

Jimma University
College of Social Sciences and Humanities
School of Social Work

Challenges and Opportunities to Reunify Street Children with their Families: The
Case of Asella Love for Children, Non- Governmental Organization

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This is to certify that the thesis conducted by Kasim Aman, entitled: Challenges and Opportunities to Reunify Street Children with their Families: The Case of Asella Love for Children, Non- Governmental Organization and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work. Consequently, the thesis complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards concerning originality and quality.

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Letter of Declaration

I, Kasim Aman, undersigned, and declare that this thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources and materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Abbreviation/Acronym

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSA - Central Statistics Agency

CSC - Consortium of Street Children

DIRC - Drop-in Rehabilitation Center Project

FGDs - Focus Group Discussions

FSCE - Forum for Street Children Ethiopia

GOs – Governmental Organizations

IDI – In-Depth-Interview

ILO -International Labour Organization

KI's – Key informants

MOLSA - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

NGOs – Non- Governmental Organizations

OAU - Organization of African Union

OPRIFS - Organization for Prevention Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children

SICY - Street-Involved Children and Youth

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

UN - United Nations

UNICEF'S - United Nations Children's Fund

Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore challenges and opportunities to reunify street children with their families in the case of Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization. Different attempts were tried so far to reunify them with their families or to support street children both by government and non-governmental organizations but there are still challenges both from the children exposed to street life themselves and from their families in the reunification process. Based on this, my research focused on challenges and opportunities to reunify street children with their families in the study area. In this study, I used a qualitative research approach, constructive paradigm, phenomenology design to understand and describe the lived experience of the participant. Again, I used purposive sampling for the selection of participants of the study and I collected primary data from 32 research participants of the study. Also, I employed data collection methods: in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and document review. I employed thematic data analysis. I used triangulation to check the validity of the data. The findings of the study indicated that family breakdown, death of one of or both of biological parents, family poverty, peer pressure, and living with step-parents are challenges in reunifying children exposed to street life whereas the existence of governmental and non-governmental organizations working on these children are opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable children. Thus, children exposed to street life are vulnerable groups in the society and social workers have a professional responsibility to help those vulnerable children so it's the implication to social work practice, intervention, policy, research, and education, in general, to change their situation better.

Keywords: Children exposed to street, Reunification, Challenges, Opportunities, Family

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, an estimated 100 million to 150 million street children live under difficult circumstances in the developing world of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The lion's share of this figure seems to go to the war-racked and poverty-stricken regions of East Africa. Again, by 1992, the Organization of African Union (OAU) estimated that Africa had about 16 million children on the street and 32 million by the year 2000. For example, a relatively recent estimate indicates that the number of street children in Ethiopia ranges from 150,000 – 600,000 nationally (Kibret, 2017).

Here again, according to an estimate from UNICEF, there are tens of millions of street children across the world. These children are referred to by various terms and categorizations among diverse cultures, but the official definition put forth by the United Nations is “any girl or boy for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults” (Harris et al, 2011).

The phenomenon of street children is rapidly becoming one of the global epic proportions. UNICEF'S annual state of world's children reports has for many years indicated that the extremely difficult circumstances in which children live and work on the streets. It is reported that children living and working on the street are present in all parts of the world. Studies have also indicated that they are more prevalent in the urban areas of developing countries. However, their mobility makes it difficult to get reliable statistics (Mahderehiwot, 2014).

The problem of children living on the street is a global phenomenon. It has created countless problems for millions of children in all parts of the world. They live a temporary lifestyle and lack necessities. In the world, street children exist on the margins of society, living in inhumane conditions, suffering from hunger, harassment, and physical abuse, deprived of basic services such as education and health care, society also threatens them as outsiders rather than as children to be nurtured and protected.

According to Azmeraw (2015), the social rank of street children is lower; they are alienated from society. Besides, because they have no strong and sustainable relationship with other social groups than street children their presence is seen with fear and suspicion. Consequently, street children live separating themselves from the rest of the society and they rely on each other for security, friendship, and to learn street life. However, their sense of belongingness and friendship fulfill their psychological and social needs in a way that is not acceptable by society.

Strengthening family caring capacities can help reduce the number of children who turn to the street to survive. When a child is out of the care of his or her birth parents there is an immense number of emotions, thoughts, and concerns experienced by both the child and the parents, but the goal is for the family to reunify whenever possible. Family reunification is an important part of child welfare and it is especially important to both the children and their parents. The primary permanency plan for families who had removed children is family reunification (Theses, 2019).

As Wondwosen (2015) explains reunification had ample benefits like (helping the children to reintegrate with their families and communities, protecting them from further abuse, and post-reunification follow up in assisting to know the current status of those reunified children and helped to see the real impacts of safe home services on the lives of those children) it also contributes to problems on children.

To promote successful and enduring reunification, stronger efforts should be made to strengthen families of street children as soon as early intervention, providing sufficient reconstructive services to allow children and biological parents to reunite as soon as possible. Another factor inhibiting the reunification of street children with their biological parents could be the high unemployment ratio according to the study conducted in South Africa. Parents find it very hard to adjust to being capable parents (Villiers, 2008). With the reunification of children to their parents, the financial expenditure of the government concerning vulnerable and street children will decrease, providing more funds to alleviate poverty. According to Walton (1993), the government prefers and encourages social workers to reunify children with parents due to the alarming costs of foster care to the state, and the difficulty in finding suitable adoptive parents.

Despite the importance of stability in a child's life, reunification services have not

attracted the degree of research attention as have other child welfare services, such as family preservation and child protection. Thus, the evidence base for successful reunification programs and practices was especially thin. The research that was available on foster care reentry focused on predictive characteristics of children who reenter the child welfare system within 12 months of being reunified as well as those of their families (Foundation et al., 2010).

Streetlife is not an easy life. Mostly the challenges children on the street encountered are out of one's control and they are subjected to it. The street environment develops the endurance power to tolerate various abuses which can be physical, psycho-social, or sexual. Consequently, they are highly affected by communicable diseases and suffer from a lack of potable water, food, and shelter and are sometimes exposed to a car accident when they run here and there in search of edible things and playing with each other on the street and also chased by a policeman. Children on the street may face many challenges in their everyday lives; the major one is meeting their necessities such as food, cloth, and shelter. Children on the street do not have a constant source of material and financial resources; they, therefore, have to go to great lengths to make sure that they have food and cloth. Again, children on the street face while living on the street is finding decent and secure sleeping places. Most of them sleep outside, thus being exposed to sexual abuse and bad weather condition on the street that might cause health problems (Zerihun, 2018).

Hence, this study aimed to explore challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with family in the case of Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization in Asella town.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The existence of children exposed to street life is very much prevalent in densely populated urban hubs of developing or economically unstable regions, such as countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia (Shrivastava et al., 2016). The problem of children being exposed to street life is becoming a worldwide phenomenon since these children exist in every part of the world.

According to the study conducted by Mahderehiwot (2014) on the experience of street children in the rehabilitation program in Addis Ababa in the case of drop-in rehabilitation center project (DIRC) child space program and come up with the findings that Street children face

infinite challenges when they are leaving on the street among them difficult of meeting their basic needs like food, cloth and finding decent and secure sleeping places, lack of access to services such as health, education as well as different kinds of violence is another challenge perpetuated. Moreover, her findings showed that mutual supporting groups with peers is one of the main coping strategies street children use among the different coping mechanisms while they are on the street as well as in the rehabilitation center. Here, in her study, the reunification of children exposed to street life within the family context as well as challenges and opportunities available to reunify children exposed to street life is not indicated. So, here we can clearly understand that both areas, as well as the conceptual gap, were observed because I conducted my study in exploring challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life in Asella.

Again Wondwosen (2015) conducted a study on attributes of reunification on psychosocial lives of sexually abused children in the case of the Organization for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS) in Addis Ababa and his findings show that reunifications result in shorter and longer-term psychological and social problems and the children show a feeling of fear, depression and poor peer relationship. In the same manner in his study, he didn't indicate the challenges and opportunities to reunify street children with their family's conceptual gap as well as he didn't include the problem of male children exposed to street life in his study. On the other hand, the area of his study is quite different from my study area, where we can observe the area gap as well because I conducted my study on challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life in Asella.

Another study conducted by Zerihun (2018) on factors leading to children on the street, challenges, and their coping mechanism in the Piassa area, Arada Sub-City of Addis Ababa indicate that the number of children on the street increases mainly due to socio-cultural and economic factors but, in his study, he didn't indicate the challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with family. Whereas my study focused on challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with family in Asella town so, the area gap, as well as the conceptual gap between Zerihun studies and my study.

The study conducted by Azmeraw (2015) on the problem and coping strategy of street children in the Case of Nekemte town indicate that street children are exposed to various problems on the street which include lack of basic needs (food, cloth, and shelter), health problems, abuse (physical, sexual and verbal), psychological and social problems, vulnerability to engage in crime, lack of water and sanitation, and substance abuse but in the study, he didn't indicate the challenges and opportunities to reunify children exposed to street life with the family context. Here, his area of study and conceptual approach is different from my study because I conducted my study in Asella town on challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life so, conceptual as well as area gap between Azmeraw study and my study were demarcated. Methodologically, Azmeraw applied a mixed research approach while he conducted his study but I employed a qualitative research approach in my study. So, here again, there was a methodological gap between his study and my study.

According to Mekonnen (2011), streets are becoming one of the major challenges of all urban areas of Ethiopia. The capital city Addis Ababa especially is among the cities that are highly affected by the problem of street children. Since 1974 there have been attempts to research the problems of these children in the country in general and particularly in Addis Ababa. From here we can see that most of the researches conducted in the area of street children were emphasizing around Addis Ababa while the zonal towns and cities lack attention, and the area gap, as well as the context of the reunification of these vulnerable group, couldn't get much emphasis in the previous researches particularly in Ethiopia and especially in the study area, in Asella.

According to the study conducted by Zerihun (2018) factors leading to children on the street, challenges, and their coping mechanism in Addis Ababa at paisa area of Arada Sub-city and come up with the findings related to push and pull factors for children to be on the street but the mechanism of reunification with family is not considered as well as the possible opportunities to way out these children from the problems they face, to bettering their survival. So, my research address/fills these contextual, and area gaps as well as help to increase our knowledge of understanding about the reunification of children exposed to street life in general and in the study area in particular. Even though there are significant challenges of street children in the different regional cities and zonal towns there are no researches as such conducted in the

area of challenges of the reunification of street children as well as possible opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable groups of children.

Hence, the focus of this study was to explore the challenges and opportunities to reunify children exposed to street life with their families, the children exposed to street life in the reunification process and to see what they experience challenges to reunify, and how both children, as well as the families, overcome challenges encountered throughout the reunification.

1.3 Basic Research Questions

- 1) What are the challenges of reunifying children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children?
- 2) What are the opportunities available for reunifying children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children?
- 3) What are the mechanisms used to reunify children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children?
- 4) What are the roles of family in the process of reunifying children exposed to street life in Asella Love for Children?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to explore challenges and opportunities in the reunification process of children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the challenges of reunifying children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children.
2. To describe the opportunities available for reunifying children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children.

3. To identify the mechanisms used to reunify children exposed to street life with family in Asella Love for Children.
4. To distinguish the roles of family in the reunification process of children exposed to street life in Asella Love for Children.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study focused on a vulnerable group of children exposed to street life and has an important contribution to address the problem of these children. So, the study can contribute to inform about the problem in the study area for policymakers to plan to address the problems. Again, addressing the issue of these vulnerable children to concerned bodies can have a significant contribution to the children as well as to the area to get attention from both government and non-governmental organizations in turn these can minimize the social problems.

Children represent hope and the future in every society; therefore, solving the problems of children in general and solving the problems of children exposed to street life, in particular, can serve as an input for sustainable development. For this reason, the researcher is interested in the issues of challenges and opportunities in children exposed to the street life reunification process with family, these are the most vulnerable part of every society.

On the other way, solving the problems of children exposed to street life through reunification in general and minimizing the challenges through reunification, in particular, can serve as an input for policymakers, concerned stakeholders, researchers and particularly have special meaning for children exposed to street life who are a vulnerable group of the community in general. For this reason, the researcher is interested in the challenges and opportunities on the issues of children exposed to street life who are the most vulnerable part of every society. The researcher believed the situation of children exposed to street life addressed to the different stakeholders such as, the GO's, NGO's and the community at large, and the reunification of children exposed to street life need special attention to the family in particular since these children are tomorrow's youngsters who are contributing to the nation's development. Thus, the situation of children exposed to street life and the multifaceted problems they were facing needs to be well addressed and require a lasting solution.

Hence, this research study served as a baseline or reference so that interested researchers can conduct further study on the area of challenges and opportunities in the reunification of

children exposed to street life with family. Also, in the same manner, interested non-governmental and governmental organizations, as well as other concerned bodies who are willing to support and work on the area of children exposed to street life reunification, can use my research findings as a baseline or can use as reference in their future career.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the challenges and opportunities in children exposed to street life reunification with family. Therefore, the study was delimited geographically to Asella town, the Asella Love for Children, a non-government organization. The study was also delimited conceptually to children exposed to street life reunification in the study area to explore challenges and opportunities available. On the other hand, this study was delimited in terms of methodological approach, qualitative approach with constructivism paradigms as well as phenomenological research design was employed. More specifically it was limited to clients of this non-governmental organization.

Again, the study was delimited in terms of the participant of the study, the participants were children exposed to street life but reunified back and with an age range from 13-18 years including from both sex who were clients of Asella Love for Children that intervened and they were appropriate for this study because they were already reunified with their family through Asella Love for Children, non-governmental organization.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The researcher does not claim that these findings are conclusive or definitive, because children exposed to street life are living in every part of the world and it's a common problem but as a result of time and budget constraints this study is limited in Asella Love for Children, NGO working on children exposed to street life reunification, with a limited number of participants for this particular study i.e., only 32 research participants involved. Again, the researcher expecting that it is difficult to meet children 's parents because either the parents had died or the children had no idea of their parents or the children did not want anyone to meet their parents because of traumatic experiences in the past, shame, difference or anxiety.

