

NEXUS BETWEEN BIBLICAL STUDIES AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF STREET FAMILIES IN SELECTED FAITH BASED ORGANISATION'S REHABILITATION PROGRAMS IN ELDORET TOWN, KENYA

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Cite this article in APA

Osoro, A. K., Ogolla, M. & Nyaundi, N. (2024). Nexus between biblical studies and spiritual development of street families in selected faith based organisation's rehabilitation programs in Eldoret town, Kenya. *Journal of pastoral and practical theology*, 3(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jppt.v3i1.545>



A publication of Editon
Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history

Received: 10.04.2024

Accepted: 02.06.2024

Published: 29.07.2024

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Abstract

This study explored the nexus between Biblical studies programs and the spiritual development of street families drawn from the rehabilitation programs in selected Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in Eldoret Town, Kenya. Previous studies focused on the social and psychological aspects of rehabilitation. The study was underpinned by the Divine Command Theory, adopted a mixed method approach, which involved the use of both correlational research design and descriptive survey design. Interviews, questionnaires and field observations were employed to collect data. Chi-square tests of association were employed to measure the relationship. Qualitative data, including field observations, were analysed thematically. Study findings revealed that Bible study programs continue to be a significant component of FBOs' efforts to rehabilitate street families in Eldoret Town. The Pearson chi-square test, the likelihood ratio test, and the linear-by-linear test results confirmed that the nexus between these Bible study programs and spiritual development among street families is positive and statistically significant. The study concludes that proactive employment of Bible study programs in FBOs in Eldoret Town to rehabilitate street families has a direct impact on the spiritual development of these families. It was recommended that all FBOs should adopt policy guidelines that embrace Bible studies programs.

Key terms: Biblical studies, Faith based organisations, rehabilitation programs, spiritual development, street families.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Daily Bible devotions that enable street families to witness their past and present circumstances have been recognised as being very beneficial (Mwalili, 2018). These encourage the street families to discuss their everyday experiences within the rehabilitation facilities and infusing extracurricular activities, such as Bible Mnemonics, Bible verses memorisation, Word puzzles, fellowships, prayers, drama and music, which help them gain new perspectives and concentrate on other beneficial routines. Indeed, many religions share the practice of Bible study and prayer (Froese et al., 2021). They are cognizant of the understanding that, similar to meditation, prayer enables people to put some distance between themselves and their problems and their capacity to solve them. Therefore, it would seem that establishing chances for people to engage in group prayer in safe and secure environments is crucial to their well-being and spirituality. Prayer has been known to avail many beneficial resources, such as an avenue through which one can express and release joy and rage, encourage self-evaluations, get protection from potentially dangerous circumstances, and a model for managing emotion (Newman et al., 2023). Moreover, prayer practices give religious people access to like-minded people who are interested in hearing and caring about their experiences at any time. This sharing of experiences would particularly benefit street families who have been known to frequently become invisible members of society as a result of their homelessness (Pospech, 2022).

Research has shown that street Families have a history of social exclusion and mistreatment that requires their exposure to religion and highlighting the feeling of order, meaning, and purpose that it may provide to them (Lenhard, 2020). For street families, the opportunity to study the Bible, pray, and tell their stories may inspire hope and optimism for their eventual ability to govern themselves. While communal life sharing and prayer may not yield miraculous and instantaneous material benefits for them, they may offer transient respite from hopelessness and despair. Therefore, this study looked at how bible study programs, regardless of their theological background, aid in the spiritual development of street families in an effort to close this gap of secular service provider models not offering faith and spirituality to them.

This study was motivated by research that indicates that male street families can modify their attitudes and behaviours through a spiritual-based curriculum despite it taking at least nine months of consistent effort. For instance, using the Hour of HOPE (Hearing Other People's Experiences) program featuring 22-one-hour sessions, Beech et al. (2017) demonstrated that homeless adults believed that participating in the program, which encouraged the sharing of experiences offered them a voice and a secure space to express and hear their life stories.

