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Impact of Strengening Civil Registration Services on Risks Facing Child Migrants in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of strengthening civil registration systems on reducing legal and socio-economic risks facing child migrants in Nairobi County, Kenya. The complexities of child migration in African urban centres particularly Nairobi demand an urgent attention to the civil registration agenda. Nairobi has become critical destination for both internal and cross border child migrants, each bringing distinct legal, socio-economic and risks shaped gaps in social service access and policy. In the absence of valid documentation from civil registration, child migrants in Nairobi face double disadvantage; they remain unseen by the state and at the mercy of discriminatory gate keeping in education, health and legal redress. This study is grounded and guided by legal identity theory, social exclusion theory and human rights-based approach theory. The study sought to assess effectiveness of civil registration system in capturing the birth of child migrants in Nairobi, it explored the socio-economic risks experienced by child migrants lacking civil registration documentation in Nairobi and evaluated the potential impact of strengthening civil registration system among child migrants in Nairobi. The research employed mixed methods of study in so doing it utilized descriptive and analytical techniques including Chi-square for quantitative data and for qualitative themes or insights were utilized. The research design employed in this study was convergent parallel research design. The key findings of the study showed that absence of birth certificates and birth registration subjects child migrants to severe legal invisibility hence negating their legal personhood and access to socio-economic benefits. Therefore, the study reveals measurable correlation between undocumented status of child migrants and denial of legal resources and birth certificate was found to be foundational document upon which rights and justice depend. The study further found out that socio-economic risks faced by child migrants led to serious exclusion, locking them out of education, health care and subject them to exploitative labour abuse. The study, therefore, recommends regular mobile registration targeting informal settlements where most migrants live. It further recommends legislation review to accommodate emerging issues like child migrant registration which do not appear in the current legal regime. Simplification of late registration conditions to accommodate child migrants is also recommended. Integration of services through digitization was also recommended apart from advocacy and proactive registration policies.

Keywords: *Child Migrants, Civil Registration Services, Impact, Risks, Strengthening.*

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Civil registration is the process by which vital events such as births, deaths, divorce and marriages are officially recorded and form the backbone of state-citizen relations, underpinning access to fundamental rights and services (Mills et al., 2019; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; Bhatia et al., 2017; United Nations, 2014). Yet, in low- and middle-income countries, persistent gaps in registration coverage create invisible populations, rendering millions, especially children, susceptible to profound legal and socio-economic vulnerabilities (Mills et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2013; Garenne et al., 2016; World Health Organization, 2013). Children lacking official documentation face hurdles ranging from denial of education and healthcare to heightened exposure to trafficking and exploitation (Apland et al., 2014; Makinde, 2016; International Organization for Migration, 2008; Mavuka et al., 2023). The scholarly consensus underscores that robust, inclusive civil registration systems are not mere administrative tools; they are pivotal levers for equity, protection, and sustainable development, especially for those on society's margins (Mills et al., 2019; Lee & Mason, 2010; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014).

The complexities of child migration in African urban centres, particularly Nairobi, demand urgent attention to the civil registration agenda (Musembi, 2024; UNICEF, 2018; Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Okwany & Ngutuku, 2015). Nairobi County has become a critical destination for both internal and cross-border child migrants, each bringing distinct legal statuses and vulnerabilities shaped by gaps in policy, social protection, and the urban economy (UNICEF,

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2018; Muthengi, 2019; Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Amiri & Tostensen, 2011). In the absence of valid documentation, migrant children in Nairobi face a double disadvantage: they remain unseen by the state and at the mercy of discriminatory gatekeeping in education, health, and legal redress (Musembi, 2024; Chege & Ucembe, 2020; Loo & Muasa, 2023; Onyango, 2016). Such exclusions deepen social divides and perpetuate cycles of marginalization, undermining Kenya's constitutional commitments, universal birth registration Principle and global child rights obligations (UNICEF, 2018; Amiri & Tostensen, 2011; Chege & Ucembe, 2020; Musembi, 2024).

Global research highlights the structural and procedural barriers inhibiting universal civil registration, ranging from socio-economic disadvantage and gender norms to geographic inaccessibility and mistrust of authorities (Apland et al., 2014; Bhatia et al., 2017; Abd Majid et al., 2019; Fall et al., 2021). For child migrants, these obstacles are often compounded: they are likely to come from families with limited legal literacy, face linguistic and cultural barriers, or reside in informal settlements beyond the reach of conventional administrative frameworks (Mavuka et al., 2023; Manby, 2020; Mikkelsen et al., 2015; Tamargo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the lack of interoperable civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems undermines efforts to provide social protection and enforce the rights of the most vulnerable (World Health Organization, 2013; Tamargo et al., 2020; Africa Programs for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, 2017; United Nations, 2019). The literature is unequivocal: without targeted reforms, civil registration will remain a significant determinant of social exclusion, with lifelong repercussions for unregistered children (Bhatia et al., 2017; Makinde, 2016; Manby, 2020; Garenne et al., 2016).

Efforts to reform and strengthen civil registration systems (CRVSS) must be both technically robust and sensitive to local contexts (Abou Zahr et al., 2015; Mikkelsen et al., 2015; Tamargo et al., 2020; Fall et al., 2021). In Kenya, recent policy and donor-led interventions have sought to harmonize civil registration and identity management, streamline birth registration procedures, and promote public awareness, particularly in urban migrant communities (United Nations, 2019; Tamargo et al., 2020; Musembi, 2024; Loo & Muasa, 2023). However, the translation of these reforms into measurable reductions in legal and socio-economic risks for migrant children remains under-researched (Musembi, 2024; Okwany & Ngutuku, 2015; Muthengi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018). There is a pressing need for empirical evidence that links improvements in civil registration to tangible gains in protection, realization of rights, and life opportunities for child migrants in Nairobi (Apland et al., 2014; Manby, 2020; Tamargo et al., 2020; Chege & Ucembe, 2020).

Against this backdrop, this study critically examines how strengthening civil registration in Nairobi County can serve as a bulwark against the legal and socio-economic risks faced by child migrants. Drawing inspiration from the resilience and aspirations the researcher has witnessed among Nairobi's migrant children and youth, this research explored not just the bureaucratic mechanics of registration but its lived significance; how a simple document can open doors, protect dignity, and transform futures. By weaving together policy analysis, field evidence, and personal encounters, this chapter introduces the context, scope, and significance of the inquiry, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of how a more inclusive civil registration system might empower some of Nairobi's most vulnerable children.

The roots of civil registration stretch far back into history, forming the invisible infrastructure that enables individuals to be recognized as legal people within a state. International scholars trace civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems to their early emergence in Europe and Asia, where recording of births, deaths, and marriages became entwined with governance, taxation, and religious practice (Mills et al., 2019; Bhatia et al., 2017; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014). Over centuries, the absence of civil registration left countless individuals outside the reach of social protection, justice, and political participation (Apland et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2013; World Health Organization, 2013; Abou Zahr et al., 2015). Modern scholars emphasize how this historical legacy continues to shape today's inequities, particularly for marginalized children and migrants whose existence may go unrecorded and unacknowledged (Mills et al., 2019; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014; Bhatia et al., 2017). This evolving context makes the study of civil registration's impact not only an academic inquiry but a moral imperative.

Globally, civil registration is now widely recognized as a cornerstone of human rights and inclusive development. International frameworks, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirm every child's right to a legal identity from birth (UNICEF, 2013; International Organization for Migration, 2008; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; Bhatia et al., 2017). Despite these commitments, gaps in registration persist over 237 million children under five worldwide remain unregistered, with the highest rates in low- and middle-income countries (Mills et al., 2019; Bhatia et al., 2017; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2013).

The international community increasingly recognizes that without reliable CRVS systems, efforts to improve health, education, and social protection are severely undermined (World Health Organization, 2013; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014; Mills et al., 2019). Today, research underscores how unregistered migrant and refugee children face additional barriers to legal protection, making them especially vulnerable to exploitation and statelessness (International Organization for Migration, 2008; Apland et al., 2014; Bhatia et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2013).

Across Africa, the historical and contemporary realities of civil registration reveal stark disparities and urgent challenges. Colonial legacies, administrative fragmentation, and resource constraints have left many African countries with incomplete and uneven CRVS coverage (Africa Program for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital

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Statistics, 2017; Garenne et al., 2016; Mikkelsen et al., 2015; Manby, 2020). In Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Nigeria, studies highlight the critical link between legal identity, access to socio-economic rights, and the effectiveness of child protection frameworks (Hlungwani, 2024; Makinde, 2016; Mavuka et al., 2023; Garenne et al., 2016). Barriers to registration for children born to migrants, those in rural areas, or those outside marriage often result in cycles of exclusion, poverty, and heightened risk (Manby, 2020; Fall et al., 2021; Tamargo et al., 2020; Mikkelsen et al., 2015). African researchers advocate for context-sensitive reforms, highlighting the potential of community-based outreach, technological innovation, and regional cooperation to improve outcomes for the continent's most vulnerable populations (Africa Program for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, 2017; Hlungwani, 2024; Mavuka et al., 2023; Tamargo et al., 2020).

