

**SOCIAL WORKERS' CHALLENGES IN REINTEGRATING CHILDREN FROM  
RESIDENTIAL CARE INTO FAMILIES : A CASE OF WAKISO DISTRICT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is a lack of sufficient documented information on social worker perspectives in Uganda. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to establish the challenges social workers face in the reintegration of residential children into families with a case of Wakiso district. To discover how reintegration service provision can be improved from the social workers perspective, the researcher conducted a qualitative study. In the study, 24 social workers were interviewed from 20 residential homes in Wakiso District. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings suggest that reintegration in Uganda occurs in five stages. Throughout these stages, social workers experience structural, organizational, and personal challenges that result in delay or failure to reintegrate residential children into families. The study recommends building the capacity of parents to assume responsibility, children's resilience, social workers and other stakeholders' competence and unity for the betterment of service provision.

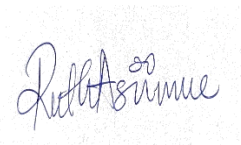
## DECLARATION

I, Asiimwe Ruth hereby declare that this is my original work, is not plagiarised and has not been submitted to any other institution for any award.

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth Asiimwe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "oo" above the "i" in "Asiimwe".

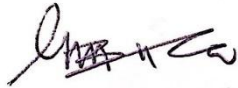
## APPROVAL

This dissertation is entitled, "Social Workers Challenges in Reintegrating Children from Residential Care into Families. A Case Study of Wakiso District. This dissertation has been written under my supervision and has been submitted to the School of Social Sciences: Department of Research and Postgraduate Studies of Uganda Christian University with my approval as the candidate's supervisor.

Name: KASULE KIBIRIGE

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kasule Kibirige', written over a faint circular stamp.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to social workers in childcare institutions for the improvement of social work practice.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Kasule Kibirige for his unwavering support, patience, and guidance during writing this dissertation.

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May you all be blessed abundantly by the Lord.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBO Community-Based Organization

CC1 Childcare Institutions

CDO Community Development Officer

MGLSD Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

RCF's Residential Child Facilities

RDC Rescue Dada Centre

SW Social Work

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This study investigated social workers' challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso district. This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, the scope of the study, the significance, justification, and the conceptual and theoretical framework.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

In Uganda, the Children's Act (2016) mandates Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to implement alternative care measures to ensure children grow up in a protective environment without risk of 'exploitation, danger, deprivatation and insecurity. In the implementation of these alternative care measures, CCI's prioritize the return and reintegration of children with their families unless doing do does not act in the best interests of the child. There are various forms of alternative care utilized by the government, social workers and other childcare practitioners; foster care, residential care, supervised independent living, adoption care, kinship care and family reintegration with 'residential care being the most widely used'. (Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018).

Childcare Institutions (CCIs) faced a dilemma in the implementation of alternative care from March 2020 to January 2022. The strict measures implemented to curb and control the spread of COVID 19 raised critical issues in the well-being of children leading to a "65% increase in physical and sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, child abandonment, and neglect" (The AfriChild center of excellence for the study of the

African Child, 2021). Children in CCIs who had no known families, experienced a decrease in the provision of essential services due to the lack of sufficient donor funding and restrictions of social worker movements which in turn hindered reunification and reintegration from occurring (Lokong, 2022). This greatly frustrated and delayed social workers' deinstitutionalization of residential children.

In their practice, social workers are guided by the National Child Policy (2020) that highlights four core children's rights: Survival, Development, Protection, and Participation. These four cardinal rights provide priority areas that function as a guide for CCIs. The government therefore directs all individuals, groups, and communities when working with children to; 'prevent child mortality and promote children's health, to promote nurturing, care, stimulation, and holistic development and learning for all children, to prevent, respond and protect children from all forms of violence, neglect, and exploitation (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, 1990). The government further directs all stakeholders to promote the rights of all children to be heard and express their opinions in all matters that affect their lives according to their capacities and lastly, to strengthen systems for planning programming and delivery of quality childcare and protection services.

To ensure universal survival, development, protection, and participation rights of children are respected, the government of Uganda holds individuals, groups, and communities accountable. Partners like CCIs and Social work professionals are responsible for implementing child protection measures. Under Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC), social workers prevent and respond to all forms of violence that act against the best interest of a child (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, 1990). This concept of "best interests of the child"

is not only the responsibility of professionals but the common responsibility men and women should have in the development of children (United Nations Women, 1990)

In doing so, the government expects families, households, and all alternative care institutions where social workers are stationed to: “promote quality parenting through the fulfilment of parental responsibilities, to impart and educate children on life skills, to educate children on their role in promoting harmony in the family, to guide and control children with access to computers with parental guidance and to trace and resettle children in their communities” (GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA, 2020)

According to the National Child Policy of Uganda, a social worker’s role is “centred on child welfare and protection”. The role of social workers is to assess potential risks to children in care and partner with local authorities and communities to safeguard and support children. In addition, social workers actively participate in family tracing, life skills training, reunification, and reintegration, and background investigation of families to ensure child welfare. Lastly, to offer support to the government by acting as mediators, advocates, and educators to communities in promoting adherence to government regulations and laws on the rights of children” (GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA, 2020).

In comparison, social workers in Malawi assist children to deal with trauma while preparing them for possible reintegration. Childcare Institutions (CCI’s) in Malawi are committed to promote children’s socio-economic rights while striving to uphold the best interest of children in their interventions and programs. These CCIs “adhere to the social work principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and

empowerment” (Kasambara & Lombard, 2018). In Uganda, the government mandates CCIs to implement alternative care measures that provide family-based care which strengthens culture through integration of children in their respective communities.

The family environment is therefore deemed as the best for child development (Riley, 2012). Social workers' provision of reintegration services plays a key role in child protection and welfare. This study investigated social workers' challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Social workers, among other child service professionals, work to implement government policies and regulations. The active participation of social workers in the reunification and reintegration of children remains a priority. However, there is a difficulty in monitoring and evaluating reintegration service provision (Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018). This also means that social workers' effectiveness in deinstitutionalizing children in favour of family-like care cannot be monitored or evaluated regularly. The Ugandan government through, “improving care practices, case management and documentation” over the years has strengthened social workers in Residential Care Facilities (RCF) capacity to provide alternative care services (Walakira et al., 2022)

However, there yet remains an estimation of 40,000-50,000 children dependent on social workers to be successfully reintegrated into families and communities. This gap has resulted in the lack of sufficient knowledge of social workers' skills and techniques in reintegrating residential children into families in Uganda. As well as a lack of information on the challenges social workers experience at each stage of the

reintegration process. The purpose of this study therefore is to establish how to improve reintegration service provision by focusing on social worker perspectives.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to establish the challenges social workers face in the reintegration of residential children into families and how social service provision can be improved. The researcher will conduct an in-depth analysis of the challenges social workers face in the reintegration of children from residential care facilities into families with a focus on Wakiso District.

### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To examine how social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso district.
2. To establish challenges faced by social workers in the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso district.
3. To recommend strategies that can be adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso district.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- 1) How do social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso district?
- 2) What challenges are faced by social workers in reintegrating children from residential care into families in Wakiso district?
- 3) What strategies can social workers adopt to improve the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso district?

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

### **1.6.1 Time scope**

The period under review is 2016 to 2022. The formation of the National Action Plan for Child Wellbeing in Uganda in 2016 led the government of Uganda and CCIs to actively implement alternative care measures by emphasising family preservation. However, it was within this period that alternative care and deinstitutionalization were prioritised by social workers and other childcare professionals. However, there remain 40,000-50,000 children in CCIs today (Data For Impact & USAID, 2021).

### **1.6.2 Geographic scope**

This research will be conducted in Wakiso District. Wakiso District has a population of 2,968,103 people as of 2019(Lwanga, 2020)Wakiso District is the second largest city in Uganda. The district partially encircles Kampala district which makes it suitable for suburban settlement.

Wakiso District, after Kampala, has the largest number of CCIs. The number currently stands at 42 CCIs approved by the government. These CCIs are spread in both urban and rural areas throughout the district. Wakiso district has a total of 68,499 orphans (58,666 children with one parent and 9833 having lost both parents (UBOS, 2020). Due to a lack of sufficient data on the number of children in CCIs per district, it is difficult to ascertain the total number of children in CCIs as well as in alternative care (Milligan, 2016).

## **1.7 Justification**

The deinstitutionalization of children started in 2012 with the introduction of the National Alternative Care Framework in Uganda. Since then, various policies and regulations have been introduced to protect the well-being of children (Walakira et al., 2022). However, even though various scholars have studied the scope of reintegration regarding child welfare, there is little knowledge documenting social worker knowledge, skills, and challenges in reintegration in Uganda.

Social workers have the responsibility of reintegrating children into the community and in families. However, with the availability of policies and regulations that govern alternative care, there remains a challenge to implement and monitor their effectiveness to ensure successful alternative care placement of children (Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018). This study analysed reintegration from the perspective of social workers to ascertain social workers' challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families for the improvement of social service provision.

## **1.8 Significance**

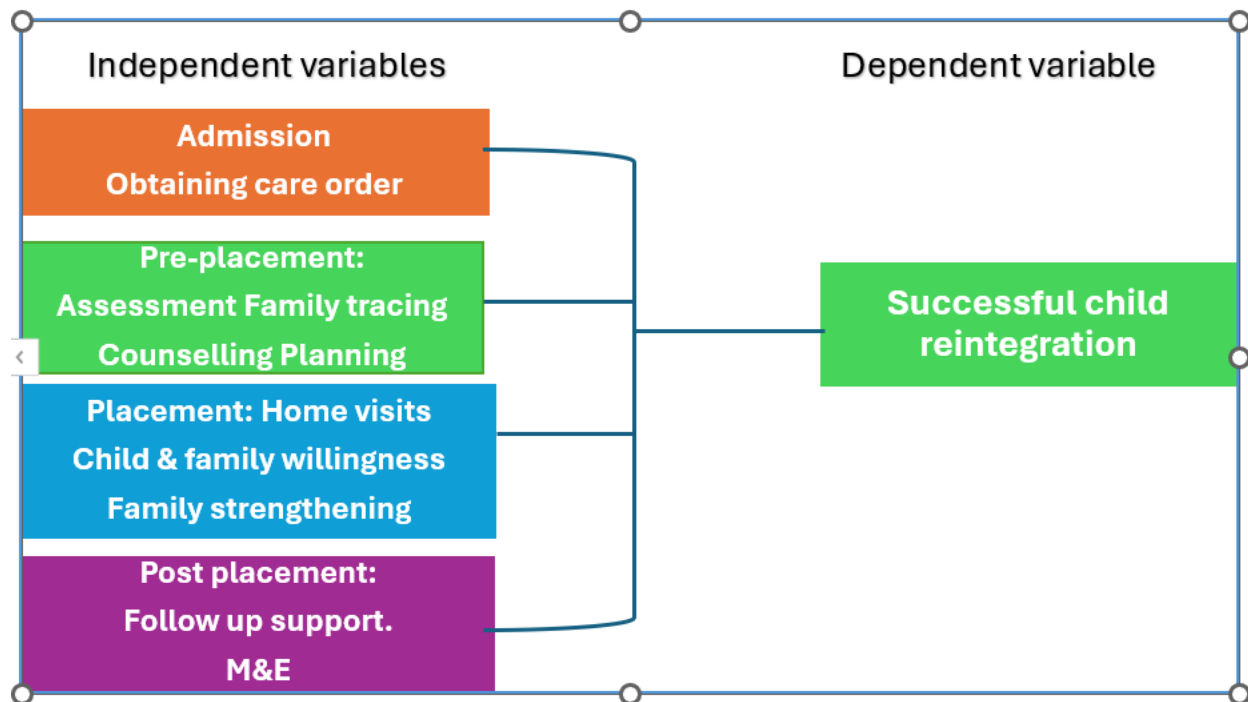
This study analyses social workers' challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families and can be used to document social workers' knowledge and skills utilised in Uganda during the reintegration of children. The indigenized knowledge about social work practice, and solutions to identified problems established in this research will aid social workers in the improvement of social work practice.

This study will also contribute to data documentation on the numbers of children in CCIs in Wakiso District as well as provide information on reintegration practice in Uganda for the improvement of alternative care policies.

This study through the study of social worker experiences will provide a wealth of knowledge that will inform the best practices for evidence-based reintegration interventions in Uganda.

### 1.9: Contextual Framework

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from (Munthali et al., 2019)

This study focused on assessing the effect that four independent variable levels; the process of admission, preplacement, placement, and post-placement have on successful child reintegration by a social worker. The four independent variable levels reflect stages that social workers go through in reintegrating children into families,

each stage has challenges that are faced by the social worker (Biella-Battista et al., 2019).

Firstly, the process of admission is a period from which a child is placed in a CCI and where social workers begin the process of admitting the child into care. This stage involves networking with community partners to identify the reason for admission as well as the social, psychological, and physical well-being of the child (Munthali et al., 2019).

Secondly, the pre-placement stage is where social workers begin to prepare the child and family for reintegration. This stage includes assessment of the family, child, and community, family tracing, counselling, and planning. Social workers in this stage aim to guide families and children to make informed decisions. about what their responsibility is in the interest of the child (UDAYAN care & Martin James Foundation, 2022).

Thirdly, the placement stage is where social workers slowly incorporate the child into the identified family through visits. This is a stage where the family and child's willingness to live together is considered (Christopher & A. Mosha, 2021).

Lastly, the post-placement stage is one where a child is fully integrated into the family and where monitoring and evaluation are done to ensure the child's continued well-being. In this stage, follow-up support is also offered to the family, this can include educational support and economic strengthening. This stage is also the determinant stage. This is because after follow-up support, as well as M& E, has been offered, that

will determine if the environment is the best fit for the child. If not, the child will return to the RCF, and the pre-placement stage will start again.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the Ecological systems theory. Ecological Systems theory is credited to Urie Bronfenbrenner, widely known for his criticism of child development theories that were conducted in laboratories without considering the environment of the child, which he termed as 'ecologically invalid' (Galvani, 2017) Bronfenbrenner therefore looked beyond individual development and considered the external factors that influence on a child's development hence the formation of the ecological systems theory. The Theory therefore states that a child's development is a complex system of relationships that are influenced by the environment. The environment therefore becomes a key aspect of any child's development with their microsystem being the most influential(Paquette & Ryan, 2015).

There are five major interrelated systems whose relationship with each other impacts a child's development; microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Fearnley, 2020). The microsystem comprises the factors that have direct contact with the child, for example, family, peers, and school. These factors can influence the beliefs and behaviour of the child, but the child can influence them as well. The mesosystem is the interactions between the child's microsystems that result in influence on each other for example parent-teacher interactions. The exosystem is the focus of the ecological systems theory and comprises other social structures that influence a child and their microsystems, for example, government agencies, mass media, communities or neighbourhoods, and offices (Fearnley, 2020). The

macrosystems focus on how the cultural aspects (attitudes, beliefs, norms, ideologies) affect a child's development, for example how a Mukiga child's upbringing will influence their perspective on life because of traditional beliefs. The Chronosystem can be understood as the environmental changes that occur over the life course of a child that influence their development for example the loss of a parent, the COVID-19 pandemic, or parental separation or divorce (Galvani, 2017).

According to Savina et al., (2014), this theory considers “multi-social systems where children and families are situated while prioritising the individual and the environment, they are in.” In this regard, it considers how the child's well-being and development are influenced by the environment they are in (Savina et al., 2014). This therefore places the reintegration of children in resident care homes as an essential part of child development. This in turn makes it a priority for social workers and other stakeholders to ensure that children are being reintegrated in environments that stimulate healthy child development. However, this remains a challenge for social workers.