Additionally, prior research on the impact of faith, religion, and spirituality on the well-being of street families has shown that religious practices can be a critical intervention that keeps people, especially street youth, safe from risky behaviour and negative consequences (Kidd, 2003). Meanwhile, using data from the National Youth Survey (NYS), Pei et al. (2020) postulated that the negative impacts of neighbourhood disorder on deviant conduct among Black homeless youth are mediated by an individual's religious involvement. The findings confirmed that Black homeless families' attendance at church may have a restraint on crime. These authors also established that Black homeless families' church attendance considerably mitigates the negative impact of neighbourhood disorder on severe crime. Similarly,

Lokkesmoe (2019) determined that teenage church attendance acts as a barrier against the negative effects of living in a disorderly environment on young people's usage of illicit drugs. In another research, Sartor et al. (2020) demonstrated that African American high school students' attendance at church or other religious events helps prevent the emergence of a number of risky behaviours, including early sexual activity and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. While previous research has concentrated on homeless teens' church attendance, it was necessary to focus on their rehabilitation endeavours undertaken in faith-based organisations (FBOs). Therefore, this study examined the impact of biblical programs on the spiritual growth of street families undergoing rehabilitation in FBOs in Eldoret Town.

The Kenyan government, along with civil society and other organisations, recognise the increasing menace of street families in Kenya and has made significant efforts to address the difficulties faced by these families, yet the problem persists (Kibet, 2020). Eldoret Town in Uasin Gishu County ranks among the major towns where this problem has existed for a long time. For instance, in April 2023, Eldoret gained global attention due to violent clashes between County government enforcement officers and street families drawn from Uasin Gishu County, highlighting the ongoing problems of integrity and involvement in vices among street families (Wangui, 2023).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have also contributed to the discourse on religiosity, risky behaviour, and negative consequences among young people. Atchison (2019) attested that Boston's faith-based collaborations between Black neighbourhood churches, the police, and probation departments played a crucial role in lowering the city's juvenile homicide rate in the 1990s. Edward and Wilkerson (2018) found that African American children receive spiritual and cultural socialisation at church, which helps them learn about their cultural history from other members and deal with life's stresses. A substantial body of research also shows that a young person's religious devotion can improve positive outcomes, such as improved academic performance and continued enrollment in the educational system (Horwitz, 2021; Wood & Hilton, 2012). In contrast to the prior research, which concentrated on general religious ethos and young people's positive consequences, this study focused on bible studies programs and the spiritual growth of street families from an urban town context.

Comprehension of faith-based services and metrics of religiosity have also attracted scholarly interest. Hammons (2023) found that children enrolled in faith-based literacy and mentoring programs showed gains in their reading levels, academic achievement, and bible studies. While such empirical evidence indicates that youths' religious involvement can act as a protective factor to promote positive outcomes and as a buffer to shield them from negative ones, most outcomes research conducted in faith-based settings has viewed the "faith" component of faith-based services as a contextual factor rather than a programmatic one (Bane, 2021). In other words, even while a number of research studies have found that faith-based services are successful, only a small number have attempted to pinpoint the precise religious elements that are linked to positive results. Furthermore, as highlighted by previous scholars (Atchison, 2019; Edward & Wilkerson, 2018), the majority of studies just use one factor—attendance at church—to gauge how religious young people are. Therefore, this study considered spiritual development measured

via the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) to be an outcome of the specificity of tailored Bible study programs.

