, 2022; & McAlinden, 2022).

Extant literature is awash with numerous factors that contribute to the separation of children from their families. Traditionally, children who were separated from their families were cared for in institutions, centres and orphanages. In contemporary times, there is increasing acknowledgement that the best place for a child to grow up is within a family environment. This acknowledgment provides the rationale for the reunification of separated children with their families by the majority of childcare agencies. Where reintegration with family is not possible, childcare institutions strive to place children into alternative environments that are family-based. This reintegration endeavour exhibit the indispensable value of supporting exploited children as a way to enhance their recovery from the negative experiences resulting from sexual exploitation. The interagency group's guidelines on children exiting exploitation expounds the recovery and reintegration process as one which can be practiced well in family-based care. Scholars (Deininger, 2003; Green, 2004; Mutambara, 2015; & Mutangadura, 2003) concur that family-based care transcends beyond the care given to children by their biological parents to comprise care given by social workers such as the support given to children in care institutions. Browne *et al.* (2006); & Ross (2011) perceived that family-based care includes kinship care, where children get support and monitoring services while staying with members of the extended family.

Children in sexual exploitation, due to their vulnerability have distinct and complex physical and psychological recovery needs which need special attention in order for them to be fully reintegrated. Literature (Debnath & Wadia, 2021; & Mbakogu & Odiyi, 2021) shows that recovery from sexual abuse and exploitation is broader than mere physical and emotional well-being. Recovery includes acceptance and integration into the family and community after initial separation, without a feeling of stigma or shame by both the concerned victim, their family or community. Thus, robust and child-centered interventions are required if the reintegration process is to succeed. According to Boothby (2012), whereas the reintegration practice

appears to be drifting from institutionalisation practice, placement of child victims of sexual exploitation in residential care facilities still dominates the practice of caring for affected children. This study acknowledged that while institutionalisation remains an effective intervention, it must be used a stop-gap measure for immediate rescue while the reintegration process is initiated as part of the long-term intervention measure.

The preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that growing in a family environment is the best in terms of the development of a child (United Nations, 1989). It states that;

.... the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

It is apparent that the centrality of the family as the best setting in which to raise a child is acknowledged at the global level. Article 9 specifies that children should not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interest. For those who are separated from their families due to circumstances beyond their choice, it is in their best interest to be reunified with their family members. In cases where the child has no family, is unwilling to be reunited with family, or where the family is not deemed able to care for the child, the child may be integrated into extended family or into an adopted family or alternative childcare institution (Delap *et al.*, 2016; & Bah, 2021)).

The UNCRC does not have a monopoly over the promotion of the rights of children. However, this foundational and legally binding framework enjoys strong backing from various other international, continental and national policy frameworks that are designed to shield children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) recognised the problem of sexually exploited children (SEC) as a global issue that affected 1.8 million children engaged in sex work globally as early as 2002 (ILO, 2015). Through its advocacy activities, the international community, child rights advocates, policy makers and implementers now view child sexual exploitation as a top priority and pressing issue. As a result, there have been international agreements, laws, and the creation of conventions and protocols that aim to stop the continuous exploitation of minors by holding offenders accountable while protecting the victims. Sadly, the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation of children continues implying that the problem will not end in the foreseeable future. What is required is to mount two fronts in the fight against this malaise.

The first front is the ongoing intensification of the implementation and enforcement of existing conventions and legal frameworks aimed at protecting the rights of children. However, evidence has shown that the factors that drive sexual abuse and exploitation of children are complex and that the problem cannot be completely wiped out. This brings the second front into perspective. Thus, the second front should focus on the provision of robust and sound rehabilitation of child victims of sexual exploitation and their effective reintegration. The second front is informed by evidence (ECAPAT, 2008; & Surtees & Brunovskis, 2012) which shows that children still have difficulty getting the correct reintegration services and rehabilitation support as provided by various international and national legal frameworks, all stemming from the UNCRC and ILO. In this regard, a global campaign against CSE launched by ILO broadened the participation of actors from around the world and increased awareness on the problem as a result of its Convention Number 182, on the Worst Forms of Child Labour adopted 1996. The conduct of this study complements ILO's campaign against child sexual exploitation and contributes knowledge to bridge the literature gaps that exists in the reintegration practice.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime against Women and Children (UNTOCAWC) complement ILO's effort against abuse and sexual exploitation of children (Optional Protocol, 2000). Both the UNTOCAWC and ILO supports the UNCRC's noble view that it is the responsibility of every State not only to combat CSE but equally important to support the recovery and reintegration of children who have suffered sexual exploitation and abuse as provided in Article 39 of UNCRC. This study notes the pronged effort being exerted to eradicate CSE at the global, continental, regional and national levels including in Zimbabwe. However, the major argument in this study is that while countries strive to meet the expectations on UNCRC as outlined in Articles 34, 36 and 39 among others (UNICEF, 2022; & UNICEF, 2020), more still need to be done given that sexual abuse of children is frequently overlooked, misunderstood and largely remain unaddressed. This is why in particular, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlights the importance of shielding every child from abuse and exploitation in its Strategic Goal Plan number 3.