The national context of Kenya reveals both significant progress and persistent gaps in civil registration, especially for child migrants and refugees. Historical records show that Kenya's birth and death registration efforts have evolved but remain hindered by administrative, socio-economic, and legal challenges (Musembi, 2024; UNICEF, 2018; Chege & Ucembe, 2020; Loo & Muasa, 2023). Kenyan researchers note that children born to marginalized families, migrant communities, or in conflict-affected settings often lack documentation, denying them access to education, healthcare, and protection (Musembi, 2024; UNICEF, 2018; Onyango, 2016; Chege & Ucembe, 2020). Despite robust legal frameworks and partnerships with international agencies, gaps in registration coverage remain most acute for refugees, children in informal settlements, and those with mixed or uncertain parentage (Loo & Muasa, 2023; Amiri & Tostensen, 2011; Okwany & Ngutuku, 2015; United Nations, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires understanding not only technical solutions but also the lived experiences of the children most at risk.

Regionally, Nairobi County has become a focal point for both internal and cross-border migration, resulting in diverse populations with complex needs for legal identity and social inclusion. Kenyan and international studies reveal how urbanization, poverty, and rapid demographic shifts in Nairobi have placed enormous strain on local CRVS systems, often leaving child migrants undocumented and exposed to risk (Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Musembi, 2024; UNICEF, 2018; Muthengi, 2019). For many families in Nairobi's informal settlements, the process of registering a child's birth is hampered by cost, distance, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of awareness (Okwany & Ngutuku, 2015; Chege & Ucembe, 2020; Musembi, 2024; Loo & Muasa, 2023). Local researchers point to the unique vulnerabilities faced by child migrants who may lack stable housing, supportive networks, or legal guardianship, further complicating their access to documentation and vital services (Muthengi, 2019; Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Musembi, 2024; UNICEF, 2018). As a result, Nairobi embodies both the promise and the challenge of achieving universal civil registration in the face of dynamic migration patterns.

The need for research on strengthening civil registration as a strategy to reduce legal and socio-economic risks for child migrants in Nairobi is both urgent and timely. Scholars across disciplines agree that inclusive CRVS systems are essential for achieving sustainable development, safeguarding rights, and building resilient societies (Mills et al., 2019; United Nations, 2014; Abou Zahr et al., 2015; Africa Programs for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, 2017). In Kenya, new policy initiatives, technological interventions, and cross-sector collaborations have begun to address the obstacles faced by undocumented children yet empirical evidence on their effectiveness remains limited, especially for urban migrants (UNICEF, 2018; Musembi, 2024; Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Tamargo et al., 2020). By illuminating the lived realities of child migrants in Nairobi and examining how targeted reforms in civil registration can alter their trajectories, this research sought to contribute meaningfully to national and international debates on legal identity, child protection, and inclusive development (Musembi, 2024; United Nations, 2019; Muthengi, 2019; Chege & Ucembe, 2020).

Taken together, the historical, global, African, national, and local perspectives converge to highlight a pressing research gap at the intersection of civil registration, migration, and child rights. The persistence of undocumented children, particularly among Nairobi's migrant population, poses both a challenge and an opportunity for Kenya's ongoing efforts to fulfill its commitments to equity, social justice, and inclusive growth (Mills et al., 2019; Hlungwani, 2024; UNICEF, 2018; Musembi, 2024). By critically engaging with scholarship across contexts and centering the experiences of Nairobi's child migrants, this study situates itself at the heart of a vibrant, necessary conversation on how strengthening civil registration systems can dismantle barriers and build futures for Kenya's most vulnerable children (Apland et al., 2014; United Nations, 2014; Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Tamargo et al., 2020).

- *Statement of the Problem*

While Kenya has made notable progress in digitalizing its civil registration systems, child migrants—particularly those living in Nairobi's informal settlements and remote areas of the country —continue to face serious legal and socio-economic risks due to non-registration of birth on time, due to a lack of awareness and special production material (Knowledge, Practice and Attitude Study -KAPS, 2022). Without birth registration, these children often cannot enrol in formal schools, access public health services, or seek help from legal institutions (Oloo et al., 2020).

The risks of exploitation, early child labour, marriages, and statelessness are worsened by their legal invisibility. Despite policies at the national level a significant gap remains between laws, and the actual registration of migrant children and second-generation migrants who tend to suffer despite being born in Kenya and yet Kenya pursues universal birth registration. These migrants tend to suffer if their birth was not captured at birth. More affected are those born at home because they don't qualify for late registration of birth

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occurring at home and are not easy to register due to condition in legal provision. As a result, the institutions meant to protect them often fail to even recognize their existence due to old-weak legal regime (Omollo & Munene, 2022).

Existing efforts appear to focus more on improving registration coverage with limited focus on child migrants as a specific special population that needs affirmative actions, who are not registered under the current registration regime and fall outside the formal refugee framework, yet remain undocumented. This could be due to a lack of specialized registration materials like the B1 form, the main form used to capture birth in the community and at the health facility. This research sought to fill that critical knowledge gap by examining how strengthening civil registration systems could mitigate the legal and socio-economic risks facing child migrants in Nairobi. By mapping their lived experiences and identifying institutional bottlenecks, the study aimed to generate actionable insights for policymakers and civil society. It contributes to emerging scholarship on the intersection of migration, urban governance, and legal identity, providing a localized lens through which to examine a global problem (Wanjiku & Odhiambo, 2023; Chege & Barasa, 2021).

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

The specific objectives of the study include:

- To assess the current effectiveness of civil registration systems in capturing birth of child migrants in Nairobi.
- To examine the legal risks faced by child migrants lacking births registration in Nairobi
- To explore the socio-economic risks experienced by child migrants lacking civil registration documentation in Nairobi.
- To evaluate the potential impact of strengthened civil registration on reducing legal risks among child migrants in Nairobi City County.

The challenge of providing every child with a legal identity is not merely an administrative task, but a fundamental issue of equity and rights. For millions of children worldwide, particularly those migrating within or across borders, the absence of civil registration transforms daily life into a struggle for access, protection, and recognition (Mills et al., 2019; Bhatia et al., 2017). Without documentation, child migrants are locked out of education, health services, and legal recourse, entrenching them in cycles of marginalization (UNICEF, 2013). This research is justified by the urgent need to examine how strengthening civil registration systems can help break these cycles and create pathways toward inclusion for one of society's most vulnerable populations (Apland et al., 2014).

Globally, the link between legal identity and sustainable development has gained prominence, yet there remains a significant gap in localized evidence, especially in urban African settings (Abou Zahr et al., 2015). Recent studies emphasize that universal birth registration is crucial for meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, not only for health and education but also for social protection and gender equity (World Health Organization, 2013; Bhatia et al., 2017). However, much of the international scholarship has focused on broad trends or national averages, often overlooking the specific barriers faced by mobile, undocumented, or displaced children in fast-growing cities like Nairobi (Mills et al., 2019). By generating empirical evidence from Nairobi's unique context, this study fills a gap in global knowledge and provides lessons that are transferable to other rapidly urbanizing, migration-affected settings.

Across the African continent, historic and contemporary research consistently demonstrates that incomplete civil registration perpetuates statelessness, poverty, and vulnerability among children born to migrants, refugees, or in non-traditional family structures (Manby, 2020; Africa Programs for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, 2017). Scholars point out that socio-economic factors, legal pluralism, and weak administrative infrastructure conspire to leave millions of African children invisible in the eyes of the state (Mikkelsen et al., 2015; Garenne et al., 2016). In Zimbabwe and Nigeria, for instance, children lacking registration are at heightened risk of trafficking and are systematically excluded from safety nets (Hlungwani, 2024; Makinde, 2016). This study is justified by its focus on identifying practical, context-sensitive strategies that can address such systemic exclusions, adding actionable recommendations to the growing body of African CRVS research (Mavuka et al., 2023).

Kenya's evolving policy landscape presents a unique opportunity for critical analysis. Although significant progress has been made in digitizing and decentralizing civil registration services, migrant and refugee children in Kenya continue to face formidable hurdles (Musembi, 2024). Gaps in coordination between government agencies, a lack of targeted outreach, and persistent socio-economic barriers leave many child migrants unregistered (UNICEF, 2018; Chege & Ucembe, 2020). Studies have called attention to the fact that legal reforms alone are insufficient without complementary efforts to understand and dismantle the practical obstacles encountered by marginalized groups (Onyango, 2016; Loo & Muasa, 2023). This research, therefore, seeks to contribute not only new empirical findings but also to inform the design of more holistic, responsive, and inclusive CRVS policies in Kenya.

At the community level, Nairobi County epitomizes both the challenge and the potential for inclusive civil registration reform. Urbanization, informal settlements, and complex migration dynamics have created an environment where documentation is often inaccessible to those who need it most (Mixed Migration Centre, 2020; Musembi, 2024). Local research reveals how a lack of documentation deepens the vulnerabilities of child migrants, leaving them exposed to exploitation, exclusion, and lifelong socio-economic disadvantages (Muthengi, 2019). By foregrounding the experiences of Nairobi's migrant children, this study not only enriches local scholarship but also empowers community actors and policymakers with evidence that is grounded in lived reality (Okwany & Ngutuku, 2015).

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From a scholarly perspective, this study advances theoretical debates on the intersection of migration, legal identity, and child rights. It builds on global and African research but carves out new ground by centering urban, migrant children's experiences in Nairobi (Apland et al., 2014; Abou Zahr et al., 2015). The study's interdisciplinary approach, blending law, social policy, demography, and human rights, provides a nuanced understanding of how CRVS reforms can be leveraged as instruments of social justice (World Health Organization, 2013). This research thus extends and challenges existing frameworks, offering practical and theoretical insights that will benefit scholars, practitioners, and advocates working on child protection, migration, and inclusive development.