Despite endeavours to gain a new perspective and concentrate on other beneficial routines through Bible devotions, literature has often interchangeably used spirituality and religion (Mhaka–Mutepfa & Maundeni, 2019). Yet without definitional categories that are mutually exclusive, parents, as expected by God through the scripture, have remained at the forefront of mentoring children. Parents today are, in a way, like chisels in God's hand, moulding their offspring into the image of Jesus. God's expectations for parents are seen throughout the Bible, starting with Genesis 18:19, which states, "... that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD." Additionally, parents are instructed to earnestly educate their children in God's ways in Deuteronomy 6:4–7. It states, "You shall speak of them when you sit in your home, and when you stroll along the path, and when you sleep, and when you wake up." The Bible provides guidance, yet society doesn't appear to live up to this standard, culminating in many societal evils and vices as manifested among street families. As stated differently, consciously imparting God's truth to children is a crucial part of intentional discipleship, which is parenting. The following four factors make this significant: God demands it. Ephesians 6:4 states, "Fathers, raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord; do not provoke them to anger." Additionally, readings like Proverbs 22:6, Psalm 78:4, Joshua 24:15, and 2 Timothy 3:15 demonstrate that God's design for children has always included parents serving as the primary educators.

Underscoring the significance of parenting, Akanbi and Beyers (2017) contend that Church programs can undoubtedly be advantageous and useful. However, they cannot replace parental guidance. Even if a youngster attends church for four hours a week, it is still insignificant compared to the time they spend with their parents. According to Psalm 1:1–3, people who ponder on and take pleasure in God's law will be blessed. However, your children require instruction in order to understand the Bible's truths and apply its lessons. It is, therefore, incumbent upon society to assist children in realising that their life's work is to enjoy God and exalt Him forever. The argument inherent here is that they can live lives that genuinely matter if they realise this. For instance, Charles Spurgeon, a highly renowned 19th-century preacher, remarked, "Let no Christian parent fall into the delusion that Sunday/Sabbath school is intended to ease them of their personal duties." He stated, "The nurture and admonition of the Lord is the first and most natural condition of things for Christian parents to train up their own children in" (McGowan, 2019).

Exposing street families to Bible study programs was also informed by the understanding that the Bible provides guidance on how children should be nurtured. Donison and Halsall (2023) implicitly observe that the outside world will replace your duty of teaching your children. They argue that children are exposed to cultural signals about appropriate behaviour, appearance, and thought processes every day. This exposure will increase as they get older. The Bible, therefore, teaches us that to help children understand how to walk with Christ in an immoral culture, it is crucial that we be purposeful in our discipleship. According to God's Word, you underwent a metamorphosis into a new creation when you accepted Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The gospel also has an impact on all aspects of your life, including parenting.

Therefore, the focus on faith-based organisations in this study to explore the spiritual development of street families was informed by the parenting atmosphere inherent in these facilities. The argument postulated in choosing FBOs is that there is the belief that God still dwells in them following assertions that "the removal of God from homes began with the removal of God from schools," (Constantine, 2021), which then justifies group therapy conducted in FBOs. Romans 14:12 states that one day, your children will come before the throne of the universe and give an account of their lives. Therefore, allow Christ to force you to be the parent that God intended you to be. Teach your kids the ways of God. Kindly resist the urge to follow cultural norms when it comes to parenting your kids and grandkids. Despite the instructions that the Bible gives, society seems not to live up to this expectation. This explains why there are so many social evils in society, including vices, found among street families. There was, therefore, a need to dissect the Bible study programs contained in these Bible instructions and their ultimate nexus with the spiritual development of street families.

Concerted efforts have been undertaken by the Uasin Gishu County Government and other entities to try to mitigate the issue of street children in Eldoret. For example, the County Department of Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Sports and Social Services has endeavoured to address the needs and welfare of the street families (Kurgat, 2024). Meanwhile, Eldoret Town hosts 52 faith-based organisations (FBOs) that offer various rehabilitation programs to street families that focus on spiritual, cognitive, self-reliance, and empowerment aspects. Despite these efforts, many street families return to street life, either after completing or even before completing rehabilitation programs, often returning to vices such as prostitution, pickpocketing, alcohol consumption, and other criminal activities. The problem has been confirmed by the NORCCAPA chairman and some FBO directors, who have noted an alarming increase in these vices despite ongoing interventions.