There is also difficulty in getting the current statistics of children exposed to street life in the study area since not yet been published neither by the government nor by the national and international non-governmental organizations are some of the limitations to be mentioned.

The other limitation is the current challenge of a pandemic COVID-19 in the world and particularly in the Ethiopian context so, it's difficult to involve more participants in the study. So, the problem of the current COVID-19 is beyond the health problem and also affects socio-economic aspects of the individual as well.

1.8 Operational Definition

Street Children/ Children Exposed to Streetlife: boys and girls, below eighteen years, who are exposed to street life in this particular study. In fact, for this particular study children exposed to street life can be alternatively used with street children and for this particular study, the definition holds for both sexes whose age is between thirteen to eighteen years and these children already reunified with their family and living currently with their family.

Family: Family is defined as a specific group of people that may be made up of partners, children, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents.

Reunification: it is a process involving the reintegration of the child into a family environment that may have changed significantly from the environment the child left.

Challenges: these are possible obstacles encountered both from the street children's side and the family in the process of reunification.

Opportunities: the advantage that helps in the reunification process of street children with their families and necessary inputs are essential for a better way to change the situation of street children in the study area.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Concept of Street Children

The term street children are commonly used in literature and initially defined by UNICEF as boys and girls aged under 18 for whom the street has become home and /or their source of livelihood and who are improperly protected or supervised. Children are the hope of society and humanity (Mahderehiwot, 2014).

Through children, societies reproduce themselves, establish nexus with successive generations and thereby keep the wheel rolling. However, children are not people of tomorrow alone. They are still individuals in themselves with needs to be attended to the right at the present. The needs of street children are so fundamental that they are considered, in more recent years and almost uniformly across the globe, as the rights of children and the responsibilities of nations. It is almost two and half decades since the UN has institutionalized these rights and responsibilities as a convention, “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”. According to this Convention, all children of the world have, among others, the right to survival and development, to be free from discrimination of all sorts, to be given priority in every decision affecting their life, and to take part in such decisions. Ratifying this Convention, many member states have been taking different measures to fulfill the promises entered. These measures extend from paper (i.e., redressing existing or formulating new policies, laws, and programs) down to fieldwork for promoting the development of child-friendly environments (Kibret, 2017).

As UNICEF (2001) defined *a street child as any boy or girl who has not reached adulthood*, for whom the street has become her or his habitual abode and/ or sources of livelihood, one who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. What is clear from the above definition of a street child is that such a child leaves home to stay on the street and the street not only becomes the child’s home but also the source of a living. Such a child assumes full responsibility for his or her own life. Street children are further as either ‘on the street’ or ‘of the street’. Children ‘of the street’ live and sleep on the streets in urban areas and streets are their homes whereas children ‘on the street’ have their homes and only come to the streets to beg for money during the day and return home in the evening. The former group has no contact with family while the latter lives with family (Martinsson, 2017).

“Street children are among the most invisible and, therefore, hardest children to reach with vital services, such as education and health care, and the most difficult to protect” (Crombach et al 2014).

The definition of street children recognizes a variety of street-based situations that exist for young people, but it is still limited in that the phrase “street child” continues to imply particular situations. As researchers and practitioners have discovered more about the daily realities of life on the street, specific definitions fail to fully explain the lived realities that many young people experience there (Corcoran, 2016).

The United Nations issued a Resolution on the Plight of Street Children in 1992, expressing concern over their emergence and marginalization. This resulted in street children rehabilitation interventions on local and regional levels which provide safety, healthcare, counseling, education, vocational training, legal aid, love, food, clothing, sports, recreation, and other social development services (Lumumba, 2017).

The term “street children” has been debated in various quarters about the motive behind its use. The term street children itself has almost disappeared from the welfare and analytical literature according to some researchers, which now uses different appellations to refer to street children and other underprivileged groups. Kapadia (1997), pointed out that, welfare agencies now talk of “urban children at risk” who conceptualize street children as one of several groups most at risk and require urgent attention. Why street children are considered as children at risk can only be attributed to the harsh conditions children have to face on the street. Some agencies argue that the term “street children are inappropriate because it creates an artificial category and diverts attention from the interconnected dimensions of child vulnerability” (Owusuaa, 2010).

2.2 Categories of Street Children

Despite their cultural differences, street children represent a worldwide phenomenon. Examination of literature indicates that the backgrounds of street children are remarkably similar. Even though, some different countries and regions have different structures of the existing policy on street children. Many street children come from structurally disadvantaged homes with poor living conditions. Parental losses through deaths or shortages of housing force children onto the streets to survive. Streetlife is an adaptive response to the stress experienced

by families living in poor conditions. The move onto the streets can represent a desire to take control and displace old values and habits with new ones (Martinsson, 2017).

The street child population has also been categorized into two overlapping groups: 1) “of-the-street” children, who are children having no contact with family and hardly ever return home and: 2) “on-the-street” children, who often sleep at home but are based on the street during the day. Street children have been shown to roam the streets of urban areas begging and looking for jobs to obtain food and other necessities. They usually work in poor conditions that are dangerous to their health and starve some days. Street children are reported to often be found in busy places such as railway stations, bus stations, in front of film or nightclubs, with no adult supervision, sleeping in half-destroyed houses, abandoned basements, under bridges, and in the open air. Street children are typically between the ages of six and seventeen and they live “without the support of traditional societal structures, such as family, school, religious institutions, and community institutions” (Cumber & Tsoka-gwegweni, 2016).

The literature that exists internationally classifies street children as either being on the street or of the street. Children on the street represent the vast majority of children who are classified as street children. They are sometimes referred to as “market children” because they work in markets, as street vendors selling gum, candy, etc., or they perform as singers or dancers or do odd jobs such as shine shoes or provide tourist assistance. These children frequently live with their families, bringing home food or money they earn in the streets to help the family survive. Additionally, because many countries do not have mandatory free public education, a significant number of these children cannot afford to attend school, and many who are enrolled in school do not go because they need to work to survive. Working in the streets, these children learn deviant behavior and neglect their education. Children of the street have left their families to live full time in the streets. They typically come from a family where conflict, death of a parent, war, and alcohol and drug abuse are common. Children of the street are considerably more likely than market children (on the street) to sniff glue, use alcohol, smoke tobacco, get arrested by police, earn money by begging and stealing, be criminally victimized, and suffer from health problems. Children of the street are also subject to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by the police who view them as criminals and try to force them off the streets (Harris et al., 2011).

In addition to difficulties in categorizing children, and the wide range of potential responses and starting points, there is enormous diversity within the countries of Asia and the Pacific. The region has varied economies and political systems that provide very different contexts for the reasons why children come to the streets, the problems they face on the street, their prospects for moving on from the street, and a wide range of government as well as civil society responses and interventions available to street children (Andrew, 2003).

A major difficulty in estimating street child populations is that definitions of the term street children 'are contested and Without an accepted definition of the term street children it is not possible to determine their number accurately The pressure for numerical and therefore definitional certainly has at times led researchers to squeeze children into very poorly fitting boxes (Thomas de Benítez, 2011).

2.3 Possible Causes of Street Children

Research has recently focused on two main categories of factors that either “push” or “pull” children into street life. Factors aligned with “pushing” children to the streets include abuse, neglect, food deprivation, and homelessness, and the factors attributed to “pulling” or attracting children to the streets include earning income, being with close friends, or the lure of nice things in the city. As (Harris et al., 2011) notes that, “All factors leading to street life are rooted in extreme poverty”.

A sub-study concerning children within the human sciences research council study of street children was carried out in South Africa and come up with the findings in the article were that the number of children on the streets is an indicator of the number of children living in poverty in South Africa. The issue can only be reduced through preventive initiatives by reducing the number of families living in poverty and supporting families so they can raise their children safely. Street children are a consequence of poverty, low education, abuse, and lack of parenthood. Several different scholars write push-factors such as situations of abuse, domestic violence, or poor family relationships are common among street children. It can go as far as their situation within the home becomes unbearable and they choose to live on the street. Some of the preventative work reduces the number of children living on the street, it is therefore important that organizations put in the significant effort at an early stage. Also as a measurable instrument of the work and methods that are practiced by social workers (Martinsson, 2017). The lack of

preventive work reduces the alternatives for street children and pushes them involuntarily to the street.

In some instances, it is parents or guardians who send the children to work on the streets to support their families and others are forced on the streets to find food and shelter which is not forthcoming from their families. Street children face untold hardship and danger on the streets. The lack of food, clean water, and adequate health care. Living and 'working' on the streets exacts a terrible toll on street children. They are often prey to every physical and moral danger and as they grow older, they often become a danger to others. After such precarious childhoods, most of them are condemned to spend their lives excluded from mainstream society (Kopoka, 2000).

Street children by the nature of their lifestyle including their living and working conditions fall within the category of the most vulnerable children. Their rights to a quality life, education, shelter, food, health care, parental care, protection from physical and emotional abuse, harmful child labor, and the use of harmful drugs are violated or denied. A general reluctance to understand the root causes for the widespread phenomena of street children is an important element for a general inability to address this issue. Despite efforts that conceptualize street children as “vulnerable” or “children at risk in need of protection”, the prevailing view is that they are really “delinquents” who come from very poor backgrounds and uncaring parents (Mahderehiwot, 2014)

2.4 Challenges of Street Children

Millions of children sleep on the streets every night, separated from family and reliable shelter. Estimating the number of children who sleep on the street, or spend most of their time on the street instead of in school, is a source of consternation for policy-makers, researchers, and program implementers. Estimates of street-involved children and youth (SICY) listed in the early 2000s reached as high as 100 million worldwide. Recent statistical modeling approaches have challenged this estimate, proposing a more conservative 10-15 million street-involved children. Empirically, it is a challenge to enumerate the number of children living on the streets globally, as SICY are often transient, rightfully reluctant to engage with adult authorities, and not easily categorized (Goodman et al., 2020).

The number of street-connected children and young people worldwide has been estimated at around 100 million although this figure is widely contested. It is recognized that exact numbers are unknown and estimates vary, due in part to political motivations. Numbers differ depending on whether estimated by governments or non-government organizations (NGOs). The definition and status of the problem have traditionally differed for Europe and other high-income countries, although some of the structural antecedents such as inequalities or social exclusion may be similar (Coren & Martin, 2014).

The tide of concern for the problem of street children initially evolved out of the issues raised in the early 1980s following the International Year of the Child. The plight of street children has become more visible as the role of tourism and mass media dissemination of highly publicized incidents of violence against street children served to galvanize the image of street children as an international problem. However, the presence of children living, working, and playing in the street as part of the process of industrialization and urbanization is not a recent phenomenon. Increased population migration from rural subsistence farms to developing urban areas has led to chronic unemployment and the emergence of makeshift shantytowns that consist of millions of impoverished families living in substandard housing that lacks water and electricity. Industrialization and urbanization have meant major economic, social, and cultural changes that have placed a tremendous strain on millions of families, cultivating problems of poverty, homelessness, malnourishment, illness, and illiteracy (Harris et al., 2011). In turn, these all are assumed to have an impact on the reunification of children exposed to street life with their families.

The community sees child labor as one of the top child protection risks in the community, along with physical abuse. Other sources of harm for children in these communities are parental lack of awareness of healthy parenting, child abuse, and child protection, and parents' death or divorce (Retrack Ethiopia, 2014).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has labeled street children as "children in difficult circumstances", who represent a minority population that has been under-represented for too long in health research. This is a concern because street children are at risk of carrying a greater disease burden. Their homeless lifestyle makes them more vulnerable to health risks and problems than children who live at home; as they roam the streets begging for food and money to

obtain basic needs and are found sleeping in half-destroyed houses, abandoned basements, under bridges, and in the open air (Cumber & Tsoka-gwegweni, 2016).

Attempts were also made to determine some of the major effects of child streets on the survival and development of the children. One major effect, particularly for “genuine street children”, was a change in the living arrangement of the children from home to streets with a wide range of child-unfriendly places of stay or sleep such as bars open streets, and verandas. In the streets, the children are meant to lead a life without adequate parental care, guidance, and protection. This in turn would lead to the disruption of the regular and developmentally constructive routines for the children. Schooling was observed seriously negotiated; children were engaged in income-generating activities for a period that was extended enough to a level that ILO normally prescribes for adults.

The extended work does not only consume street children's time for schooling and play. It is in some cases heavy and dangerous to them. Children were able to sustain their life with what is achieved through it and they were also observed supporting others (friends, siblings, and parents). However, the money earned from it, and possibly lack of adult supervision, has led many of them to engage in substance abuse (cigarettes, shisha, glue, quat, alcohol) and destructive routines (like begging, stealing, gambling) when running short of money to buy these substances. Behavior problems (being abusive; getting rude; restlessness; growing cold, shy, frightened...), sexual risks (commercial sex, early sexual engagement, failure to use or inconsistency to use condom), and health concerns (physical, medical, emotional...) were also among the commonly observed negative effects of street children. The most pressing problems faced by street children are malnutrition and health risks, police violence, drugs, prostitution, and rape (Kibret, 2017).

Street children's lives are marked by frequent and in some cases continuous exposure to violence. They have typically already suffered abuse at home in dysfunctional families, and have grown up in poverty-afflicted, chaotic neighborhoods, experiencing both violence in the street, and mistreatment by police forces. These violent experiences, combined with the constant insecurity of having to struggle to find food and shelter, but these children at substantial risk of developing trauma-related mental disorders. Several studies suggest that children living in the streets frequently suffer from behavioral and emotional difficulties, such as low self-esteem,

suicidal ideation or even suicidal, alcohol and substance abuse, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Crombach et al., 2014).

