

Educational Participation among Street-Connected Children and Young People: A Critical Narrative Synthesis of Schooling Experiences, Programme Pathways and Intervention Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Access to education, dignity, participation, and protection constitutes an interconnected priority for children and young people in street situations. Integrating evidence on schooling experiences, program pathways, and intervention delivery requires careful consideration of their unique contributions. This article examines reported educational engagement and related support while considering how study designs and settings influence interpretation. A critical narrative synthesis was informed by a source-level audit of 33 named candidate publications across two source lists. Three empirical publications were purposively selected: one reporting two schooling studies in Kenya, one tracing the pathways of three children participating in a Ugandan resilience programme, and one examining the implementation of two adapted health and social interventions in Kenya. A design-sensitive comparison differentiated the participants' experiences, program processes, and implementation observations. Schooling accounts document shame, acceptance, and belonging during educational transitions. The Ugandan pathways described educational participation alongside changing relationships with peers, families, practitioners, and schools. Implementation findings identified trust, gender dynamics, and logistical planning as key delivery considerations. Children's rights clarify educational aims, an ecological perspective situates support across settings, and social emotional development frames the proposed relational process of the program. The synthesis informs proposed practices, including welcoming school entry, sustained contact, children's participation in decision-making, and coordinated child safeguarding. Prospective evaluations could examine how these practices relate to attendance, retention, and learning over time.

Keywords: *street-connected children, educational inclusion, school participation, intervention implementation, children's rights.*

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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have connected education, protection, and meaningful participation in the lives of children in street situations (Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty, 2024; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023). Street-connectedness involves shifting relationships with public spaces, families, and services, including movement between home, work, learning, and the street (Edmonds et al., 2022; Lehtonen, 2023). In Pakistan, children described nonformal education in relation to self-worth, aspirations, and citizenship, while a Ugandan program account traced educational pathways through peers, families, practitioners, and schools (Edmonds et al., 2022; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023). Together, these accounts support a rights-based approach that places children's perspectives alongside institutional responsibilities for safe and responsive educational provision (Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty, 2024; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023).

Educational engagement develops through encounters with schools, community programs, and support services (Edmonds et al., 2022; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023). Mobility reshapes children's relationships with families and institutions, while documentation, poverty, and school social environments may constrain educational access (Lehtonen, 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2025). A related analysis of Corcoran's Kenyan doctoral transition study describes how interactions with peers, teachers, and the wider community informed young people's experience of settling into school (Corcoran & Kaneva, 2023). Nonformal education in Pakistan was designed as a route towards formal schooling, while a Ugandan resilience program developed support across families, practitioners, and schools (Edmonds et al., 2022; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023). These accounts place supportive relationships and children's perspectives alongside school access when considering sustained participation.

Recent studies have examined street-connected young people using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches, focusing on schooling, educational barriers, and well-being (Fischer & Calabrese Barton, 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2025; Urgessa Gita & Abeshu Dissasa, 2023). Corcoran et al. reported findings from two Kenyan studies on schooling, including a related analysis of relationship dynamics during the transition in one study (Corcoran & Kaneva, 2023). Edmonds et al. examined educational and well-being trajectories in a Ugandan resilience program (Edmonds et al., 2022). Embleton et al. identified the roles of trust, gender dynamics, and planning in implementing two adapted health and social interventions in Kenya (Embleton et al., 2023). Kushtiwala and Iqbal explored children's perspectives on nonformal education in Pakistan (Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023). McAlpine et al. investigated relational well-being through youth associations in Tanzania (McAlpine et al., 2025), and Greeson et al. assessed family functioning and child well-being during reintegration support in Kenya (Greeson et al., 2024). Additional Kenyan research has associated family program participation with reintegration outcomes (Goodman et al., 2023). The focused comparison retains three complementary forms of evidence, while these additional publications provide contextual interpretations. Their differing designs require careful distinction among participants' accounts, program processes and measured outcomes.