The next chapter will present the Literature Review of this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter highlights and analyses the work of scholars regarding investigating social workers' challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families in Wakiso District. The chapter is divided into three sections: Social workers' reintegration of children, social workers' challenges in the reintegration of children, and Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children. Some of the literature in this study are more than ten years old, this is because they are government, organizational laws, policies, and guidelines.

#### **2.1 Social workers' reintegration of children**

Social workers in Childcare Institutions (CCI's) have contributed greatly to the social, cognitive, and physical development of vulnerable children in their implementation of alternative care policies and regulations. However, there remain negative social, cognitive, and physical consequences children face in institutional care (Milligan, 2016). Young children are placed in Resident Care Facilities (RCF's) under the conditions of: "loss of parental care, risk of losing parental care, and risk of being harmed" (Riley, 2012). Since CCI's provide large-scale care to children, there remains a lack of a one-on-one relationship with a caregiver which is found in families. This large-scale care affects a child's social, behavioural, and cognitive development but also results in attachment disorders due to the lack of a healthy parent-child relationship, the weakening of traditional kinship bonds, and the commercialization of the children (Riley, 2012).

The publishing of the National Actions Plan on Children's Wellbeing in 2016, entered Uganda in the race to better the social service provision of vulnerable children in Uganda. The primary area of focus is child protection through an increase in family-based care (Milligan, 2016). The government of Uganda with a 2040 vision to become a "modern and prosperous country by the middle of the century:" realised that without adequate investment in child development, health, education, and protection, it will not achieve its goals with its young population (The Government of Uganda, 2016). This mandated instruction from the government to continually reduce the number of children residing in CCIs and reintegrate them into family-based care in their respective communities can be understood as 'Deinstitutionalization.

Therefore, the government of Uganda mandated CCIs to implement alternative care measures that provide family-based care that strengthen culture, family, and community through the reintegration of children in their respective communities. This process is known as Reintegration.

According to Delap & Wedge (2015), reintegration is the process of a "separated child making permanent transition back to their family or community of origin in hope to obtain a sense of identity, protection and belonging" (Delap & Wedge, 2016). The scholars argue that reintegration entails; child safety that ensures the environment social workers are taking the child to is secure and healthy for them. Their argument also entails open communication which ensures that both parties; the child and the family, desire reintegration and are willing to communicate effectively with one another hence fostering good relations (Chadambuka & Chikadzi, 2019). Reintegration

also entails compliance with authorities such as the local government officers, probation officers, and other leaders at the district and community level, to ensure that all processes occur within the law. Social workers therefore take charge of ensuring there is a safe transition from institutional care to families and are involved at all stages of the reintegration process (Chadambuka & Chikadzi, 2019).

Similarly, Rescue Dada Centre (2015), a project of the Archdiocese of Nairobi that is dedicated to fulfilling the rights of children on the street, defines reintegration as a process that involves placing a child who has been separated from their parents or guardians. However, rather than placing a child in their family or community of origin, Rescue Dada Center (RDC) argues that a child is placed in a “family-based environment where their rights are fulfilled and where they receive love and care” that will build their capacity (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). RDC provides six steps in which their organisation carries out reintegration namely, ‘Admission of a child in care, assessment, identification of suitable guardian, preparation of child and guardian for reintegration, reintegration and lastly monitoring of placement’ (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). The reintegration process is therefore lengthy and complex. The Reintegration process is complex because each level needs careful attention, planning, and decision-making. Social workers act in the best interest of the child, and this entails engaging the child in decision-making. There is no assurance that the social worker will obtain the best family for the child quickly and this therefore complicates the process.

According to Teixeira (2022) reintegration and reunification involves three stages; preparing the family and child, providing professional support after reunification and follow up. On the other hand, Retrak (2013), provides another six-step process of

reintegration. The process includes “child assessment and preparation, family contact and assessment, placement, follow up and family strengthening, phase out and lastly exit.” This social service agency argues that to be effective, the reintegration process should not be put in a timeframe (Retrack Inspiring Street children, 2013). This means that like RDC, this process is long. Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan (2018) in their research on a generalist service model for street children support this argument by stating that mentorship and follow-up is a challenging process that demands practitioners to be patient. The limited funding and external pressure from governments to reintegrate as soon as possible heavily contrast the slow process needed to impact change within street children. The scholars argue that the process is dependent on a child’s readiness to be reintegrated (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018)

In the Ugandan context, most of the literature does not discuss how reintegration is utilised in the field from the perspective of social workers. The literature available focuses on alternative care for present social problems like child neglect or abandoned children and on how to improve alternative care policies (E. Walakira, 2017). In that regard, this study conducted research on how social workers in Uganda reintegrate children into families.

## **2.2 Social workers' challenges in the reintegration of children**

In order to increase family-based care in Uganda, the government formulated policies and regulations outside the Children's Act and the National Alternative Care Framework namely: the National Child Policy (2020), Case Management Handbook (2016), Standard

Operational Procedures of Family Reintegration (2015), National Parenting Guidelines (2018), all which provide guidelines that ensure that social workers alongside other child care professionals adhere to the government regulations on child protection. However, even with all these policies and regulations, social service response remains slow as reflected in the numbers of children being reintegrated into communities. The numbers reflect a gap and a problem (Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018).

According to Rescue Dada Center (2015), each stage of the reintegration process carries its challenges. At the first stage of case assessment, the challenge identified is that 'reintegration is dependent on a child in care's case file that contains information about the child's history (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). Children come to CCIs at all ages from 0-17 years, some children are too young to remember with no known knowledge. This makes it difficult for social workers to act. In the second stage of identification of a guardian, the challenge is 'reintegration is dependent on caretakers' willingness to accept the child (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). If the individual is unwilling, the agency cannot force them to take on that responsibility and social workers cannot risk the wellbeing of the child by placing them in the home of an unwilling party.

Berckmans et al. (2012) supplements by saying that the relationship between street children and their families is usually strained. Therefore, reintegration in these cases will often cause harm to both parties that although governmental organizations focus on integrating the child back into the family, for the majority of the street children whose family connections are severely strained, family reintegration would be unfavourable or even harmful to them. Anich et al. (2011) and Berckmans et al. (2012) stress the importance of private and public services in work of strengthening the parent-

child relationship and emphasise that “reintegration of street children can only be successful when the child's standard of living is uplifted” (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018)

In addition, this stage is dependent on the living conditions of the guardian. Reunification in Africa is ‘absent due to restricted improvement in family conditions’ (van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020). This refers to a family's economic and social well-being in Africa where poverty is the biggest social problem. Hence, this results in long-term care of a child who at the age of 18 years will have to leave care. The biggest challenge for social workers in this regard is that their work is a race against time. A social worker must reintegrate a child with no known background before they reach an age where they must leave care. Teixeira (2022) highlights the complexity and challenge of preparation of children and family for reintegration and reunification by stating that. Social workers therefore experience challenges in decision making, tight deadlines all which create an “environment of pressure at work” (Teixeira et al., 2022) Research shows that ‘availability of a casefile, receipt of reunification package, and social workers monitoring visits’ influence successful reintegration (Frimpong-Manso et al., 2022).

The third stage of preparation of a child and guardian for reintegration, the stage which is solely dependent on the previous stage cannot be predicted and can therefore be delayed. In the case that the social worker traces a guardian, their ability to provide basic human rights to the child is a huge determinant of being reintegrated (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). Reintegration will then be dependent on the guardian's bio-psycho-

socio-economic well-being. In the fourth stage, reintegration of child and guardian, the challenge is 'the child's adjustment into the environment and the environment's willingness to embrace the child' (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). For example, stigma from neighbours, rejection, and discrimination from family members in the household where the child has been placed. The environment a child grows up in greatly impacts their cognitive and behaviour development hence the child finds in the home can greatly affect their adjustment in the home and can determine successful placement (Savina et al., 2014).

In the fifth stage of monitoring placement, the challenge is that there is a chance that placement will fail if the child's survival rights are not being protected. The social worker is mandated to remove the child from that environment which will force the restart of this process. This study conducted by Rescue Dada Center is based in Nairobi, and even though Uganda and Kenya are all East African Countries, social work practice and culture are different, in that case, the challenges identified by the scholars are relevant but not based on Ugandan society and cannot, therefore, be assumed to be applicable in Ugandan social work practice.

In the scope of alternative care in Uganda, which includes foster care, adoption, reintegration, and reunification, Ddumba-Nyanzi (2018) stated that there is a "lack of guidelines and practice standards" that effectively inform case assessment, planning, documenting, registering, tracing, as well as a lack of sufficient tools. He stresses a three-factor gap in alternative care: the legislative, policy goals, and practice. What this means is that despite all the policies and regulations that Uganda has on alternative care, there remains a gap, and social workers implement policies that most likely do

not provide sufficient and effective guidance and standards that all CCIs can be held accountable to (Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018).

Similarly, Chadambuka & Chikadzi (2020) in the Kenyan context, state that the challenges in reunifying children with their families include the “lack of cooperation and partnership between stakeholders” which includes the government, the practitioners, the children in need of reintegration and the families. The lack of adequate resources to reintegrate children, high caseloads, and lack of sufficient staff.

The common thread in the literature is that all the challenges discussed by the scholars above reflect gaps in the legislative, which is the body responsible for setting laws that do not sufficiently and effectively provide guidelines and standards in alternative care. The literature also reflects a gap in policy goals and implementation. The challenges can be categorised under these three areas. This study established why social workers face challenges in the reintegration of resident children into families to ascertain their relation to the three-factor gap.

### **2.3 Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children.**

Ddumba-Nyanzi (2018), points out that there needs to be development of quality standards in the field of service delivery where social workers are directly affected. This will enable practitioners to practice reintegration and other alternative measures without limitations of knowledge and tools that are essential. The scholar also identifies that there needs to be a focus on case management. In addition, Frimpong-Manso et al., (2022), suggest that “case management as one of the most vital stages of reintegration”, this is since the case files contain information about the children. When

children have no case files, then the reintegration process is frustrated. For that matter, all stakeholders from the legislators to the local government, community leaders, families, CCI, and social workers should be on the same page. Ddumba-Nyanzi echoes that there is a need to “strengthen the capacity of, referral systems, local government and of community-based mechanisms.” The research, however, does not highlight how exactly this can and should be done.

In support of the strategies, Walakira et al., (2017), stresses that there needs to be a “strengthening of child protection systems” where alternative care systems are classified. These systems will serve to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse. Atanga (2023) supports this view by further emphasising the importance of having all “necessary systems and social protection interventions” in place to ensure monitoring and evaluation of all stakeholders (Atanga Patience, 2023). For that matter, the scholar provides components apart from alternative care that need strengthening, and they include “human capacity, funding, legislation, information management, service delivery, and coordination and leadership.” Similarly, knowledge of how this can be attained is not provided, rather the strategies are stated. This research expounds on why and how reintegration can be improved.

#### **2.4 Operational Definitions of Terms and Concepts**

Below are some of the terms that were referred to in this study.

**Alternative Care:** This refers to the other forms of care outside childcare institutions. for example, kinship care, adoption, foster care, and inter-country adoption

**Deinstitutionalization:** This refers to the mandated instruction by the government to return children in CCIs to families and communities.

**Re-integration:** This refers to the transition that children in CCIs make from institutional care to their families or communities or origin where their developmental, protection, and survival rights will be protected.

**Family:** This refers to the primary group in which members are born and socialised. This study will particularly refer to Kinship families that include parents, siblings, grandparents, and other extended relatives.

The next chapter will present the methodology of this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1: Introduction**

This chapter presents the research design, the population of the study, sampling techniques and sample size, methods and instruments of data collection, validity, and reliability tests of instruments of data collected, and methods of data analysis used. This study employed the qualitative method aimed at obtaining in-depth and engrossed data on the experience of the study participants while focusing on their development, conscience, and self-awareness.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study employed qualitative research design is a method that seeks to study individuals, communities, groups, and organisations in their natural setting to understand or give meaning to a phenomenon(Yegidis et al., 2018). This study utilised the qualitative research design because it provides an in-depth understanding of people's behaviour and perceptions. This method aided the researcher in gaining insight into social workers' behaviours, thoughts, and perceptions regarding the challenges they face in reintegrating children from residential care into families. There are five types of qualitative research design: historical, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. This study employed a phenomenological study (Yegidis et al., 2018).

Phenomenological study can be understood as one that focuses on the nature of participants' feelings, knowledge, and human experiences about evidence-based

practice(Mike, 2019). The phenomenological research design enabled the researcher to study the lived experiences of social workers through the utilisation of qualitative methods(Yegidis et al., 2018). Secondly, the study will seek to learn from detailed accounts of social workers who are practicing and investigating social workers' challenges to reintegrate children into resident care. This study therefore will prioritise social workers who are employed by social service agencies approved by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) to conduct alternative care services in Wakiso District.

### **3.3 Area of study**

This study was carried out in Wakiso District. Wakiso District is the area of study since the district is one of the biggest areas with Residential care Facilities (RCF's). This therefore denotes this area has many practitioners practicing reintegration. The area of study of this paper therefore was determined by the location of the Childcare institutions listed in Table 3.1.

### **3.4 Sources of Information**

This research employed primary sources of information. Primary data is the information that is collected with the scholar's research questions in mind (Emanuelson & Egenvall, 2014). The primary data that was utilised in this study was obtained through interviews with the study sample and this enabled the researcher to obtain valid and reliable information that pertains to the research questions.

### 3.5 Population and Sampling Techniques

#### 3.5.1 Population

This study was restricted to practitioners who are employed by social service agencies approved by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development to conduct alternative care services in Wakiso District. There are 142 approved alternative care homes in Uganda (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2018). “There are 42 homes in Wakiso district and 20 alternative care homes that have been approved by the district” (Data For Impact & USAID, 2021).

**Table 3.1: List of approved alternative care homes in Wakiso district**

NO	NAME OF CCI	LOCATION
1	DWELLING PLACES TRANSITIONAL REHABILITATION HOME (Street Children of Kampala)	Buloba, Waksiso
2	AFRICAN HEARTS TRANSITIONAL HOME (for sexually abused girls)	Senge, Wakiso
3	SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE	Entebbe, Wakiso
	SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE	Kakiri, Wakiso
4	TALITHA KOUM (Street Children)	Mende, Wakiso
5	MASULITA CHILDREN'S VILLAGE	Masulita, Wakiso
6	VICTORY CHILDCARE MINISTRY	Wakiso
7	CHERISH UGANDA	Entebbe, Wakiso
8	ANOTHER HOPE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES	Wakiso, Wakiso
9	MERCY CHILDCARE MINISTRIES	Mende, Wakiso

10	RAFIKI AFRICA MINISTRIES	Wakiso
11	ST NOAH'S FAMILY	Gombe, Wakiso
12	VICTORY CHILDCARE	Wakiso
13	KIDS OF AFRICA	Entebbe, Wakiso
14	BWEYA CHILDREN'S HOME	Entebbe, Wakiso
15	KAMPALA CHILDREN'S CENTRE	Kayunga, Wakiso
16	KYASIRA HOME OF HOPE (Abandoned children for care and protection)	Entebbe, Wakiso
17	BBIRA CHILDREN'S VILLAGE (Abandoned children for care and protection)	Buloba, Wakiso
18	MALAYAKA HOUSE (Abandoned children for care and protection)	Entebbe, Wakiso
19	CHRYSTAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE (Abandoned children in need of care and protection)	Lweeza, Wakiso
20	SOZO CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL (Abandoned children for care and protection)	Ssisa, Wakiso

*This list is provided by, (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2019)*

### 3.5.2. Sample Size

Since there is “no consensus for the exact size of a sample”, in qualitative research, the researcher selects a sample of 30 social workers from the 20 homes (Daniella, 2020). However, the researcher utilised information circulation, where there was no new information is obtained during data collection, the researcher stopped.