The children for many families are on top of parents' priorities. They are sent to school to have their formal studies and be nurtured on the many aspects in life other than those which the parents could extend to them. But sometimes some families forgot that sending to school is just one of the numerous obligations of parents. There are children, who spend and sleep in a house with ill-prepared adults, and some live entirely in the streets and have no adult supervision or care, the latter are considered street children. They are most often deprived of family care and protection. Most children on the streets are between 10 to 14 years old, and their population between different cities varied. Particularly street children are those not taken care of by their parents or other guardians for protection. In developing, countries street children exist in many major cities and these street children may be the subject of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by residents and transients in the said place (Bocar, 2015).

Children living on the street should be understood in light of a growing global discourse on child labor and children's rights. As it stands now, work is a vital activity in the lives of street children to take care of their basic needs and their right to work as children has always been in contention. The work of street children is very important to them. In many regions of the world, the phenomenon of street children is a huge issue, while in others it is not. "Street children are said to be an alarm signaling the dire need for social development and poverty reduction policies to improve the situation in the community at large, and to prevent more young people from becoming marginalized". This is because poverty is often cited as one major reason for being on the street. A survey conducted by a group of researchers revealed that most street children go on the street first and foremost to work for money to buy their personal effects such as clothing, cooking pots, bowls, and buckets (Owusuaa, 2010).

Much work focused on establishing the hallmarks of a street lifestyle and the characteristics of street children in terms of their use of public spaces and their links with family and public institutions. 'to understand the burgeoning urban phenomenon' of street children.

- Street children perceived as delinquents are more likely to be feared, excluded, and subjected to random and state-led violence, and are more likely to end up in the penal system.

- Street children perceived as victims are more likely to be treated as passive objects of welfare rather than as subjects of rights.
- Children whose characteristics fall outside the street child‘ stereotype may become invisible to policy-makers, service-providers, the media, and the public (Thomas de Benítez, 2011).

According to the research conducted about the harmful consequences of the phenomenon of street children reveals the fact that these children have problems in all aspects of growth (physical, kinesthetic, emotional, psychological, social, and intellectual) (Zarezadeh, 2013).

The precise number of street children throughout the world is still unknown. This is, in part, due to the difficulty in identifying these children. Streetlife is such a fundamental component of poor economies and societies with vastly disproportionate living wages that these children blend into the societal picture, making their necessitated presence on the streets so much the norm that there is a lack of perception that a problem exists. Difficulty tracking the number of street children is also due to inconsistent definitions and categorizations of these children. Further complicating the issue is the anonymity of street children because they are constantly moving and unlikely to reside in a shelter or program where data are collected. Additionally, they avoid medical treatment due to their fear of those in authority and their desire to stay hidden to prevent being sent to prison or back home (Harris et al., 2011).

2.5 Defining Reunification

Reunification refers to the ‘services that are provided for purposes of returning children who have been placed in out-of-home care to their families of origin. Family reunification is the primary permanency goal for the majority of children who have been placed outside of their families. While family reunification is commonly understood as the physical reunion of the child to the family after out-of-home placement, it also involves the planned processes that strive toward reconnecting or maintaining connections of children with their families of origin. In addition, historically, family reunification was understood as an ‘either-or’ process where children were either reunified with their families or caregiver. In more recent arguments though, a “less compartmentalized approach” changed the meaning of family reunification into a

continuum that could include varied outcomes such as periodic visitations or maintaining partial contact (Sauls, 2015).

Scholars such as Faircloth (2013) describe the emphasis that has been placed on parenthood as a significant influence on the development of children. In terms of this perspective, parents are perceived as ‘God-like’ as their actions determine each child’s development and future. This view highlights the ideological premise that the role and influence of parents are highly individualized as well as its influence on the lives of children as well as society in general. Consequently, parenting policies are constructed on the ideology that ‘good’ parenting will develop ‘good’ children and therefore a better functioning society. This individualization of parenthood emphasizes the parents themselves and avoids the importance of structural conditions.

According to Gillies (2008), intimate family relationships tended to be viewed as private and outside the remit of state intervention. This boundary is increasingly challenged to regulate citizenship at the level of the family. In terms of its parenting role, Faircloth (2013) states that ‘the family’ has been problematized as a reliable context for childrearing. As a result, childrearing has become an object of policymaking.

According to Furedi (2002), this is related to the notion that social challenges are intergenerational. Consequently, a range of policy initiatives has been created to ‘support’ parenting as a crucial determinant of children’s behavior and life chances. Family reunification, like other contemporary practice theories, draws on family values, assumptions, and philosophies to promote the positive growth and development of children. Research in child welfare has been focused on the risk factors that bring children into out-of-home care, and the impact of care on children, but much less is known about the needs, processes, and impacts of the biological family as a protective factor in children’s development during care.

Returning to birth parents is the placement that carries the greatest risk of poor outcomes. This is so whether placement stability, remaining safe from further maltreatment, or a range of well-being measures, are used as outcome indicators. The only outcome indicator on which reunification scores best (alongside placement with kin) is having a sense of identity and personal history. Of all the child welfare services studied over the past few decades, reunification services have rarely attracted the kind of attention dedicated to other child welfare services, such

as family preservation. Thus, the evidence base for successful reunification programs and practices is especially thin, even by child welfare standards. Family for every child is a global network of civil society organizations working to ensure more children can grow up safe and protected in families and be provided with quality, appropriate temporary alternative care if needed. A prime aim of this work is to enable children to live within their own families, either by preventing loss of parental care or by reintegrating children who have become separated (Elaine, 2018).

Another way to lessen the incidence of children winding up on the streets is to strengthen the institution of the family. As the basic component of society, the family has hardly ever been given adequate recognition by governments. Paradoxically, it is only recently when it is most threatened, that its natural virtues are being rediscovered. Although many governments have developed policies aimed at assisting the elderly, the unemployed, or single working women, few have focused specifically on strengthening the cohesion of the family as a component of development strategy (Kopoka, 2000).

According to Theses (2019), it is important to understand how potentially traumatizing the removal experience can be on both the child and the parents. For example, parents may experience shame and guilt and even struggle with their self-esteem and their perception of themselves as a parent, all of which can take a toll on the reunification process. Children may experience some resentment and anger toward their parents. While there were services such as family therapy to be utilized as a part of the family reunification process there should be some sort of positive reinforcement, such as a reunification celebration, once services were completed and family reunification happens (Theses, 2019).

Successful reunification is characterized as a service where both the child and the parents are engaged in family reunification (Miller, 2004:32). This means that both the child and the parents will be involved in decision-making and commit to working with the designated social worker. De Villiers (2008:5) strongly believes that the designated social worker should give more attention to strengthening and supporting families while their children are in care, as this can allow parents to reunite with the child as soon as possible. However, because of the high caseloads, designated social workers may not be able to focus on strengthening families.

2.6 Street Children Reunification

All interventions concerning children's welfare are necessarily rooted in several cultural assumptions and beliefs regarding who children are, what they should do, who should look after them, and where they should live. The attitudes towards children have continually metamorphosed over the centuries through different social, cultural, and economic contexts, with perhaps the most significant change occurring with the advent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. The move from viewing children as objects with needs to the active social participants with rights was in many ways revolutionary for the development community and ushered in new guiding principles for working with children such as safeguarding the right of children to participate in decisions affecting their lives. The importance of 'family' as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights above has had a powerful impact on the lives and identities of individuals all around the world. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990) echoes many of its sentiments and even goes so far as to assert that the family is the 'natural environment' for the 'full and harmonious development of children's personalities' (Feeny, 2005).

The scientific literature indicates that family empowerment, particularly through identity reinforcement and the development of a group identity, is necessary as families prepare to be reunified. When a family considers itself a group, it makes a greater effort to stay together. As children prepare to return home from temporary care, several strategies are used to reinforce the feeling of connection, such as increasing visitations and parental involvement in important events or providing parental capacities (Balsells et al., 2014).

By their very existence, family reunification programs presuppose the existence of a definite and bounded entity or unit the 'family' from which a child has been separated and to which they may be returned. But what exactly is 'family'? Who does it refer to? What kind of relationships does it entail? And what makes a 'family' suitable for reunification rather than any particular group of individuals? (Feeny, 2005).

Children should be protected from violence, fear, and helplessness. They should be motivated by reward rather than punishment. In the case of residential centers, a transparent structure has to be created and communicated, detailing when and how children are to be sent back to their families of origin. Since the final goal of residential centers is the successful

reintegration of the children into society, frequent contact between children and family has to be a very high priority. The educators should have the opportunity to engage in activities with the children that allow them to bond and to help the children to establish trusting relationships (Crombach et al., 2014).

2.7 Challenges of Street Children Reunification

Following reunification, the financial needs of caregivers increase. Initially, caregivers seem able to cope with the child being reunified. However, as time progresses, parents struggle to maintain the child. Meeting the educational needs of children and providing specialized care for children with 'special needs is particularly challenging for caregivers (Sauls, 2015). The reunified parents indicated that due to the inadequate quality and content of reunification preparation by providers, they had experienced some adjustment challenges after their child returned home from the street (Foundation et al., 2010).

There are also different reasons why children are in street-facing various challenges arising from their living environment. Street children encounter many challenges while they are living on the street. The main problems which are exposing children to street life are family poverty which is they can't accommodate their children's basic needs (food, clothes, in some cases shelter), and due to alcoholic parents being involved in physical abuses of their children. Moreover, loss of family members at an early age due to different reasons, lack of extended parents and relatives to assist them, and family breakdown or divorce followed by marital to a stepmother who might abuse them physically and psychologically and the environment (peer and community) influence are the major factors that expose children to street life. In the main, while these factors have an adverse influence on the street children reunification process (Mahderehiwot, 2014).

On the other way, an array of risk factors and challenges exist when reunifying children and caregivers. These contingent factors stem from financial constraints to influencing ideologies of parenting. Single-handedly, these factors do not fail reunification. Rather, a combination of factors can negatively influence the process. In some cases, challenges seem possible to overcome; in others, it is far more challenging (Sauls, 2015).

2.8 Opportunities of Reunifying Street Children

Social networks and the extended family type also have played a significant role in street children reunification. The community's potential social capital and social networks can be assumed to help in the reunification of street children with their families. 2011 provides an exceptional opportunity to reflect on knowledge accumulated through research about street children and a profound responsibility to use this reflection wisely to benefit street children's interests. 2011 is exceptional because:

- The UN Human Rights Council has dedicated a full day to discussing street children on 9th March 2011 and will adopt a UN Resolution on Street Children the first since 1994
- CSC will launch the International Day for Street Children on 12th April 2011
- The African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child have dedicated 16th June 2011, the Day of the African Child, to street children

This contributes to preparations for these events by drawing attention to and interpreting the latest research on street children: their numbers and characteristics, everyday experiences and voices; their family relationships, spatial mobility, and careers their lived lives, in other words (Thomas de Benítez, 2011).

According to Thomas (2011), all interventions concerning children are necessarily rooted in many cultural assumptions and beliefs regarding who children are, what they should do, who should look after them, and where they should live. Depending on the organization that they approach, reunification may be one of the alternatives put forward for their consideration and they were more likely at this time than perhaps any other to give it serious thought.

On the other way, Thomas (2008) stated that the reunification program was undeniably helping the abused, stigmatized, and victimized children. The benefits and contributions of the reunification program were in the process of helping the psychological and social wellbeing of those vulnerable, discriminated, voiceless, and victimized children.

According to Wondwoson (2015) need-based and asset-based solutions or relief, assistance brought the needed change among the individuals. It shaped the local community to be helping those individuals and to use other available resources like their assets, skills, natural potentials, and talents for problems not supported by other community development systems.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated the importance of family as a powerful impact on the lives and identities of individuals all around the world. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) stated family is the 'natural environment' for the 'full and harmonious development of children's personalities. So, this reunification helps family members to play vital roles to assist their children to cope up with the family and community environment in the developmental process of those children within the community.

2.9 The Global and Regional Perspective of Street Children Reunification

In the study conducted in Zambia Harju (2013) it has been indicated that street children poverty is not limited to financial aspect rather it manifests itself in the form of susceptibility to 'exploitation', 'crime', 'violence'; negative perception of the society; lack of access to different services; substance abuse; feeling wasted years, etc. African countries have many good national laws and some are specifically aimed at street children, but these policies are often not properly implemented or evaluated. According to UNICEF, the street children phenomenon presents one of the most complex challenges in low- and middle-income countries for policymakers today (Cumber & Tsoka-gwegweni, 2016).

A question that we must increasingly ask ourselves is how long must it take before the problem of street children attracts the proper attention that it deserves? How many more children must first take to the streets or die because of lack of care on our streets before we can acknowledge that the problem of street children is a very serious one which is likely to affect all of us? The probable answer, given present-day conditions in Africa, is that the problem of street children has to grow to enormous proportions before it gets the attention it deserves. This is a tragedy that cannot remain ignored any longer. What are some of the actions that African countries can take to address the problem? The first important step is to realize and acknowledge that the problem of street children is one of the most burning problems and challenges facing the African continent. There needs to be a firm commitment by all concerned parties to tackle the problem and not just ignore it hoping that it will go away or that other people are going to come to solve the problem for us. Children living on the street, without homes or families, pose the greatest challenge in terms of rehabilitation, often needing long-term one-on-one counseling. Preventive measures are, therefore, vital to protecting children from the risk of full exposure to life on the street (Kopoka, 2000).

Education is also seen as a means of helping children on the streets. Most of the street children are illiterate with no basic skills to help them get proper jobs. Education may help break the vicious circle of marginalization and help potential street children towards a better life. This is not proving to be the case for many African countries. With liberalization and reforms schools seems to belong to a different world, remote from the everyday existence of those most deprived (Kopoka, 2000).

2.10 Street Children Voices, and the Public Image in General

The paradigm shifts in research informed by the New Social Studies for Childhood, together with a parallel move in development circles to a rights-based perspective in which children are seen as subjects and active participants, has led to a new emphasis on the importance of listening to children 's voices '. These approaches reject the representation of them as passive vessels (Thomas de Benítez, 2011) and privilege children's perspectives of their lives.