Concerns have pointed towards street family interventions by the county government, FBOs and NGOs in Eldoret Town as being reactive rather than preventive. Moreover, studies of street families have traditionally focused on short-term goals such as providing clothing, food and shelter, neglecting the spiritual needs and long-term development of these individuals (Greeson et al., 2024; Muhindi, 2020). Considering that street families often become formal Christians and participate in church activities without real reformation and that they are expected to attend church, pray, read the Bible, and participate in leadership and outreach programs, eventually developing spiritually and becoming self-sufficient, the role of Bible study programs in street family rehabilitation may not be underrated. The Bible emphasises the importance of supporting the helpless and oppressed (Psalm 10:17-18). Given this context, where there is insufficient focus on the nexus between Bible study programs and spiritual development at minimising street life and promoting integrity and spiritual growth among street families, it was essential to assess the efficacy of Bible study programs used in faith-based organisations on the spiritual development of street families in Eldoret Town.

Conceptual Framework

Independent variable

Bible Studies Programs

- Mnemonics /Memory verses
- Fellowship
- Vacation Bible School
- Prayer retreat
- Songs/praise and worship
- Word puzzles



Dependent variable

Spiritual Development of Street Families

- The Spiritual Well-being Scale
- Fruits of the Holy Spirit; Gal.5:22
- Joy, Love, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control
- Discover their Identity in Christ
- Exploit their talents
- Self-reliant
- Independent

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Mixed method approach was used, which involved the use of both correlational research design and descriptive survey design. Semi-structured questionnaires were utilised to collect quantitative data, while face-to-face interviews and field observations were utilised to collect qualitative data. A variety of samples were obtained for the study using strategies such as census sampling, proportionate stratified random sampling, simple random sampling, and purposeful sampling. The different samples utilised in this investigation were obtained based on Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) rule of thumb. The study targeted 52 FBO directors, 687 street families, 180 chaplains, and the chairman of the North Rift Child Care and Protection Association (NRCCPA). On reflection, a sample of 246 individuals comprising 12 FBO directors, 48 chaplains, 185 street families and the chairman of NORCCAPA was constituted. Field observations, interviews, and questionnaires served as the data-gathering tools. A pilot study in the nearby town of Kapsabet in Nandi County was used to test and determine the instruments' validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics and charts, including proportions, means, standard deviations, pie charts and bar charts, were used to explore and present descriptive nuances of the quantitative data. Conversely, qualitative data was evaluated and presented thematically in the form of codes based on verbatim reporting. Meanwhile, the Chi-square test of association (or independence) was used to test the existence or non-existence of associations between the Bible study programs and spiritual development. Street families' spiritual development was assessed using an adapted version of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study's objective looked at the connection between street families' spiritual growth and their exposure to Bible Studies programs in selected FBOs in Eldoret Town. Consequently, the current state of Bible study programs and the spiritual growth of street families in FBOs in Eldoret Town were investigated using descriptive statistics and thematic perspectives of both the street families and chaplains. Themes from interviews and pictures taken while conducting field observations complemented the descriptive statistics.

Street Families' Perspectives on Exposure to Bible Study Programs

Streets families were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with exposure to Bible study programs during their rehabilitation. The descriptive statistics from street families revealed that these families agreed to be exposed to a variety of activities as part of the bible studies program in their individual FBOs. These activities address many aspects of recovery that focus on spiritual nourishment.

The following was specifically determined by the descriptive analysis results shown in Table 1. A total of 189 respondents, or 89 per cent of street families, concurred that they were taught bible verse memorisation. Five respondents, representing a paltry 5.5 per cent of the sample, either remained neutral or disagreed on the same topic. Ninety-one per cent (131) of the respondents agreed that they associate and socialise with each other. Five respondents, 3.4 per cent, were neutral, while nine respondents, 6.2 per cent, denied that they were exposed to fellowship with one another.