This study is not only timely but also essential for closing persistent knowledge and practice gaps in civil registration and child protection. Examining the concrete impact of CRVS strengthening for migrant children in Nairobi it provides actionable guidance for Kenya and other countries facing similar challenges (Mills et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2013; Musembi, 2024). The study's findings will support more equitable policy design, inform international scholarships, and, most importantly, help ensure that every child is seen, counted, and protected in law and life.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➢ *Empirical Literature Review*

Empirical literature on civil registration and child migrants has expanded significantly in recent years, especially within the context of global development agendas like SDG 16.9. Scholars have used a variety of methodological approaches, including qualitative case studies, mixed-methods, and longitudinal data analysis, to examine the consequences of lacking primary legal identity. The existing empirical work primarily focuses on refugee children, while evidence on undocumented urban child migrants, especially those in informal settlements, is more limited.

Many studies reveal the compounded challenges undocumented child migrants face, ranging from legal ambiguity to socio-economic exclusion. However, notable contradictions and contextual gaps persist. Some literature emphasizes the technical aspects of digital registration systems, while others highlight the human rights implications of legal identity denial. This section synthesizes findings across geographies and identifies the empirical gaps that the current study seeks to bridge.

➢ *The Legal Risks Associated with Lack of Civil Registration Among Child Migrants in Nairobi County*

In a study by Bhatia and Wallace (2021) involving over 2,000 undocumented migrant children in Southeast Asia, the researchers found that lack of birth registration was directly linked to legal invisibility, statelessness, and increased vulnerability to detention. This was echoed by García and Moreno (2020) in a multi-country Latin American study, which showed that undocumented children were routinely denied access to justice and were unable to report abuses due to a lack of recognized identity.

Regionally, Makoni and Moyo (2021) analyzed civil documentation gaps in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, revealing that child migrants were often excluded from national legal systems and disproportionately targeted for labor and sexual exploitation. The study emphasized that the lack of legal documentation contributes to a cycle of silence, where children's rights violations go unreported. Similarly, in Kenya, Omollo and Munene (2022) examined undocumented Somali migrants and found that their children were unable to acquire legal guardianship or school placements due to administrative barriers tied to their undocumented status.

Locally in Nairobi County, Njue and Kamau (2021) conducted interviews with social workers in Kayole and Mathare and discovered that undocumented child migrants were routinely bypassed by legal aid programs. Police and judicial systems lacked protocols for dealing with undocumented minors, leading to informal handling or prolonged detention. Despite this evidence, most empirical work lacks longitudinal data on the legal trajectories of undocumented migrant children, revealing a gap that this study intends to address.

➢ *Assess the Socio-Economic Risks Faced by Undocumented Child Migrants in Nairobi*

A global comparative study by Abou Zahr et al. (2019) used demographic health survey data across 42 countries and confirmed that undocumented children had consistently lower school attendance and immunization rates. The study's findings also indicated that unregistered children were more likely to engage in informal work or drop out of school due to institutional rejection. This aligns with Turner (2021), who documented the link between legal identity and socio-economic resilience among displaced populations in the Middle East.

In Africa, Chibwete et al. (2020) analyzed birth registration and child poverty data from urban Malawi, concluding that undocumented children suffered from food insecurity, mental health issues, and exploitative labor due to lack of access to state-supported programs. Kimathi (2021) reached similar conclusions in a Kenyan context, stating that undocumented status restricts children from accessing public education, bursaries, and nutrition programs.

At the national level, Chege and Barasa (2021) surveyed school-aged undocumented children in Kisumu and Nairobi. Findings showed that lacking documentation led to school expulsion or denial of enrollment. Families also couldn't access subsidies or social safety nets because of the absence of verifiable identity documents. Locally, Otieno and Lando (2023) interviewed parents of undocumented child migrants in Mukuru Kwa Njenga and observed that without legal documents, they were excluded from health insurance, child welfare services, and vocational training programs. However, there is still a gap in the quantitative measurement of economic outcomes directly linked to registration status, especially in Nairobi's informal economy.

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➢ *The Effectiveness of Current Civil Registration Strategies Targeting Migrant Children*

Globally, Mikkelsen (2020) assessed civil registration reforms in Indonesia and the Philippines, revealing that while digital tools improved registration rates, migrant children remained excluded due to language barriers and lack of outreach. The study emphasized that top-down reforms must be complemented by community-level inclusion strategies. Bhatia and Wallace (2021) similarly documented that decentralized mobile registration units in Bangladesh improved registration among migrant children by over 35% when community health workers were engaged.

Regionally, Makoni and Moyo (2021) evaluated a UNICEF-supported pilot project in Johannesburg, South Africa, which integrated civil registration with maternal health clinics in migrant communities. The initiative recorded a 27% increase in birth registrations over 12 months. However, challenges remained in documentation recognition across jurisdictions. In Kenya, Wanjiku and Odhiambo (2023) critiqued the Huduma Namba rollout, noting that migrant and stateless children were inadvertently excluded due to reliance on existing ID documents to enroll in the system.

At the local level, Oloo et al. (2020) assessed a civil society-led birth registration drive in Kibera, which partnered with churches and schools to reach undocumented children. While results were promising, showing a 40% increase in awareness and a 15% increase in registration uptake, the program lacked policy alignment with national frameworks, leading to sustainability challenges. There is thus a need to empirically examine the effectiveness of hybrid models; government-supported but community-led targeting undocumented migrants in urban slums like those in Nairobi County.

➢ *Recommendations of Policy and Institutional Measures for Strengthening Civil Registration and Reducing Child Migrant Vulnerabilities*

Globally, García and Moreno (2020) recommend that legal reforms be paired with digital innovations, suggesting interoperable databases between immigration and civil registration bodies. Their study in Mexico and Guatemala highlighted the benefits of data harmonization for improving registration of cross-border child migrants. Bhatia and Wallace (2021) add that frontline workers should be trained on rights-based approaches to documentation, ensuring services are non-discriminatory.

In Africa, Chikwanha (2022) studied policy frameworks in Ethiopia and Ghana and found that government-NGO–NGO partnerships resulted in improved registration rates when coupled with public awareness campaigns and legal aid. However, the absence of centralized coordination was noted as a persistent challenge. At the national level, Njue and Kamau (2021) recommended revising Kenya's Births and Deaths Registration Act to include explicit clauses protecting undocumented migrant children, a policy gap yet to be implemented.

Locally, Otieno and Lando (2023) proposed institutionalizing registration desks in public schools and health centers in Nairobi's informal settlements Nairobi has only one office which serves about 5.5 million people. Their pilot initiative showed that early intervention during school admission processes increased child registration compliance among undocumented families. Despite these insights, no comprehensive evaluation exists comparing these various models, especially within a Nairobi-specific context that captures urban-migrant complex

➢ *Conceptual Framework*

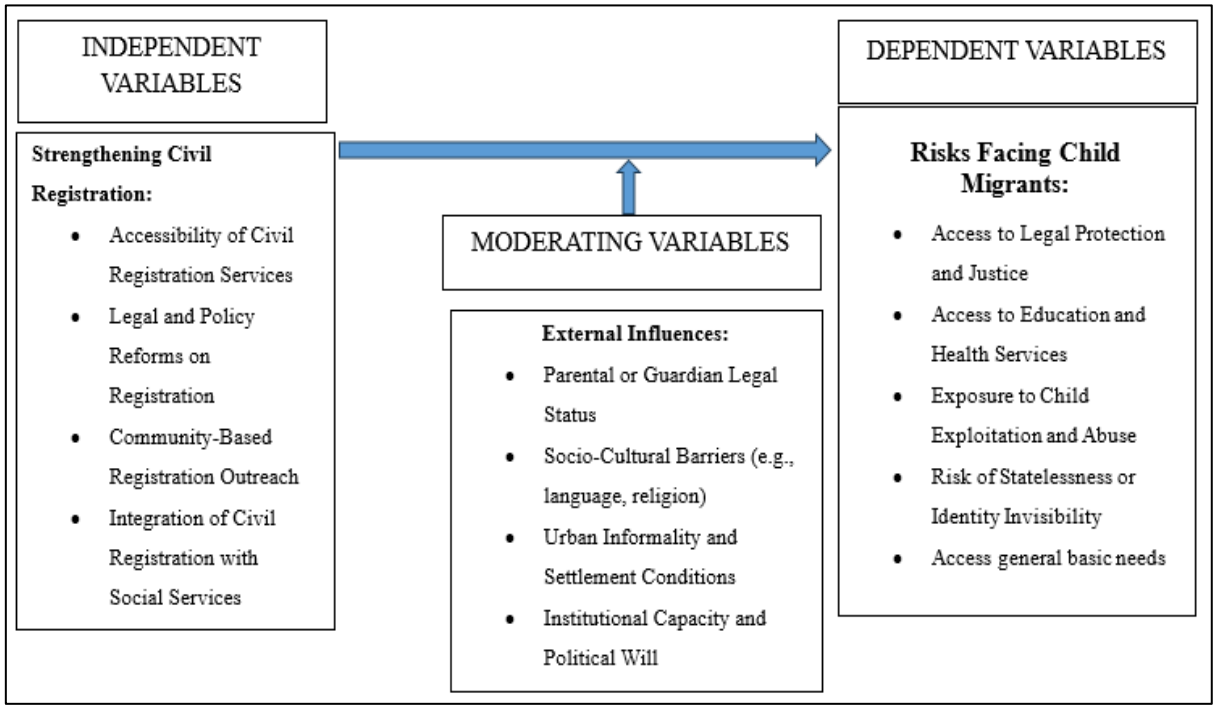


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

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➢ *Explanation of Conceptual Framework*

The independent variables represent components of strengthened civil registration systems that aim to reduce exclusion and increase legal identity coverage among vulnerable populations, especially child migrants. Accessibility speaks to geographic proximity, affordability, and the presence of mobile registration units. Legal and policy reforms involve harmonizing civil registration frameworks with migration law, while community outreach includes localized efforts such as school-based drives and faith-led mobilization. Integration with social services, such as registering children during health visits or school admission, is another critical component of a responsive system.