Through the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, African states adopted their own instrument to deal with the problem under study due to their unique economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger; and the African cultural heritage. It states that State parties undertake to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and must adopt measures to prevent the inducement, coercion or encouragement of children to engage in any sexual activity, as well as the use of

children in prostitution or other sexual practices. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was established within the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children. Most important for this study is that, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) article 5(2) obliges state parties to protect and promote the survival and development of the child which includes the recovery and the reintegration of children who have experienced neglect, exploitation or abuse. These instruments appear to be strong pillars to support reintegration of sexually exploited children but what seems to be problematic is the implementation of the instruments in most African states.

As a signatory to the UNCRC, Zimbabwe is under international obligation to protect its children in an effort to reduce CSE. Zimbabwe, like the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, has domestic laws in place that forbid child labor. Some of these laws include: (i) section 81(1) (e) of the Zimbabwean Constitution of 2013. This particular piece of law decrees that children should be protected from sexual exploitation. Article 3 (a) of the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2014, criminalises child trafficking, exploitation through child labour and child prostitution. Section 8 (2) of the Children's Act, Chapter 5.06 of 2001, prohibits causation of seduction, abduction or prostitution of a child or young person. However, among many other forms of child labor, CSE is still a problem for children in Zimbabwe. The prevalence of CSE provides rationale for the conduct of this research study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a phenomenological research philosophy. Using this research philosophy, the study focused on a specific aspect of life (Vagle, 2018), the reintegration of sexually exploited children. This philosophy was adopted because it was deemed the most appropriate philosophy for the development of in-depth understanding of not only the numerous challenges encountered by sexually exploited children but also the complexity associated with reintegrating them successfully with their families or primary caregivers. The adopted philosophy also helped this study to develop vital insight into the effort of various stakeholders in their bid to reintegrate sexually exploited children back to their families and society at large. These linkages provided direction and inspiration for conducting given that the goal of phenomenology, according to both historical and modern scholars (Heotis, 2020; Dangal & Joshi, 2020; & Husserl, 1931) is to enable the researcher to give a detailed account of the subject matter, in this case, the reintegration of sexually exploited children back into a family environment. For Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair (2020); Nigar (2020); & Heotis (2020), such thick descriptions should be grounded on the essence of the phenomenon as it was or is experienced by the participants.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. As explained by different scholars (Harding, 2019; Creswell, 2014; & Flick, 2014), the building blocks of qualitative research studies are the views of participants. Leaning on this scholarly view, the study collected data from participants who possessed what Maxwell (2013) describes as 'rich insider knowledge' of the studied phenomenon. A multiple-case study research design, which is embedded in qualitative research approach, was used to select the participating research sites where participants were drawn. Data were collected from key informants and caregivers using in-depth interviews and focus groups. Analysis of data was conducted using NVivo computer program and thematic data analysis procedures.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of reintegration practices for sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe revealed that several initiatives and programs were in place to facilitate their recovery and subsequent reintegration. Notably, safe havens were provided by both the government and non-governmental organisations for children who had been sexually exploited. These safe houses offered not only shelter but also healthcare, education, counseling, and vocational training services. However, the quality of these services varied among the participating institutions, and they were not comprehensive enough to address the complexity and diversity of the challenges faced by sexually exploited children. This study identified significant gaps in both the scope and quality of the available reintegration services provided by the participating institutions. It was evident that further investment was needed to improve the reintegration services, particularly in the areas of education, skills training, empowerment, income-generating projects, and other psychosocial support services.

It was also apparent from the analysis that the existing reintegration services were being carried out in isolation, leaving uncovered gaps. These gaps were leading the majority of children to revert back to sexual exploitation to supplement what was not provided by reintegration providers. In the absence of a reliable source of livelihood, sexually exploited children were bound to remain victims of sexual exploitation. Hence, the need to provide all the support required to prevent them from relapsing into situations that expose them to sexual exploitation. Relatedly, it was apparent from the analysis that significant challenges were undermining the existing reintegration practice in Zimbabwe. Common challenges include stigmatisation, discrimination, rejection by family members and lack of a supportive policy environment. Services addressing these challenges were largely uncoordinated, rendering the reintegration practices ineffective. The need for greater coordination and collaboration between stakeholders involved in the reintegration process was apparent. This requires the development of a coordinated approach to

the provision of reintegration services. In this regard, the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach as the guiding philosophy in the reintegration practice, could produce positive reintegration outcomes. This study argued that a multi-stakeholder approach could create linkages to ensure that providers of health care, education, legal services, social security and economic empowerment projects, work together to ensure the success of the reintegration process.