On the topic of FBOs occasionally organising vocational bible schools for street families, 109 respondents (75.2%) agreed, while 18 (12.4%) disagreed or stayed neutral. Meanwhile, 115 street families, or 79.3 per cent, agreed that FBOs organise bible word puzzles for them; 19 families, or 13.1 per cent, disagreed; and 11 families, or 7.6 per cent, were neutral. A total of 108 respondents, or 74.5 per cent of the families, agreed that they are allowed to pray individually; 20 respondents (13.8%) disagreed, and 17 respondents (11.7%) stayed indifferent. Agreements were also expressed for FBOs' occasional organisation of prayer retreats for street families, singing songs and praising God, and organising fellowship programs. A total of 125 respondents (86.2%) agreed that FBOs once in a while organise prayer retreats for them; 134 respondents, which is equivalent to 92.4 per cent, agreed that they sing songs and praise God whenever they meet. Similarly, 134 respondents (92.4%) agreed that they usually organise fellowship programs while in the FBOs.

Table 1. Bible Study Programs in FBOs as Perceived by Street Families

Bible Study Programs	Total	Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Here, we are taught about memorising bible verses	145	8	5.5	8	5.5	129	89.0
We often come together and have fellowship with other children	145	9	6.2	5	3.4	131	90.3
The FBO once in a while organises for a vocational Bible School (VBS)	145	18	12.4	18	12.4	109	75.2
The FBO once in a while organises a prayer retreat for us	145	19	13.1	1	0.7	125	86.2
We usually sing songs and praise God whenever we meet	145	6	4.1	5	3.4	134	92.4
The FBO organises Bible word puzzles for us	145	19	13.1	11	7.6	115	79.3
We usually have fellowship programs here	145	8	5.5	3	2.1	134	92.4
8. I am able to pray individually	145	20	13.8	17	11.7	108	74.5

Source: Researcher, 2024

Chaplains Perspectives on Street Families Exposure to Bible Study Programs

The descriptive results on exposure to Bible study programs from the Chaplain (Table 2) confirmed street families' positive perspectives, demonstrating that FBOs in Eldoret Town have a variety of Bible study programs that they apply in endeavours aimed at rehabilitating street families. Specifically, there was broad consensus among them that street families are taught to memorise bible verses, with 23 (92 %) agreeing and 1(4%) remaining neutral or disagreeing. The organisation of fellowship sessions for street families likewise gained overwhelming support from the Chaplains, with 24(96%) approving and only 1 (4%) disagreeing. Similarly, 19 chaplains (76%) agreed that FBOs organise Bible word puzzles for families, while three chaplains (12%) stayed neutral or disagreed. Chaplains also agreed that organising prayer getaways, singing hymns praising God during meetings, and organising fellowship programs were as effective as other bible study programs in street family rehabilitation. Regarding the organisation of prayer retreats, 22 chaplains (88%) agreed that FBOs occasionally organise prayer retreats for street families, with two chaplains (8%) staying neutral and one chaplain (4%) voicing disagreement. However, there were differing views among the Chaplains on the implementation of specific bible programs. For example, whereas 17 chaplains, or 68% of all chaplains, agreed that FBOs occasionally organise vocational Bible School (VBS) for street families, four chaplains (16%) remained neutral or disagreed.

Table 2 Bible Study Programs in FBOs as Perceived by Chaplains

Bible Study Programs	Total	Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. We teach children to memorise bible verses	25	1	4.0	1	4.0	23	92.0
2. We organise fellowship sessions for the children	25	1	4.0	0	0.0	24	96.0
3. The FBO once in a while organises for a vocational Bible School (VBS)	25	4	16.0	4	16.0	17	68.0
4. The FBO once in a while organises a prayer retreat for the children	25	1	4.0	2	8.0	22	88.0
5. The children usually sing songs and praise God when they meet	25	0	0.0	1	4.0	24	96.0
6. The FBO organises Bible word puzzles for the children	25	3	12.0	3	12.0	19	76.0
7. The FBO organises fellowship programs for street children	25	0	0.0	1	4.0	24	96.0

Source: Researcher, 2024

The combined perspectives of street families and chaplains are a testament that bible study programs continue to be a staple of FBOs' efforts to rehabilitate street families in Eldoret Town. As a result, they involve street families in Bible study activities such as memory verses, fellowship, vocational bible schools, prayer retreats, praise songs, and bible word puzzles. The use of Bible study programs by FBOs in the effort to rehabilitate street families was substantiated during the field observations. During this exercise, the researcher came across some street children with certificates indicating that they had recently graduated from Vocational Bible School (Plate 1) and others praying individually, as seen in Plate 2.