The dependent variables reflect the legal and socio-economic outcomes that stem from either the presence or absence of civil registration. A child with documentation can more easily access courts, enroll in school, receive immunizations, and be counted in national planning systems. Conversely, without legal identity, children are exposed to heightened risk of abuse, neglect, and invisibility in national data, rendering them unprotected and voiceless. These variables directly measure the extent to which registration strengthens inclusion or entrenches marginalization.

Moderating variables influence the relationship between civil registration efforts and the risks faced by undocumented child migrants. For example, a child's registration may still be denied due to a parent's undocumented status if it's a late registration. Similarly, settlement in informal urban areas like Mathare or Kibera can limit access even when national systems exist, due to a lack of awareness among foreigners. The institutional readiness and political will of the state further determine how effectively reforms are implemented and sustained.

Together, this framework conceptualizes civil registration as both a technical process and a social intervention. It captures how its design and implementation affect the legal recognition, social inclusion, and long-term security of child migrants. By understanding the dynamic interaction between independent, dependent, and moderating variables, the study explores the transformative potential of civil registration in addressing the hidden crisis of child migrant exclusion in Nairobi.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a very significant section where research design, target population, sample size, tools of data collection are examined to collect valid, reliable and verifiable data for scientific results and dependable conclusions.

➢ *Research Design*

Research design refers to the overall strategy or blueprint that integrates the components of the study coherently and logically to effectively address the research problem. This study adopts a mixed-methods design, specifically a convergent parallel design, where qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then integrated during interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design allows the numerical measurement of legal and socio-economic risks to be enriched by qualitative narratives that provide context, depth, and meaning to the findings.

The use of a mixed-methods approach enhances the reliability and validity of results through triangulation, ensuring that the weaknesses of one method are offset by the strengths of the other (Fetters et al., 2013). Quantitative data provides generalizability and statistical patterns, while qualitative data offers a nuanced understanding of institutional processes, cultural barriers, and personal experiences related to civil registration. This integration is particularly critical in research involving marginalized groups, where numbers alone may fail to capture the complexity of lived realities (Bryman, 2016).

The study was structured to collect survey data from a representative sample of child migrant households to quantify the prevalence of undocumented status and its associated risks. Simultaneously, in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion with parents, civil registration officers, and NGO representatives provide qualitative insights into barriers, policy gaps, and potential solutions. The convergent design ensures that both strands of evidence inform the conclusions and recommendations, creating a comprehensive understanding of how strengthening civil registration impacts legal and socio-economic risks outcomes for child migrants in Nairobi.

➢ *Target Population*

The target population refers to the specific subset of the overall population that is relevant to the research problem and to which the study's findings are intended to generalize. It represents the group from which the sample is drawn and is defined according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria established by the researcher (Lavrakas, 2011).

In this study, the target population consists of undocumented child migrants aged below 18 years residing in Nairobi City County and their primary caregivers, as well as key stakeholders directly involved in civil registration service delivery and advocacy. This narrower scope allows the study to focus on those who directly experience or influence the processes and challenges under investigation (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

A well-defined target population ensures relevance and precision in sampling, as it reduces the risk of including respondents who cannot provide meaningful insights into the research variables (Saunders et al., 2019). For example, in this study, documented migrant children or those outside Nairobi County were excluded, as their experiences with civil registration may differ substantially from those of the target group. This precision enhances the internal validity of the study while maintaining its applicability to the policy environment in Nairobi.

The target population includes undocumented child migrants living in Nairobi County, their parents or guardians

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who are responsible for navigating civil registration processes and selected civil registration officers and NGO representatives who work directly in child migrant registration and protection. These groups are selected because they have firsthand knowledge of the barriers, risks, and potential benefits associated with strengthened civil registration systems.

Table 1 Target Population and Sampling Frame

Category	Total Population	Sampling Method
Undocumented child migrants	440	Stratified Random Sampling
Parents/guardians of child migrants	220	Stratified Random Sampling
Sub-total (Quantitative Sampling Frame)	660	
Civil registration officers	5	Purposive Census
NGO representatives (child-focused/migrant-focused)	3	Purposive Census
Total Individuals of Interest	668	

Source: Nairobi County Child Protection Unit (2025)

➢ *Sample Size*

Determining an appropriate sample size is critical for ensuring that the study's findings are statistically reliable and representative of the target population. For this study, the sample size calculation applies specifically to the quantitative component of the research, which involves undocumented child migrants and their parents/guardians.

Yamane's (1967) formula is a widely recognized approach for calculating sample size in social science research when the population size is known. The formula is expressed as:

$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision (sampling error)

For the quantitative strata of this study, the population size (N) is 660. The precision level (e) is set at 5% (0.05), which is acceptable for social research (Israel, 2013; Taherdoost, 2016). Substituting the values: The 660-target population was homogeneous hence use of this formula 8 respondents we used census and analyzed separately but converged during explanation.

$n = 660 / [1 + 660 * (0.05)^2]$

$n = 660 / [1 + 1.65]$

$n = 660 / 2.65$

$n \approx 249$

Thus, a minimum sample size of 249 respondents is required from the quantitative strata. This size balances statistical representativeness with the practical constraints of time, cost, and accessibility, especially given the mobility and legal vulnerabilities of undocumented child migrants (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

For the key informant groups (civil registration officers and NGO representatives), a purposive census was conducted, meaning all five (5) officers and three (3) NGO representatives were included. This ensures their in-depth, expert perspectives are captured in the study. Therefore, the total planned number of study participants is 257

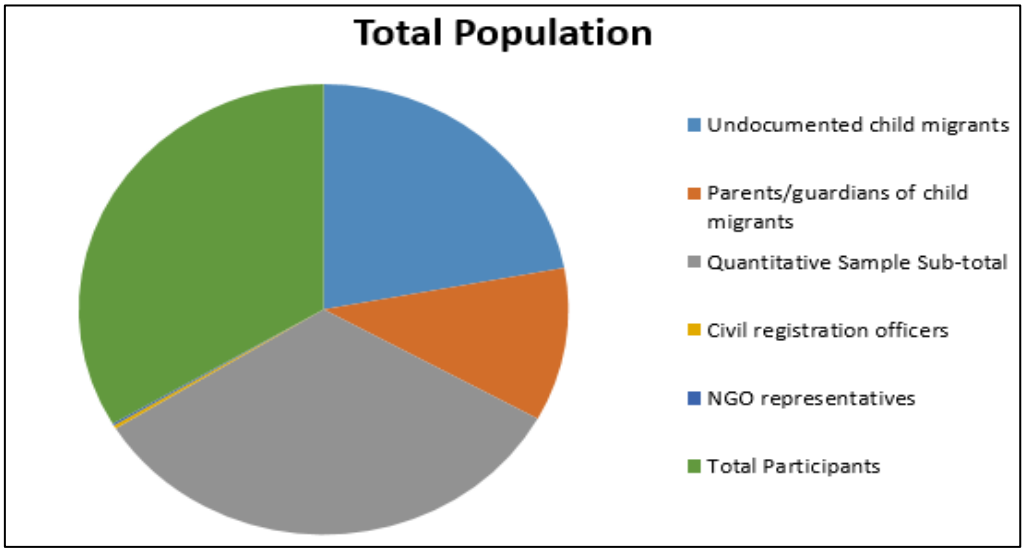


Fig 2 Sample Size and Distribution

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➢ *Sampling Techniques and Study Site*

Sampling techniques refer to the strategies used to select a subset of individuals from the target population in a way that ensures the sample is representative. This study employed a mixed methods sampling approach to effectively address both the quantitative and qualitative research objectives.

For the quantitative component, a stratified random sampling method was applied to the subgroups of child migrants and guardians. This method reduces sampling error and enhances representativeness, particularly in heterogeneous populations (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The planned sample of 249 was proportionally allocated to ensure each group was adequately represented.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select all key informants (a purposive census) with in-depth knowledge of civil registration processes and challenges. This includes officers directly handling birth registration, as well as NGO representatives engaged in advocacy and community mobilization. Purposive sampling ensures that participants are selected based on their ability to provide detailed, relevant, and experience-based insights (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The study also employed a multi-stage sampling strategy to effectively reach the hard-to-locate target population of undocumented child migrants. The first stage was purposive and geographical, focusing on the settlement areas of Kibera, Mathare, and Eastleigh. These areas were strategically selected as they are known to be hubs for both internal and cross-border migrant populations, thereby ensuring the research was conducted in contexts with the highest density of the study's target group.