This review combines children's rights, ecological theory, and social-emotional development to examine educational engagement. General Comment No. 21 establishes education, dignity, participation, and protection as rights-based priorities (UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). Recent work has connected this orientation with representation and healthcare access (Jørgensen et al., 2024; Weatherill et al., 2024). Participatory research foregrounds street-connected children's priorities, while a broader participation model considers their identities and enabling environments (Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty, 2024; Cuevas-Parra, 2023). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory locates development within the interactions among relationships, educational settings, and wider institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A recent scoping review examined reintegration across individual, family, and community conditions (Zewude et al., 2023). The Ugandan program accounts trace educational relationships, and Brazilian research examines mobility across family and community settings (Edmonds et al., 2022; Lehtonen, 2025). Kenyan implementation research identified trust, gender dynamics, and logistical planning as delivery considerations (Embleton et al., 2023). Foundational social and emotional learning scholarship emphasises emotional regulation and relationships (Elias et al., 1997), supported by broader school-based syntheses of social, emotional, and educational outcomes (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2022). Teacher support is associated with engagement in broader student populations (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). Here, social-emotional development offers a proposed process connecting belonging, trust, and supportive relationships with engagement. Rights specify aims, ecology maps settings, and social-emotional development guide process investigation. The matrix records linked study units, reported participant ages, settings, support components, observation periods, identified measures, and interpretive boundaries, connecting conceptual claims with source evidence.

This article develops a focused synthesis of traceable research on street-connected children and young people's educational experiences and support. It asks two questions. First, what do the three selected publications report about schooling, program pathways, and intervention delivery? Second, how do their designs and settings shape interpretation through children's rights, ecological relationships, and social-emotional development? These questions encompass experience and implementation, alongside reported educational change. They also make the scope of the available source record part of their interpretation. This article contributes an illustrative comparison of three publications and a source audit that identifies where a fuller evaluation of educational outcomes would add to knowledge.

METHOD

1. Review design

This study used a critical narrative synthesis supported by a source-level evidence audit. Each named publication is the audit unit, while substantive interpretation concerns the study or studies it reports; PRISMA 2020 distinguishes records, reports, and studies in review reporting (Page et al., 2021). The audit reconciled two supplied source lists, and the focused synthesis purposefully compared three empirical publications representing schooling

experiences, program pathways, and implementation. The author alone conducted the reconciliation and interpretive comparisons. PRISMA 2020 informed the audit of search and selection information, while PRISMA-S provided reporting criteria for information sources, search strategies, and dates (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2024). The resulting account ties thematic interpretation to documented provenance and evidence of roles.

2. Information sources and search dates

The supplement provides search expressions for ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, APA PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, alongside targeted organisational, repository, and scholarly web searches. The audit distinguishes platforms named in a draft from strategies documented in the source histories, consistent with source-specific search reporting (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Appendix A summarises these source descriptions and associated provenance questions. The detailed reconciliation is provided in the revised supplementary evidence audit.

The supplementary eligibility specification covers scholarly publications dated 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025; this publication window governs the focused synthesis. The earlier manuscript states a wider period ending in May 2026, which the audit retains as provenance discrepancy. Supplementary entries date individual website and verification activities to 14 July 2026 and record completion of further targeted work on 31 July 2026. These dates indicate the documented activities. A database search receives a specific execution date only if its original search history supplies one. Appendix A lists the publication window, historical search claims, and later verification activities in separate fields.

3. Eligibility

The focused synthesis examined empirical publications dated 2020–2025 concerning children or young people with an explicit connection to street life. Sources using “young people” could include young adults when the publication situated them within a street-connected educational pathway; reported ages remain explicit in the matrix table. Three publications were purposefully selected for distinct evidential roles: Corcoran et al. (2020) reported two Kenyan studies of schooling experience; Edmonds et al. examined three children’s pathways through a Ugandan resilience programme (Edmonds et al., 2022); and Embleton et al. investigated the implementation of two adapted health and social interventions in Kenya (Embleton et al., 2023). The selection favoured a traceable empirical account for each role and source details sufficient to attribute the review’s claims. It defines an illustrative comparison of educational experience, program pathways, and delivery. A wider candidate set remains available for study-level eligibility and appraisal.

For each publication, the author recorded the population, reported age, setting, purpose, design, support components, observation period, named measures where available, and the claims each observation could support. Publication identifiers P1–P3 remain separate from their underlying study units: P1 reports the Kenyan doctoral transition study (S1a) and a second Mombasa study (S1b); P2 presents one Ugandan program account (S2) illustrated through three children’s pathways; and P3 reports an implementation case study (S3)

covering two adapted interventions. The Kenyan case in Corcoran and Kaneva draws on the doctoral material represented by S1a and contributes a contextual interpretation under that shared identifier (Corcoran & Kaneva, 2023). Kushtiwala and Iqbal provide contextual evidence concerning children's perspectives on nonformal education (Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023), while S2 was selected to examine nonformals across program, family, and school settings. Policy documents and other contextual studies informed the Introduction and Discussion. The comparison records participant experiences, program accounts, and implementation observations separately from directly measured educational outcomes. Table 1 specifies the source fields.