### **3.5.3. Sampling techniques**

This study employed a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling method enabled the researcher to identify general desirable qualities in the sample. This study employed a category of purposive sampling; a homogeneous sampling, that allowed the researcher to select a sample that shares similar characteristics (Etikan, 2016). These include individuals who have graduated with a bachelor's or master's degree in social work and social administration and individuals who have learned social work skills in practice. They should have practiced social work for at least one year and must be practicing Social Work in a CCI that has been approved by the government of Uganda to provide alternative care services. Purposive sampling technique will be employed. After all, it is cost and time-effective because it can be employed in the face of limited primary data sources that can contribute to the study (Makuu, 2019).

This study also utilised snowball sampling. This method is most effective in the case of difficulty obtaining a sample. When utilised, snowball sampling enables the researcher to obtain a sample as per referral from another sample. This method is cost and time-effective and it enabled the researcher to obtain relevant participants (Yegidis et al., 2018).

### **3.6. Procedure for data collection**

Upon acceptance of the proposal by the Faculty of Social Sciences of Uganda Christian University and approval by the REC committee, the researcher was issued an introductory letter (appendix 2 and 3). The researcher reported the purpose of the research study to the probation office of Wakiso District. Utilizing the list of approved

alternative care organizations, the researcher accessed the organization contacts through their websites seeking permission to collect data. With consent from the residential homes, the researcher conducted the semi-structured interview that was recorded for purposes of data analysis and reliability. However, for organizations that were inaccessible via their company websites, the researcher visited personally to seek consent. However, to some, the researcher was unable to gain access. The researcher also used snowball and purposive sampling techniques to obtain other participants.

### **3.7. Data Collection Instruments**

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews.

#### **3.7.1 Interview**

Semi-structured interviews provide a first-hand account of information in doing so provide reliable information that they aid in the understanding of the feelings, opinions, attitudes, and personal qualities of the sample population. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. This method allows for the full utilisation of the opportunity to interview an individual when it is not possible to get that chance again (Makuu, 2019). The interview guide that was used in this study is attached in Appendix 1.

### **3.8. Quality Control**

According to Mosha (2021), validity exists to measure the extent to which research questions and instruments measure what they intended to measure. The researcher therefore developed the research tool; and the interview guide in three sections that are reflective of the three research objectives where questions are classified per

objective. The researcher also conducted a pre-test of the interview guide on a social worker who works in a Childcare Institution (CCI) to ensure that the set questions are in line with the research questions and measurements (Makuu, 2019).

In the field, the researcher wrote field notes to ensure a comprehensive record of each interview was documented. The field notes then served as raw material throughout data analysis.

### **3.9. Data Processing and Analysis**

The researcher employed a thematic framework method of analysis. According to Mosha (2021), thematic analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns and themes in qualitative data. In doing so summarises collective similarities and differences in participants' views enabling the researcher to make sense of the data more easily (Christopher & A. Mosha, 2021).

The researcher's data analysis followed Terry et al., (2017) recommended process of thematic analysis. Specifically, the researcher, transcribed and reviewed per participant, coded, themed, and formatted tables to make the report writing flow. (Terry et al., 2017)

### **3.10. Ethical Considerations**

This section presents the ethical considerations with a focus on, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

To ensure consent is obtained, the researcher sought permission from the participants to interview them. The researcher before obtaining consent informed the participants about details of the study as well as the fact that their response would be recorded for purposes of data analysis and reliability. This was aimed at ensuring participants'

dignity is maintained. The participant was advised to be free to state their voluntary or involuntary stance to participate, at which they can retract voluntarism at any stage of the study. To confirm their willingness to participate, the participants signed an informed consent form, attached as appendix.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher assigned participant unique identifier numbers. Because the CCIs in the study are already government-approved, the name of the social service agencies is already listed in the methodology. However, the researcher did not attach a participant to an agency out of respect for confidentiality. The participants were informed of the fact that only the researcher and the supervisor, as an outside researcher, would listen to the interview recording for purposes of study reliability. Secondly, the researcher personally carried out the interviews, transcribing acquired information and analysing the data.

### 3.11 Methodological Constraints

The methodological constraint of this study is the fact that there is no triangulation. This refers to the use of various data collection methods that are utilised to increase credibility and reliability (Makuu, 2019).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides data presentation, interpretation, and analysis of the study findings. A qualitative research approach was employed to answer the overall research question: “To establish the challenges Social workers face in the reintegration of residential children into families and how social service provision can be improved?”

The chapter presents the findings in the following sections: demographic indicators of the participants (characteristics of the participants) and themes of the interviews that are categorized into three sections based on the study objectives. The themes are presented per research objective to highlight the findings, and participant voices while supported by social work literature. Some participant voices in this section are long but crucial to the findings.

#### **4.2. Demographic Indicators of Participants**

This study used a semi-structured form of interviews. In these interviews, questions were asked to twenty social workers who are employed by social service agencies approved by the Ministry of Gender Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) to conduct alternative care services in Wakiso District. The demographic data provided in Table 4.1 has been categorized into, sex, years of experience, education qualification, and area of practice. These details are as follows.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Participants' demographic indicators.**

ITEM	DETAIL	Male	Female
Age	15-30	2	5
	31-50	7	5
	51+	2	3
ITEM	DETAIL	Social worker training	Without formal social work training
SEX	Male	7	4
	Female	5	8
Years of experience	1-4	2	0
	5-9	3	8
	10-14	2	5
	15-20	3	1
Education qualification	Diploma	1	0
	Bachelor's degree	9	10
	Master's degree	1	2
	Certificate/Vocational	0	5
Area of practice	Child Reintegration	12	4

Source: Primary Data

A total of 24 participants participated in the interviews. The ages of the participants ranged from 25 years to 67 years making their mean age of 36 years. They comprised of thirteen females and ten males. Of these, five females and seven males had social work training. This is in line with Twikirize who argues that even though East Africa has

a higher number of females who are social work professionals, Uganda stands out with more than half of its social work professionals being male (J. Twikirize et al., 2014). Nineteen of the participants had a bachelor's degree, with nine being trained social workers and ten untrained social workers that are skilled in, social sciences, and nursing. public relations and communications, economics, and entrepreneurship, and lastly project planning and management. Among the participants, one individual without a bachelor's in social work had a diploma in social work. Furthermore, five participants had certificates in hairdressing, carpentry, and tailoring. Twikirize (2014) states that the highest number of social work professionals in Uganda have a bachelor's degree with lower numbers of professionals with a master's and Ph.D. due to "limited social work training opportunities." This is reflected in the data as one out of nine trained social workers has a Master of Social Work with other Masters from untrained social workers in fields of development studies, economics, and public health. Notably, twelve of the participants had child reintegration as their area of practice ranging from child safeguarding practitioners to rescue and rehabilitation practitioners, However, regardless of their title in the residential home, these individuals were child reintegration specialists in their respective organizations. In contrast, four participants did not serve in other roles but participated regularly in child reintegration in their respective organizations, these were majorly the individuals with vocational skilling. Regarding the years of experience, two of the participants had 1-4 years of experience, followed by eleven of the participants with 5-9 years of experience followed by seven of the participants had 10-14 years of work experience, and lastly, four people who had 15-20 years. The findings show that most of the participants had 5-9 years of experience

with the least 1- 4 years of experience. Research shows that professional learning is a crucial part of the social work profession. (Ferguson, 2022) This means that social workers obtain knowledge, skills, and training from daily tasks performed in the workplace. Social workers' experiences whether personal or professional inform the decision-making and intervention plans. The years of experience a social worker has in a particular field therefore reflects their practice (Kwan & Reupert, 2019)

#### **4.3. Presentation of findings per objective**

This section presents findings according to themes and subthemes that emerged from the study presented in Table 4.4 below. The Findings reveal that reintegration is a goal that social workers work towards to support children by reuniting them with families and communities where they are safe. The following excerpts support the given statement.

*Reintegration is the process of supporting children to be reunited with their families...it involves ... taking up a child and then involving all stakeholders. (P1, F-35yrs)*

*Some people think reintegration is just a placement. It is the goal that we must achieve (P2, M-36yrs)*

*To reintegrate children is having children who were taken out of family-based care and placing them back into their families, the families may be biological, or they may be extended families. So really, having those who are previously displaced, going back into family-based care or their family. (P3, M -37yrs)*

*Taking back a child in the community, in your family whether nuclear or extended. And then when I take back a child in the community and they are safe, I feel I've been -reintegrated a child. (P14- F-37yrs)*

The statement concurs with the Ministry of Gender, Labor & Social Development (2020) that calls for support for children to “prevent, respond and protect children from all forms of violence, neglect and exploitation”. In addition, reintegration entails reuniting children “with their family or community of origin in a hope of obtaining a sense of identity, protection and belonging” and ensuring their security and health (Delap & Wedge 2015).

**Table 4.2 themes and subthemes for social workers' challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families.**

Theme	Subtheme
<b>Objective 1: To examine how social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso District</b>	
1. Importance of reintegration	
2. Reintegration Process	2.1 Review of the Case file 2.2 Assessment 2.3 Verification and tracing 2.4 Preparation and Placement 2.5 Follow up
3. Key factors essential to reintegration	3.1 Early child reintegration 3.2 Resolving the cause of parental separation. 3.3 Importance of social workers timely response in handling children’s cases 3.4 Quality of relations in homes

	<p>3.5 Availability of resources</p> <p>3.6 Social Cultural considerations of children</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.6.1 sex</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.6.2 religion and ethnicity</p> <p>3.7 Stakeholder Involvement in the reintegration of children</p> <p>3.8 Skills training and the empowerment of children</p> <p>3.9. Willingness of parent and child</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: To establish challenges faced by social workers in the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso District.</b></p>	
1. Difficulty to reintegration youth	
2. Information gaps	<p>2.1 Lack of adequate information in children's casefile</p> <p>2.2 Caregiver withholding information.</p> <p>2.3 Children withholding information</p>
3. Reluctancy of caregivers to assume parental responsibility	
4. The cost of the family tracing process to the social worker	
5.Challenges that arise from coordination with other stakeholders	
6. Communities and Families are less receptive to children with disabilities.	
7. Lack of sufficient monitoring and evaluation of CCI's by the government.	

8. Reintegration's legal framework gaps	
9. Personal challenges faced by social workers	
10. Ill-equipped social workers in practice	
11. Stigma against residential children	
<b>Objective 3: To recommend strategies that can be adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso District</b>	
1. Positive parent-child relationship Sensitization	1.1 Topics to sensitize parents and children
2. Formation of child targeted support projects	2.1 The boy child 2.2 Resilience building programs
3. Improving available database systems	
4. Education empowerment	
5. Formation of strict laws	
6. Increase the competence of social workers	6.1 Area-based social work practice. 6.2 Social Worker Collaborations

#### **4.3.1. To examine how social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso District.**

This section presents knowledge on how social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso District in three themes; Importance of reintegration, reintegration process and key factors essential to reintegration, and nine subthemes as presented in detail below.

#### **4.3.1.1 Importance of Reintegration**

The findings show that due to the negative social, cultural, and psychological challenges institutionalized children experience in care, reintegration becomes important because it helps residential children adapt and understand morals, culture, and family outside the institution.

*Reintegration is good. It helps children and young people to understand the reality of the world. Even that coping up that life going up, gives them a coping mechanism. Institutionalized children have a lot of challenges (P1, F-35yrs)*

*I think we reintegrate children to get a sense of belonging. You know where they are mixed, but everyone here has a family to which they should subscribe. I have seen it helping children have a sense of belonging and identification. I belong to my family. I belong to my clan. I subscribe to my religion. (P21, M-35yrs)*

The above findings reveal that reintegration helps residential children to obtain a sense of belonging and identity. Whereas reintegration involves placing a child who has been separated from their parents or guardians in a family or community of origin, Rescue Dada Center (RDC, 2015) argues that a child is better placed in a “family-based environment where their rights are fulfilled and where they receive love and care” that will build their capacity.

#### **4.3.1.2. Reintegration Process**

The finding reveals that the reintegration process involves seven major steps: a review of the case file, assessment, verification, tracing, preparation, placement, and follow-

up. Social workers and other child reintegration practitioners in childcare institutions (CCIs) understand reintegration to be a process that involves various steps. However, this process is not linear and can move from one stage to another in a cycle at any point. This comes because of a child's case, the cause of parental separation, age, and the institutional guidelines. Therefore, participants' responses varied depending on the CCI they were based on.

*It begins with preparation caregivers here who are with the children, need to be prepared and prepare the child... you do some kind of research on the challenges that may have brought this child here to determine whether they were solved. What are you going to do about them? (P1, F-35yrs)*

*When the social workers oversee reintegration, the process of reintegration is first by building rapport with the child, getting to know them, and collecting the basic information that would lead us into the home. (P17, F-26yrs)*

*We begin with the rescue of those children when the government hands them over to us and after receiving them, we have processes we make mandatory. Medical check-ups for our children then when get results we give psycho-social support and provide them with nutritional support because in most cases we find them when they're malnourished. Then we start we begin the process of supporting them to be reintegrated with their families (P19, F-50yrs)*

*children are rescued from Kampala or even other towns, the rescue is done by the Minister of Gender, Labour, and Social Development with the Kampala City authority, or any other authority, if it is in another town and they work with*

*Uganda police. And when the children are rescued from those urban places, especially street children, then they are brought to the organization. (P12, M-58)*

In agreement, the reintegration process includes “child assessment and preparation, family contact and assessment, placement, follow up and family strengthening, phase out and lastly exist” (Retrak, 2013). However, Retrak asserts that to be effective, the reintegration process should not be put in a timeframe. In general, for reintegration to occur, there must be vulnerable children who have been taken out of family-like care due; to denial of basic needs and services, denial of the right to life, sexual, emotional, and psychological, physical abuse, inadequate parental care, protection of children in the justice system, child labour and trafficking among others (MGLSD, 2016). The involvement of several stakeholders, like the Childcare Institutions (CCI's), probation officers, the Uganda police, and KCCA officials is critical for the success of the process, following the rules provided for in The Children's Act of Uganda CAP 59 (The Children Act, section 57).

#### 4.3.1.2.1. Review of the Case File

This is the first stage of the reintegration process. The findings reveal that a case file can simply be understood as the ‘first information about a child’ that the residential home and social workers obtain. This information may include the child's details (sex, age, name, photo), person of initial contact or parent/guardian contact information, area where the child was found, and cause of separation. This is supported by the participants who said.

*The process is different because we handle case by case. some children are very little, and they are abandoned, so the process is different. ... (P14, F-60)*

*The process starts with the review of the files review of the case file to identify any information that is there. The first information be it from the police from the community, the probation, from the hospital.... We look at that information searching for any clues is there in a village? Are there any names? Then is there any phone number? (P2, M-36yrs)*

*when these children come from different homes, you find that the file has details for example, where and how this child was placed or picked, you can use the number to call and you trace through that file, and then we do the follow-up, requesting if the child was known (P1, F-35yrs)*

Upon receiving a child, practitioners take on their role as case managers who are responsible for overseeing and organizing child and family needs to ensure they obtain appropriate services from admission to case closure (MGLSD,2016). This is the most crucial step of the reintegration process since it sets the pace for the other stages. The information provided in the case file of a child gives practitioners a foundation to assess and trace the child's family history. Due to this stage in the reintegration process, there is no systematic formula to reintegrate, every case file dictates a different procedure. Furthermore, Frimpong-Manso et al., (2022), suggest that "case management is one of the most vital stages of reintegration", this is because the case files contain information about the children. When children have no case files, then the reintegration process is frustrated.