Within these designated settlements areas, a combination of random walk and snowball sampling techniques was necessary to identify individual respondents. Given the absence of a formal sampling frame for undocumented migrants and the 'hidden' nature of this population, traditional pure random sampling was not feasible. The 'random walk' method involved field teams systematically covering predefined routes within the settlements to randomly select households for screening. This was supplemented by snowball sampling, where initial contacts helped refer the research team to other eligible families, a practical and necessary technique for accessing closed and often distrustful community networks.

This pragmatic approach ensured the study could overcome the significant barrier of finding and recruiting a vulnerable, often invisible population. Consistent with the study's focus on populations marginalized by formal systems, this hybrid sampling strategy was not merely a pragmatic choice but a direct methodological response to the researched phenomenon of administrative invisibility, thereby strengthening the validity and relevance of the findings.

➢ *Sampling Criteria*

Sampling criteria define the specific conditions under which participants are included in or excluded from the study. Well-defined criteria are essential for enhancing the internal validity of the research, as they ensure that data collection is focused exclusively on the relevant population, thereby minimizing confounding variables (Saunders et al., 2019). The inclusion criteria for this study stipulate that child migrants must be under 18 years of age, currently reside within Nairobi County, and lack official birth registration. Their parents or guardians must be primarily responsible for navigating the civil registration process for such a child. Furthermore, civil registration officers are included based on their active involvement in birth registration services, while NGO representatives must be engaged in programs specifically related to migrant child protection or civil registration awareness. Conversely, the exclusion criteria eliminate documented child migrants and those residing outside Nairobi County to prevent the introduction of variables related to different policy environments. To ensure all gathered perspectives are directly pertinent to the research problem, stakeholders with no direct involvement in migrant civil registration are omitted, as are children possessing birth certificates and guardians not currently caring for undocumented minors (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This rigorous application of inclusion and exclusion criteria ensures that all collected data accurately reflects the lived experiences and institutional realities of individuals with undocumented status.

➢ *Data Collection Instruments*

Data collection instruments are the tools and techniques used to gather information from respondents in a systematic and standardized manner. In mixed-methods research, selecting appropriate instruments is essential to ensure both validity and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, structured questionnaires are used for the quantitative component to capture measurable indicators of legal and socio-economic risks, while interview guides facilitate the qualitative component by enabling deeper exploration of individual and institutional perspectives. Structured questionnaires are preferred for their ability to produce standardized data suitable for statistical analysis, whereas semi-structured interview guides allow flexibility for probing and clarification (Bryman, 2016).

The questionnaires include both closed-ended and Likert-scale items designed to measure variables such as access to education, healthcare, legal protection, and exposure to exploitation among undocumented child migrants. The interview guides are designed for key informants—civil registration officers and NGO representatives—focusing on systemic barriers, policy gaps, and operational challenges in migrant registration. Both instruments are pre-tested for clarity, cultural appropriateness, and comprehensiveness before full deployment (Saunders et al., 2019).

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The study uses a structured questionnaire to survey undocumented child migrants' households, gathering data on legal challenges, socio-economic conditions, and experiences with civil registration systems. An interview guide is used for in-depth discussions with officers and NGO representatives, enabling exploration of procedural gaps, policy bottlenecks, and effective strategies for improving registration services in Nairobi.

➢ *Types of Data*

Types of data in a study refer to the nature of the information collected to answer the research questions. This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research objectives (Johnston, 2017). Primary data are collected directly from the field through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, capturing current and context-specific information from undocumented child migrants, their caregivers, and relevant institutional stakeholders. Secondary data come from existing records such as government statistics, NGO reports, and relevant academic literature, which provide historical context and comparative benchmarks (Saunders et al., 2019).

Combining primary and secondary data enhances the credibility and validity of the findings by allowing triangulation between observed realities and documented evidence (Fetters et al., 2013). Primary data provides the most up-to-date information, while secondary data helps to situate these findings within broader institutional and policy frameworks. This approach aligns with best practices in migration research, where data invisibility is a recurring challenge that can be mitigated by blending multiple data sources (Bakewell, 2020).

The research collects primary data through household surveys and interviews with key informants in Nairobi, focusing on undocumented child migrants and relevant stakeholders. Secondary data are drawn from official statistics maintained by the Civil Registration Services, annual NGO reports on child protection, and recent peer-reviewed studies on legal identity and migration.

➢ *Data Collection Procedures*

Data collection procedures outline the step-by-step process of gathering information in the field while maintaining methodological rigor and ethical standards. In this study, data collection begins with securing necessary approvals from relevant authorities. Trained research assistants are then deployed to administer the questionnaires and conduct interviews. Data collection is carried out over a defined period to minimize recall bias and seasonal variations in migrant patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative surveys are administered face-to-face in respondents' households to ensure clarity of questions and maximize response rates. Interviews with civil registration officers and NGO staff are conducted at their workplaces or via secure virtual platforms when in-person meetings are not feasible. The fieldwork incorporates measures to protect respondents' privacy, such as anonymizing personal identifiers and securing informed consent before participation. All data are recorded systematically, with digital backups created daily to prevent loss (Saunders et al., 2019).

Data is collected over six weeks, with survey teams visiting identified neighborhoods in Nairobi's sub-counties. The process begins with household visits for administering questionnaires to caregivers of undocumented child migrants, followed by scheduled interviews with registration officers and NGO representatives. Locations are selected to ensure coverage across both informal settlements and more formal migrant communities, capturing a diverse range of experiences.

➢ *Final Sample Attainment and Response Rate*

This section details the outcome of the data collection process, explaining the achieved sample against the initial targets for both quantitative and qualitative components.

➢ *Quantitative Sample Attainment*

The study successfully collected data from a total of 249 households. Following a rigorous data cleaning process to remove incomplete, inconsistent, or erroneous responses, 196 fully completed and usable questionnaires were retained for quantitative analysis. This achieved quantitative sample of 196 represents a strong field response rate of 78.7% against the initial target of 249 survey respondents. This outcome is considered robust and acceptable within the context of surveying highly mobile, vulnerable, and often hidden populations, where factors such as distrust of authorities, fear of legal repercussions, and high mobility inherently limit participation.

The primary reasons for not reaching the initial quantitative target were consistent with the known challenges of this research domain. These included the high mobility of migrant families, who relocated within Nairobi's informal settlements during the data collection period, making them untraceable for follow-up. Furthermore, despite stringent confidentiality assurances, a level of apprehension remained among some undocumented parents and guardians about engaging with a formal research process. Nevertheless, the final quantitative sample of 196 is substantial for meaningful statistical analysis. It is noteworthy that this sample size provides a margin of error of approximately 7% for the original accessible population, which remains within acceptable limits for social science research. The data collected provides a reliable and valid foundation for addressing the research objectives.

➢ *Qualitative Sample Attainment*

For the qualitative component, the study successfully conducted all planned key informant interviews. This included a purposive census of all 5 targeted civil registration officers and all 3 targeted NGO representatives, resulting in a 100% response rate for this stratum.

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➢ *Total Study Participants and Respondents*

Therefore, the total number of participants in this study was 204, comprising 196 respondents from the quantitative survey and 8 key informants from the qualitative interviews. All subsequent quantitative analysis in Chapter Four is based on the cleaned dataset of N=196. The qualitative insights from the 8 key informants are integrated thematically to enrich and explain the quantitative findings.