4. Record reconciliation

The author compared 28 named publications in the earlier manuscript with the populated entries in the supplied supplementary matrix. Five additional names appeared solely in the matrix, yielding 33 named candidate publications for reconciliation analysis. The revised supplementary audit record checks of titles, authorship, publication details, and selected publisher records, alongside apparent topic or design mismatches. This number describes the combined publication-level provenance set. This synthesis purposefully examines three publications and links their component study units, as described above. Appendix A presents the corresponding count and source summary.

The earlier files reported different totals for retrieved records, duplicates, and included material. The audit preserved each total as a claim associated with its source file. PRISMA 2020 distinguishes records, reports, and studies (Page et al., 2021); accordingly, the audit keeps publication identifiers separate from identifiers for the underlying studies. For example, Corcoran et al. (2020) reported two Kenyan studies in one publication, and the Kenyan material discussed by Corcoran and Kaneva (2023) is linked to the doctoral transition study. Table 2 identifies the three synthesised publications and their roles as evidence. An exhaustive review would require the original database exports and full-text decision log to establish retrieval, deduplication, and selection counts (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2024).

5. Extraction and design-sensitive assessment

For the three selected publications, the author recorded the country, population, and age where reported, purpose and design, schooling or program components, reported observations, identifiable measures, observation period, and the claims supported by each source. The findings were grouped into schooling experience, program pathways, and delivery conditions. Participant accounts and practitioner descriptions retained their original status. Educational outcome measures, follow-up periods, and comparisons were included if reported. Table 2 describes the types of evidence available for each contribution.

The author assessed how each publication's design supported its contribution to the synthesis. Corcoran et al. reported participants' experiences across two Kenyan studies (Corcoran et al., 2020), Edmonds et al. traced three children's pathways through a resilience-based programme (Edmonds et al., 2022), and Embleton et al. analysed qualitative evidence

on implementing health and social interventions (Embleton et al., 2023). This design-sensitive reading maintains claims about intervention effects and processes proportionate to each publication's observations and measures. The present audit records evidence of roles and interpretive boundaries. A comprehensive study-level review could add a criterion-level appraisal using an appropriate Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist or the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2024; Hong et al., 2018).

Table 1. Fields used for source-level classification and study linkage

Field	Information recorded	Purpose in the synthesis
Publication and study unit	P1–P3; S1a, S1b, S2 and S3; linked contextual report	Separates publications, component studies and the related Kenyan report
Population and setting	Street connection, country, participant age where reported and educational or service context	Defines the people and context of each observation
Design and source type	Participants, data sources, study purpose and case-study structure	Matches claims to the reported method
Support components	School transition, programme activities, outreach and intervention-delivery arrangements	Identifies the activity under discussion
Reported observation	Participant account, programme narrative, implementation finding or named outcome measure	Connects each synthesis claim to the form of evidence
Observation and comparison	Time frame, follow-up, baseline or comparison where reported	Shows the temporal and comparative scope of the claim
Interpretive boundary	Evidence role, measured outcome status and design-sensitive limits of inference	Keeps conclusions proportionate to the source
Framework relevance	Rights, ecological relationships and proposed social-emotional process	Connects interpretation to observed material

6. Narrative synthesis

The narrative synthesis brought together three evidence roles while preserving the scope of each publication. First, the author summarised the schooling, programme, and health and social intervention contexts reported by the selected publications (Corcoran et al., 2020; Edmonds et al., 2022; Embleton et al., 2023). Second, the author compared descriptions of relationships, participation, and delivery in participant, practitioner, and program accounts, retaining each observation's source type and study identifier. Third, children's rights-oriented interpretation towards access, dignity, participation, and protection (UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017); ecological theory located interactions across schools, families, peers, and services (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); and social-emotional development framed a proposed relational pathway to educational engagement (Elias et al., 1997; Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). The interpretation of the pathway followed each publication's design, reported observations, and identifiable measures. The synthesis provides a focused account of the educational experience and delivery. The supplementary

audit retains the wider candidate set and documents search and eligibility questions for future comprehensive reviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

1. Study characteristics

The reconciliation identified 33 named candidate publications across two earlier source files: 28 in the manuscript's study list and five additional names in the supplementary matrix. These publications were considered in the provenance audit. Three publications were selected for focused synthesis. Corcoran et al. (2020; P1) combine two Kenyan studies (S1a and S1b); Edmonds et al. (2022; P2) describe three children's pathways within one Ugandan program account (S2); and Embleton et al. (2023; P3) examine the implementation of two adapted interventions within one Kenyan case-study publication (S3). Table 2 presents their distinct roles. The differing identification and inclusion totals of the original files remain documented in the revised supplementary audit.