Ethical concerns have been raised about how to involve street children in research, derived from principles of consent, confidentiality, and protection from harm relating to the particularities of street children 's situations. Street children 's participation throughout the research process can both raise and resolve ethical dilemmas and researchers have highlighted the importance of involving street children in accommodating and resolving these dilemmas in the research process itself. Fears have also been raised about the need to sensitize adult researchers to be willing to share power, otherwise, children can have little influence on the research and become disillusioned, in such cases, there is a danger of street children 's involvement in research being tokenistic instead of genuinely valued. The study conducted by (Thomas de Benítez, 2011) suggests that street child-centered research by development practitioners has generated ideas for more responsive approaches, which in turn has contributed to the recognition of street children 's issues in policymaking.

There is little likelihood of finding a lasting solution to the problem of street children without involving the street children themselves. Very often the tendency has been to formulate plans and strategies for children without consulting them. Families, the government, and the community at large must seek out the street children and have a meaningful dialogue with them. We must speak and listen to the street children if we are to help them. We must find out more about their problems and prospects and how we can best help them. Living on the streets is

difficult and hazardous and therefore anyone able to survive must be listened to and helped.

It is without a doubt that street children are resourceful and determined people who must be given a chance. The initial step must be hearing their voices and cries for help. On the other hand, the street children themselves must raise their voices to ensure that their plight is known. They must fight for their rights and we as a community must help (Kopoka, 2000).

The public view of street children is vital. However, in many countries, the public's perception and attitude towards street children are overwhelmingly negative. Street children are subjected to mental and physical abuse by police, their peers, and fellow citizens. The governments treat them like a plague that is to be eradicated, rather than as children that need to be nurtured and protected. Street children are subjected to physical abuse by police throughout the world. The society also treats them as outcasts rather than as children to be nurtured and protected. They are frequently detained arbitrarily by police simply because they are homeless, or they can be charged with vague offenses such as loitering, vagrancy, or petty theft. There is an alarming tendency by some law enforcement personnel and civilians, business proprietors, and their private security firms, to view street children as almost sub-human. They are frequently detained arbitrarily by police simply because they are homeless or criminally charged with vague offenses such as loitering, vagrancy, or petty theft. These children are often tortured or beaten by police or held for long periods in poor condition form of trial without any form of trial or legal process. Girls are sometimes sexually abused, coerced into sexual acts, or raped (Mahderehiwot, 2014).

2.11 Theoretical Framework

From the existing theories, ecological system theory was selected and best suited to explain the challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with their families. Accordingly, I used this theory to further explain the reunification of children with their families or caregivers in the study area in detail. So, the challenges and opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable children in the family context are explained in theory.

2.11.1 Ecological System Theory

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Saarinen et.al, (1994) development and socialization of children are influenced by the different width rounds or circles of the

environment with which a person is inactive inter-relation. This includes three significant assumptions: 1) person is an active player, exerting influence on his/her environment, 2) environment is the compelling person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions and 3) environment is understood to consist of different size entities that are placed one inside another, of their reciprocal relationships and micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems (Harkonen, 2007). In line with the ecological system theories, an individual has an interaction with his/her family members as well as with the local community.

Thus, while interacting with his/her surrounding ecological system an individual has a chance to develop both challenging and opportunities to survival these, assumed to have an impact in the later reunification of children exposed to street life with the family. Here, I need to remain that an individual child exposed to street life is interacting in a different setting to his/her environment.

The reason to use ecological system theory was that both the challenges and opportunities to reunify these vulnerable children exist in their ecological system because these children are not detached from the surrounding ecological system. Therefore, the purpose of using this theory was to further describe the challenges and opportunities of reunifying street children with their families.

So, in describing the reunification challenges and opportunities of street children with families, better to see the children in the environmental context to understand the issue related to children exposed to street life, and ecological system theory was used better to clarify the issue for the study.

2.12 Children's Rights Issue

Rights are important to every human being, being it an adult or a child. Freeman argues that "Those who lack rights are like slaves", (Owusuaa, 2010). The right of children to decide issues concerning their lives can be very important especially in the lives of unaccompanied migrant children, who have to make personal and sometimes life-threatening decisions every day for them to survive and also fend for themselves. The 20th century then saw a politicization of the street children 'problem', shifting responsibility away from religious groups and more towards the government. Specialized line ministries for 'Social Affairs' or 'Women and

Children' emerged around the world and, in light of the increasingly negative image of these children as 'criminals delinquents', purpose-built institutions such as orphanages or 'homes' were speedily constructed where these 'difficult' children could be treated in isolation.

However, standards of care in these centers were invariably poor, and by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the multiple negative effects of prolonged institutionalization on children started to emerge. The advent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 then generated a global shift in thinking about children from objects with needs to subjects with rights, including the right to a family. This posed a significant challenge to traditional governmental approaches and led to several panicked attempts to forcibly return street children to their families through organized 'street cleaning' campaigns, some of which continue today (Feeny, 2005).

Chapter Three: Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methods and techniques the researcher used in conducting the study. Accordingly, it describes a description of the study area, research paradigm, research design, data sources, participants of the study, participant selection procedure, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. Additionally; quality assurance and ethical consideration were presented.

In this research, researchers need to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Description of Study Area

Asella is the capital town of Arsi Zone for a long time. Asella Love for Children is a non-government organization established eight years back. The study was conducted in this NGO and is located 159km southeast of Addis Ababa. Asella Love for Children is currently working on the reunification of children exposed to street life since its establishment. Asella town is situated at 2350 meters above sea level, and the proximity of the Asella town and Chilalo Mountain is responsible for the cool moderate type of climate.

The study focused on Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization in assuming that accessibility of full information is possible and the children exposed to street life who were reunified back as well as their families were the focus area to this research was obtained and directly contacted to get deep-rooted information that was again pertinent to the research.

Map of the Study Area (Asella Town)



Figure 3.1 Map of the Study Area

Asella Love for Children, NGO is found in the Asella town as indicated on the map. The main road from Addis Ababa to Bale Robe crosstown. The town is nearest to Mount Chilalo.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Research Paradigm reflects a particular stance that researchers make when I choose qualitative research. After I made this choice, I then further shapes my research by bringing to the inquiry paradigms or worldviews. A paradigm or worldview is “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. Therefore, in this regard, I used the constructivist paradigm which was selected as a guiding framework for this study. The reason behind this was that this paradigm acknowledges that human beings have a different understanding of reality and Subjective expression of the situation they are living in and it gives much emphasis to this individual explanation of the issues. Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, and the possible use of a theoretical lens (Creswell, 2007). Among the existing four paradigms (post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism), I selected constructivism as best explaining the stance of doing this research. One of the critical decisions that we were needed to make in designing our study was the paradigm (or paradigms) within which we were situated our work.

Therefore, based on these philosophical concepts the researcher was used constructive paradigms that suit this kind of study because the researcher was taking into account the participant's meanings and subjective interpretation of the experience of the reunification challenges and opportunities in the study area.

3.4 Research Design

In a qualitative study, we are interested not only in the physical events and behavior taking place but also in how the participants in our study make sense of these and how their understandings influence their behavior. The perspectives on events and actions held by the people involved in them are not simply their accounts of these events and actions, to be assessed in terms of truth or falsity; they are part of the reality that we are trying to understand, and a major influence on their behavior. This focus on meaning is central to what is known as the “interpretive” approach to social science (Maxwell, 2018).

Again, understanding the particular context within which the participants act and the influence this context has on their actions. Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserve the individuality of each of these in their

analyses, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations. Thus, they can understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur.

Therefore, taking these into account while conducting this qualitative research that suits such kind of study and I used a phenomenology research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of lived experiences and challenges encountered during the reunification process by the participant in the study area. In terms of purpose, the researcher employed descriptive research for this particular study because the descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service, or program, or provides information about, say, the living condition of children exposed to street life challenges and opportunities in reunification with family, or describes attitudes towards an issue. In terms of dimension, this research employed a cross-sectional study because I collect data from a participant of the study at a specific point in time.

The research method I employed during this study is a cross-sectional qualitative research approach. The justification for using this method is that the study was conducted at a single point in a time and largely based on the subjective explanation of the participants. As Nick (2010) assert it, qualitative research tends to be interpretive and seeks to understand a phenomenon in its context in greater depth.

3.5 Data Sources

For this research, I used both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from children exposed to street life and reunified back to their families. Also, I employed KII with 3 experts who have potential work experience in the area. On the other way, I used two FGD's i.e., one FGD with children and one FGD with their families. The duration for each of the FGD's was 90 minutes or 1 hour & 30 minutes. Each of the FGD's contains 8 participants. Under secondary sources, I used different related material with the topic such as books and different related kinds of literature from various sources such as published or unpublished thesis, reports, articles, internet, and other relevant source used.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling technique specifically the purposive sampling technique employed for identifying research participants. The reason why the researcher used this technique is due to the researcher's judgment towards the participants based on their knowledge and experiences of children exposed to street life about the challenges and opportunities in the reunification process with the family.

The goal of purposive sampling is to select participants strategically so that those selected participants are relevant to the research questions that are being posed. Very often, the researcher wanted to select participants to ensure that there is a good deal of variety in the resulting participants so that participant members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question. Because it is a non-probability sampling approach, purposive sampling does not allow the researcher to generalize to a population (Alan, 2012).

In qualitative research, the site and participants are mostly selected by researchers purposefully and that will best help them to understand the problems and research questions (Creswell, 2009). The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013).

As Berg (2001) stated, under a purposive sample, researchers use their knowledge or expertise about some group to select participants who represent this population. Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was used to get data from children exposed to street life and available sampling from children exposed to street life at Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization. Therefore, for this particular study, I used a non-random sampling technique which is the purposive sampling technique.

There were 32 participants in this particular study that was purposefully selected. Among these 13 children exposed to street life and reunified back to their families used for an in-depth interview. On the other hand, I employed 3 KII with experts. One of the key informants was used from the Asella labour and social Affairs Office, one of the key informants was used from the Asella women and children's office, and one key informant was used from Asella Love for Children, NGO. Again, I employed 2 FGD's that contain 8 members in each group. While I

conducted this research, I employed the first FGD's with children exposed to street life and reunified back to their families and the second FGD's with families of children.

3.7 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria used to select the study participants from children exposed to street life and currently reunified with their family and living with a family from one month to two years since reunified based on some of the attributes such as whose age is between 13-18 because children under these age range can understand and explain or share their life experience of challenges and opportunities in reunification with their family, from both sex, ethnicity not restricted and currently living in Asella town.

Qualitative research is marked by an intimate relationship between the researcher and the participants. As explained by Dawson (2002) this relationship is developed through verbal interaction between the two parties which to some extends are like coresearchers. According to Robert (2011), generating qualitative data require first and foremost participants with the capacity to explain and narrate their feeling about the topic being discussed.

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

In this study, I utilized qualitative data collection methods. The main data collection methods I employed include in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), Observations, and Document reviews.

To fulfill this objective, I employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with children exposed to street life who were already reunified with their families or caregivers in one group and families of children exposed to street life in the second group. Also, I employed direct observation and key informant interviews with experts from different organizations. Data were gathered from twenty-one children exposed to street life and eight families involved in one focus group discussion at Asella love for children non-governmental organization as well as three key informants used in this study from different organizations.

Among the research participants, 13 of them were interviewed and data saturation was reached. On the other way, 8 children exposed to street life were participated in the focus group discussion whose age range from (13-18 years), from both sexes. In the same way families of children exposed to street life whose age range from (30-50 years), from both sexes and 8 in

numbers were participated in the second focus group discussion. In this study, all the names used are pseudonymous for confidentiality.

3.8.1 In-depth Interview

According to Lofaland and Lofland (1995) as a general rule, in in-depth interviews, the participants are more confident, more relaxed and they feel more encouraged to express their deepest thoughts about a certain subject. An in-depth, interview is an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. It is also an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with participants, interviews participants individually until data saturation. These interviews involve generally open-ended questions that are few and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2009).

The formal, semi-structured, and in-depth interview helps the researcher to explore and deeply understand how the interviewees view the issues raised and his understanding about the challenges of reunification on the lives of return home children. In addition, it helps to enable the research participants to talk and express their feelings and opinion freely. Interview guide questions were used to get the appropriate and the needed information for the study. So, based on this, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the help of a semi-structured open-ended interview guide question until a data saturation point was reached with children exposed to street life.

3.8.2 Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interview guide questions were used to collect data. Therefore, for the key informant interview, I used one expert from the Asella labour and Social Affairs Office, one expert from Asella Women and Children Office, and one expert from the Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization for this study.

Then I believed that these informants have detailed information due to the attachment they have with the children in their day-to-day activities. So, in the study about three key informant interviews were used with the help of key informant interview guide questions.

3.8.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The reason behind using FGDs by the researcher is that to get more information from the children exposed to street life while they are in group discussion and understand their interaction as well as to know what they have in common as their experience while interacting in group discussion. In the same way, families of children exposed to street life may have common experience during separation with their children and challenges and opportunities in the reunification process before and after reunification so, during in group discussion they explained their lived experience that helps the researcher to get deep-rooted information of challenges and opportunities experienced by the families as well for successful reunification.

As Dawson (2007) suggests a focus group discussion is where several people are asked to come together to discuss a certain issue focused on the purpose of the research. The focus group is facilitated by a moderator who asks questions, probes for more detail makes sure the discussion does not go off the point of focus and tries to ensure that everyone has an input and that no one person dominates the discussion. Therefore, the researcher was attended to both the content and process of the discussion in these regards. Herewith help of FGD's guideline the researcher was employed two FGD's. The first FGD's was with 8 children exposed to street life and the second FGD's was with 8 families of children exposed to street life/ mother and father/ who are well informed/ understanding about the challenges of reunifying children exposed to street life both from children and their family side. Here the researcher was conducted both FGDs in collaboration with Asella Love for Children and find a suitable place to conduct in Asella Love for Children.