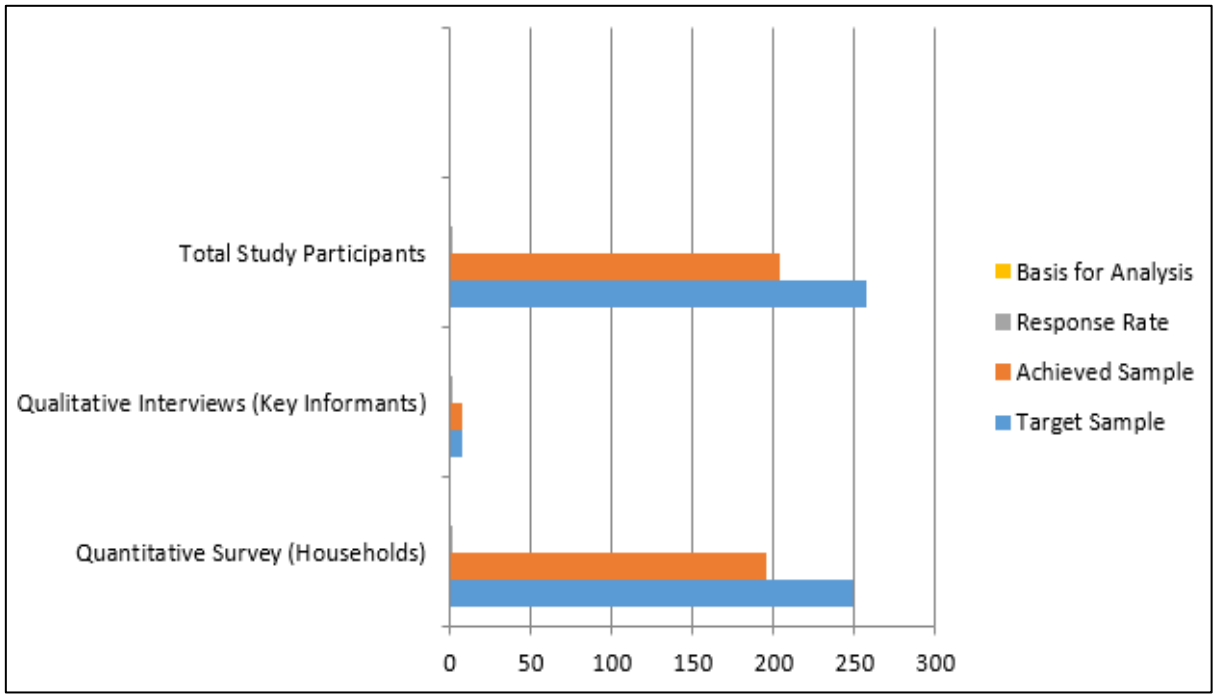


Fig 3 Final Sample Size Attainment Summary

➢ *Pre-testing of Research Instruments*

Pre-testing, or piloting, is the process of administering research instruments to a small subset of the target population before the main data collection to identify and address potential weaknesses in question design, structure, or clarity. It is an essential step to ensure that instruments are both valid and reliable (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, pre-testing was conducted with approximately 5% of the total sample size, targeting respondents from areas with similar socio-economic and demographic profiles to the main study sites but not included in the final sample. This helps to identify ambiguous wording, culturally inappropriate phrasing, and logistical issues in administration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The process also serves to assess the estimated time for completing questionnaires and interviews, allowing for adjustments in scheduling and resource allocation. Additionally, it offers an opportunity to evaluate the performance of research assistants, ensuring they are comfortable with the instruments and can maintain a neutral, non-leading tone when administering them. Findings from the pilot are analyzed and used to revise the tools before deployment in the main study (Bryman, 2016). A pilot survey is conducted in select neighborhoods in Nairobi that share similar characteristics with the main study areas, targeting undocumented child migrants' households and relevant stakeholders. The pilot identifies questions that are either misunderstood or too sensitive, allowing for refinement before the main study begins. Research assistants also receive additional training based on observations from the pre-test phase to improve their interviewing skills.

➢ *Validity and Reliability*

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency of measurement over time and across various conditions (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In this study, content validity is ensured by aligning survey and interview questions with the study objectives and theoretical framework, and by subjecting the instruments to expert review from migration and child protection specialists. Construct validity is achieved by grounding the questions in established indicators of legal identity and socio-economic well-being as used in comparable studies (Fetters et al., 2013).

Reliability was addressed through standardization of administration procedures, including training research assistants to ensure uniformity in the delivery and interpretation of questions. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed for multi-item Likert scale questions to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable for social science research (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This dual focus on validity and reliability ensured that the data are both accurate and dependable, supporting the credibility of the findings.

The research instruments were reviewed by experts in civil registration and migration studies to ensure they accurately capture relevant indicators. During data collection,

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all enumerators used a standardized script to minimize variations in question delivery. After the pilot test, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to confirm internal consistency, and necessary adjustments were made before final deployment.

➢ *Unit of Analysis*

The unit of analysis refers to the primary entity that the study seeks to describe, analyze, and draw conclusions about (Neuman, 2014). Defining the correct unit of analysis is essential to ensure that the data collected aligns with the research objectives and theoretical framework. In social science research involving vulnerable populations, this may range from individuals and households to organizations and policy systems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the unit of analysis is the individual—specifically, undocumented child migrants in Nairobi County—as well as key institutional actors such as parents/guardians, civil registration officers, and NGO representatives. This allows the study to capture both the lived experiences of those directly affected and the systemic dynamics influencing civil registration processes.

By focusing on both individuals and institutional stakeholders, the study can examine how personal circumstances intersect with structural barriers and opportunities. This multi-level approach is consistent with contemporary migration and governance research, which acknowledges the need to link micro-level experiences with macro-level systems (Bakewell, 2020). The analysis focuses primarily on undocumented child migrants, capturing their experiences of legal and socio-economic risks. Parents and guardians are also included to provide contextual background, while data from officers and NGO staff inform the institutional perspective. Together, these units provide a full picture of how strengthened civil registration affects the realities of undocumented children in Nairobi.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter details the analysis and findings of the research on the impact of strengthening civil registration on risks facing child migrants in Nairobi City County. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study collected quantitative data from 196 respondents including child migrants, their parents/guardians, civil registration officers, and NGO staff complemented by qualitative insights from open-ended survey responses.

The findings are structured around the study's four specific objectives: to assess the current effectiveness of civil registration systems; to examine associated legal risks; to explore socio-economic risks; and to evaluate the potential impact of system strengthening. The analysis utilizes descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) for quantitative data, with findings discussed in relation to existing literature and the conceptual framework.

➢ *Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

A total of 249 questionnaires were administered, and all were completed and returned, resulting in a 100% returns rate. This exceptional level of participation strengthens the validity and generalizability of the findings within the specific context of Nairobi's child migrant population. The high response rate is attributed to the researcher's immersive fieldwork approach, the deployment of culturally sensitive and trained research assistants, and the critical salience of the civil registration issue to the respondents, for whom legal identity is a matter of daily survival and future opportunity. The subsequent demographic profile was based on 196 (78.7%) respondents after data cleaning, about 53 (21.3%) questioners were discarded because they contained errors in response and others were incomplete. The qualitative insights from 8 key informants are woven into the discussion to provide context and depth.

The demographic variables analyzed included the respondent category, age group, settlement area, and nationality or legal status. The distribution across these categories provides a clear picture of a study population deeply embedded within the complex landscape of migration, urban informality, and administrative bureaucracy in Nairobi.

➢ *Distribution by Respondent Category*

The study engaged a multi-stakeholder sample to ensure a holistic perspective. The distribution, as detailed in Table 1, shows that most respondents were child immigrants themselves (63.3%, n=124), providing firsthand accounts of their experiences. A significant portion were parents or guardians of child migrants (32.7%, n=64), whose insights are critical for understanding the practical and logistical hurdles families face. A smaller but vital segment comprised institutional actors, including civil registration officers (2.6%, n=5) and NGO staff (1.5%, n=3), who offered invaluable perspectives on systemic bottlenecks and policy implementation.

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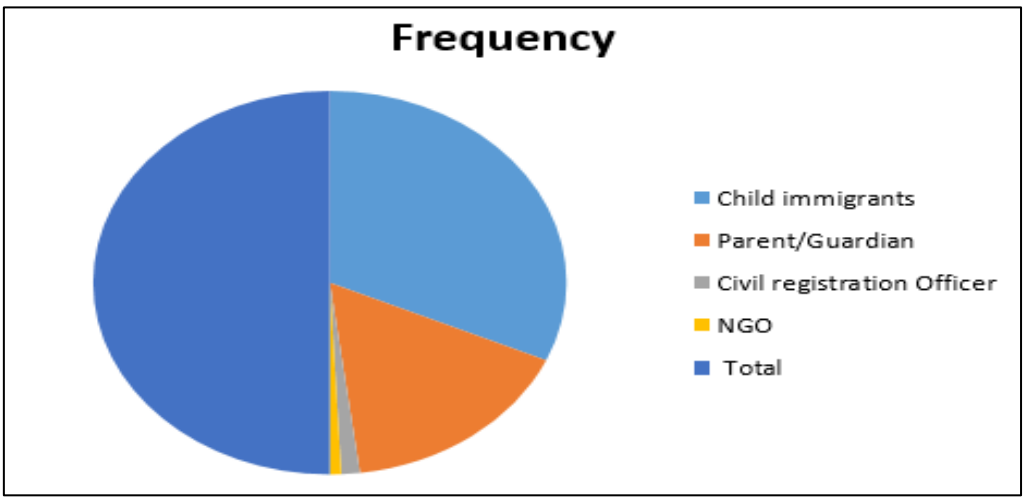


Fig 4 Frequency

➢ *Distribution by Respondent*

This stratified sample ensures that the findings are not only grounded in the lived realities of the primary beneficiaries but are also informed by the views of caregivers and key institutional stakeholders, thereby enriching the analysis with both micro-level experiences and macro-level systemic insights.

➢ *Distribution Respondents by Age Group*

The age profile of the respondents, presented in Table 2, reveals a predominantly young sample, which is consistent with the study's focus on child migrants. The largest cohort was Young Adults aged 18-35 (41.3%, n=81), many of whom were likely reflecting on recent experiences as child migrants or were young parents. Children aged 10-17 constituted 30.6% (n=60) of the sample, while Adults aged 36 and above made up 28.1% (n=55). This age distribution confirms that the data accurately captures the perspectives of the affected youth while also incorporating the views of older, potentially more experienced caregivers and community members.

Table 2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age group	N	%
Child (10-17)	60	30.6%
Young Adult (18-35)	81	41.3%
Adult (36+)	55	28.1%

➢ *Distribution by Settlement Area/Study site*

The geographical distribution of respondents, as shown in Table 3, highlights the focus on Nairobi's major informal settlements, which are known hubs for migrant populations. The largest proportion of respondents resided in Kibera (37.2%, n=73), followed by Mathare (28.1%, n=55) and Eastleigh (20.4%, n=40). These three areas alone accounted for 85.7% of the total sample. Smaller representations came from Kayole (10.7%, n=21) and Other Areas (3.6%, n=7). This concentration is methodologically strategic, as these settlements epitomize the urban environments where access to formal administrative services like civil registration is most challenging due to poverty, high population density, and informality.