Table 2. Evidence forms, findings and interpretive boundaries of the three selected publications

Publication and study unit	Population, setting and support	Observation and period	Evidence role and measure boundary
P1: Corcoran et al. (2020); S1a doctoral transition study, S1b Mombasa study	Kenya; S1a includes 53 young people aged 12–28 years; S1b concerns young people with sustained street connections. Schooling and transition.	Accounts of fear, shame, acceptance, and belonging during entry or return to education; recalled transition experiences.	Qualitative experience evidence. The Kenyan case in Corcoran and Kaneva (2023) is linked to S1a. Accounts describe participation and transition, while educational effects require dedicated measures.
P2: Edmonds et al. (2022); S2 programme account illustrated by three children's pathways	Uganda; three children aged 14–17 years at the reported points. Building with Bamboo practice, outreach, peer activities, family, and school links.	Narratives across program learning cycles and later pathways describe changing relationships and experiences of education and well-being.	Situated program-process evidence. Individual pathways and narrated changes support the process interpretation within this setting.
P3: Embleton et al. (2023); S3 implementation case study of two adapted interventions	Eldoret, Kenya, 38 street-connected young people, and six facilitators. Two health and social interventions were implemented.	Interviews, focus groups, and observational notes identified trust, gender dynamics, and logistics during implementation.	Implementation evidence. The reported observations address delivery conditions, and measured educational attainment falls outside this publication's study purpose.

The selected publications address different aspects of children's and youth's educational pathways. Kenyan schooling research reports experiences of entering or returning to education. The Ugandan program account describes support across relationships and settings. The Kenyan implementation publication examined the conditions encountered when delivering adapted health and social interventions. These sources contribute to

experience, program process, and implementation evidence. Their comparison is interpretive, with each publication retaining its own scope of evidence.

2. Educational access and experiences of schooling

Corcoran et al. bring together the findings from two studies of street-connected young people's educational experiences in Kenya (Corcoran et al., 2020). The doctoral study (S1a) examined transitions from street life into education or training among 53 young people aged 12–28 years, while the second study (S1b) explored the perspectives of young people who remained street-connected. Participants described schooling as part of their earlier routes towards street life as well as a possible route beyond it. Fear, embarrassment, and shame shaped decisions regarding entering or returning to formal education. Participants associated acceptance and support with a stronger sense of belonging during their school transitions. These findings concern the experiences of educational participation and the conditions surrounding the transition. The related Kenyan analysis by Corcoran and Kaneva draws on S1a and serves as a contextual interpretation of the linked material (Corcoran & Kaneva, 2023).

Kenyan studies pay particular attention to relationships within formal schooling. Participants described difficulties connected with classroom expectations, language, assigned work, and interactions with teachers. Their accounts place belonging alongside access when describing a viable return to school after the pandemic. These observations contribute to the evidence concerning school transitions. A reported school placement and a young person's experience within that placement capture different aspects of engagement; this distinction helps specify what subsequent attendance or retention measures would need to explain.

3. Education within resilience-based programme pathways

Edmonds et al. (S2) examine street-connected children's pathways through the Building with Bamboo resilience programme and related practice at S.A.L.V.E. International in Uganda (Edmonds et al., 2022). Their account follows program activities and relationships with peers, outreach workers, families, communities, and schools. The staff developed activities through cycles of learning and adaptation. Three pathways, involving children described as aged 14–17 years at the time, illustrate changing experiences of education and well-being, including efforts to return to or remain in school. The contribution concerns the relationships described alongside these educational experiences within a particular programme setting.

The Ugandan account describes educational support as a broader set of activities. Street outreach, counselling, care, and skills development accompany contact with families and teachers. Peer activities and opportunities for children to express their experiences are part of the program description. The three narratives describe changes in support and relationships across the program cycles and later pathways. These accounts provide situated process evidence, while their narrated education and well-being experiences retain the status of case descriptions (Edmonds et al., 2022).