Furthermore, this study found that the Zimbabwean reintegration framework for sexually exploited children was disintegrated, and lacking dedicated policies to guide the reintegration practice. To exacerbate this problem, the policies that were infused within the broader child protection laws were half-heartedly implemented and supervised. The policies were scattered in different Acts and were administered by different Ministries and Government departments. The institutions that provided rehabilitation and reintegration services in Zimbabwe, were not uniformly supervised, rendering them varied, depending on the priorities of each particular institutions. In some cases, the services were not informed by the needs of the affected children or basic principles of modern reintegration practices. Lack of a comprehensive policy framework to standardise the reintegration services, resulted in most of the participating institutions offering fragmented services that did not cater for the unique needs of sexually exploited children. Despite the availability of services such as counselling, education, vocational training, and safe havens for victims of sexual exploitation, lack of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders in the reintegration process rendered most of the services inappropriate. The study found that the services were offered on an ad hoc basis, and many sexually exploited children were not accessing the reintegration services as a complete package.

There were no dedicated reintegration policies to guide the reintegration practice for sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. This problem was making it difficult for reintegration service providers to provide comprehensive and individualised support to the children. Additionally, the lack of coordination among stakeholders involved in the reintegration process was a reflection of some missing links that were inherent in the existing policy framework. This was rendering the existing policies ineffective and pointed to the need by policymakers to take urgent action to address these issues in order to enhance the success of the reintegration process. Given this policy inadequacy, there was need to develop and implement comprehensive policies and guidelines that address the different aspects of reintegration practice, cannot be over emphasised. Specific provisions should address critical areas such as the provision of education and skills training, psychosocial support services and family mediation services. Such policies should take into account the specific needs and circumstances of sexually exploited

children in Zimbabwe and should guide the provision of comprehensive and individualised reintegration support.

One of the key findings of this study was that the reintegration process was intricate. The experiences of sexually exploited children were diverse. This diversity was influenced by an array of factors such as individual circumstances, social background and cultural factors concerning each affected child. However, the study noted that despite their diverse experiences and perceptions of the reintegration process, the reintegration process itself presented many difficulties and challenges. Children who were interfacing with the process exhibited feelings of isolation, stigma, shame, anxiety and fear among a range of other psychosocial glitches. The majority of these challenges pointed to the deficiencies inherent in the reintegration practice itself. Based on these observations, it was important for professionals working with sexually exploited children to identify, understand and address the specific needs and challenges they faced, and to provide comprehensive and coordinated services that can help the children to successfully navigate the reintegration process. In order to measure up to this task, rehabilitation and reintegration should be multidimensional and comprehensive, and must be child-centered.

The study found that the reintegration programs offered by the participating institutions were not customized to meet the needs and challenges faced by sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. Most of the children who were institutionalized due to sexual exploitation suffered from post-traumatic disorders because the services provided were limited and inadequate for addressing such issues. To tackle this problem, the study recommended that institutions should provide specialized services such as psychosocial therapy and other mental health care services to address the mental health needs of sexually exploited children.

Upon analyzing the data, it was found that the reintegration services provided by participating institutions primarily focused on the behavioral changes exhibited by the children in response to the services provided. However, this narrow focus failed to consider the risk of post-reintegration exposure to sexual exploitation. As a result, the study concluded that it was crucial to address the root causes of sexual exploitation, such as poverty and gender inequality, by providing meaningful support and resources to help reintegrated children become self-reliant and avoid reverting back to transactional sex.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy-Related Recommendations

It is recommended that;

- The Government of Zimbabwe, in collaboration with relevant ministries and stakeholders, should develop and implement comprehensive policies and guidelines to guide reintegration

practices for sexually exploited children. These policies should address various aspects of reintegration, including education and skills training, counseling, and family mediation, while considering the unique needs and circumstances of sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe.

- The Government of Zimbabwe in collaboration with its partners providing reintegration services, should increase funding for reintegration services. The study found that there are significant gaps in terms of both the scope and quality of reintegration services available to sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe. Therefore, policymakers should increase funding for reintegration services to support the successful reintegration of sexually exploited children into their families and communities. This will require the allocation of sufficient resources to support the provision of education and skills training, psychosocial support services and family mediation services.
- Government of Zimbabwe should foster collaboration and coordination among reintegration stakeholders through the relevant Ministries and Departments. The study found that uncoordinated reintegration practices render policies ineffective. Therefore, government should foster collaboration and coordination among stakeholders involved in the reintegration process, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations. This will require the development of a coordinated approach to reintegration that involves all relevant stakeholders and takes into account the specific needs and circumstances of sexually exploited children in Zimbabwe.

Practice-Related Recommendations

It is recommended that;

- Reintegration service providers should provide comprehensive and individualised services that addresses the physical, emotional and social needs of sexually exploited children. This support should include education and skills training, counseling and family mediation. It should also be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of each child.
- Reintegration service providers should develop a holistic and coordinated approach to the reintegration practice which involves all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations and community-based organizations. This approach should take into account the specific needs and circumstances of sexually exploited children and should be guided by comprehensive policies and guidelines.

Recommendation for Areas of Future Research

It is recommended that future research could explore the long-term outcomes of reintegration, such as the impact of reintegration on the well-being, education, and employment outcomes of sexually exploited children.

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