#### 4.3.1.2.2. Assessment

The findings pointed out that assessment is an ever-ongoing process in reintegration. Assessment in reintegration happens throughout the process because there is constantly a search for a family environment for residential children. As social workers get information, they conduct/ more assessments is done. The findings therefore reveal that social workers assess a child upon initial admission by conducting bio-psycho-social assessments, assessing family and community conditions, assessing the child's and family's readiness for reintegration, and assessments after placement. In this stage, social workers' analytical, observation, and counseling skills are crucial to their information gathering. Social workers must be able to make informed decisions based on small pieces of information (children's words, body language, community environment) to form a big picture that will influence their intervention plan.

*We need to know what causes this child to maybe run away from home because cases are different. We have domestic violence at home, we have child-headed families. And then children just decide to run away from home, so you need to know what the major cause was. (P22, M-29yrs)*

*We assess after identifying the family, we assess the family. After we engage with stakeholders...the police and the local stakeholders to help you give you the information, since they were with the family in this community and after assessing come back you work on the assessment report...when the child spends 3 months in this organization, that child is given a package, but that package passes also on the assessment that was conducted...That is the final assessment*

*we do find follow-up on the family that we are in preparation. We prepare this family... (P21, M-35yrs)*

*We make assessments of the family where we're taking them. we make our community assessment is a place safe. If a child is coming from a place where, for example, is a slum, then we have a question mark, if the environment is full of drunkards. There's a question mark we may take them for a bonding visit for a day. Just for them to meet those people and we are observing the reactions of this child. Is this child safe. We have taken children whereby, for example, I'm sitting with them at the back of the van. They will run away from even me, go into the front. Pull up the windows when they see their father is coming, so that is an indicator that that child is not safe for us to take them back home... we develop our report about the time that the child has stayed with us, the Community assessment, and the family assessment of the child, and then they seek approval from the probation (P19, F-50yrs)*

The initial purpose of these assessments is to uncover the risks and harm to a child as well as the strengths and resilience of a child and their family, all this to ensure child protection (MGLSD,2016). The findings also reveal that the age of the child aids the information gathering in the assessment and case filing stages of reintegration. From the infancy to childhood stages of development (age 0-11 years) children may not have a clear recollection of their past. Ericksons stage of development may be. This makes assessment of the child majorly dependent on the information in the case file. However, for adolescents (ages 12-17 years) and in some special cases, late childhood (ages 9-11years) assessment can occur which can quicken or delay the assessment process.

Social workers in this stage aim to guide families and children to make informed decisions in the interest of the child (UDAYAN Care & Martin James Foundation, 2022).

#### 4.3.1.2.3. Verification and Tracing

After gathering the first information in the case file and obtaining more information through assessments of a child with recollection of their past, the information needs to be verified and tracing begins. The findings revealed that social workers experience this stage to discern truth from lies. To act in the best interest of the child [the best interest of the child is a children's rights principle in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children](GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA, 2020). Professionals must be sure that the information on paper matches what is in the field. It is important to note that this step in the reintegration process is essential to monitoring and evaluating the progress of reintegration.

*Who picked this child? Who are there? Which police posts which phone number? Which person is a chairman? Is it where you're planning where to go to start the tracing? we go, there with that information to trace to verify the information that is there... (P2, M-36yrs)*

*Then after getting permission, we go to the community to get the right information, we go with the photo names of the children. We try to go through the local leader, they permit us to reach their families because we can't access their families before getting their permission. (P8, M-36yrs)*

*you're going to conduct background checks; you're going to visit places where this child has come from. You will find in the community they know about this*

*child and where the child went and they will be able to show you the child's ancestral, home, and relatives there, they'll show you the child's maternal relatives, paternal relatives, and really just drawing up a family tree for that child and then you identify people who have the will to take up this child (P3, M-37yrs)*

Tracing the family goes hand in hand with establishing the willingness of the family and the child's readiness to be reunited with the family (Luwangula et al., 2019). It also involves working with stakeholders such as the probation and social welfare officers, and provision of resources necessary to affect the resettlement.

#### 4.3.1.2.4. Preparation and Placement

The finding revealed that preparation of the families, children, and CCIs is the next step that goes hand in hand with placement. This preparation occurs after the verification and tracing have been conducted. Social workers with the correct information can now assess the child and the families involved through counseling to prepare them for placement. In this stage, social workers step into their roles as mediators and counselors (between families, children, and government) to ensure the best interest of the child is protected and that all parties are willing to assume responsibility.

*After tracing you come back here, and we do the family preparation. [by the term 'here' the participant refers to the organization] you talk to the organizational mother and the mother starts talking to this child. They found your relatives. If we have found the home during the tracing that is now a chance for these people to come and start supervised bonding. The person comes*

*and sees the child. They started talking. He is encouraged to bring in some small gifts. Bring a shirt. Something that can interest this child is to know that this person is there (P2, M-36yrs).*

*We do a plan to see that that child will not run out of the home. For example, we find out why the child ran out of home if it was the misbehaviours of their parents. We first try to engage them and give them counselling. If it was poverty, we find a way of engaging these people. Earning something so that they can take care of their children. Then when we come up with a small budget to support their families where we are taking their children. We start on the resettling process. That's when we must again go back with the child. (P8, M-36yrs).*

The environment a child grows up in greatly impacts their cognitive and behaviour development hence the child finds in the home can greatly affect their adjustment in the home and can determine successful placement (Savina et al.,2014). Similarly, placement of the child with the family should be after social workers determine that the reasons and conditions why the child left the home have been removed (Hood *et al.*, 2022:67). Furthermore, effort “to improve the socio-economic circumstances of families should be considered alongside investment in targeted interventions for children in care and their families.”

#### 4.3.1.2.5. Follow up.

The final stage of the reintegration process is follow up, which can also be termed monitoring and evaluation. Following up on the progress of reintegration is a legal

mandate for probation officers and CCIs as stipulated in the Children Act. This follow-up is mandated to ensure that no harm is being done to the child, and to assess whether reintegration has been successful.

*We are supposed to follow up for six months as you also identify other stakeholders within the community, for instance churches where this child will be supported psychologically; are there schools, and support systems in the community (P1, F-35yrs)*

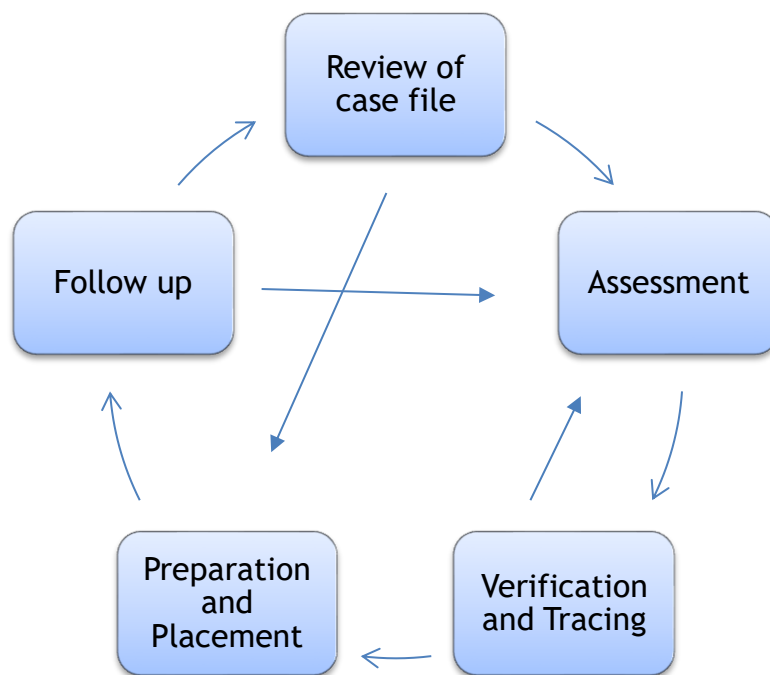
*We also do follow-up after we have resettled the child, usually within the first three to six months, its good practice, we use 12 months to know whether the child is coping.... (P12, M-58yrs)*

*After assessing and training, you place the child with a family. You do what they call post-pattern evaluation. you evaluate and see if the family is doing well or if there are issues that might result in a child leaving that family. So, you continuously assess them over one year, after which you can let them go. You also assess if they're economically sound, are they financially stable enough to look after this child... You can close the case and consider that child in their family and depending on the nature of the family that you have considered you go do a follow-up action. (P3, M-37yrs)*

According to (Goldacre et al., 2022), follow-up time shall be 0-3 months, 3-12 months, and 1-6 years since most unsuccessful reintegration happens between day 1 and 6 years. Hence, detailed information on child outcomes is critical because it provides a comprehensive picture of potential sources of risk and resilience that may force the

child to re-enter care. However, this study's findings reveal that this follow-up is mandated to occur every six months to a year. Notably, some organizations conduct this follow-up three months into a year at various stages. It is important to note that this follow-up is essential to the well-being of children who have been reintegrated. If a social worker discovers that a child is being harmed after placement then they are mandated to extract that child from that home, this in turn repeats the cycle of the reintegration process. Social workers move across this process of reintegration constantly in search of a family that seeks to act in the best interest of a child for that matter, assessment, verification, tracing, preparation, and reviewing of case files in search of information is never-ending.

**Figure 4.1: Illustration of reintegration process**



Source: Primary data

### 4.3.1.3. Key factors essential to reintegration

#### 4.3.1.3.1. Early Child Reintegration

The findings indicate the younger a child is the easier it is for them to adjust to reintegration and the older a child is the more difficult reintegration becomes. This is because children become more aware and interested in their environment and its impact on their identity the older, they become.

*It's a common thing for all of them growing up in an orphanage when they reach 13,14,15 years old, they sense of identity and belonging. That's why for several of them when you want to tell them about reintegration when they're that age, they even hate where you are taking them. One of the girls here read on that board her date of admission and date of birth. She was two days born and on the second day she would say what did I do to my parents? What wrong did I do? Why did they deny me? [In this CCI children's photos and date of entry are pinned on a board in the social workers' office] (P24, M-57yrs)*

*reintegration should be done early when children are still young... they even adapt to life more easily.... best one would be ten years and below... (P1, F-35yrs)*

This finding is supported by Erickson's stages of psychosocial development which state that each stage of human development is accompanied by a psychological crisis that will positively or negatively impact human development. One of these stages is Identity vs Confusion which occurs from ages 12-18 years (McLeod,2024). This explains why when a child in a residential home reaches age 13 more questions about their origin begin to form. For the earlier stages (before age 12) a child's development is majorly based on

attachment to a caregiver and the provision of love and basic needs. These things are obtained in residential homes, for that matter reintegration must occur during these stages of attachment.

#### 4.3.1.3.2. Resolving the cause of separation.

The findings highlight that resolving the cause of parental-child separation is essential to the success of the reintegration process. This is because as the ecological systems theory states, a child's well-being and development are directly related to their environment. An environment that includes the family, community, and nation that the child grows up in. For as long as the conditions that caused separations remain constant, for example physical and sexual abuse in the home, a child cannot be successfully reintegrated.

*So sometimes we reach out to their needs, some people have emotional needs. Some children deal with sexual abuse. The family may be ready to receive the child, but the family needs counselling. What I usually do is look at the cause of separation. Deal with that before I take back the child in the community. So yeah, after that I do the reintegration. (P14, F-37yrs)*

*As long as you work on the issues that brought this child here. When you're going to do all that [this refers to tracing, preparation, placement], you must know what brought the child. Was it domestic abuse? Was it mistreating? Asking this guardian. What have you done about this situation? As you know, who mistreated this child is separated... (P2, M-36yrs)*

The cause of separation informs the type of interventions that will be offered before, during, and after the reintegration process (Guillermo et al., 2022a). Such often range from negligence, unsafe environmental issues that may cause risk and harm to the child, and physical abuse. The “value of intensive reunification support is undermined if children return to the same conditions of deprivation and inequality that are associated with disproportionately high rates of entry to care” (Guillermo et al., 2022a). It necessitates social workers ensure to improve the pre-existing family circumstances.

#### 4.3.1.3.3. Importance of social workers timely response in handling children’s cases

The findings reveal that how quickly or slowly a social worker responds can impact the success of reintegration. This particularly refers to the work that a social worker does in the tracing, assessment, verification, and preparation stages of the reintegration process. If a social worker responds slowly, there is a possibility of information distortion. If a social worker does not verify the information accurately, the child could end up in harm at the hands of a caregiver. The reintegration process is majorly dependent on the researcher and report writing skills of a social worker as well as collaboration with stakeholders like the Community Development Officers (CDO) and Probation Officers.

*We go with that information to trace to verify the information that is there. Then you reach and you find that this child was abandoned, but it also has time just to be timely if a child comes here and you go in the next four years, you’ll find the information destroyed. (P2, M-36yrs)*

*You know, wrong people come in, also disguising as families to foster when they want to take children for other reason. So, I worked with the probation officer.*

*Through my findings we fortunately found the girl was not stable and he had other wrong reports. I went back to the CDO. They also gave me another report about the girl that showed she had left her home, and the community also gave me a bad story about her, and she had attempted to get children from other different homes and failed. [This refers to a case of a lady who attempted to get legally fostered and then offer illegal adoption to individuals] (P24, M-57yrs)*

Arising from the findings, a social worker's interpersonal skills and knowledge of which stakeholder is responsible for what in the field is essential to the protection of the best interest of children. Social workers often must act as advocates. To appropriately succeed in this role, knowledge of the system and quickness in response to crisis is essential. One of the principles in the handbook for case management in child protection released by the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (2016) in Uganda states that practitioners should ensure timely action to secure the safety and justice of vulnerable children. Any delays a social worker takes in case management can put a child's life at risk.

#### 4.3.1.3.4. Quality of relations in homes

The findings reveal that 80% of the participants identified polygamy and lack of parental care as a major cause of parent-child separation. This reflects a parenting gap in Uganda. Social workers hence pay attention to the quality of caregiver relations in the home as a determining factor before reintegration can occur.

*polygamy is also creating a very big issue. A man has more than five women and cannot take care of them. Then a wife cannot survive in an environment like*

*that and therefore gets married to other partners, leaving their child without anyone to care for them. So that is a very big problem. (P19, F-50yrs)*

*If the father says that I can I love my child, but the challenge is the wife who mistreated this child is still there. I don't want to cause a problem. you don't force them... So, we mostly look at acceptability and love. Love for these children and acceptability are the major key drivers of everything that we do. (P2, M-36yrs)*

A successful reintegration is based on the overall improvement of the quality of relationships within the family, and the met expectations of the children (Schrader McMillan & Herrera, 2014). The developed memories and successful goals of working together as a family enhance the required positive change.

#### 4.3.1.3.5. Availability of resources

The research shows that the availability of resources (financial, labour) will determine the success of reintegration through dictation of how fast the process can occur due to availability and the measures taken to attain reintegration. The assessment, verification, tracing, preparation, and placement stages of the reintegration process all require finances. The social workers are constantly spending money traveling to rural areas, spending money on accommodation and feeding.

*Funding is very key, especially with the tracing...that first information that comes with the child if it is not there it is hard. The statements from the police, that letter. Then also the willingness to integrate into the organization. If there is no support. If the organization puts in lots of questions you cannot*

*reintegrate. Organizations can be an obstacle if they don't align funds to that they put little funds, reintegration is not a priority...the human resource to do that is very key and that also goes into funding which goes into funding the vehicles, (P2, M-36yrs)*

*if you unite a child where there is food, shelter is what a child can enjoy, the basic needs, reunification can be a success rather than having to take the child back to a place where there's no food and there are 10 people in one room. That cannot be a success... (P23, M-38yrs)*

Successful reintegration depends on the stability of family resources and relations. According to (Jordanwood & Monyka, 2014), the factors that ensure successful reintegration include families with “sufficient food, adequate shelter, family stability and access to school. Most had formed strong relationships with family members and were positively embedded in the life of their communities.” Hence good relationships between the child and family enhance the required unity necessary for relationship growth.