3.8.4 Observations

Observation is one of the key methods for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes. The observations are based on our research purpose and questions. We may watch physical settings, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and their behaviors during the observation (Creswell, 2013).

Observations are those in which the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in a semi-

structured way (using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know), activities at the research site. Qualitative observers may also engage in roles varying from a non-participant to a complete participant (Creswell, 2009).

According to Ruane (2005) observation will be the best way to see things that are not explained in the interview. As a complete observer, a researcher minimizes his or her immersion in the social phenomenon being investigated. In non-participatory observation, the researcher tries to remain as detached as possible from the situation being observed.

To record the positive and negative impacts of the reunification process, the researcher observed all participant children exposed to street life physical condition, their interaction with family members, the relationship of children with their sisters and brothers, their pattern of play and communication, in general, their living condition and their emotional intelligence observed during the observation time. Thus, the researcher used electronic materials for recording during observation in the field.

3.8.5 Document Review

The other source of data for the study was dependent on reviewing different related documents of the government institutions and non-governmental institutions and documents of the reunification of the organization. These were organizational profiles, and annual reports, reunification procedures documents of the organization, and the researcher has used a checklist to pick up the needed specific information from the documents. Again, different sources of documents from the internet and other related sources were used.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher has used the interview questions, FGD guidelines, and observation checklists based on the research questions to have more data from selected participants. Before going to the field, first of all, I have got a letter of support from Jimma University School of Social Work. Then, I was gone to the study area to select participants here both male and female children whose age is between 13-18 years and their respective families/caregivers were participants in this study.

The participant selection was done at Asella Love for Children non-governmental organization working on children exposed to street life reunification. Then the researcher was

selected participants of the study purposively from children exposed to street life who have a good understanding of challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with family. After participants were identified, the researcher was started collecting the data. The collected data was transcribed and was coded before it is organized into major themes and then the interpretation was made to achieve the research questions.

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

The steps I employed while data analysis includes coding the data (reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments), combining the codes into broader categories or themes, and displaying and making comparisons in the tables, and discussion. These were the core elements the researcher used in the analysis of the study in this particular qualitative research.

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, these were the general process that the researchers used in data analysis.

The data generated from the in-depth interview, key informant interview, FGDs, observation, and different documents were narrated and thematically analyzed based on the research questions of the study. Therefore, I used thematic analysis in general in this particular research.

3.11 Data Quality Assurance

Trustworthiness can be addressed in qualitative research in several ways (Creswell, 2018). Trustworthiness can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing good-quality recording devices and by transcribing the digital files. Creswell (2009) also supports the use of computer programs to assist in recording and analyzing the data. The validity of the data was checked through triangulation.

For triangulation, the findings of the in-depth interview and key informant interview were compared with the data collected from observation. Thus, the elements of triangulation were

focused on the in-depth interview, observation, and FGDs. The collective combination of all these methods was helped me to find out and clearly understand the major challenges in the reunification process of return homes children exposed to street life, lived problems, and consequences so with the use of all these methods quality of the data was assured.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

The researcher had a support letter from Jimma University School of Social Work to concerned bodies before going to the field and then the researcher has contacted the authorities of the Asella town administration as well as Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization, and had made it clear about the objective of the study. Regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and the analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. Therefore, planning and conducting an ethical study means that the researcher considers and addresses all anticipated and emergent ethical issues in the study. Typically, these ethical issues relate to three principles guiding ethical research: respect for persons (i.e., privacy and consent), concern for welfare (i.e., minimize harm and augment reciprocity), and justice (i.e., equitable treatment and enhance inclusivity) (Creswell, 2018).

Before commencing the study, all participants of the study were informed about the purpose of the study since the fundamental ethical principle of social work research is never forcing anyone into participating in the study and so participation must be voluntary. So, the researcher carried out only with the consent of the participants, and the time the interview was taken possibly informed to the participants. Confidentiality issue was also addressed including how the data was recorded in a secured way and to whom it was revealed after all.

A researcher has protected the anonymity of the participants, for example, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals. To gain support from participants, a qualitative researcher conveys to them that they are participating in a study, explains the purpose of the study, and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study (Creswell, 2018).

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The major objective of this study was to explore challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life in Asella Love for Children, NGO. So based on this, the findings of the study and analysis are presented in the following manner. To achieve the objective, I employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with children exposed to street life in one group and families of children exposed to street life in the second group. Also, I employed direct observation and key informant interviews with experts from different organizations. Data gathered from twenty-one children exposed to street life and eight families involved in one focus group discussion as well as three key informants used in this study. Data were collected from children who are exposed to street life for some time and have already reunified with their families.

On the other hand, to obtain comprehensive data about the values of challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life participants were interviewed purposively. Hence, as a qualitative researcher, I developed patterns and themes out of the triangulated data, that were collected through the above multiple data gathering techniques. The first part of this section deals with detailed background information of the study participants. The second part presents the main themes and subthemes that were identified during the data aggregation phase and encompasses cases from the data in a direct quote. Participant's knowledge and experiences about challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life are mainly presented and interpreted from their point of view.

4.2 Profile of Children Exposed to Street Life

Children exposed to street life were asked about their background and demographic history, place of origin, the challenges, and opportunities they encountered in reunification with their family as well as their experience in reunification and their mechanisms (strategies) used in their reunification process to way out from the initial problems that exposed them to street life for effective reunification and the detail of their present life circumstances.

4.3 General Background of the In-Depth Interview Participants

For this particular study, I used 13 children who had an experience of street life and are now reunified with their families /caregivers for an in-depth interview. From the participant of the in-depth interview, 10 of them are male and 3 of them are female. I employed the in-depth interview with children exposed to street life before and reunified back to their family whose age is between 15-18 years alone while for those whose age is between 13-15 years with their family or caregivers.

Table 4.1 Demographic Background of the In-depth Interview Participants

No.	Age	Sex	Educational Level	Place of Origin (Woreda or Kebele)	Duration since Reunified	Family Size
1.	18	M	Grade 1	Arba-Minchi	2-years	5
2.	13	M	Grade 5	Asella	6months	3
3.	13	M	Grade 3	Asella	8months	4
4.	13	M	Grade 5	Asella	6months	6
5.	13	M	Grade 3	Bokoji	6months	5
6.	15	M	Grade 7	Asella	1 year	4
7.	14	F	Grade 5	Asella	9months	4
8.	15	F	Grade 6	Asella	6months	5
9.	14	F	Grade 5	Asella	1 year	6
10.	15	M	Grade 4	Gonde	2 years	5
11.	16	M	Grade 7	Asella	6 months	4
12.	17	M	Grade 8	Sagure	1 year	3
13.	16	M	Grade 6	Asella	1 year	4

As it can be deduced from the above table, the majority of the participant attained above grade 5 regarding their level of education, and most of them can read and write. On the other hand, the experience of participants since reunified with their family or caregiver from street life ranges from 6 months to 2 years. Some of the participants of the study at hand come from different family sizes as well as from different ages ranging from 13-18 years. Here again, most of the participants of the study originally exposed to street life are from Asella town while some of them are from different places and later live in Asella town as indicated in table 4.1 above.

Table 4. 2 General Background of Focus Group Discussion Participants

No.	Age	Sex	Focus Group Discussion	No. of Participant
1.	13-18 years	5 male participants & 3 Female participants	Children exposed to street life but reunified back to the family	8
2.	30- 50 years	4 male participants & 4 female participants	Families of children exposed to street life and whose children reunified back to them	8

In the study at hand, the focus group participants were sixteen of which eight of them were children exposed to street life in one group, and eight of them were again from families of children exposed to street life from both sexes in the second group. Therefore, children in the same focus group and families in the other focus group were participants of the study.

Table 4. 3 General Background of Key Informant Participants

No.	Age	Sex	Position of Key Informant	Organization	Experience of Working with Children exposed to street life	Level of Qualification
1.	30	M	Education and Advocacy expert	Asella Labor and Social Affairs	5 years	BA in Social Work
2.	42	M	Manager of Organization	Asella Love for Children, NGO	16 years	BA in management
3.	54	M	Children Right and Peace Coordinating and Assurance expert	Asella Town Women and children Office	11 years	BA in Management

In the study again I selected three key informant experts who have potential work experience in the area of the reunification of children exposed to street life from different organizations. Here, two of the experts were used from government organizations i.e., from Asella Labour and Social Affairs Bureau, and Asella Women and Children Bureau. whereas one of the experts was used from the non-governmental organization so, based on their work experience with children exposed to street life reunification and their day-to-day interaction with these vulnerable children as well as with their families that expertise was used for key informant interview.

4.4 Themes of the Study

The major themes and sub-themes of the study analysis are indicated in the following table.

Table 4.4 Major Themes and Sub- Themes of Study

No	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Challenges of Reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of Reunification from the Children's Perspectives (Continued Peer pressure, Fear of Traumatic Injury of Separation, Addiction to Different Things and Related Behavioral Problems • Challenges of Reunification from the Family's Perspectives (Death of Parents or Caregivers, Divorce of Biological Parents, Economical Problems to Satisfy Basic Need, lack of awareness, Abuse of Children,
2	Opportunities of Reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of Non-governmental Organization Working on Children • Existence of Governmental Organization Working on Children
3	Mechanisms Used to Reunify Children Exposed to Street Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-Social Support • Understanding Needs and Interests of Children
4	The Role of Family / Caregivers in Reunification	

4.5 Challenges of Reunification on Children Exposed to Street Life

The responses obtained from IDI, FGD's, KI's, and observation indicate that there are challenges to the reunification of children exposed to street life both from the children's side and from the families. So, to explain the challenges and 'opportunities to the reunification of children exposed to street life it needs to see the issue from both sides to manage the reunification process successfully.

In the same way, the mechanisms used in the reunification of these vulnerable children from street life need considerable attention in the reunification process as the findings from FGD's with children exposed to street life as well as FGD's with families of these children.

4.5.1 Challenges of Reunification from the Children's Perspectives

4.5.1.1 Continued Peer Pressure on children

In-depth interviews with children as well as KI's interviews indicated that it is difficult to separate children exposed to street life from their peer groups because of their interaction and mutual support as well as the good relationship they already developed while they were on the street life. So, this challenge was encountered while an attempt was done to reunify children exposed to street life as participants of focus group discussion with families of children exposed to street life in the study area and needs due attention in the reunification process of these vulnerable children with their families or caregivers.

IDI-02 explained his experience as follows:

My name is IDI-02, I am 13 years. I am a student of grade 5 and currently living with my mother and sister in kebele house in Asella town. My father died 4 years back and now every burden becomes on the shoulder of my mother to support us in all aspects of life. Initially, I have friends at school that has an experience of street life. After school I stay at home with my friends and play together because no one was in our house therefore, my school friend has got a good opportunity to put pressure on me by sharing his personal experience. Then following the experience of my friend, I was exposed to street life. After I become reunified with my family still my relationship with my friends not stopped and I was disappointed and disturbed with the living conditions of my friends still living on the street so these were some of the challenges I encountered during my reunification time from street life and till now I have psychological disturbance while thinking such unresolved problems of my friend's life challenging issues.

So, an interview with IDI-02 indicated that peer pressures have a great influence both to push children to street life and also have a great challenge in the process of reunifying children exposed to street life due to their interaction and intimacy with these vulnerable children.

In the same way, the findings from FGD's with families of children indicated that these children who are reunified back have still some interaction and relationship with their peer groups especially these children who are addicted to alcohol, benzine, and substance abuse. Therefore, these vulnerable children are still influenced by continued peer pressure. Here

according to the participants of FGD's with families of children exposed to street life and reunified back these children need connection with their peer groups who are still on the street to fulfill their need of subsistence abuse due to these reasons some of the reunified children are still under the continued peer pressure.

4.5.1.2 Fear of Traumatic Injury of Separation

Participant of interview IDI-09 share her experience in the following manner:

My name is IDI-09 and I am 14 years old. I am living in Asella town. I am from a family of six members. I was exposed to street life after my biological parents divorced. Both my mother and my father were remarried soon after the divorce. My families take as a share to look after their children based on our interest and initially my interest is to live with my mother but through time, I quarreled with my stepfather then things become challenging in my life situation. Then I was exposed to street life for about 1 year. While I am on the street life, I decided everything in my life freely because no one to take responsibility for when I was on street life. Soon after my biological father got me through Asella's love for children, NGO. So, my biological father is committed and willing to accept me, and I was become reunified with my family but I have a previous traumatic injury due to disagreement with my stepfather and again I am thinking that what is going to happen to me again from my stepmother as well after I reunified with my biological father and this is what I never forget and challenge me even now after the reunification from street life.

Here, the interviewee above indicates that how previous traumatic injury becomes a prolonged challenge in the future career of these vulnerable children exposed to street life and children need to continue to follow up even after the reunification process ends up successfully.

4.5.1.3 Addiction to Different Things and Related Behavioral Problems

According to FGD's conducted with children exposed to street life, there are challenges in reunification includes addiction to different things like "Mastish inhaling "or addiction to" Benzene" assuming that it helps the body to protect from cold and become strong so that they don't feel pain and coldness during night time. To separate these children exposed to street life

from different bad conditions and addictions as FGD's conducted with children indicate some of the family use punishment and this again affects the reunification process.

IDI-10 give his own experience as follows:

First of all, I like to say really street life is challenging. It is a place where children exposed to street life learn a lot of bad things which are beyond their age expectation to accept by society in general. When I observed children, who are inhaling what we call "Mastish" for the first time I was surprised how these children are inhaling such things but gradually through time I become addicted to it and start to inhaling "Mastish" and other "Benzene" to protect my body from coldness and also, we are assuming that it helps us to make our body strong and make us mechanisms to resist external weather conditions. Even after I become reunified with my parents, I am psychologically disturbed and challenged a lot to get these bad things.