Plate 1. Recently Graduated Street Children from VBS

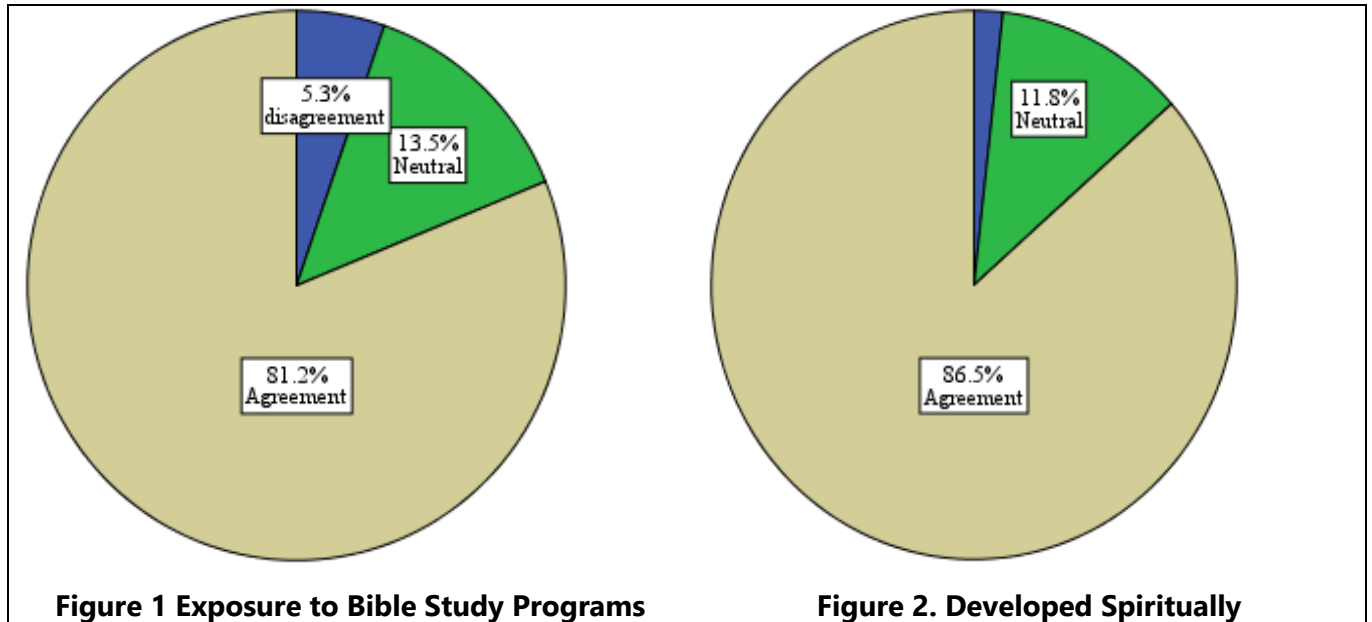


Plate 2: Street Children Praying Individually

The Nexus between Bible Study Programs and Spiritual Development

After determining that street families are exposed to a variety of Bible study activities, it was necessary to investigate the relationship between their exposure to these programs and their observed spiritual development. We hypothesised that there is no significant association between exposure to Bible study programs and spiritual development among street families in Eldoret's FBOs. Overall, Figure 1 and Figure 2

suggested a direct relationship between exposure to Bible study and spiritual development. Both figures show correspondingly high proportions of exposure to Bible study programs (81.2%) and spiritual growth (86.5%).