#### 4.3.1.3.6 Social-Cultural considerations of children

Social work is a profession that works within societies that have belief systems, morals, and norms. Uganda is home to one of the most culturally diverse populations. With the family as the central unit of a nation especially with the topic of children and family, cultural considerations will always contribute to social problems.

##### 4.3.1.3.6.1 sex

The study asserts that the sex of the child is an essential factor to consider during reintegration. This is due to the traditional beliefs held in a society where girls are often more preferred in homes than boys. As a result, most of the children in residential homes are boys, this knowledge enables practitioners to prepare to encounter situations where caregivers reject children based on their sex and come up with strategies to combat this to ensure successful reintegration.

*If you look at the child's age you will find out that girls are preferred ...social cultural aspects which are attached to that. for example, a boy child who wants to inherit property while the girl child may not. The girl child will provide domestic labour at home while the boy child will sit and go and play and come back and eat. So, there are those things that people look at when they are identifying children... (P3, M-37yrs)*

Research showed that as of 2015, Wakiso district had a high admission rate of girls in comparison to boys which contrast other districts that have higher number of boys. (Walakira et al., 2015) Social workers' report that despite this fact, the sex of a child is essential to the reintegration process. Research further establishes that the sex of a child is a key factor to be considered during reintegration. There is a higher abandonment rate of boys from families in childcare. Despite this fact boys are less likely to be reintegrated whether kinship, foster care, or adoption alternative care measures (Walakira et al., 2016).

#### 4.3.1.3.6.2. Religion and Ethnicity

The findings reveal that religion and ethnicity are cultural considerations are key factors to consider when reintegrating a child. The Children's Act stipulates that in the

knowledge of a child's religion, residential homes are to raise that child in the norms and beliefs of that stated religion. This is because residential homes are required by the Children's Act to raise children in the knowledge of their culture. Secondly, the causes of separation are cultural and societal related issues. The reason a child from Kabale runs away from home may not be the same as a child from Napak. For this reason, the tribe and home district of a child determine the norms and beliefs social workers are to consider before reintegration.

*the religion of the child. When you do understatement of this child. And you realize that maybe from a Muslim background you would want to match this child to a Muslim family... (P3, M-37yrs)*

*let's say, Northern Uganda, you want to have this child reintegrated back in that place and not take them to the Southern region because you feel like they're going to miss out on their culture... (P3, M-37yrs)*

The purpose of alternative care is to provide protection to children and ensure the well-being, stability, and safety of children in Uganda. As a result, the rights of children stated in the Children Act of Uganda are strictly observed by social workers. Children right to ethnicity, education, identity, health, language, property, inheritance, and lastly religion and belief. Social workers are expected to guarantee that no child's religious beliefs are dissuaded because of placement (FICE YOUTH, 2010). The importance of a child's ethnicity comes into play when placing children. Reintegration should move away from generalized solutions of the idea of the best interest of the child, and work towards "structuring programs in a manner that addresses locally

situated challenges. A move towards reintegrating children within their own community/culture/area (Williams, 2020).

#### 4.3.1.3.7 Stakeholder Involvement in the reintegration of children

The participants of this study agree that reintegration involves three major key players; children, families, and stakeholders (CCIs, probation officers, LCs, and government)

*The LC system the LC system is very key. It is very key because it is the one we take back children to. We find that I am in Entebbe and the child is in Mayuge. You must build a system around this child and the first person is the LC, whereby work with the chairperson and the Secretary for women... Probation officers were very key, they provide this technical guidance, the CDOs are always because you find that our organizations, we are working with one child, but there is a whole family... it is them to link them to other services. (P2, M-36yrs)*

*The police are helpful because when you bring those children first their mind is on the street. They want to go back so when you bring them here, they support us to keep security... (P5, M-28yrs)*

The National Child Participation Strategy of 2017 states that stakeholders aim to “ensure effective child participation” and do so by valuing and providing spaces for their participation. The stakeholders are at various levels of the social structure of Uganda namely the Ministry of Education and Science, Health, Internal Affairs, Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Local Government and Gender Labor and Social Development. To support these ministries other stakeholders, include the National

Child Authority, Development partners like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Civil Society Organizations, Community members, and Children (MGLSD, 2017).

#### 4.3.1.3.8 Skills training and the empowerment of children

Arising out of this study, empowerment of youth who reside in residential care homes is a key factor in reintegration. Social workers often empower these youth through the provision of vocational training like; hairdressing, tailoring, mechanics, plumbing, carpentry, and metal work to mention but a few to aid them when they are reunited with their communities to have a foundation for economic strengthening.

*Some of them are good, they are creative. Just yesterday our children the ones we rehabilitated sent me 190,000 ug. shillings, they told me, 'Please would you mind buying for us some materials Like beads, sheets the Karamojong sheets,' they wanted to start their business. Which means they're interested in staying with their parents. They no longer want to come back to the organization (P6, M-36yrs)*

In the effort to achieve positive reintegration in Cambodia, Social workers in Cambodia noted that reintegration is likely to be unsuccessful if the older children are reintegrated without a skill to use to acquire income (Jordanwood & Monyka, 2014). Hence the need to provide vocational training for older children to develop a skill that they need for life. This helps in building resilience in children by them "to develop new or existing skills that enable him/her to become independent, self-sufficient and

allowed to actively take part in their recovery”(Zewude et al., 2023). Social workers should be concerned with equipping the children with an income-generating skill.

#### 4.3.1.3.9. Willingness of parent and child

The willingness of both a parent and a child is a key factor in the reintegration of children. One of the Alternative care principles approved children’s homes are required to adhere to is that they must act in the best interest of the child, this applies in the selection of a family to reintegrate. Social workers must ensure that both parties, parent/caregiver and child want to be reunified.

*For a child that has spent 10 years with us, how shall we handle that child? Some families are welcoming, they are eager to receive their children, while others are not welcoming. Those who are welcoming find it easier for reunification and they are a success. (P23, M-38yrs)*

The reintegration must target improving the situation of both the child and the family if it is to bring about a lasting solution (Zewude et al., 2023). This is in line with Dr Sandra Bloom’s Sanctuary Model which considers components of safety for children and families; strategies that provide and manage the emotions of children and families; improve on the coping mechanism patterns and, empower them to make positive choices for their future (Schrader McMillan & Herrera, 2014). This is done to improve the safety of the children since some children are re-abused when they are reunited with their families (Biehal et al., 2015).

#### **4.3.2. To establish challenges faced by social workers in the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso District**

This section presents the experiences of social workers and other child reintegration professionals in reintegrating children from residential care into families in Wakiso District in eight themes; reintegration of youth, information gaps, reluctance of caregivers to assume parental responsibility, reintegration is an expensive and time-consuming process, difficulty to reintegrate children with disability into families, lack of sufficient government support, Reintegration's impact on the practitioner, ill equipped social workers in practice and reintegration legal framework gaps.

##### **4.3.2.1 Difficulty in Reintegration Youth**

The participants asset that adolescents aged 12 to 17 years are proving to be the most difficult age group to reintegrate into families. This comes because of caregivers' bias against older children with the perspective that they are ill-mannered and rebellious. However, this is also due to the adolescent's reluctance to be reunited with the same families that 'abandoned them'.

*I have a challenge with taking back youth, they don't want to stay with their families, the bonding is hard, they find it hard. They are complaining that acceptance is very hard. They feel that they were just thrown away. (P1, F-35yrs)*

*Older children it is hard because they have this. They have all this mindset that they are here in residential care, people are fed. People have all the nice things. Yes. So now you're taking a child to a place where these things are never there*

*so there is resistance. First of all, bonding. Someone has not stayed with this child so; it is hard... And this family's best care might be the child's own family. Or it might be another family. It might be a foster family. It might be an adopted family. (P2, M-36)*

The findings also reveal that some youth at the age of 18 years find it difficult to adjust to life outside the residential homes in communities. This in turn causes them to return to the residential homes for care but unfortunately, these homes are not mandated to provide care for children over the age of 18 years.

*you find that when children turn 18 years you integrate them into the community, they are faced with challenges and they keep coming back to residential care because life outside is hard [child reintegration policies of Uganda stipulate that at 18 years, children exit residential care] (P1, F-35yrs)*

Reintegration greatly depends on the willingness of the caregiver to accept the child (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015). The unwillingness of the caregiver is likely to put a child at further risk of abuse. It was established that the “older adolescent males (16 and 17-olds) were the most difficult to reunify with their families as families” (Hood et al., 2022). Hence many practitioners assert that families may opt to keep the youth out of the home. This is supported by a qualitative study into children and caregivers' experience following reintegration in Uganda, which pointed out that some caregivers felt that “reunification had robbed their children of the opportunity of receiving support to continue with school” (E. J. Walakira et al., 2021).

#### 4.3.2.2. Information gaps

The study indicates that the availability of accurate information makes the reintegration process smooth. The use of information gathered from the stakeholders and secondary information provides the needed background to the process and provides a platform of knowledge to build on (Compton, 2014). The information gaps identified by the participants are discussed in the section below.

##### 4.3.2.2.1. Lack of adequate information in children's case files

The findings reveal that when social workers do not get sufficient information from the beginning, the reintegration process is delayed. It is important to note that this process has various stakeholders like the probation officers, police, and health workers that all contribute to case file information. When one area is weak for example, the police report in the case file that contains details on who found the child, where was the child found and contact information of any related parties then, reintegration is delayed.

*we don't get enough information. There is a gap at the police station. Whereby there is no tool that will help us capture most of the information about the child. That will help us reintegrate this child within the specific period- six months because the person who rescued that child did not give detailed information, so that remains a big challenge and slows the process of reintegration (P19, F-50yrs)*

Whereas case files provide rich and detailed data, it must be accurate (Biehal et al., 2015). Case management remains an integral stage of reintegration because the case files provide the necessary information to enable service provision, hence helping to

minimize the frustration in the reintegration process (Frimpong-Manso et al., 2022). Lack of details on case files always makes follow-up difficult, and this is made worse if social workers depend on another agency to carry out follow-up visits for them (Jordanwood & Monyka, 2014).

#### 4.3.2.2.2. Caregivers withholding information.

The findings indicate that caregivers often withhold information at the assessment, verification, tracing, and preparation stages of reintegration. Information gathering is one of the most important factors in reintegration. Successful reintegration depends on the details that the social worker has on the child in question. When caregivers withhold this information, it is either due to inability to provide care or unwillingness to provide care. This delays the process, and they face no repercussions. The findings also reveal that social workers also struggle with gathering information from community members in the verification and tracing stage. This is because communities are also classified as caregivers in Africa due to the UBUNTU concept, which believes we are human due to our social interaction (Moodley et al., 2020).

*There are those children whom caregivers don't know. You find them in the homes, and someone says that they just brought this one here. So, you find that there's some distortions that occur. Someone can give you false information*  
(P2, M-36yrs)

*Not getting the clear information from the local people. they don't share...They will ask. Why are you asking for this person? because when we go to the community you a new person in that community. You have to say, I'm looking*

*for someone and then they ask you, who are you? Where are you coming from?*

(P8, M-36yrs)

Caregivers often experience mixed emotions and taking children back into the home comes with uncertainties. Many have feelings of happiness, responsibility, insecurity, and fear (Balsells et al., 2017). This is due to the need to learn to live with a child who has been out of the home for a while, hence fears of unsuccessful reunion, challenges that come with adolescence, parent's failure to provide, and a repeat of earlier patterns that led to the child leaving home. In reference to reintegration programs in Guatemala, community connectedness plays a critical role in facilitating reintegration. When there is no "acceptance by, inclusion in and engagement of the community" in alternative care, there are higher chances of family separation and unsuccessful reintegration. Social workers need to include "community belonging and connectedness in interventions, case management, counselling tools and case planning" in designing and monitoring reintegration interventions (Guillermo et al., 2022)

#### 4.3.2.2.3. Children Withholding Information

The participants emphasised that children also withhold information at the assessment and tracing stages of reintegration. Children withhold information majorly due to prior trauma they have experienced in their homes; sexual, and physical abuse. Some children are witnesses to crimes and other children run away due to poverty. In this case, the children shall not disclose their family history and details due to reluctance to return home.

*Information gaps are also a challenge because sometimes you'll find children holding out a piece of information. You assess a child, and they don't have a very traumatizing background, and they don't want to go back they will hold back on information (P3, M-37yrs)*

Many children often find it difficult to discuss information asked of them, let alone their experiences (Balsells et al., 2017). This could be attributed to their culture, hence getting the children to provide their experience becomes challenging. Research shows that many children do not participate in the process because they believe that “adults know better than them and hence they shall decide on behalf of the children” (Zewude et al., 2023).

#### **4.3.2.3. Reluctancy of caregivers to assume parental responsibility**

The findings reveal that one of the major reasons for failure of reintegration is caregivers' reluctance to assume responsibility for their children. This can also serve as a reason behind caregivers' withholding of information. The findings further reveal that this is majorly caused by poverty which leads to a shortage of basic resources like food and other needs like scholastic materials for education, and the presence of another household member burdens these caregivers.

*They fear responsibility like taking them to school because most of our communities are ignorant and illiterate, they don't know about the goodness of the schools in educating children. So, children become a burden to them again (P6, M-36yrs)*

*Another challenge those people or the relatives of these children are not being cooperative, or they don't want to have their children back, yeah. (P8, M-36)*

Furthermore, it was indicated that there is a reluctance to assume responsibility, particularly for the boy child. Participants revealed that most of the children in these organizations are boys. This can be attributed to the social-cultural considerations of children (presented in 4.3.1.3.6) under objective one of this research study. Social workers argue that there is a need for a shift.

*Most of the boy children take a bigger percentage in residential care. Girls are usually taken easily reunited but for the boys, most families or relatives are not ready to take on the boy child... (P19, F-50yrs)*

Reintegration of children requires stable homes because children from greatly underprivileged upbringings are most likely going to move out of the home after being settled back (Goldacre et al., 2022). Similarly, the social economic situations in the children's home are likely to cause the children to leave their homes. This is emphasised by Lorschiedter and Bannink-Mbazzi, (2021) on supporting war-affected children and youth in northern Uganda. They point out that equipping youth with income-generating projects will help them to become productive and appreciated members of society. Thus, reducing youth vulnerability, and creating satisfied children who feel cared for by their families.

#### 4.3.2.4. The cost of the family tracing process to the social worker

The findings indicate that the reintegration process is an expensive venture. Before a social worker can reintegrate a child during the verification and tracing stage, they conduct numerous home and community visits. The purpose of these visits is to gather information, assess, and write a field report. As social workers discover more information, for example, the existence of extended relatives of a child, other home visits and assessments need to be conducted. Since the information gathering is not obtained in one process, the home visits are therefore unpredictable and dependent on the information obtained. These visits include traveling to different districts and villages across Uganda, with no specific location (due to tracing) which is costly.

*When we go to trace, we always ask for details of other relatives. You don't ask for, only that one that we talk about. Tracing takes some time, and it is very expensive. It needs a lot of fuel, and you don't have a particular destination.*  
(P2, M-36yrs)

*At the level of community-based workers. It's a very expensive process, family tracing. It is like putting money down a rabbit hole. You're not sure if you're going to find a family, you get you get a bus Karamoja. You know you spent 200,000-300,000shs. on accommodation for nights two to three nights. And you're just trying to visit... (P3, M-37yrs)*

*I was visiting a family in the Midwestern part of Uganda. I reached there around 1:00 pm and the stakeholders told me that I should go with the information I got. I noticed that I could not do resettlement with this family... his family was*

*willing to hand over the child to the maternal side. So, I asked them how long it would take. They said just a few minutes, we reached at 8:00 PM which was very deep in the village (P14, F-60yrs).*

These visits prepare the child and the family for reintegration, and they identify gaps that may impair the reintegration process (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018b). Social workers engage with families through home visits to assess the family' "strengths, challenges, traumas, protective factors" and to establish appropriate interventions (Hood et al., 2022). This however cannot be accomplished within one home visit. In addition, the findings show that the cost of tracing families in CCIs is high since every child needs family tracing. Some organisations have close to 100 children in care. These organizations therefore incur tracing costs for each child.