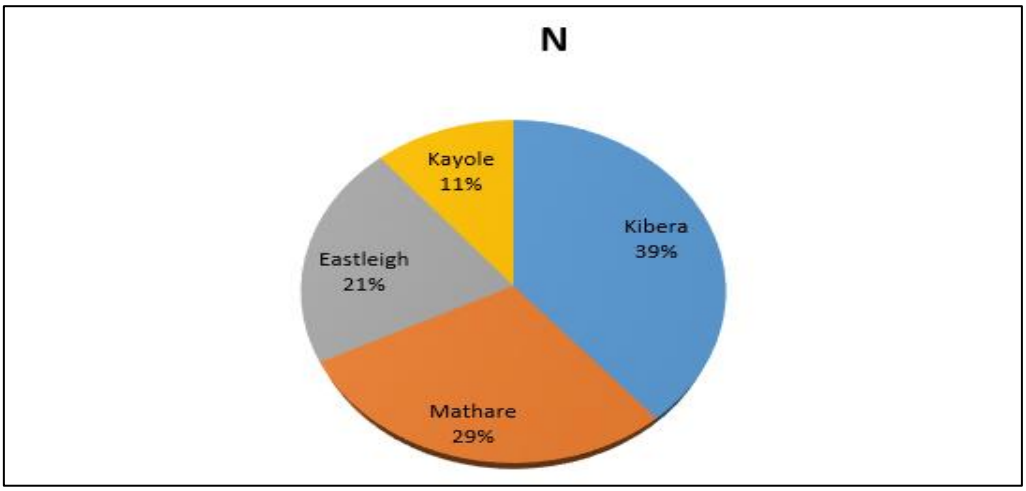


Fig 5 Distribution of Respondents by Settlement

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➢ *Distribution of Respondents by Nationality/Legal Status*

The legal status of the respondents and their children, detailed in Table 4, is perhaps the most critical demographic variable for this study. The data reveals a sample characterized by profound legal precarity. The largest single group was Second-Generation Migrants (42.9%, n=84) children born in Kenya to foreign parents, who often face complex citizenship and documentation challenges. This was closely followed by Undocumented Migrants (29.1%, n=57), who lack any formal recognition from the state.

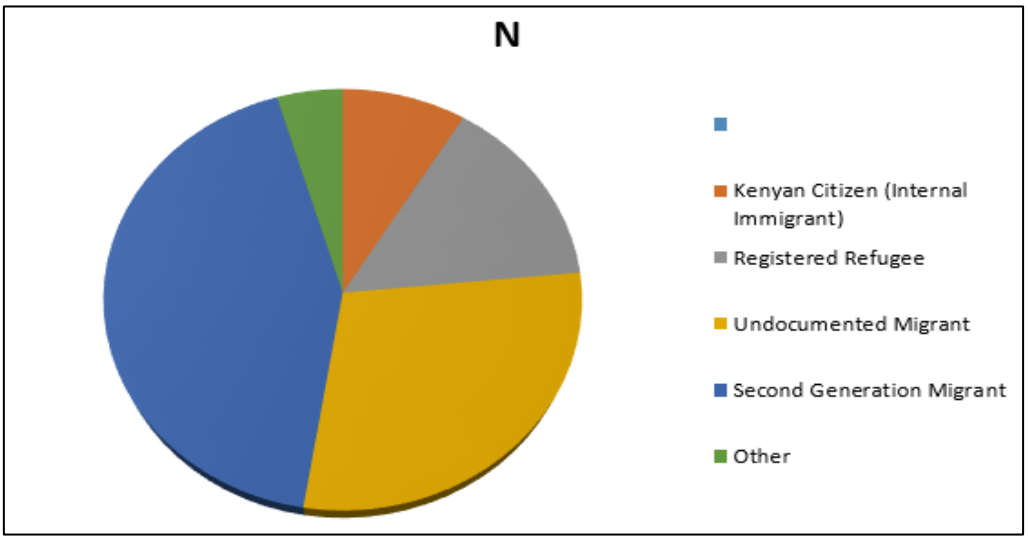


Fig 6 Distribution of Respondents by Nationality/Legal Status

Notably, the combined categories of Undocumented Migrant and Second-Generation Migrant represent 72.0% of the entire sample. This underscores that the study's findings are overwhelmingly driven by the experiences of those who are most vulnerable and marginalized by the current civil registration system. The presence of Registered Refugees (14.8%, n=29) provides a comparative perspective, as this group often has a different, though still complex, documentation pathway through UNHCR and the Kenyan government. The small number of Kenyan Citizens who are internal immigrants (8.7%, n=17) serves as a useful control group within the sample.

➢ *Findings on the Current Effectiveness of Civil Registration Systems*

This section addresses the first research objective: To assess the current effectiveness of civil registration systems in capturing the birth of child migrants in Nairobi City County. The analysis is based on responses to a series of statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The results paint a picture of a system with significant procedural and accessibility gaps that disproportionately affect migrant populations.

To provide a high-level overview, the descriptive statistics for the key variables related to system effectiveness are summarized in the table below. This reveals a system perceived as moderately effective in theory but failing in its practical, community-level application.

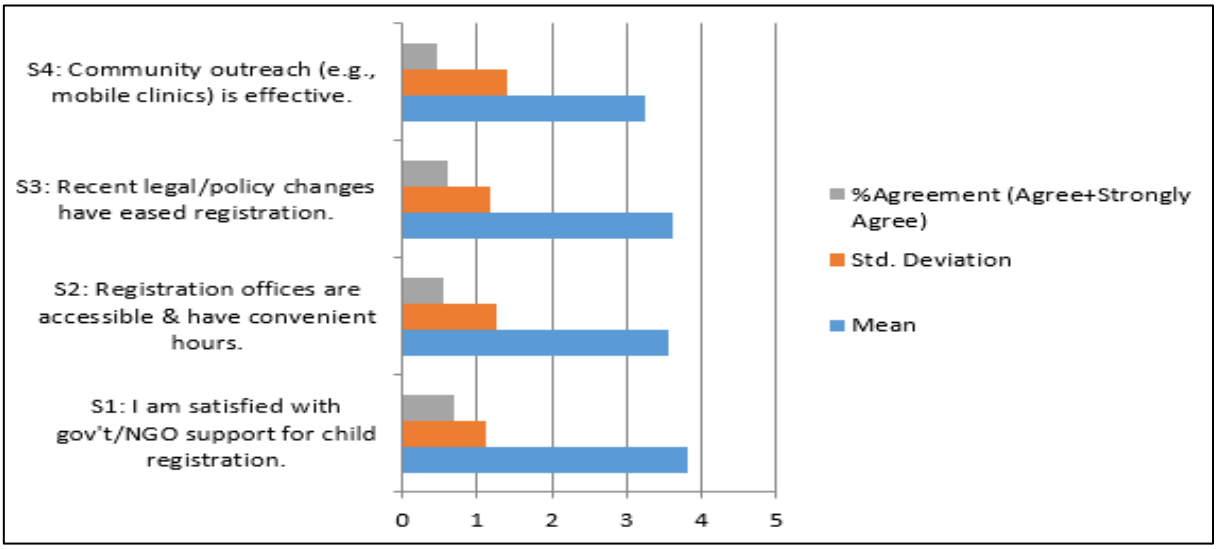


Fig 7 Descriptive Statistics for Civil Registration System Effectiveness

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➢ *Moderate Satisfaction Amidst Systemic Barriers*

The data indicates a moderate level of overall satisfaction with the support provided for registration (S1: Mean=3.82). A combined 68.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, suggesting that where services are available, they are somewhat functional. However, this overall figure masks critical weaknesses. The high standard deviation (1.12) and the significant 25% who were "Neutral" point to considerable variability in experiences and a large segment of the population that may be unaware of support services or has not formed a strong opinion due to lack of engagement.

The most pronounced deficiency lies in physical and logistical accessibility (S2). This was the only variable where disagreement (15.3%) outweighed strong agreement (10.2%). With a mean score of 3.55, for many migrant families in settlements like Kibera, Mathare, and Eastleigh, the journey to a registration office, in terms of cost, distance, and time, poses a formidable first barrier. This finding directly reflects the literature on how geographic and economic barriers inhibit universal registration (Apland et al., 2014).

➢ *The Gap Between Policy and Practice*

Respondents perceived recent legal and policy reforms with cautious optimism (S3: Mean=3.61, 60.2% agreement). This suggests that national efforts to digitize and harmonize registration systems have generated some positive awareness. However, the high neutral response (30.1%) is telling. It indicates that a substantial portion of the target population has not yet felt the tangible impact of these reforms, or finds them irrelevant to their specific, often complex, migratory circumstances.

The most critical finding, however, pertains to community-based outreach (S4). This was the lowest-rate aspect of the system (Mean=3.25), with the highest level of disagreement (19.9%) and the highest percentage of neutral responses (34.7%). A staggering 54.6% of respondents did *not* agree that current outreach strategies are effective. This reveals the most significant failure of the current system: its inability to proactively reach the most marginalized. Relying on a static, office-based model effectively excludes those who cannot navigate the formal system, such as undocumented parents fearful of authorities or those lacking the literacy and resources to complete the process.

➢ *Cross-Tabulation: A System Failing its Most Vulnerable*

A deeper layer of analysis emerges when examining the perception of system effectiveness based on the respondent's legal status. The cross-tabulation below starkly illustrates how the system's weaknesses are most acutely felt by those with the greatest need.