4. Intervention delivery and implementation

Embleton et al. (S3) report a qualitative implementation case study of two adapted health and social interventions with street-connected young people in Eldoret, Kenya

(Embleton et al., 2023). Interviews and focus groups involved 38 young people and six facilitators, alongside observational notes. The authors identify trust and authentic relationships, gender dynamics, and operational and logistical planning as implementation considerations. These findings describe how delivery was experienced and organised in a particular setting. They contribute to the review question concerning delivery context; the publication's observations concern implementation rather than measured educational attainment.

Together, the three publications identify different aspects of educational engagement and supportive provision. Corcoran et al. describe encounters with schooling and transition. Edmonds et al. describe children's pathways through resilience-based practice. Embleton et al. examine the delivery of health and social interventions with a related street-connected population. Their evidence can be read together as an account of experience, support and delivery, while each design governs the scope of its own findings. Table 2 makes those roles and limits explicit.

5. Scope of the synthesis

The three publications use different forms of evidence. Accounts of school transition, children's programme narratives and interviews about implementation illuminate distinct questions. Their reported material offers an empirical basis for examining participation and delivery conditions. Attendance, retention and learning are presented through different forms of observation across these sources. The Results therefore describe educational experiences and programme processes; the Discussion develops proportionate implications for practice and future outcome-focused research.

The 33-candidate audit documents the provenance of the broader publication list; the three-publication comparison constitutes the analytical material in this article. Table 2 reports each selected publication's study units, setting, form of finding and interpretive boundary. Bibliographic corrections and conflicting figures from the earlier documents remain in the revised supplementary evidence audit as part of its provenance record.

DISCUSSION

The selected publications addressed educational participation and support from three distinct perspectives. Corcoran et al. reported young people's accounts of earlier classroom encounters, anticipated returns to school, and reception after arrival in two Kenyan studies (Corcoran et al., 2020). Fear, embarrassment, and shame appear alongside acceptance and support, locating participation within everyday educational relationships. Edmonds et al. present three children's pathways within a Ugandan resilience program (Edmonds et al., 2022). Their case accounts describe program activities and evolving connections with peers, practitioners, families, and schools alongside educational experiences. Embleton et al. analysed the delivery of two adapted health and social interventions in Kenya (Embleton et al., 2023). Young people and facilitators identified trust, gender dynamics, and operational planning as considerations during implementation. Taken together, these publications direct attention to relationships and delivery contexts when interpreting opportunities for

educational participation in older adults. Their evidential roles remain distinct: schooling experiences, individual program pathways, and health and social intervention implementation. Estimates of intervention effects and their magnitude require suitable comparisons and outcome measurements.

General Comment No. 21 connects access, dignity, participation, and protection (UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). Participatory studies foreground agency and educational aspirations (Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty, 2024; Kushtiwala & Iqbal, 2023; Miller, 2023). Through this rights lens, Kenyan accounts of shame and acceptance illuminate dignity during transition (Corcoran et al., 2020), alongside contextual studies of inclusive provision and school environments (Fischer & Calabrese Barton, 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2025). Ecological theory maps families, peers, schools and services (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Brazilian research describes relational mobility (Lehtonen, 2025), while a review identifies the individual, family, and community conditions of reintegration (Zewude et al., 2023). Ugandan outreach workers connect families and teachers (Edmonds et al., 2022), while Kenyan evaluations foreground tailored family and community support (Goodman et al., 2023; Greeson et al., 2024). Implementation findings identified trust, gender dynamics, and logistics in two adapted Kenyan health and social interventions (Embleton et al., 2023). Social and emotional learning emphasises emotional regulation and relationships (Elias et al., 1997). Broader student research associates teacher support with engagement (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024), and SEL syntheses report benefits for relationships, school functioning, and learning (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2022). Tanzanian research situates agency within peer networks (McAlpine et al., 2025). The three Ugandan pathways describe supportive relationships that accompany educational participation (Edmonds et al., 2022). Kenyan accounts connect belonging with views of school return and trust with delivery (Corcoran et al., 2020; Embleton et al., 2023). These observations motivate longitudinal tests of belonging, trust, engagement, and learning. Rights specify aims, ecology maps settings, and social-emotional development propose a process. The study design determines the strength of each inference.