Using the Cambodia experience, "consistent, regular follow-up was found to have the largest impact on positive reintegration" yet it posed many challenges (Jordanwood & Monyka, 2014). The further away from the residential home the family home was, the more complicated follow-up became. Home visits were easily achieved if the social workers lived closer to the homes of the children, otherwise, social workers would travel long distances or only visit close children. The findings of this study note that traveling long distances often becomes tedious, costly, and hectic. Yet, there is no guarantee that the child will be settled with the family visited.

#### **4.3.2.5. Challenges that arise from coordination with other stakeholders**

The findings reveal that social workers and residential homes incur other unforeseen costs while tracing families. One of the biggest challenges is brought about by

corruption. Social workers report having to pay some offices money to obtain help or facilitate the acquisition of needed information. This is often unavoidable because reintegration cannot occur without cooperation from key stakeholders.

*to resettle the children and I went back to police from there, they want to arrest me...told me you go away with your boy we are tired of that boy. I said no you know; this is our boy, you help me. The boy has been rehabilitated. He is a good boy. So don't do that. (P5, M-28yrs)*

*The stakeholders we work with ask us for money and this is the role of the government, yet they want money. We find that there is no cooperation. We should be helping one another to help this child because children are for the government. Transporting officer from here you have to part with 50,000shs. you must pay some people; they don't want to use a boda-boda and yet we are in the community. You must carry the van which you fuel for over 500,000shs (P19, M-35yrs)*

*There is no specific amount designed in the URA system where the care order should be paid. In every court, they will ask for different money without a receipt They don't want to receive the money. They toss the probation officer; they toss us the social worker. So, the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Justice should work together. (P24, M-57yrs)*

The study findings demonstrate that social workers encounter corruption through unavoidable collaboration with stakeholders. Family tracing cannot be done without the involvement of LCs, and Police. However, often, social workers must pay some

money to facilitate the process and tolerate incessant behaviour from some stakeholders to attain these services. Involving many stakeholders is necessary because it enables the provision of holistic services to the child and the family (Zewude et al., 2023). However, this requires social workers to assess the views of all key stakeholders before concrete decisions are taken and the children's voices about their welfare should also be captured (Walakira et al., 2021).

#### **4.3.2.6. Communities and Families are less receptive to children with disabilities**

The findings reveal that there has been a failure to reintegrate children with disabilities as well as children with terminal illnesses. This failure comes because of the reluctance of caregivers to take on responsibility for children with physical and mental disabilities. As a result, the majority of children in CCIs are those with disabilities and terminal illnesses. This reflects a knowledge gap about persons with disabilities in our communities and a need to raise awareness.

*It is harder to have disabled children reintegrated, so in most cases, such children grow up in residential care, become young adults in residential care and with not much hope of having them reintegrated (P3, M-37yrs)*

*children with chronic diseases like heart disease were abandoned by their biological parents. Children who are autistic, some of them cannot speak and you cannot know where they come from these children cannot express themselves (P19, F-50yrs)*

The findings of the study indicate that it is difficult to reintegrate children with disabilities and there seems to be limited previous literature on the same. However, it was reported in Mozambique that persons with intellectual disability could not be easily reintegrated (Gouveia et al., 2017). This was because it is mainly associated with the stigma associated with it and because it is not curable, relatives likely consider them a permanent burden.

#### **4.3.2.7. Lack of sufficient monitoring and evaluation of CCIs by the Probation office**

The participants mention that stakeholder involvement makes the reintegration process smooth and easy due to their knowledge of the communities. However, despite the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development emphasising the use of online M&E databases, social workers still revealed a need for an increase in M&E at the post-placement stage by the probation office and community development officers. Social Workers reveal that once children are reintegrated, the government needs to evaluate the well-being of these children consistently to ensure their safety.

*This government always says take back children, but you realise that it is not good at follow up... sometimes you have to part with money. For instance, if this is government work, and we are supplementing, it would be their role to ensure that this child is settling in... (P1, F-35yrs)*

The study findings reveal that reintegration requires constant evaluation of the progress of a child in a family to ensure that their caregivers are still acting in their best interest (Walakira et al., 2016). A concern identified was the government's inability to provide oversight for all activities and stakeholders involved in reintegration

(Compton, 2014). Failure to streamline the reintegration process and hence share information renders the programs relatively ineffective.

#### 4.3.2.8. Reintegration legal framework gaps

The findings indicate that there are gaps in the guidelines that influence reintegration. Social workers argue that the legal frameworks are not practical enough and are too generalized. Social workers deal with unique cases that require particular attention and support from these legal frameworks. Social workers argue that the policies are sometimes unfair in providing the best opportunity for children to be adopted. They argue that the domestic adoption policies [though in place to offer protection to children] limit chances for children to be adopted by foreigners. Social workers also argue that available policies do not consider our African culture and context at the forefront. This is done by favoring individual family obligation over the communal aspect of African culture (UBUNTU).

*One that I have found very unfair, but of course, is a protective one is the policy on adoption, international adoptions, and the preference given to domestic adoption. These days adoption is very limited because foreign adoptive parents must stay in Uganda for at least one year fostering a child. I feel it limits some opportunities for some children... it's been argued that there has been a lot of trafficking of these children. These are children of Uganda, and you cannot take a child of Uganda and do to them whatever you will in another country but the laws or policies on domestic adoption. I would like it to be investigated.,. (P3, M-37yrs)*

*When you look at our culture, we are communal, but certain things are only addressing the individual family. But this child is going back to a community. But no aspect is telling me it's about the community. They are only talking about individual obligation and duty. But we need the African context. (P12, M-58yrs)*

Furthermore, there is a policy gap around children with disabilities and child witnesses in legal cases. Social workers argue that available policies do not sufficiently consider their best interest as reintegration of these children is heavily dependent on the provision of special care in the family and communities. Social workers cannot reintegrate them like other children whose cause of separation is polygamy, they require unique interventions that take time.

*Another policy gap is the protection, urgent support for children who have legal cases. Whereby some children. Are traumatized because they don't feel safe. Someone is looking for them, government needs to come up with ways of supporting us very fast to make sure children with legal issues are protected. We need government support to help as we expedite their cases. (P19, F-50yrs)*

*Also, NIRA we have had problems getting national IDs for them and they can hardly go to university or be considered in other places or better institutions without a national ID. We want change, for them to consider children and children without family because they are just pushed away. They say, bring your father. Bring your mother, bring your birth certificate. And if they don't? But we know we don't have that information. (P24, M-57yrs)*

*the common issue now is the care order, the alternative care rule, which says that the child will not live in a home for over three years. So, the judiciary that offers the care order took it for granted that every child will be living only and only three years maximum, and now three months for renewal, the maximum of three years. So going there to renew we get a lot of obstacles... (P24, M-57yrs)*

It is noted that the government systems make it difficult for social workers to reintegrate children. This is due to the failure to consider the unique cases of residential children and the lack of knowledge concerning their family history. Using the example in the national ID processes that require tons of information on personal and family history that these children's homes have no access to. This makes procuring IDs for these children hard. Social workers also report difficulty in procuring court orders that are mandated for CCIs to have in the Children's Act that stipulates these homes must obtain one within 48 hours of procuring a child. Corruption in these government systems makes it difficult to obtain one. Hence there is a need to revise legal tools to accommodate both the protection and rights of children (Guillermo et al., 2022a). In addition, concentration should be placed on "addressing the root causes that drive children to be separated, preventing that separation, and strengthening family-based care".

#### **4.3.2.9. Personal challenges faced by social workers**

The findings reveal that social workers are mentally and physically affected by what they experience in the field. Social workers spend limited time with their families to prioritize family restoration. Often social workers find themselves in unsafe places

during the tracing process especially while tracing and protecting children who are in care due to criminal cases. Social workers also face psychological trauma from what they see in the field.

*Those who work in those kinds of cases [P17 is referring to sexual abuse cases], end up having a mental issue, if not managed well, yeah that is the biggest challenge we will suffer even as we're doing our work. I would encourage you to always get someone where you download. You know, sometimes when you download it, it helps you at least feel that relief (P17, F-35yrs)*

*You find some aggressive parents or relatives who don't know the child got lost and for them, they were like our child was kidnapped. Now to go back, this family is not friendly. It's like they want to fight you. Why do you have our children? Why have you been with our child for over 2 years? (P6, M-36yrs).*

Research shows that social workers' personal experience contributes significantly to their decision-making and the quality of their interventions while dealing with clients. (Kwan & Reupert, 2019). The effects of child protection work on social work practitioners are often overlooked. Despite this fact, the hostile and aggressive behaviour of parents continues to hinder the reintegration of children through the negative personal and professional implications it has on the social worker (Littlechild et al., 2016). Social workers must pay attention to self-reflect and assess how these experiences inform their social work practice decisions for the betterment of social service provision.

#### 4.3.2.10. Ill-equipped Social Workers in Practice

The participants suggest that social workers in training are not adequately equipped to handle the reintegration of children. Participants argue that social workers still lack knowledge of the legal frameworks that provide a foundation for reintegration as well as a lack of knowledge of the procedures and stakeholders involved in reintegration. Participants argue that it is due to this training gap, that new social workers often find reintegration difficult.

*Capacity-wise, some social workers are not very skilled in the process, in understanding the guidelines, understanding the laws around these processes, the legal frameworks in Uganda, and understanding who part of this process (P3, M-37yrs) should be.*

*Social workers want to reintegrate children but do not look at the economic strengthening aspects of these families. You really can't do one without the other. I mean you are not going to take a child and say, you know, Salongo look after this child and he was willing to look after the child, but Salongo is a peasant farmer... if you have a blended approach in reintegrating this child, you support the family. You place the child there and you also support them to improve their economic welfare. (P3, M-37yrs)*

*Maybe some people lack research. The social workers, they don't know things. Yes, they don't. The process, the procedures. That's why things backfire (P22, M-35yrs)*

The findings show that the number of individuals without formal social work training equals the number of social workers in the field. This shows that there is still a need for sensitization on the importance of social work training for practitioners. Furthermore, trained social workers showed wider knowledge of the child protection policies outside the Alternative care Frameworks and often could refer to sections in those policies. However, social workers with less than four years of experience did not have adequate knowledge of policies and procedures of reintegration. On the other hand, the participants without formal social work training who are often exposed to social work-based roles like counselling through interaction with children's knowledge depended on the number of years of experience they had in the field. Individuals with more than six years of experience and higher education levels (master's degrees) revealed exceptional knowledge of reintegration policies and procedures in Uganda. This can be attributed to the fact that organizations often provide training to their staff.

*You get so stressed because you must build them almost for two months, just counselling them and talking to them. You begin doing social work. (P7, F-32yrs)*

Failure to support families throughout the reintegration process is likely to leave the parents feeling abandoned by the practitioners. This is supported by Balsells *et al.*, (2017) who affirm that "there are families who perceive a lack of professional support and experience feelings of loneliness after having been intensively tracked during the entire process of recovering their children". Despite their gratitude for all the support received, families feel left alone to solve whatever challenges may come their way. The reintegration, bring continuous process, requires practitioners to prepared to

provide the service appropriately. Zewude (2023) points out that reintegration process “require networking and coordination among various stakeholders involved in the program and must be accompanied by advocacy activities”. All service providers are required to understand diversity, need for holistic interventions, dignity of the child, and the sustainability and challenges of each service brings (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018b), the failure of which negates the very reason for the service. It is noted that there is a need for evidence-based findings to inform practitioners on the successful reintegration process and the development of strategies that will address the underlying drivers for retrogression and the eventual return of children to residential care (Balsells et al., 2017).

#### **4.3.2.11. Stigma against residential children**

Arising out of the findings social workers constantly deal with externally caused trauma impacted on residential children by the communities' systems that include schools and community members. Residential children face stigma and discrimination that comes with their identity as 'children from residential homes'. Teachers and students in schools are biased against them and view them as rebellious and disrespectful due to their status. This stigma the children face in the community (which is a form of societal integration) discourages the children from participating in family reintegration because it is a sign of how other families will treat them.

*there are communities who say that” abo baana bekitongole” [children from the residential homes] (P2, M-36yrs)*

*stigmatized by the local community that is in a school for children on the street. It was some of the teachers said these children from the organization are just difficult. (P24, M-57yrs)*

An “inclusive neighborhood with an open social system where reunified children are not discriminated against, sets a condition for easily reintegrating children” (Zewude et al., 2023). Looking at an example in Guatemala, successful reintegration requires a concerted effort from individuals, groups, organizations, and professionals, including program managers, social workers, and families (Guillermo et al., 2022a). A child is not only reintegrated back into a family but also into a community and designing interventions that foster positive connections and acceptability is critical for successful reintegration work.

#### **4.3.3. To recommend strategies that can be adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children from residential care into families in Wakiso District**

This section presents social workers and other child reintegration professionals' strategic recommendations for the identified challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families in Wakiso District in six themes; sensitization, child-targeted support projects, improving available database systems, education empowerment, formation of strict laws for parents, Increase competence of social workers.

##### **4.3.3.1. Positive Parent-Child relationship sensitization**

###### **4.3.3.1.1 Parent-child relationship**

The finding suggests that sensitization of parents, community, and children to alleviate ignorance is the first strategy. The challenges social workers identified revealed a continuous cycle in the reintegration process. This means there call for both the government, NGOs, and social workers to pay heads to the cycle that comes with reintegration, unless we prioritize the root issue that leads to reintegration that lies in the family unit, then the children will keep returning to Kampala which repeats the cycle. There is a need for positive parenting sensitization and training in rural areas. There is still a need for sensitization on; family planning, family dynamics and welfare of children, child development and neglect, financial literacy, and faith-based living to boost moral teachings. When the family unit in Uganda is stable then there will be an increase in child welfare in the home setting.

*We do not get tired of talking about sensitizing...of our biggest issues is education background. You know, understanding of things. When you teach people, they tend to understand better and they learn better, (P3, M-37yrs)*

*the governments should introduce mobilization and sensitization to the communities where the problem is. We need to go back and sensitize them about the dangers of being on the street; child abuse, school dropouts, early pregnancies...we shall be just be making cycles, children come from home, they go to the street then they are brought to the rehabilitation center, we resettle them back again, but still others want to come back because their parents are not sensitized (P6, M-36yrs)*

*teaching the community about community evangelism. You know, the community should live in the word of God also. Then teaching health and wholeness, teaching*

*them sanitation, how to take children to school. All these moral teachings. (P6, M-36yrs)*

According to the UZAZI AVSI parenting model, parenting is a long-term pursuit of intentional actions directed to a child's well-being and development. Positive parenting is the awareness of positive physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual development outcomes in a child. The program modules: (i) appreciating parental responsibility, (ii) appreciating your child, (iii) parent-child relationship, (iv) raising your child with positive discipline, (v) positive approach to authoritative parenting is based on the belief that parenting knowledge and skills training can increase child well-being (Matovu et al., 2021) When positive parenting practices are prioritized, children's behavior and potential are directly impacted. The parent-child relationship is therefore crucial for the improvement of social service provision because it has the potential to lower the numbers of children entering residential care. Since the quality of relations in the home is a key factor of parent-child separation, parents need to learn how to communicate effectively with their children while building knowledge on development stages and their respective emotional and behavioral changes (especially the adolescent stage).