Therefore, during an attempt to reunify these vulnerable children from street life to make the reunification process successful necessary preconditions and action should be taken to minimize the risks related to addiction and associated behavioral problems that hamper the reunification of these vulnerable children with their families or caregivers.

4.5.2 Challenges of Reunification from the Family's Perspectives

According to the findings from the interviews with some of IDI indicate challenges encountered during the reunification of children exposed to street life is family poverty which originally exposing these vulnerable children to street life. Moreover, also the findings from FGD's with children exposed to street life and FGD's with families of these children indicated that loss of family members especially father or mother and lack of extended families to take over the care of children and family breakdown due to different reasons greatly affect the reunification of children exposed to street life in the study area.

My KI-02 further explained the main challenges of reunification that he faces while working on the reunification of children exposed to street life are mainly about four as he explained:

Among these, the first challenge to the reunification of children exposed to street life according to KI-02 is intergenerational poverty. The second challenge to the reunification

of children exposed to street life is that family breakdown due to different reasons such as family divorce, death of father or mother of children exposed to street life, or both or one of them have a great influence on the reunification of these children. The third challenge to reunification according to KI-02 is family addiction to different things like addiction to alcohol, chat chewing, and addiction to other issues as well.

The final challenge to the reunification of children exposed to street life according to KI-02 is lack of attention to their children by some of the family about their future due to this no follow-up daily on the regular basis to their children's daily activities both at school and home and this again another challenge to reunification of children exposed to street life in the study area.

4.5.2.1 Death of Parents or Caregivers

Death of families or caregivers are reported as a challenge in IDI, and in KI as well. Here is the study indicated when one of or both of families /caregivers dead even though an attempt were there to support these children exposed to street life still a challenge to help them because children are unable to manage themselves so they need love from families/caregivers, care, protection, follow-up, socialization and the like.

IDI-08 explains her experience as follows:

I am 15 years old. I was born in Asella town. My mother was dead when I was in grade three. I have two brothers and I am the middle child in our family. After the death of my mother, the burden of every household activity becomes on my shoulder, like cooking food, washing clothes, cleaning the house as well as others challenge me due to this my educational performance decreased. In the meanwhile, after the death of my mother 1 year later my father was get married to another woman. So, things have become more complicated and worse for me to manage because my stepmother was not even happy while I go to school and attain class except working at the house. Then I was very disappointed with my stepmother and quarreled with her. After a few days, I am decided to leave our house to start a new way of life i.e., to begin street life. But there are a lot of challenges and things are not as we expect. Then my life becomes more challenged, I was rapped two times on the street at night, however, I have not become pregnant and soon I consult Doctors about the case so I have got some medication too. After 6 months of stay

on the street, I was reunified through Asella Love for Children, then the organization provide counseling and guidance services, as well as they, support me financially due to this I was reunified with my brothers and father even though I am with psychological traumatic injury of separation and unexpected injury on the street which challenges me during reunification process with my family.

Death of families or caregiver is a big challenge in an attempt to reunify children exposed to street life as the finding of the study from IDI, and from KI indicates. So, in the reunification process of these children, the concerned bodies have to find some alternative option during reunification to tackle the problems related to the death of families or caregivers.

4.5.2.2 Divorce of Biological Parents

Another challenge to the reunification of children exposed to street life as indicated by research participants is family divorce. Among the challenges of reunification, family divorce has a great impact on children exposed to street life reunification. Since families are divorced children lack mutual support from both families, and also lack care as well as feels unsecured in their life situation according to my observation and findings from FGD's with families of children exposed to street life.

On the other hand, the findings from key informant interviews further explain the divorce followed by the remarriage of the father or the mother becomes a challenge to reunifying children exposed to street life because most of the stepfathers or stepmothers are not committed as well as not willing to accept these vulnerable children to reunify with their families.

In this regard, KII-01 shares his experience as follows:

As far as my knowledge and my work experience in the street children reunification concerned most of the stepparents are not committed and willing to reunify street children with their biological children due to behavioral problems of these children, they fear that these children can attack their children and run away to street life. Again, when their biological parents are divorced children lack secured living home and their basic need is not satisfied with their stepparents. Therefore, the divorce of a biological parent is a very challenging issue in an attempt to reunify these vulnerable children from street life (KII-01).

The other key informant also explains his experience in the following manner.

From the very beginning, family is the natural environment to nurture and socialize children to show them the right track for their future as well. As to my understanding, KII-03 said that when biological families have divorced their responsibility to their children also becomes under difficult situation because the two partners don't want to even see each other. Children's responsibility becomes on the shoulder of mother or father after divorce of biological parents but the divorced partners are remarried soon because of different reasons. So, these conditions exposed their children to another way of life which most of the children don't like to live with stepparents.

Hence, the divorce of the biological family is the most challenging in reunifying street children. Therefore, from the above key informants, the divorce of the biological family has a significant influence in reunifying children from the street because stepparents are not willing to accept these children (KII-03).

4.5.2.3 Economical Problems to Satisfy Basic Need

To fulfill their children's basic, need some families have economic problems as findings from IDI, FGD's with families of children exposed to street life and KI interview indicated. Here the economical challenge is one of the obstacles in reunifying these vulnerable children with their families because families need additional income to support these children.

An interview conducted with IDI-05 indicated that as follows:

I am 13 years old. I am grade 3 students and now I drop from school because of unaffordable school fee and family's economic problems. Both my father and my mother are currently living in different places due to the divorce problem. My mother was remarried and I don't know where my biological father is but my stepfather does not volunteer to accept me during the reunification time so I have no option except to live in a rental house in Asella town. Furthermore, an interview with IDI-05 indicated that children need love and support from their biological parents even though there was a family breakdown due to divorce so this was another challenge in the reunification of children exposed to street life. I was reunified with my mother and 2 of my brothers for 2

months and then I decided to go to Asella and start to live currently in a rental house and work as a shoeshine to get money to cover all my expenses.

Another interview with IDI-06 indicates that:

I am 15 years old and grade 7 student in 2013 E.C. I'm from a family of 4 members. My father died and there is no one to support us from extended families or relatives. So, my family has economic challenges to help me in the reunification process. As a result of this influence, my mother was suffering a lot to fulfill our basic needs such as food, house rent expense, and other running costs for our family. IDI-06 explains the challenges during reunification as even though I continued my education after reunification with my family there was the challenge of school fees and also, I was punished by my elderly brother as well as by our neighborhoods so I was challenged by these issues during my reunification from street life.

Family is a basic and primary institution to satisfy the basic needs of their children for survival but the lack of income to support them hamper the reunification process of children exposed to street life. Therefore, an additional source of income has to be mobilized by concerned bodies to support these families so that economic challenges of the reunification of children exposed to street life to minimized challenges.

4.5.2.4 Lack of Awareness by Family or Caregivers

Lack of awareness about children exposed to street life by some of the family also indicated as a challenge to reunifying children who are exposed to street life by research participants. Here one of the KI informants share his experience of working in the area of the reunification of children exposed to street life in the following way:

I am working in a government organization for several years, but working with children exposed to street life is more challenging because of families or caregivers' lack of awareness about street life situations and the later consequences of this problem on children's future life. So due to lack of awareness about the problems in detail some of the families assume as once children are exposed to the street, they are not willing to reunify them back and also, they assume that all children exposed to street life are due to their bad behaviors but which is difficult accept (KI-03).

The findings from IDI, FGD's with children, and KI interview indicated that some of the families do not talk with their children and understand their needs and interest. So, children should not have a chance to express their feeling in such situation due to this the attachment between children their families become weak which again a challenge in the reunification process of these vulnerable children.

4.5.2.5 Abuse of Children by Family or Caregivers

Again, as indicated from key informants interview sometimes children are exposed to street life abused by stepfathers or stepmothers physically or psychologically so these children complain of fear of these problems as punishment and revenge to previous traumatic injuries of separation, and these actions challenge the reunification of children with their families.

IDI-02 further explains his experience as:

challenges to the reunification of children exposed to street life include fear of punishment from family, remembering of the previous traumatic injury of separation with their family, and continued peer pressure on the children already reunified with their families as well as sometimes unnecessary words that demoralize these vulnerable children from the family. I am challenged with these things in general during my reunification time, and the issue needs special attention from the concerned bodies throughout the process of reunification as well as further follow-up both from government and non-governmental organizations.

Interview with KI-03 indicated that:

Some families accept their children to reunify and on the other hand some families are not committed to even accept their children after being these children exposed to street life due to economic as well as fear of behavioral problems these children developed during the street life. As a result of this exclusion of children exposed to street life by their family members observed according to KI-03 and also families sometimes through unnecessary words to these children exposed to street life. Again, as KI-03 explained family remembering of the previous traumatic injuries of separation to their children and forceful attempts to resolve the situation by family negatively affect the reunification process of children exposed to street life.

In general, an interview conducted with all of the key informants and in-depth interviews with children exposed to street life indicated that these vulnerable children exposed to street life have already developed a habit of freedom to decide everything about themselves because they didn't have any adequate parental care, guidance, protection and supervision from family or any other concerned bodies.

So, as the findings of the study with research participants revealed that after reunification with their family children exposed to street life lost the freedom to decision making about themselves because of close family supervision and overprotection which was against what the children adapted earlier as a result of their exposure to street life and raised by most of the participants of the research as challenging to these vulnerable children exposed to street life during the reunification process.

4.6 Available Opportunities in Reunifying Children Exposed to Street Life

4.6.1 Existence of Non-governmental Organization Working on Children

Findings from the study indicate that the existence of non-governmental organizations working in the area is an available opportunity to facilitate and support these vulnerable children in reunifying them with their families or caregivers. In the case of Asella Love for Children, the interview with children and FGD's with families of children indicate the importance of these non-governmental organizations in reunifying these vulnerable children exposed to street life through counseling and economical support for children and their families. Here one of the IDI participants further explains his own experience that:

I am one of the clients of Asella Love for Children that supported by this non-governmental organization. When I was on street life, I am hiding from families because my family is unable to satisfy my basic need. So, this NGO provides counseling service both to my family and me during reunification time. In addition to this, the local NGO supports us economically both in kind and in cash. Again, after I was reunified with my family, they have continued their further support as well as a follow-up about my status of school achievement and my behavioral condition in general. Thus, from my side, I am lucky to get such an opportunity to be supported by these organizations (IDI-09).

Hence, the existence of Asella Love for Children working in the area of children exposed to street life is indicated as an opportunity by a participant of the study. So, the existence of NGOs special working in the area of children exposed to street life is essential in mobilizing resources and psychological support to reunify these vulnerable children with their families or caregivers.

4.6.2 Existence of Governmental Organization Working on Children

According to the findings from FGD's with families of children exposed to street life and key informants with experts the governmental organization such as Asella Women and Children Bureau and Asella labor and Social Affairs Bureau are working in the area of children in supporting and facilitating to link these vulnerable children with the local available NGO's and Governmental organization as well with all concerned bodies so these governmental organization activities are opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable children. In this regard one of my key informants shares his experience as follows:

I have been working in the area of children exposed to street life for the last 11 years and the role of the Asella Women and Children Bureau as well as Asella Labor and Social Affairs Bureau to speak frankly is unforgettable. Here what I want to explain is that these governmental organizations play a great in linking these children with NGO's and other stakeholders working to change the life situation of children exposed to street life so the existing of these governmental organization is from my side it is a good opportunity in reunifying these children exposed to street life in the area.

Therefore, as indicated above the existence of the governmental organizations that are working in the area of children in general and working in the area of children exposed to street life, in particular, is also an opportunity in reunifying these vulnerable children with their families or with their caregivers.

4.7 Mechanisms Used to Reunify Children Exposed to Street Life

4.7.1 Psycho-Social Support

As the finding from FGD's conducted with children exposed to street life indicate families have to understand children needs and feelings so that with the good approach in a

positive way to attract their children to home and to motivate their children with love intern their children gradually trust and approach their families in a good way as well as in an interactive manner to facilitate reunification process effectively even though there are different unresolved problems in the reunification of these vulnerable children with families. According to the findings from the interviews conducted with IDI-05 indicated working every activity appropriate to the age of children taking children's interest into account is a means to way out children from their problems and facilitates reunification of these vulnerable children exposed to street life with their families.

According to KI-02 explanations children exposed to street life were already developed different behavioral problems while they were on street due to this during reunification their families fear and suspected that these children will teach and share their own experiences with these children living with their family at home before and my KI-02 share the idea of these families as he informed me so during reunification to minimize the risks associated with behavioral problems better to continue counseling services for at least weeks to months these vulnerable children in institutional care setting till expected behavioral and attitudinal changes come. Therefore, after a long time through gradual counseling of both children and families, the reunification process becomes successful and effective. Also, KI-02 further explains the importance of mutual understanding and working in collaboration to solve the challenges related to the reunification of children exposed to street life with their families by all concerned bodies.

Moreover, an interview conducted /FGD's/ with families of children exposed to street life indicated that families are the primary and baseline for children future career in nurturing, protecting, guiding, fulfilling for children basic needs and also socialization from the very beginning at home what is accepted and what is unaccepted behavior in the family as well as in the society to prepare children for their responsibilities and obligation both at the family level and at the community level as well. Based on these most of the participants of FGD's with families of children exposed to street life share almost similar approaches in terms of mechanisms of reunifying these vulnerable children. One of the participants of FGD's with families of these vulnerable children share her experiences as follows:

I am 45 years old. I am living in Asella town for the last 10 years. I have 2 children, one female, and one male. My husband died 4 years back. I don't have any job before the

death of my mother and we were dependent on him. Then after he died our family suffers a lot, nothing to eat in our home, no money for children's school fees, and other related challenges in our house. So, I am the only one responsible to feed, look after, and manage my children because of this I started to work in one cafeteria as a servant for the whole day every day from 8:30 AM-6:00 AM. As a result of this, I have no time to follow up with my children both at school and after school. My son has friends at school who have experience of street life and even they stay together sometimes after school so my child is pushed to the street by his friends. I start to find my son soon to back but I can't get him for 3 months because he changes his sleeping place as well as he hides from me. Then I informed all concerned bodies of the government, police, and helping organizations for children to reunified back to their families like Asella Love for Children. From time to time, I am checking and asking my son's friends who are helping me on street to get my child and I start to help other children who are friends with my son then they give him advice bring him to discuss everything with me. After this, I changed my mind to approach my son positively and encourage him to bring back him home again Asella Love for Children also help me a lot through counseling me as well as my child in the reunification of my child from street life. My child now continues his school we communicate and discussed everything with my children at home as well as I improve the time to stay with my children, follow up at school, and communicating about my child with his teacher, I am also convincing my child to stop further communication out of school time with peers and to concentrate on his education only. As to my understanding: good approach, understanding the need of children, talking with children, and above all giving love to children are mechanisms that helps in the reunification of children exposed to street life.