The chi-square results (Table 3) confirmed that the premise that exposure of street families to Bible study programs had no meaningful link with spiritual development was invalid. The Pearson chi-square test yielded significant results ($\chi^2(4) = 36.667, p < 0.001$). The likelihood ratio test showed significant results ($(4) = 20.103, p < 0.001$). Similarly, the linear-by-linear relationship was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 11.624, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the study revealed that the nexus between Bible study programs and spiritual development among street families is positive and statistically significant.

Table 3: The Nexus Between Bible Study Programs and Spiritual Development

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.667 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	20.103	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.624	1	.001

Source: Researcher, 2024

Discussion

The use of a variety of Bible study programs in FBO rehabilitation endeavours, as demonstrated in this research, mirrors previous literature contributions. For example, exposing street families to group fellowship reflects research that emphasises the value of letting street families relate their experiences and provide self-expression stories of their past. Indeed, the use of fellowship in rehabilitation is mentioned in scripture. In a letter to Israel and Judah, James states that faith-based prayer can heal the sick and pardon

sins. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, and you will be healed. James contends that a righteous man's effective and sincere prayer yields great results (James 5:15-16).

Meanwhile, the descriptive findings indicate that street families are taken to prayer retreats and programs to enhance individual prayer abilities, which demonstrates FBOs' intention to care for the well-being of street families. Individual prayer has been linked to overall well-being and personal spirituality (Bradshaw & Kent, 2018). Furthermore, prayer is viewed as a ritual performed collectively or individually that facilitates a constant symbolic encounter with the divine (Draper, 2019). The descriptive data indicating that street families sing songs and thank God while in FBOs are biblically supported. The book of Ephesians instructs believers to glorify God by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs together.

The finding shows that Bible study programs are associated positively and significantly with spiritual development and support other existing narratives. This is consistent with Rev. Mwalili's (2018) argument that regular Bible devotions can significantly benefit the development of street families. The study also supports Hansen's (2023) thesis that allowing persons to engage in community prayer in safe and secure environments increases well-being and personal spirituality. Exposing street families to Bible study programs is equivalent to giving such a setting. Given that street families are homeless, introducing them to Bible studies supports Fox et al. (2020) hypothesis that community life sharing and prayer can be related to spirituality and temporary alleviation.

Through recurrent themes such as memorising bible verses, emphasis on fellowship among street families, use of prayer retreats, and songs and praise, FBO directors supported the perspectives of chaplains and street families on the utility of Bible study programs in FBOs. This support underscores the critical role of Bible Study programs in faith-based organisations in Eldoret towards the rehabilitation of street families. The FBOs actively participate in these initiatives because they recognise that studying the Bible is illuminating and leads to knowledge. Essentially, these institutions believe that a strong foundation of faith may make or break a person's recovery.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The proactive employment of Bible study programs in FBOs in Eldoret to rehabilitate street families has a direct impact on their spiritual growth. These programs expose street families to prayer retreats and fellowships with the goal of maintaining a continual symbolic engagement with the supernatural, knowing that faith is essential for recovery. Finally, street families who have participated in these programs become advocates for fellowship and prayer retreats at the colleges and universities where they attend.

Recommendations: The study recommends that all FBOs in Eldoret Town offer Bible study programs that include a variety of activities such as fellowship, vocational bible school, prayer retreats, and praise and worship in order to ensure that all street families develop spiritually since the proactive use of Bible study programs is directly associated with the spiritual development of street families. Because of the programs' significance, relevant authorities and stakeholders should investigate policy frameworks that can compel chaplains to be employed permanently. This will ensure that the programs are offered full-time rather than just once a week, as the study revealed was the case in some FBOs due to a shortage of chaplains who are

sufficiently qualified. Future research should, however, explore contextual factors that contribute to challenges faced by FBOs in the provision of spiritual development programs, leading to some street families receding back into their wayward ways.

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