#### 4.3.3.1.2. Community sensitization

The finding revealed that there are various stakeholders in the reintegration process and one of the biggest is the community. Children are not only reintegrated into families but into communities that have belief systems, structures, and norms. It is essential that a child is successfully reintegrated into the communities in order prevent

stigma and discrimination that is common for residential children, especially in shared spaces like schools.

*The government should create awareness, I think to communities, they should educate their community, their importance of children. Growing in their families, their parents should know that. Or maybe relatives could be extended family members. (P16, F-29yrs)*

Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso argue that social workers need to educate communities on the experiences (challenges, process, benefits) of children in residential care (van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020). This is done to ensure that community stakeholders are aware of the outcomes of their treatment of these children to reduce stigma and discrimination. Educating communities also ensures that social workers are protecting their role in positive parenting, especially in the African setting that believes it takes a village to raise a child. In doing this a social worker can ensure that the community is ready to receive these children and act as social support that will enforce positive behavioral habits that will improve the capacity and wellbeing of these children. When the communities are ready to residential children, then children will be eager to be reintegrated. Zewude further supports this argument by stating that building cooperative relationships in the child's environment (peers, communities, extended and biological families) throughout the process of reintegration is required. Reintegration is a complicated process because it is heavily dependent on the stakeholders and their willingness to participate. Social workers are therefore taxed

with ensuring these stakeholders are knowledgeable and equipped to assume their responsibilities (Zewude et al., 2023)

#### **4.3.3.2. Formation of child-targeted support projects**

##### **4.3.3.2.1. The Boy Child Empowerment**

The findings reveal that our community empowerment programs have heavily focused on the girl child and in doing so left the boys behind. This can be attributed to cultural traditions and beliefs on the contribution of both sexes to the family. The findings reveal that boys are less likely to be reintegrated due to families view of the role of a boy in the succession and inheritance of families, as well as their contribution to the domestic management of a home being less than that of a girl. Therefore, there is a need to focus programs on the empowerment of the boy child.

*establishment of support projects that target children. We've heard of women empowerment projects, and there's specific officials for empowerment of the women at the end of the day, the culture is overly empowered, and we have left behind the boy child because there are no intentional efforts. As state actors and as governmental actors, we need to be more intentional in supporting the boy child to be able to match the kind of investment that we have put within the girl child. (P3, M-37yrs)*

*Teaching their families. About the importance of girl child and the importance of the boy child, OK, all children (P6, M-36yrs)*

#### 4.3.3.3. Improving available database systems

The findings indicate that in this tech-savvy generation, there needs to be an improvement in the Ugandan database systems that social workers have access to. Social workers believe that with a streamlined, up-to-date, and organized identification system that is consistent with the child since the issuing of a care order, and at birth, then the reintegration process would be easier and quicker. Social workers recommend the available online systems should be improved to ensure that each stakeholder in the reintegration process from the birth of a child (hospitals), the police, the probations, the community development officers, and the residential homes, should contribute sufficient information to the available databases.

*If, for example, we had very streamlined databases, national databases that quickly help us identify a child and where they come from and who has been with these children, it would be much easier. Of course, we know that NIRA has tried to do much on that with the national IDs and certificates and linking these children to parents and various relatives but there are still gaps. It's still a process that we that is yet to be effective... (P3, M-37yrs)*

*I think maybe you would code them because the child starts with the police and probation and the care order...There should be a special office where they treat us as such. For example, when we have refugees here, we allow them to register for other services because they have a code they are known and captured. so, children's home should also be considered. these codes should be from the care order time then once the history from the parent changes, other information can change (P24, M-57yrs)*

The study findings show that The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) has improved M&E since the 2019 USAID supported Data for Impact, MEASURE evaluation project commenced. The project prioritized improving “data collection, information management, and reporting systems” and in doing so provides a functioning M&E system with a nurturing, safe, and stable environment for children to grow. (Data For Impact & USAID, 2021) The introduction of the Child First Software by Both Ends Believing has enabled alternative care facilities or residential homes to “identify and actively manage a plan for the best family-based outcome” of the child which lies in reintegration(Both Ends Believing, 2022). However, while the residential homes are being strengthened, other stakeholder systems like the police reports that are essential to reintegration, are being left behind. This database strengthening needs to extend holistically to all sectors involved in child development in Uganda.

#### **4.3.3.4. Education empowerment**

The findings reveal that most organizations due to information gaps on the history of some children heavily practice preparation for independent living especially for children who have been in the organizations for over 10 years. This majorly comprises children with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and children with no known family information. Therefore, due to the high numbers of children in these organizations, there is a need for government-initiated transitioning into adulthood programs that prioritize the preparation of these children for independent living through capacity building and strengthening. This finding suggests that the goal of this strategy is to empower the children through educational skills development to take charge of their future by providing them with life skills and training that they can use to support

themselves. Social workers suggest that there needs to be consideration of how much the government is preparing these children for independent living regardless of their reintegration status. Social workers are confident that there needs to be a shift in priority to consider the best interest of these children which lies in adequate preparation that is not being rushed due to a deadline. Some participants believed that social support for residential children should extend beyond 18 years. This is because some children at the age of 18 years are not empowered enough for independent living and lack social support. For example, you can find a child in a CCI who is 20 years old but only in senior 3 (o'level stage of education) this child is not ready physically, economically, and mentally to exit care. Social workers believe it is the role of the government to ensure that these children are equipped enough to live independently and should take on the responsibility of capacity building of these children past the age 18 years, since policies and guidelines limit residential homes.

*I wish that KCCA rescued these children from the street, and they had brought them to different homes. I wish they could get a school where we can put all these children; they can start education because when you bring these children, and you rehabilitate, and you resettle back you haven't solved this child's issue. They are going to reach their home, nothing to do, nothing to eat, all they think about is coming back to Kampala. (P5, M-28yrs)*

*Putting skilling as part of our programming, especially for children who have stayed long in their institution, helps us to either reunify them or take them for*

*independent leadership, whereby a child is helped, and supported to be able to start their prayer lives independently and learn to care of themselves. (P19, F-50yrs)*

*government through the mix of agendas could put something into consideration of how they can give a small support to the children who are in this country being supported by people who don't know them. They come and go but that child is here because they need to attend at least a vocational institution or university. There should be a consideration. Instead of just exit care because the government is pressured, but how Are you preparing them? Where are they going? (R24, M-57yrs)*

According to Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020), social workers and other child reintegration professionals need to ensure they are equipping children to develop interdependent skills and not independent skills. This refers to equipping them with basic life skills, effective communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, networking, self-awareness, and interdependent relations, vocational and entrepreneurial skills. All of which will increase the employability of these children by teaching them how to fully utilize social networks. The concept of interdependence is aligned with the African values of UBUNTU. This concept believes that we are human due to the relationships we have with other people. Similarly, Stein (2012) argues interdependence to be a psychosocial transition out of residential care that prioritizes the development of interpersonal skills, confidence, and self-esteem in a child and equips them for community integration and not just self-reliance as believed in independent living (Storø, 2018).

Storo further argues that residential children at the age 18 years' experience pressure and realization that they must exit care due to a lack of adequate preparation to transition out of care. This research has also proved that not only the children but the social workers and other practitioners experience that same feeling, though it is expected due to policies and guidelines that influence practice. The scholar therefore argues in favour of interdependence. He states that social workers need to prioritize building social networks for residential children leaving care as they are key to improving the quality of life for residential children. Priority should therefore go to adequately preparing children through education empowerment to fully utilize available connections in the social systems to increase their socio-economic development (Storø, 2018)

#### 4.3.3.5. Formation of strict laws for parents

The findings reveal that there is a lack of strict regulations and policies that punish parents for parental negligence. Social workers believe that if parents faced repercussions for abandoning their children and roles as parents then they would be hesitant to repeat it.

*Another strategy the government to put into practice is to deal with these parents who neglect their responsibilities. You neglect the child, or we find your child on the street you are accountable for this and must be jailed, they should set a time. Why would you leave your child? The government should have strict policies on that. (P21,*

*M-35yrs)*

*Inform the area committee, and the counsellors and put some laws that any child who's got on the bus or in any means of transport alone without their parent, must arrest their parents or punished. I think it will work well because we need to weed out the weeds from the plant. Plants won't grow unless you remove the weeds. (P6, M-36yrs)*

The finding demonstrates that there is a need for community responsibility in the cases of child neglect in Uganda. If the community holds parents accountable for parental responsibility, then strict laws can begin to be implemented. The Children's Act of Uganda section 11 states that all members of a community who have proof that a child's rights have been infringed upon by the parents or guardian are expected to report the matter to the Local council of that area will submit the case to the secretary of children's affairs. The secretary of children's affairs starts with a discussion of the matter if failure to comply the decision will be passed to the village executive committees(CONSTITUTION OF UGANDA, 1995). The available policy on strict laws for violation of children's rights is a long process of referrals, court, and discussions. Communities must take it upon themselves to set accountability standards for parenting in their areas and hold each other accountable within the law.

#### **4.3.3.6. The need for increased competence of social workers**

The findings reveal that there remains a gap in the training of social workers. Professionals therefore recommend that social workers need to be constantly trained in social work practice with children in the Ugandan context. Social workers in training need to be aware of the systems and processes to take in the field.

#### 4.3.3.6.1. Area-based social work practice.

Social work practice aims to alleviate social problems through improving the wellbeing of vulnerable groups of people in society, it is a practice that is heavily dependent on the beliefs, and norms of families, communities, and nations. The findings therefore suggest that social work practice needs to be area-based. Uganda is a culturally diverse country; social workers need to know the culture of the people they are providing social services to for them to be effective.

*I think the training in the psychosocial aspects is important. If we are taking the child to eastern Uganda, there are specific things you need to understand that kind of context...Don't just walk into an area because there are some places where nobody will listen to you. We need to just know the community. Then you will get an entry point. If you go and you don't identify yourself with these community areas who have community. You can't do a lot. (P12, M-58yrs)*

*we need to continuously build the capacity of social workers at the community level partner or NGO level or CDO level and at the national level, those are the professional social welfare officers' information (P3, M-37yrs)*

#### 4.3.3.6.2. Social worker collaborations

The participants knowledge and experiences are invaluable to each other, and there is a need for an increase in social workers' collaboration and interaction with each other. The National Association of Social Workers alongside the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development need to prioritize social worker focused platforms where social

workers in districts and communities can share their experience frequently at district and national level.

*I became an expert through networking with other social workers in the in network, in the in the play. (P21, M-35yrs)*

*Sharing experiences, the way we want to do in Wakiso... having those platforms from where we share experiences. Quarterly meetings, per district, I have ever been in a seminar where they brought all the districts together, the probation officers of those places came, from Mbale, Tororo, and Kamuli. Those platforms are good. they are not done often because they need to plan for them, there is a lot of spending. (P1, F-35yrs)*

#### **4.4. Summary of Findings**

The study set out to establish the challenges social workers face in the reintegration of residential children into families and provide an answer to how social service provision can be improved with a focus on Wakiso District. The response to this is presented per the study objectives below.

##### **4.4.1 Social workers' reintegration of children**

The study set out to examine social workers' challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families. The objective of this section is to examine how social workers reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso District. The study findings reveal that social workers view reintegration as a goal that works towards supporting children who are out of family care to reunite in a safe, loving family environment whether extended, nuclear, or foster families. The goal of social workers

is to place children in an environment that will positively build their capacity and ensure their rights are fulfilled (Rescue Dada Centre, 2015)

The data suggested that reintegration occurs in five major steps: review of casefile, assessment, verification and tracing, preparation, and placement then finally follow-up. Despite the existence of a process, there is no linear order in which this process occurs. This is because every child's case is unique. One child's case file may lead a social worker straight to the preparation stage and another family tracing. This therefore requires social workers to pay keen attention to each case which prolongs and complicates the reintegration process. The findings revealed that due to the need to gather information the verification and family tracing stage proves to be the most time-consuming and unpredictable which comes because of the involvement of stakeholders; families, probation officers, police, Community Development officers (CDOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and various others. The data differs from the researchers' expectations of a four-step process of reintegration which were: admission, pre-placement, placement, and post-placement. The difference between the five-step process and the four-step process is the findings provide the Ugandan perspective. The stages in the four-step process are general for example admission in contrast to review of a case file. The findings of this study therefore provide a detailed account of the Ugandan reintegration process.

#### **4.4.2. Social workers challenges in the reintegration of children**

The objective in this section sought to establish the challenges social workers face while reintegrating residential children into families in Wakiso District, to document social

worker perspectives. The findings supported the researchers' expectations that social workers experience unique challenges because of the stage of the reintegration process the practitioner is on. Despite this fact, the challenges can be classified as structural, organizational, and personal.

The structural challenges refer to issues that come because of social structures or systems. These social structures refer to relationships between two groups of people (Vareed et al., 2023). For example, the interaction between the government and social workers particularly refers to available policies and government systems. The data proposed that social workers are dissatisfied with the gaps in the available policies and argue that there is a lack of policies that address reintegration of children with disabilities, terminal illness, criminal cases, and youth. This gap makes reintegration of children that fall into that category difficult if social workers are to target building children's capacity. For example, an 18-year-old male in a childcare institution (CCI) who is in senior three and is not mentally and economically ready for independent living. The government in this case expects social workers to exit this child from care because of their age, yet they are not resilient enough to leave care. Social workers therefore suggest that policies need to be made more practical and based on our Ugandan cultural context. Social workers also argue that available policies are too generalized and not practical enough for the reintegration of children.

The second social structural interaction is between social workers and stakeholders, particularly families, the Ugandan Police family unit, and the probation office. The findings revealed that there is a gap in the securing of the first information on a child at the point of first contact with stakeholders. This first information contains details

on where the child was found, known relatives, age of the child, name, sex, village, sub-country, and various others. When stakeholders do not prioritize securing this information, especially for the Ugandan police family unit, then the case file is not adequately updated, and the verification and tracing process becomes more difficult. The lack of cooperation and teamwork among the stakeholders is therefore a big challenge in the reintegration of children (Chadambuka & Chikadzi, 2019) The findings revealed that there is a presence of corruption, where CCIs must pay bribes before they can obtain assistance from some offices, this demotivates social workers from having good relationships with other stakeholders that reflected in how reintegration is done. The findings suggested that there is a parenting gap present in families where social workers attempt to reintegrate children. One of the biggest challenges is parents' reluctance to assume responsibility for their children. Social workers are required to reintegrate children into stable homes however in Uganda, poverty is the first cause of child placement in CCIs at 41 per cent followed by child abandonment at 35 per cent (Walakira et al., 2014). This means that a family's socioeconomic status is a crucial factor that a social worker must consider. However social workers have various other aspects to consider in relation to the caregiver in the home, community environment, criminal record of caregivers, number of other children in the home, parental and child willingness, religion, sex, and the cause of separation. All the above factors must be assessed before social workers can place a child in a family, hence making reintegration time-consuming.

Organizational challenges refer to the issues that result from the working of the CCI. These challenges are unique to the residential home the social worker comes from. The data suggested that the financial cost of reintegration is a challenge that is unique to residential homes. Some participants presented the high cost of verification and family tracing as a hindrance to their reintegration while other organizations often with donor funding did not experience that challenge.

Lastly, personal challenges refer to the problems that affect the person of the social worker. The findings revealed that in cases of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children, some social workers experience trauma because of physical and emotional abuse from aggressive parents (Littlechild et al., 2016)

#### **4.4.3. Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children**

The objective of this section sought to recommend strategies social workers believe should be adopted to improve the reintegration of children from residential care into families. The strategies can be classified under three, strategies for the government, strategies for parents, and strategies for the social work profession.