Therefore, families have the lion's share in reunifying their children from street life by attracting their children with love and helping them with emotional as well as psychological support throughout the reunification process.

4.7.2 Understanding Needs and Interests of Children

The finding of the study indicates that understanding the need and interests of children during reunification is a very important mechanism to improve the situation to make the

reunification process effective as well as progressive. From the participant of IDI, one of the participants explain his experience as follows:

From the very beginning reunification of children exposed to street life should be voluntary with the participation of children and their families/caregivers.

So, in these case children expresses their need and interest to the concerned bodies so that the reunification initial decision making and the whole process focused on the children needs and interest. I am reunified with my family after I explain my need and interest to my family as well as to all concerned bodies to help me in reunification. Again, what I want to add up is that unless my family understands my problems the reunification doesn't have much input on my life (IDI-13).

Therefore, successful reunification needs to understand the needs and interests of vulnerable children who are exposed to street life. In the same way findings from FGD's with family indicate similar things i.e., while reunifying children from street life their needs and interest should get priority so that the whole process of reunification becomes successful.

4.8 The Role of Family / Caregivers in Reunification

The findings from IDI indicated that the families of children exposed to street life have the role of full participation in the decision making for their children to reunifying and also commitment as well as a willingness to accept their children to make a good turning point for children future career to build a ground base for successful reunification.

Therefore, the role of families in the reunification of children exposed to street life is again further explained by a participant of KI's of the study that starting point to successful reunification of vulnerable children exposed to street life needs family's voluntary participation both in decision making throughout the whole process of reunification and in attracting their children to their home with a good approach to these children.

The families of children exposed to street life have to properly look after their children, follow up their children, fulfill their children's basic needs based on their capacity. On the other way, above all things, children need love and psychological support from their families so the families have to get avail themselves to invest in their children in all aspects.

According to the findings from the FGD's with both children exposed to street life and their families indicated that families have the lion's share in the reunification process of these vulnerable children from street life. Therefore, from the initial pre-reunification to post-reunification and follow-up of reunification families have an unreplaced role to perform. From FGD's with families of children exposed to street life one of the participants explain her (participant-2) experience as follows:

I am 48 years old and the mother of 4 children. I am living in Asella town for the last 15 years. My husband is a chronic drunker and he works as a daily laborer. He leaves the house early in the morning and comes back around 8:00 PM-9:00 PM in the night every time. In our house, there is conflict and disagreement between my husband and me. Because of these problems in our house my second child was exposed to street life for 6 months. I am working on domestic activities in other people's houses to support my children and to fulfill their basic needs as much as possible. My children are looking for my hands for breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as for clothes and other running costs. In case to speak frankly, if I am sick my children have nothing to eat. I get "injera" from some of the houses and money from another house to feed my children after I work for them. Unfortunately, we are living in kebele's house and this all way I am managing my children at least to survive their life. After so many challenges my child reunified with us. At all costs, the family has a great role to protect, look after their children and show the future possibilities and opportunities in life situations due to this I am giving myself to my children in whatever challenges that I come up with throughout my life.

So, from the life experience of the FGD's with the family of children exposed to street life participants and other findings from FGD's with children exposed to street life families of children have so many roles in children reunification from street life by providing love and showing the good approach to these vulnerable children so that the children will develop a sense of trust and understanding about their role as well as their responsibility in the family from time to time (FGD's with family participant-2).

4.9 The Services Given to the Children Exposed to Street Life by the Organization

According to the explanation of KI-03 respondent Asella's love for children serving children exposed to street life and their families with counseling and financial support during the reunification process. Also, the organization is working in collaboration with other government

organizations to reach these vulnerable children and to facilitate the reunification of children exposed to street life with their families.

On the other hand, the organization provides follow-up and discussion on the progress of children with their families. An interview with children and FGD's with families of children exposed to street life indicates the service that the organization for them supports a lot in minimizing challenges as well as encourage the children family to improve their support and parenting their children properly.

The organization again provides referral and linking services for children for medical or health services so that they can get treatment from the government and private clinics and hospitals in the town. According to the KI-03 and some of the IDI-09, IDI-05, and IDI-13 the organization also provides school uniforms and materials that support these children to continue school after reunified with their family or caregivers empower these vulnerable children.

Among the in-depth interview participant IDI-13 share his experience as follows:

When I (IDI-13) reunified Asella Love for children support a lot of things, this organization provides my counseling services and financial support to reunify me with my family. Then after I reunified back with my family, they gave me a school uniform and material support. Sometimes, this NGO works with schools and families regularly to follow my performance both at school and after school. So, they support me and advise me to spend more time on my education. So that I can this all helps me to improve my education (IDI-13).

Therefore, the services that were provided by this NGO extend from initial or per-reunification to post-reunification to reduce the risk of return to street life by these vulnerable children. Counseling and financial support are not the endpoints of this NGO's due to these reasons the organization extends its services beyond the reunifying phase of street children with their families.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Challenges in Reunifying Children Exposed to Street Life

Having discussed on analysis of data in the previous chapter, here in this chapter I shall focus on the discussion of the study. Interview analyzed from the primary data collected revealed that the major challenges in reunifying children exposed to street life are family breakdown due to death of one of or both of biological parents, divorce followed by remarriage of one of or both of biological parents, family poverty that hampered to satisfy children basic needs, still continued peer pressure on children who are already reunified with their family, continued memorization of the family about previous traumatic injury of separation which children don't need to remember history of traumatic injury of exposure to street life, the punishment from step-parents which most of the participant highly stress as problems, and other psychological as well as social influence on children at family level that have continuous traumatic effect on children as well as lack of commitment and willingness to accept their children by some of the families are the challenges in reunifying children exposed to street life are findings from IDI, FGD's and observation.

Reunification of street children becomes possible when the family has satisfactorily undergone the change process that enables the child to return home. The commitment, willingness, and desire of the family to accept and make the necessary changes contribute the most to promoting reunification and family resilience during this process (Balsells et al., 2014). Therefore, this supports my finding of challenges of reunification in the study area reported by IDI, KI, FGD's participants and is in line with my findings.

As indicated from the findings of the study most children exposed to street life are challenged by continued and unresolved poverty to overcome as a result difficult to fulfill their basic needs even though they were reunified with their families from street life.

Another challenge to the reunification of these vulnerable children as the findings of the study indicated from FGD's with families of these children, while on-street life these children adapted different behavioral problems which are difficult to deal with family's level of understanding and again because of these behavioral related problems these children exposed to

street life are not open to discussing with family once exposed to street life even though reunified with their family.

The finding of my study indicates that economic problems of the family are one challenge in reunifying these vulnerable children exposed to street life but Zerihun (2018) conducted a study on factors leading to children on the street, challenges, and their coping mechanism in the Piassa area, Arada Sub-City of Addis Ababa and come up with the finding that children exposed to street life have many challenges while they are on the street life-like physical, psychological or sexual abuses and difficult to fulfill their basic needs so his finding is inconsistent with my finding because my study focuses on the challenges at a family level during reunifying these children from the street life.

5.2 The Available Opportunities in Reunifying Exposed Children from Street Life

The findings of the study indicate that involving the family or caregiver in the whole range of reunifying children exposed to street life by itself is an opportunity. In the same way, the support from government organizations and non-governmental organizations indicated in the study findings are also important opportunities in reunifying children exposed to street life and Asella Love for children, NGO plays an essential role in this regard through providing counseling and financial support for children exposed to street life and for their families as well.

These vulnerable children exposed to street life reunified with their families through this local NGO's, Asella Love for Children as the IDI with most of the children indicated that still they are getting follow up by the non-governmental as well as governmental organizations about the current situation of these already reunified vulnerable children because by its nature reunification is a process and needs continued progress recording, follow-up as well as continued to improve the overall future career of these vulnerable children life.

5.3 Mechanisms Used in the Reunification of Children

There are different mechanisms used to overcome the challenges of the reunification by the organizations and by families of children during the reunification process to improve the life situation of children exposed to street life. The mechanisms used by the organization includes counseling services to both children and their families or caregivers and economical support for the families/caregivers to develop their capacity to fulfill the basic things for children whereas the families used as a strategy to overcome the reunification challenge providing love, and

understanding their children needs and interest in a better way are some of them. The study conducted by (Thomas de Benítez, 2011) suggests that street child-centered research by development practitioners has generated ideas for more responsive approaches, which in turn has contributed to the recognition of street children's issues in policymaking. Therefore, the mechanisms used to overcome the challenges of the reunification must be centered on children's interests and need with their active participation in the helping process to make the reunification successful.

5.4 The Overall Reunification Process of Children Exposed to Street Life

It should not be forgotten that reunification is not simply about returning street children to a family so that they can 'pick up where they left off' the impression of 'sameness' is illusory, as both the child and the other family members are likely to have changed significantly during their time apart, particularly if this is a matter of months or years.

Other common reasons for which children may refuse reunification include: feelings of guilt or anger at being abandoned by the family, memories of separation may be too painful fear of continued abuse once reunified or 'punishment' for having run away, the child may no longer have both parents and all of his/her brothers and sisters, the child may have to live with a relative they hardly know and the conditions of their present lifestyle may simply be better in terms of friendships, personal freedom, income, employment (Wondwosen, 2015).

Therefore, the reunification of children exposed to street life needs special attention from decision making to reunify these children to the stage of follow-up after reunification time. So, to minimize the risks associated with separation time traumatic injury professionals like social workers have a significant role in the area of the reunification of vulnerable children.

The interview conducted with KI-01, KI-02, and KI-03 shows that reunification of children exposed to street life needs counseling of both the children and their families to make an effective reunification process. So, as further explained by some participants of the IDI successful reunification also needs to involve both the children and their families in all steps of the reunification process from the initial decision making to the final stage of reunifying children exposed to street life. Therefore, successful reunification requires involving all potentially

concerned bodies from governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, children exposed to street life and their families as well as neighborhoods and extended families too.

As Mahderehiwot's (2014) studies in many parts of the world have shown, children exposed to street life tend to be predominantly male. In this study higher gender imbalance is also established therefore, the majority of them are male children. Here in my study 10 male and 3 female children have an experience of street life so this is an indication of gender imbalance among the children exposed to street life in the study area so my finding in terms of gender imbalance of children exposed to street life is consistent with Mahderehiwot's finding that she studies the experience of street children in the rehabilitation program of the Kirkos Sub City of Addis Ababa: the case of Drop-in Rehabilitation Center Project (DIRC) Child Space Program. Many of the respondents who are children exposed to street life are those who lost their father or mother and also these children from family breakdown due to different reasons. Children from out of Asella also constitute a considerable proportion of the children exposed to street life while most parents/caregivers reside in Asella town (Table 4.1).

The findings from the study participant IDI, FGD's with children, FGD's with families, and KI indicated that the successful reunification of children exposed to the street with families/caregivers require the participation of families and children from decision making to the whole range of reunification. Therefore, my finding is consistent with Miller (2004) which says successful reunification is characterized as a service where both the child and the parents are engaged in the reunification process.

According to the study conducted by Shimelis (2018) on the situation of street children in urban centers of Ethiopia and the role of NGOs in addressing their socio-economic problems in the Case of Hawassa city and come up with the finding that non-governmental organizations are also playing a very important role in promoting the welfare of disadvantaged children by planning, financing, managing and providing advice and counseling services for various projects set up to help poor children in general and street children in particular. Her again my study indicated that Asella Love for Children plays a significant role in reunifying these vulnerable children with their families in the study area through economical support as well as through counseling services support for both children and their families to make the reunification of these children with family successful.

Whenever we are explaining the challenges and opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with families /caregivers we need to see both the challenges and opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable children with family in the context of children in the surrounding ecological system because these challenging issues and available opportunities in reunifying these children are beyond the individual capacity to manage or control by themselves as indicated in the study. In line with this Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Saarinen et.al, (1994) development and socialization of children are influenced by the different width rounds or circles of the environment with which a person is inactive inter-relation. So, based on ecological system theory assumptions: 1) person is an active player, exerting influence on his/her environment, 2) environment is the compelling person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions and 3) environment is understood to consist of different size entities that are placed one inside another, of their reciprocal relationships and Micro, Meso, Exo and Macrosystems (Harkonen, 2007).

Here, we need to understand that an individual child exposed to street life is interacting in a different setting to his/her ecological systems. So, in an attempt to reunify children exposed to street life both challenges and opportunities that hamper the reunification process can be better observed within the existing ecological system. Therefore, ecological system theory helps us to understand the challenges and opportunities in reunifying these vulnerable children with families or caregivers as to find possible mechanisms of reunifying these children within these system contexts as well.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusion

In concluding my research, I shall look at the themes that this study intended to, i.e., exploring challenges and opportunities in reunifying children exposed to street life with family, mechanisms used in reunifying these vulnerable children, and the role of the family in the reunification process of children exposed to street life.

There are so many challenges that hamper in reunification process of children exposed to street life, which needs special attention in consideration of reunification of children in the family context for the improvement of children future careers. Understanding these challenges in reunifying these vulnerable children helps all concerned bodies to find a solution and to tackle these challenges because the problems of children need special attention from everyone at every corner of the world.