Transitions and participation merit practical attention in this regard. Kenyan accounts link school return with acceptance and belonging (Corcoran et al., 2020), alongside research on educational barriers (Sulaiman et al., 2025). Ugandan pathways describe peer, outreach, family, and teacher support (Edmonds et al., 2022), alongside reintegration research (Greeson et al., 2024; Zewude et al., 2023). Schools can establish welcoming routines and ongoing contact, as informed by research on street schools and support services (Fischer & Calabrese Barton, 2025; Howard, 2024; Macleod et al., 2023). Children's priorities can guide regular conversations about learning, safety, and services (Bhattacharyya & Chakraborty, 2024; McAlpine et al., 2025), and participation frameworks also emphasise enabling environments (Cuevas-Parra, 2023). Broader secondary school research associates receptive teaching with student engagement and attendance (Conner et al., 2025). Kenyan implementation accounts foreground trust, gender dynamics, and logistics in two adapted health and social interventions (Embleton et al., 2023). Authorities and outreach organisations can coordinate

entry responsibilities, safeguard referrals, and document participation, consistent with children's rights and multilevel service recommendations (Jørgensen et al., 2024; Teye & Adjetey, 2026). Family involvement and follow-up accompanied reintegration outcomes in Kenya (Goodman et al., 2023). Program reporting should distinguish between access, engagement, participant experience, protection, and learning. Prospective evaluations could test how these proposed practices relate to attendance, retention, and learning.

The evidence has a defined scope. The source audit identified 33 candidate publications across files with conflicting search totals, dates, and category labels. Three traceable publications underpin this focused account, addressing schooling experiences, program pathways, and intervention delivery (Corcoran et al., 2020; Edmonds et al., 2022; Embleton et al., 2023). The Ugandan account follows three children within one program setting (Edmonds et al., 2022). Applying these insights elsewhere requires attention to school arrangements, service capacity, forms of street-connectedness, and family relationships; qualitative transferability depends on the fit between documented and intended contexts (Drisko, 2025). Purposeful selection for traceability and complementary evidence roles shapes this illustrative synthesis; the candidate register provides a basis for a wider study-level appraisal. The linked Kenyan doctoral reports represent a shared empirical material (Corcoran et al., 2020; Corcoran & Kaneva, 2023). Future reviews could maintain reproducible retrieval logs, record study-level eligibility decisions, apply design-appropriate appraisals, and extract intervention components, measures, and observation periods (Lockwood et al., 2024; Young et al., 2024). A Kenyan exploratory evaluation illustrates how reintegration programs can record child and family outcomes (Greeson et al., 2024). Further evaluations could specify transition and relationship practices and examine their associations with attendance, retention, and learning over time.

CONCLUSION

This critical narrative synthesis integrates three purposively selected publications to examine the educational participation and associated support for street-connected children and young people. Accounts of schooling in Kenya describe experiences of shame, acceptance, and belonging during educational transition. Three Ugandan program pathways document educational experiences and evolving relationships with peers, families, practitioners, and schools. Kenyan implementation findings further identified the influence of trust, gender dynamics, and logistical conditions on the delivery of adapted health and social interventions. Collectively, these observations highlight the relational and contextual conditions that shape the educational opportunities.

The framework connects the normative objectives of children's rights with an ecological understanding of support in diverse settings. Social-emotional development is proposed as a relational process informed by the situated program narratives and related observations. However, the design of each publication defines the boundaries of the resulting interpretation. Practical implications include welcoming school entry, maintaining ongoing contact, creating opportunities for children to influence decisions, and strengthening the

coordination between schools and support services. These proposed practices require prospective evaluation using distinct measures of access, attendance, retention, learning, and participant experiences. The application of these insights in other contexts should consider local school arrangements, service capacity, and children's relationships. A broader source audit offers an initial basis for a comprehensive review supported by verified retrieval records, study-level eligibility decisions and design-appropriate appraisal.

CRedit Authorship Contribution

The sole author was responsible for the conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, validation, writing of the original draft, reviewing and editing of the manuscript, and approval of the final version.

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Ethics Statement

This study analysed published research and documentary materials. It did not involve the direct recruitment of participants or the collection of identifiable personal data. Therefore, ethics committee approval and informed consent were not applicable.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare no financial or non-financial competing interests.

Declaration of AI use

During the manuscript preparation, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5.6) to review the language and clarity. The author conducted the analysis, made scholarly decisions, reviewed and revised AI-assisted material, and accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, source attribution, and final content of the article.

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