Firstly, the finding indicated that the government needs to prioritize the improvement of systems that are crucial to the reintegration process. This refers to the improvements of available database systems and sensitization of professionals who are not well conversant with this system across all stakeholders. The improvement of the available policies and procedures while making them more relevant to what social workers face in the field. Secondly, there is a need to sensitize parents on how to relate with their children, this includes setting up parental sensitization movements in rural areas and

prioritizing areas with high numbers of child abandonment cases. Lastly, there is a need to build resilience in social workers to be able to combat the trauma faced in the field and improve their competencies to handle difficult situations.

The next chapter will present the study conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The study purpose and objectives of this study were met as presented in chapter four of this research report. This section will present the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study arising out of the study.

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

The study findings revealed that social workers experience challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families in Wakiso district. The key finding is reintegration occurs in five stages. The success of reintegration at each stage is dependent on parental and child willingness, early reintegration of children, the quality of relations in the home, the timely response of social workers, social-cultural considerations, resolving the cause of separation, and stakeholder involvement.

Arising out of the second objective, challenges social workers experience can be classified as under three points; structural, organizational, and personal, all of which result in a delay or a failure to reintegrate children into families. While experiencing these challenges, social workers collaborate with stakeholders, and knowledge of available policies and procedures and support from residential homes, families, and children help social workers overcome them.

For reintegration of children to be improved, there is a need for increased parental-child relationship sensation in rural areas, improvement of available child protection databases and the implementation of strict guidelines that require all stakeholders to

utilize the system, increased competence and resilience building of social workers, mandatory social work training for all practicing child reintegration officers and improving inclusivity in the child reintegration legal frameworks. It is critical that reintegration of children from residential homes, shifts to prioritize building the capacity and resilience of children rather than just family placement.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

Arising out of the study the following recommendations are made:

The Probation Office in Wakiso District needs to prioritize and maximize first information capture, through strengthening the capacity of the Uganda police family unity. There is a need for the formation of a tool that will hold them accountable for the information they document about a child. This tool should be based on the case file information that social workers need to reintegrate a child. If implemented, the verification and tracing process will be shortened, and the amount of time social workers spend reintegrating a child will lessen as well.

There is a need for social work training courses for all social science degrees in universities and all individuals who work in residential homes. This is because most participants without formal social work training had social science degrees, namely human resource, project planning, and management, or were skilled in vocational courses. The training needs to equip the individuals with social work core principles, values, skills, and theories. These professionals need to be competent enough to handle child protection cases due to their exposure to residential children.

Professionals also need to constantly update themselves on the social work best

practices around the world. These best practices need to be frequently documented, published and discussed by social workers in training and practice.

#### **5.2.1. Recommendations for further research**

This study was conducted to document social worker perspectives. More research that gives voice to social workers' experiences and solutions to social problems is needed. There is also a need for further research on the reintegration of adolescents and young adults in Uganda that prioritizes the perspective of the boy child.

#### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The study was restricted to residential homes in Wakiso district particularly those approved by the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) to practice alternative care. As a result, the researcher could not interview other practitioners from other organizations despite the recommendations by participants.

The researcher was unable to access three of the listed organizations whose contact information was not readily available on the Internet.

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**APPENDIX**

**Appendix 1 : Interview Guide**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

My name is Asiimwe Ruth and I am currently a student at Uganda Christian University pursuing a Master of Social Work. Part of the requirements of the degree is to conduct research. The topic of my research paper is; **Investigating Social Workers Challenges to Reintegrate Children From Residential Care into Families. A Case of Wakiso District.** The Purpose of this study is to establish and document why social workers are recording little progress in the reintegration of residential children into families and how social service provision can be improved. I would like to seek your permission to ask you questions pertaining to my research study.

**Agree or Disagree .....**

**SECTION A: Introduction and rules of engagement**

1. Please tell me about yourself (bio data: name, age, professional experience, institution they work with, social work area of expertise)

<b>BIO DATA</b>	
PARTICIPANTNUMBER:	
Management level (low, middle, top)	

Years of experience	
Education qualification	
Area of practice	

**SECTION B: Social workers reintegration of children from residential care into families**

1. What does reintegration mean from your work experience?

.....  
.....

2. How do you reintegrate children from residential care into families?

.....  
.....

3. In your practice, describe the process in reintegrating residential children from residential into children?

.....  
.....

4. What are the key factors you have observed are essential to reintegration of residential children?

.....  
.....

5. What key sectors and partners (nationally and in the community) influence your reintegration of children of residential children into families?

.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION C: Social workers challenges in the reintegration of children**

6. What have you faced as a practitioner when integrating children into families?

.....  
.....

7. What are the underlying factors behind the success or failure to reintegrate residential children into families?

.....  
.....

8. Do available policy and guidelines sufficiently aid your reintegration of residential children into families?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. What policy changes would you as a child reintegration practitioner love to see?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. What do you believe is the root cause of the challenges you experience?

.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION D: Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children in residential care into families**

11. What innovations have you utilised in the field that aid you in your work?

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.....  
.....

12. What strategies can be adopted to improve the reintegration of children in residential care into families (government, CCI's, Social workers, Families)?

.....

.....

.....

13. How can this be achieved?

.....

.....

**Appendix 2: Introduction Letter**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

November 17<sup>th</sup> 2023

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH**

This is to introduce to you ASIMWE Ruth Registration number KS19M31/002, a student of Uganda Christian University, and pursuing Master's degree in Social Work. She is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above mentioned award.

**Topic: "Investigating Social Workers Challenges to Reintegrate Children from Residential Care into Families: A Case of Wakiso District. - UCUREC-2023-662."**

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow her collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to her will be highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

**Jeremy Waiswa, PhD**  
**HoD, Research & Postgraduate Studies Department**  
**Tel: 0752319951**  
**Email: jwaiswa@ucu.ac.ug**



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### Appendix 3: Informed Consent

## **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Research:** Investigating Social Workers Challenges to Reintegrate Children from Residential Care into Families. A Case of Wakiso District.

**Principle Investigator:** ASIIMWE RUTH; **Tel. contact:** +256755772930/+256774345530

Affiliated to Uganda Christian University, Department of Public Health P.O Box 4, Mukono, Uganda.

### **1. Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

Asiimwe Ruth a Master of Social Work student at Uganda Christian University is conducting a study to investigate social workers challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families in Wakiso District. The general objective of this study is to establish the challenges social workers and other childcare practitioners face in the reintegration of residential children into families and how social service provision can be improved. The information you give will be confidential and only used for the purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell us will remain anonymous. We shall ask questions about how you reintegrate children into families, the challenges faced and strategies to improve reintegration particularly in Wakiso District. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and I will not insist.

### **2. Description of the Research**

This is a qualitative expedited review design of social workers challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families, with a case of Wakiso District.

### **3. Subject Participation**

Participants will be social workers and other child reintegration practitioners in organization approved by the Government of Uganda to conduct alternative care in Wakiso District

#### **4. Potential Risks and Discomforts**

This is a study involving two-way conversation between the researcher and the respondents on challenges to reintegrate children from residential care into families, with a case of Wakiso District. Minimal risk is expected.

#### **5. Potential Benefits**

The findings will inform social workers and child reintegration practitioners' perspectives regarding reintegration of children into families. In doing so will document knowledge and skills utilised in Uganda during reintegration of children for the betterment of practice.

#### **6. Confidentiality**

The information you give will be confidential and only used for the purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell us will remain anonymous. We shall ask questions about how you reintegrate children into families, the challenges faced and strategies to improve reintegration particularly in Wakiso District. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and I will not insist.

Every participant will be asked to sign a written study informed consent form before participating in the study as this ensures voluntarism and acceptability to participate in the study.

#### **7. Authorization**

By signing this form, you will be authorizing us to use the information from this research.

#### **8. Participation**

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this study, it will not affect your work in any way.

### 9. Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization

As a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any point if you choose not to continue.

### 10. Whom to contact in case of ethical related concerns.

This study was Approved by Uganda Christian university Research Ethics Committee (UCU-REC) and cleared by Uganda national Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), In case of any Ethical related concerns or inquiries, you can contact UCU-REC chairperson; Prof. Peter Waiswa on 0772 405 357, [pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug](mailto:pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug) or UCU-REC Secretariat, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe on 0775737627 or [oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug)

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; to tick appropriately.

Yes

No.

I understand that I will be given a copy of this signed Consent Form.

Name of Participant (Optional): .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

Name of Researcher: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....



# UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF RESEARCH & POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

## DISSERTATION CORRECTION COMPLIANCE REPORT BY THE CANDIDATE (POST VIVA FORM)

Date: .....15<sup>TH</sup> April 2025

Name of Candidate: ..... ASIIMWE RUTH

Reg. No: ..... KJ20M31/002

Title of Dissertation: Social Workers Challenges in reintegrating children from residential care into families: A case of Wakiso District

SN	COMMENTS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Background of the problem is not focused and it is so confusing. The candidate introduces a study on COVID-19 pandemic; which is QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE TITLE The 2 <sup>nd</sup> paragraph introduces Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), this is QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE TITLE	Study introduction improved to include information pertaining to the purpose of alternative care measures in Uganda to better explain the relevance of COVID-19 information to the background. Ddumba-Nyanzi & Li, 2018 citation added The quotation from CEDAW has been removed	Page 1 and 2, first, second and fourth paragraph
2	The problem statement: Statement of	The Statement of the problem has been focused on	Page 4 and 5

	<p>Problem is NOT clear! It points out diverse issues from child rights, policies and regulations to data. The candidate should re-write this section focusing on ONE and clearly stated problem by answering; WHAT is the problem at hand? How big is the problem? Research questions are probing on issues that were not introduced in the background of the study and statement of the problem. There should be a coherent alignment between Title, background of the problem, and research questions. Please re-write</p>	<p>one problem by excluding other data in this section that was not relevant to the problem at hand.</p> <p>The background and problem statement have been corrected therefore the questions are now aligned.</p> <p>No changes or corrections have been made to the research questions</p>	
3	<p>LITERATURE REVIEW</p> <p>This chapter should provide the fundamental / underlying theories to the statement of the problem / research questions. Improve this chapter</p>	<p>Addition of Teixeira et al., 2022 added to literature review on 2.2 Social workers' reintegration of children to improve the discussion on stages of reintegration.</p> <p>Addition of Teixeira et al., 2022 added to literature review for 2.3 Social workers' challenges in the reintegration of children to improve discussion on the available literature on challenges of social workers in the reintegration process.</p> <p>Atanga,2023 citation included to add literature review for 2.3 Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children.</p>	

SN	COMMENTS BY INTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	<p>The problem was clearly stated and the student addressed a relevant subject</p> <p>The research objectives and questions were consistent, coherent and relevant</p> <p>However, the student could do more on the background information to strengthen the problematisation</p>	<p>The first, second and fourth paragraphs of the background has been corrected to introduce information related to the topic. This includes the inclusion of the purpose of alternative care services and its relevance, Children’s Acts mandate of CCIs, Ddumba-Nyanzi &amp; Li, 2018 citation added to strengthen the problematization.</p>	<p>Page 1 and 2, first, second and fourth paragraph</p>
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A fair amount of literature was reviewed.</li> <li>2. The sources used were relevant and diverse but the newer sources were limited</li> <li>3. A critical attitude is displayed but the amount of literature reviewed could be bigger</li> <li>4. The student defined concepts used but could be better of much literature on them was reviewed</li> <li>5. The gaps in literature were fairly identified</li> </ol>	<p>Addition of Teixeira et al., 2022 added to literature review on 2.2 Social workers' reintegration of children to improve the discussion on stages of reintegration.</p> <p>Addition of Teixeira et al., 2022 added to literature review for 2.3 Social workers' challenges in the reintegration of children to improve discussion on the available literature on challenges of social workers in the reintegration process.</p> <p>Atanga,2023 citation included to add literature review for 2.3 Strategies adopted by social workers to improve the reintegration of children.</p>	<p>Page 14</p> <p>Page 17</p> <p>Page 20</p>
3	<p>Good work done on presentation of data and interpretation</p> <p>There is too much of data and it swamps the emerging themes</p>	<p>The comment on the existence of too much data that swamps emerging themes has been noted. However, the discussion there in has captured the researchers point of view</p>	<p>Page 31,34,47</p>

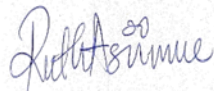
	Table 4.3 is missing, improve numbering of tables	Numbering of tables has been improved. There was no table 4.3 so that mistake has been corrected.	
4	The findings have been discussed and some subthemes generated. However, there is room for more emerging subthemes	The comment on the following was noted however, the discussion there in has captured the researchers point of view	
5	The name of the school is forgotten on the Title page	The name of the school is stated in the statement of award as required in the UCU Postgraduate Handbook	Cover page
5	The beginning of Chapter and some titles were appearing wrongly: at the bottom of the pages	Corrected	Chap 2-page 12 and chap 4-page 16
6	the list of tables and list of figures doesn't capture their page numbers. Numbering of tables is not consistent e.g Table 4.4 on page 32 comes before page 4.3 which is missing. It seems the numbering is done according to section number  There is a need to close up the wide spaces between paragraphs	Numbering of tables and list of figures captured and corrected.  Spaces between paragraphs have been corrected.	Page 31,34,47

SN	COMMENTS BY VIVA VOCE PANNEL	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Review your sampling procedure. What is the total population of Wakiso District?	Wakiso District has a population of 2,968,103 people. This information is indicated in the geographic scope in chapter one.	Page 6
2	What is successful Reintegration? Is reintegration necessary?	In chapter two, successful reintegration is characterized as when a child's standard of living is uplifted (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018). This literature is also backed up by literature in chapter four, that states that successful reintegration is the overall improvement of the quality of relationship of a child within the family.	Page 17 and 52
3	What are the social cultural beliefs about the boy child and how is that making it so hard for reintegration?	The research found by social workers revealed most children in residential homes are boys as a result of the cultural beliefs on inheritance. Girls are also valued for domestic labor and dowry at home while boys are not seen in that same light. For that matter, it is harder to reintegrate boys in families than girls.	Page 54 and 82
4	What theoretical framework is at play for the legislator, policy, practice and social role?	The theoretical framework at play is the eco-systems theory that states that a child's well-being and development are directly related to their environment. An environment that includes the family, community, and nation that the child grows up in. All those stakeholders from the legislators to the social worker practicing play a crucial role in reintegration and in acting in the best interests of children.	Page 11 and 49
5	What is the central belief about the boy child?	The central belief about the boy child is that in comparison to the girl child boys have less to contribute in the family setting because of the socio-cultural beliefs in Uganda's patriarchal society.  Addition of the belief about the boy child added to the	Page 54 and page 82

		discussion on boy-child empowerment in chapter 4	
6	How has this made it harder for the Social worker?	For reintegration to be successful it is essential for both the caregiver and the child to want to be reunified. This ensures that social workers are acting in the best interest of both the child and the family. When a caregiver is reluctant to be reunified with a child because of their sex, disabilities or any other personal reason, reintegration process becomes even more complex and will result unsuccessful reintegration. Other forms of alternative care are then considered.	Page 58
7	What is Uganda police role in social work?	The Uganda police role in the reintegration of children is first to capture first information in the case file that becomes essential to family tracing for social workers.  The police are also essential to social workers during the family tracing and placement process. Their knowledge of the communities offers assistance and protection to social workers while in the field.	Page 39-43
8	Should social workers become police officers?	This question is beyond the scope of this paper, however in the reintegration of children there are various stakeholders and each has their role. It is essential that all stakeholders receive training and empowerment to contribute to the reintegration process.	

**ASIIMWE RUTH**

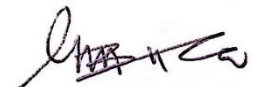
Candidate's Name



Signature

**KASULE KIBIRIGE**

Supervisor's Name



Signature