The findings of the study indicated that the main challenge in the reunification of children exposed to street life is family breakdown due to different reasons such as divorce, family violence, family disagreement, remarriage after death of children biological father or mother to another person/ stepfather or stepmother to their children/. From the study it is also indicated that continued and unresolved family poverty becomes another challenge to the reunification of children exposed to street life, to solve their children's problems, families need income so due to this families of children exposed to street life were challenged and then after lack commitment in reunifying their children back to home from street life.

On the other way, the findings of the study also indicated available opportunities in reunifying children exposed to street life with their families, and in the study, the existence of the family members is the main opportunity in the reunification process of these vulnerable children. There are additional findings indicated as opportunities in reunifying children exposed to street life such as commitment to accept their children to reunify back to their home, family's resources like farmland, and having extended family from biological parent side who are committed and willing to support children special after the death of families.

The findings of mechanisms of reunifying these vulnerable children exposed to street life indicated that family approach in a good manner to accept their children to bring behavioral and attitudinal change on their children. Also providing counseling services to both children exposed

to street life and their families is indicated as mechanisms used in reunifying children exposed to street life with their families.

The study also indicated that family has an important role that is not replaced at every phase of the reunification of children exposed to street life so the family has to prepare themselves to accept their children by providing love and psychologically support to their children, and also to satisfy their children basic need by understanding their children's needs and interest throughout reunification process. The family is a basic and also a primary institution in children nurturing and socialization, the findings of the study indicate that the family's role in the reunification of children exposed to street life is again the primary and basic one in reunifying these vulnerable children.

6.2 Implications of the Study

6.2.1 Implication for Social Work

The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being, utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems. Social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Since principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. So, social workers to address their professional obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights and that all decisions taken by states and other organizations regarding the care and protection of children should be in the child's best interests, to help these children to change their condition and this implies for social work.

The social work profession promotes problem-solving concerning human relationships, social change and provides liberation and empowerment to people to enhance wellbeing. The profession of a social worker practices injustices and barriers that exist in society on an everyday basis. It utilizes a variety of skills such as different techniques and activities consistent with a holistic focus on persons and their environments because these children exposed to street life are also among a vulnerable group of the society that needs social work practice hence it is the implication for social work intervention. Social workers practice counseling, clinical social work; group work, social pedagogical work, family treatment, and therapy, as well as different efforts to help people obtain resources and services in the community. It also includes engaging

in social and political actions to impact social development. Social workers work with children in need and provide services to ensure street children's rights. They are involved daily as to how to keep the children safe and which provider in society can give the best tools for protection. As a social worker, there is a need to work strategically as a civil society appeals to the protection of human rights, especially of minorities and street children that are often ignored by the government. Children's voices go often unheard and the rights to affect the decision concerning them are ignored. So, social workers are promoting social change and for the vulnerable groups to be participatory in this situation hence it is the implication for social work.

However, the findings of this study indicated that the reunification services provided to children exposed to street life are not comprehensive enough to enable them to become fully reunified with their families in their future careers. Thus, there is a need to assess organizations working in the children reunification within the family context so that it will provide comprehensive reunification services to these children exposed to street life then they will become self-supporting individuals in their future.

The problem of children exposed to street life cannot be solved by the efforts of one part only. It needs the cooperation of different stakeholders such as governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, vulnerable children to street life, families of children exposed to street life as well as the enter community. Usually, the social worker has the role of mediating, negotiating, facilitating, counseling, resource mobilizing, coordinating, working as a case manager, and managing the overall process of reunification of children exposed to street life. But the organization where I conducted my study lacks professional social workers in fact, they use one person who is not qualified as a social worker in Asella Love for Children.

Besides, since the parents are the first ones that nurture the children and it is necessary to educate parents first on the advantage of reunifying these children exposed to street life in their future careers. By giving training on how to solve their socio-economic problems, how to take care of their children, and on the mechanisms of coping with their children's problems as well as how to deal with their home-based challenges for living with children in the reunification process.

6.2.2 Implication for Education

People have the expertise in their own lives and situations. Therefore, exploring challenges and opportunities in reunifying children exposed to street life needs special professional knowledge which indicates implications for education to successfully address the multifaceted problems of these vulnerable children exposed to street life. Since reunification is a process and needs professional experts to address the challenges of reunifying these children exposed to the street life at every step of reunification the experts who are qualified to support professional these vulnerable children know expertise so incorporating people's expertise in helping to reunify them require education and these all indicate implication for education about the reunification of children exposed to street life with families or caregivers.

Thus, Social work practice should make use of the strength approach to solve the problem of children exposed to street life so it needs a professional way to understanding people's interests and needs which is the implication for education.

6.2.3 Implication for Policy

The issue related to reunification of children from street life with their family is sensitive to ensure the interest of children and also to implement the laws of child rights that are signed and ratified by our country to discharge its responsibility. Therefore, the reunification of children exposed to street life is not only the concern of one sector due to this a lot is expected from governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, families of children exposed to street life, vulnerable children who are exposed to street life themselves, and other concerned bodies in all attempts to reunify these children with their families. So, the involvement of all stakeholders at every phase of the reunification of children exposed to street life is curtailed for the successful reunification of these vulnerable children. Hence, to implement the rights and interests of these vulnerable children the study indicates that cooperation and collaboration of stakeholders are needed so it's the implication for policymakers to define the role and responsibilities of all concerned bodies about children exposed to street life. Therefore, it's the concern of policymakers to ratify and adjust the international conventions to the local context for practical settings as well. On the other way children exposed to street life are among the most vulnerable group in the community that needs special attention from policymakers to change the socio-economic situation of these children in particular.

Again, finding from key informant interviews revealed that there were some efforts to help children exposed to street life even though lacks coordination both from governmental and non-governmental organizations failing implementation of the policies and programs of the government. Thus, this showed that the need for greater endeavors and commitment on the part of the government and non-governmental organizations working with children exposed to street life to implement policies and child care programs.

6.2.4 Implication for Intervention

Findings of the study indicated that the main challenge of reunifying children exposed to street life is family breakdown due to different reasons and death of one of or both of biological parents which are followed by the remarriage of one of or both of biological parents that children are forced to live with a stepfather or with stepmother but most of these children dislike to live with stepfather or stepmother so these are again challenging to them in reunification process with their families. Therefore, to handle these family crises from multiple angles the intervention of professionals in this aspect of the intervention is important, and social work intervention is indicated in this special case of reunifying children exposed to street life in general. So, to minimize these challenges in the reunification of children exposed to street life, family therapy, and other extended family members to take care of children after the death of their biological parents.

The other findings of the study indicated intergenerational poverty of family is one curtail challenge in reunifying children exposed to street life with their families. In this regard poverty challenges, the family's ability to fulfill the children's basic need for survival as a result of these problems families lack the commitment to accept these vulnerable children to reunify back with other members of the families.

To solve the poverty of family which is part and parcel of intergenerational poverty need special attention to mobilize the resources to support these families of children exposed to street life and these vulnerable children and also needs to improve family's income through some kind of income-generating activities based on their living environment business activities at least to minimize these challenges in the process of reunification of children exposed to street life. Here again, social workers can intervene in mobilizing local resources to support these vulnerable children and also indicated for the intervention of professionals in the field special social workers

to deal with these social problems of children and families to tackle the situation, hence it indicates implication for intervention.

Therefore, to provide basic services for children exposed to street life intervention from multi-professionals needed to give comprehensive services in reunifying these vulnerable children from street life with their families or caregivers, hence it is the implication for social work intervention to provide a professional role in the helping process of these vulnerable children.

6.2.5 Implication for Social Work/ Future /Research

The challenges in the reunification of children exposed to street life in Asella Love for Children, NGOs get less attention by stakeholders including governmental and NGO working with children exposed to street life in the study area. However, finding from key informant interview revealed that though no census of street children has been conducted to know the exact figure of street children in the study area still the number of children exposed to street life who needs to reunified is increasing year by year and the problem is also changing its feature as well as the magnitude of these challenging situations from time to time. These challenges in reunifying these vulnerable children are yet to be given attention as a result of which children exposed to street life are still suffering from the various hampering problems during the reunification process.

To this end, this study helps as a base for further multi-disciplinary study in each of these challenging conditions in the reunification of children exposed to street life with family or caregiver in general and on the study area in particular on challenges and available opportunities. On the other way, the mechanisms used to reunify these vulnerable children help to improve the life situation of these children in the study area.

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Annexes

Annex I

Consent Form

The consent form often requires that specific elements be included, such as the following:

- The right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time
- The central purpose of the study and the procedures used in data collection
- The protection of the confidentiality of the respondents
- The known risks associated with participation in the study
- The expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study
- The signature of the participant as well as the researcher (Creswell, 2018). Accordingly, I used the following consent form.

Consent Form for Research Participants

Research Title: Challenges and Opportunities in Reunification of Children exposed to street life with Family: The Case of Asella Love for Children, Non-Governmental Organization.

Researcher Information: Name: Kasim Aman

Tel. +251913550669

Email: kasimaman13@gmail.com

Postgraduate student in School of Social Work, Jimma University

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was to Exploring Challenges and Opportunities in the Reunification of Children exposed to street life with Family: The Case of Asella Love for Children, a Non-Governmental Organization. I do this research to Submit to the Graduate Programs of Jimma University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters in Social Work.

This study was not possible without your participation and partnership because the information that you provide was used in developing knowledge in the area. Therefore, I kindly request your participation so that you can provide me important information for the success of my research.

Confidentiality and consent

I may ask you some personal questions and I am not going to talk to anyone about what you tell me. Your answers are completely confidential. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you may end this interview at any time you want. However, your honest answer to these questions will help me better understand in Exploring Challenges and Opportunities in Reunification of Children exposed to street life with Family. I would greatly appreciate your help in responding to this study.

Would you be willing to participate?

Signature of interviewer_____

Signature of interviewee_____

Signature of family _____

Annex II

Tools for Data Collection

In-depth Interview Question

The following basic questions were prepared to collect primary data from children exposed to street life and reunified back with families or caregivers who are the clients of Asella Love for Children, a non-governmental organization.

1. Personal Background Information of Children Exposed to Street Life.

Name of interviewee:

Age:

Sex....

Place of birth:

Place of origin (woreda or kebele)

School attendance status.....

Duration of Interview.....

2. Family Background of the Interviewee

a) Do you have parents? Are they alive?

b) Where do your parents live now?

c) What was your mothers' and fathers' mean of children exposed to street life?

d) Who supports the family?

3. Children Exposed to Street Life Profile

a) What are the challenges you encountered while you reunified with your family from street life?

b) What are the opportunities available for reunifying children exposed to street life with your family?

c) How do you come back to your family from street life?

d) How do your family accept you after you experiencing street life and come back to reunify with them?

e) What are the mechanisms used to reunify children exposed to street life with family?

d) Who helps you to reunify with your family?

- e) Who was supporting you and your family in the reunification process?
- f) How do you cope up with the problems of the reunification process?
- g) What are the roles of your family in the process of reunification process?

Key Informants Guide Question

I. Background of the Key Informants

Name _____ Position/work: _____ Date of interview _____
Address/cell phone _____ Place of interview _____ Duration of interview _____

II. Guiding Questions for Key Informant (With 3 Respondents)

1. What is your name?
 - For how long you know the area and children exposed to street life?
 - What kind of position or work do you have?
 - Would you give me your address/ cellphone?
2. What are the major challenges that children exposed to street life encounter during reunification with family in the study area?
 - What do you think about the social exclusion of children exposed to street life?
 - How do you perceive children exposed to street life? How often do you interact with children exposed to street life? Could you tell me about your experiences if you have had any with them?
 - What are the major challenges children exposed to street life encounter after being reunified with their families?
 - What are the roles of the family during the reunification of children exposed to street life?
3. What are the socio-cultural and economic challenges that hamper the reunification process of children exposed to street life at the family level?
 - How do you observe situations and the number of children exposed to street life? Is increasing or not in your local area? If it is increasing what do think? What are the main challenges to children exposed to street life?
 - How do you describe children who are exposed to street life such as, their life, character, your image, and the magnitude of the problem?

- Have you observed differences between children exposed to the street and children being at home with their parents? If yes, what are the differences? Why did these differences happen?
 - Where, how, and with whom children exposed to the street spend their time? What do they do together with their friends? What kind of relationships and interactions have among them?
4. What kind of coping mechanism is performed by the children exposed to street life for their source of livelihood in the study area?
- How did children exposed to the street cope with the challenges faced during reunification?
 - What is the basic contribution expected to be performed by the family of children exposed to street life to make the reunification process successful?
5. What are the possible ways of addressing the psycho-social challenges that hamper the reunification of children exposed to the street in the study area?
- What could be done to reduce challenges during the reunification of children exposed to the street in the study area?
 - What are the available opportunities in the reunification of children exposed to street life with their families in the study area?
6. Any final comments?

Thank You for Your Valuable Information

Focus Group Discussions Guide Question

- a) How do you get this organization?
- b) What are the major challenges in reunifying children exposed to street life from your experience?
- c) What are the opportunities in reunifying children from street life?
- d) How do you cope with the challenges during the reunification of children exposed to street life?
- e) What kind of service is provided to children by this organization during the reunification of children?

- f) How do you experience reunification?
- g) What do you suggest regarding the reunification service?
- h) How do you see the role of the family in the reunification of children?
- i) Are the services provided by the organization help you in reunification?

Observation Checklist

- Date of ObservationDuration of Observation.....
- Name of the study area.....
- Location of the area/ description of the children exposed to street life
- Check magnitude of the problem and challenges that children exposed to street life faced during reunification in the study area
- Kinds of the coping mechanism used by the children exposed to street life while reunified with their family in the study area
- Observing behaviors and the day-to-day activities of children exposed to street life in the study area after reunification with family.
- How children exposed to street life interact with each other and with the other family members in the study area
- The relationship and interaction among children exposed to street life and with family in the study area.