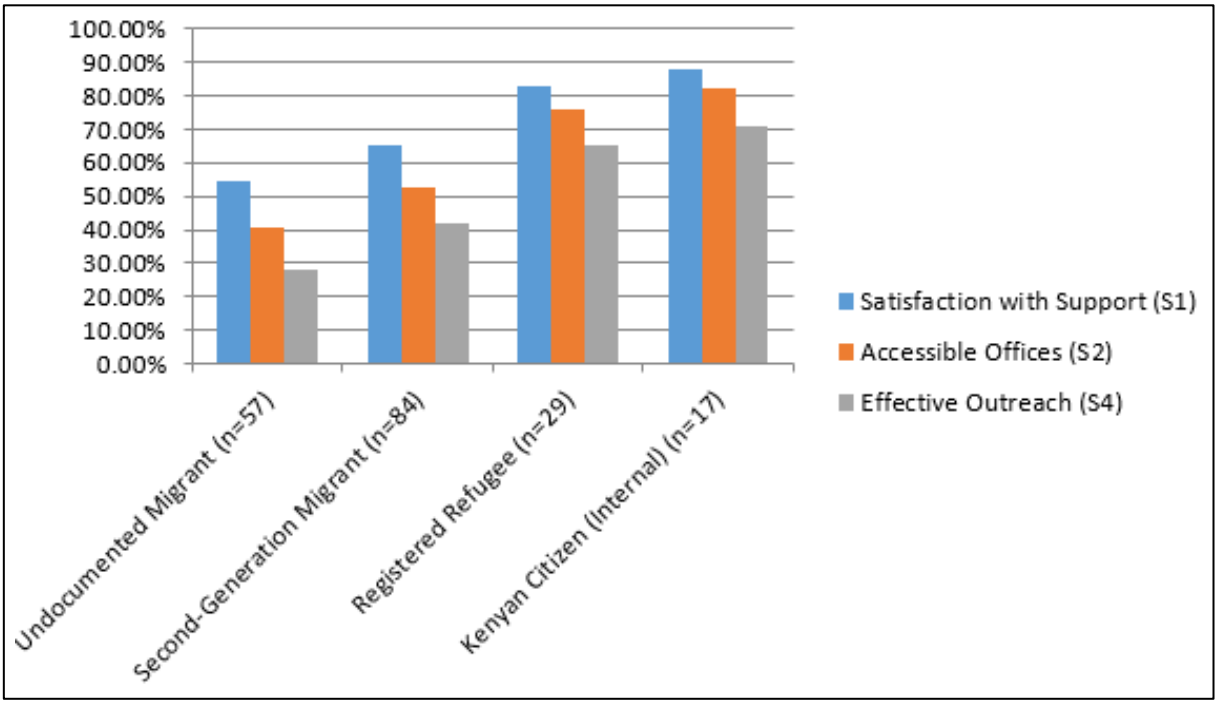


Fig 8 Perception of System Effectiveness by Legal Status

The gradient is unmistakable and statistically revealing. As legal vulnerability increases, perceived system effectiveness plummets. For instance, while 88.2% of Kenyan internal immigrants find offices accessible, this drops to just 40.4% among undocumented migrants. Most critically, only 28.1% of undocumented migrants find community outreach effective, compared to 70.6% of Kenyan citizens. This demonstrates that the current outreach strategies are not designed to overcome the profound distrust and specific barriers faced by the undocumented population.

➢ *Qualitative Insights: The Human Cost of Systemic Failure*

Open-ended responses provided poignant context to these numbers. One parent from Mathare explained, *"They tell us to go to the chief's camp for a late registration form, but when you go, they ask for your national ID and a birth*

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certificate from the parent, which I don't have because I am not from here. So, you just go in circles." This quote encapsulates the "Catch-22" situation created by bureaucratic requirements that undocumented migrants cannot fulfill.

An NGO worker in Eastleigh corroborated this, stating, *"Our mobile registration drives are the only time many of these children get documented. The government system waits for them to come, but they will never come. We have to go to them, with simplified procedures and trusted community elders to vouch for them."*

➢ *Discussion and Conclusion on Objective One*

In conclusion, the current civil registration system in Nairobi County demonstrates a critical implementation gap between policy intent and practical accessibility for migrant populations. While a foundational level of service delivery exists alongside some awareness of recent policy reforms, the system proves markedly ineffective in reaching its most vulnerable targets particularly undocumented and second-generation child migrants. The system's principal deficiencies manifest in its insufficient proactive outreach and its procedural rigidity. The heavy dependence on a passive, office-based model, combined with outreach strategies hat most respondents find ineffective, creates an insurmountable barrier that perpetuates the administrative invisibility of the most marginalized children.

Compounding this problem, bureaucratic obstacles and the rigid, uniform application of documentation requirements disproportionately disadvantages migrant families who cannot produce conventional identification documents. These empirical findings substantiate the scholarly critiques advanced by (Oloo et al. 2020) and (Wanjiku and Odhiambo 2023), who contend that well-designed national reforms frequently overlook the distinctive circumstances of mobile and marginalized urban communities. The evidence presented herein unequivocally establishes that absent a fundamental reorientation toward decentralized, migrant-sensitive, and proactively engaged registration strategies, the objective of universal birth registration for child migrants in Nairobi will continue to be unattainable.

➢ *Findings on Legal Risks Faced by Child Migrants*

This section addresses the second research objective: To examine the legal risks faced by child migrants lacking birth registration in Nairobi County. The data reveals a landscape of profound legal precarity, where the absence of a birth certificate translates directly into heightened vulnerability and a denial of legal personhood.

The descriptive statistics for the key variables related to legal risks are summarized in the table below, illustrating a strong consensus on the severe legal consequences of being undocumented.

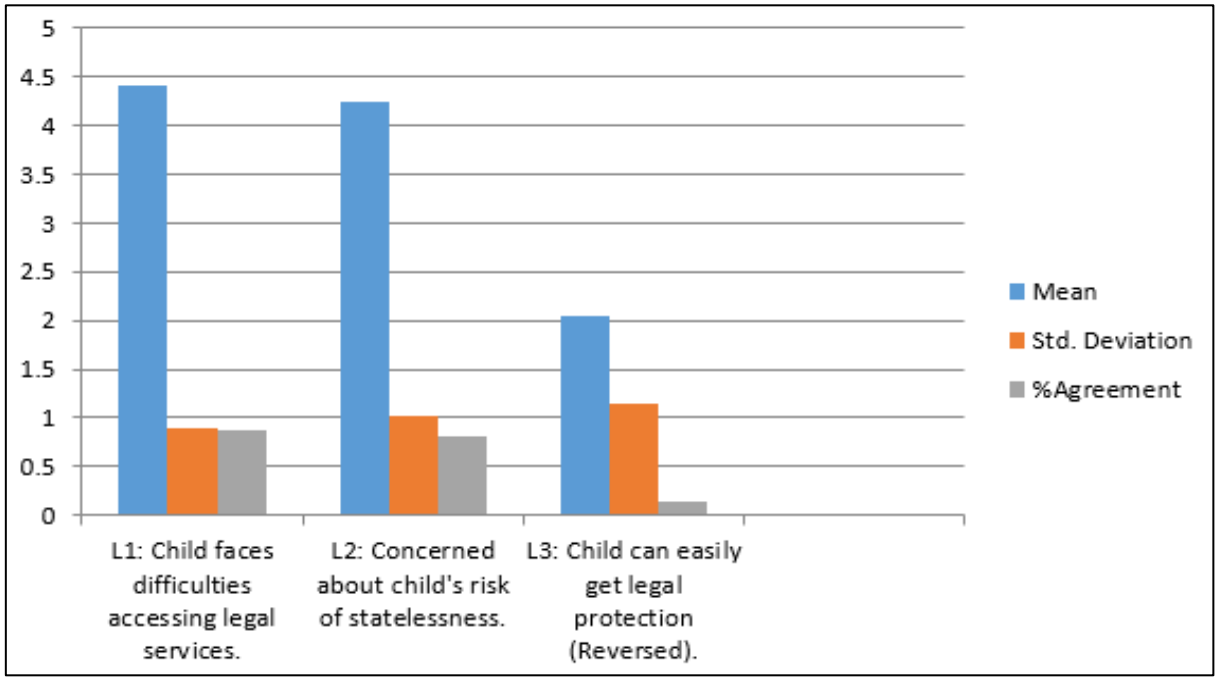


Fig 9 Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Legal Risks

➢ *Pervasive Barriers to Legal Access and Justice*

The data indicates an overwhelming consensus that a lack of civil registration creates insurmountable barriers to the justice system. An alarming 86.7% of respondents agreed that their children face difficulties accessing legal services (L1: Mean=4.41). This sentiment is powerfully reinforced by the reversed statement (L3), where a striking 74.5% disagreed that their child could easily get legal help and protection. This chasm between the need for protection and the ability to access it underscores a state of legal invisibility. The very institutions designed to protect children are rendered inaccessible by a simple, yet profound, lack of documentation.

The Spectre of Statelessness and Identity Erasure A significant majority of respondents (81.6%, Mean=4.25) expressed a concrete fear that their child may not be recognized as a citizen anywhere, leading to statelessness

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(L2). This is not an abstract anxiety but a real risk, particularly for second-generation migrants born in Kenya who may not qualify for their parents' nationality and who face obstacles in acquiring Kenyan citizenship. This finding directly manifests the theoretical concept of "legal ghosting" discussed in the literature, where individuals exist outside the formal recognition of any state.

➢ *Cross-Tabulation: A Gradient of Legal Vulnerability*

The perception of legal risk is not uniform across all migrant groups. A cross-tabulation by legal status reveals a stark gradient of vulnerability, where the most precarious legal status correlates with the highest perceived risk.

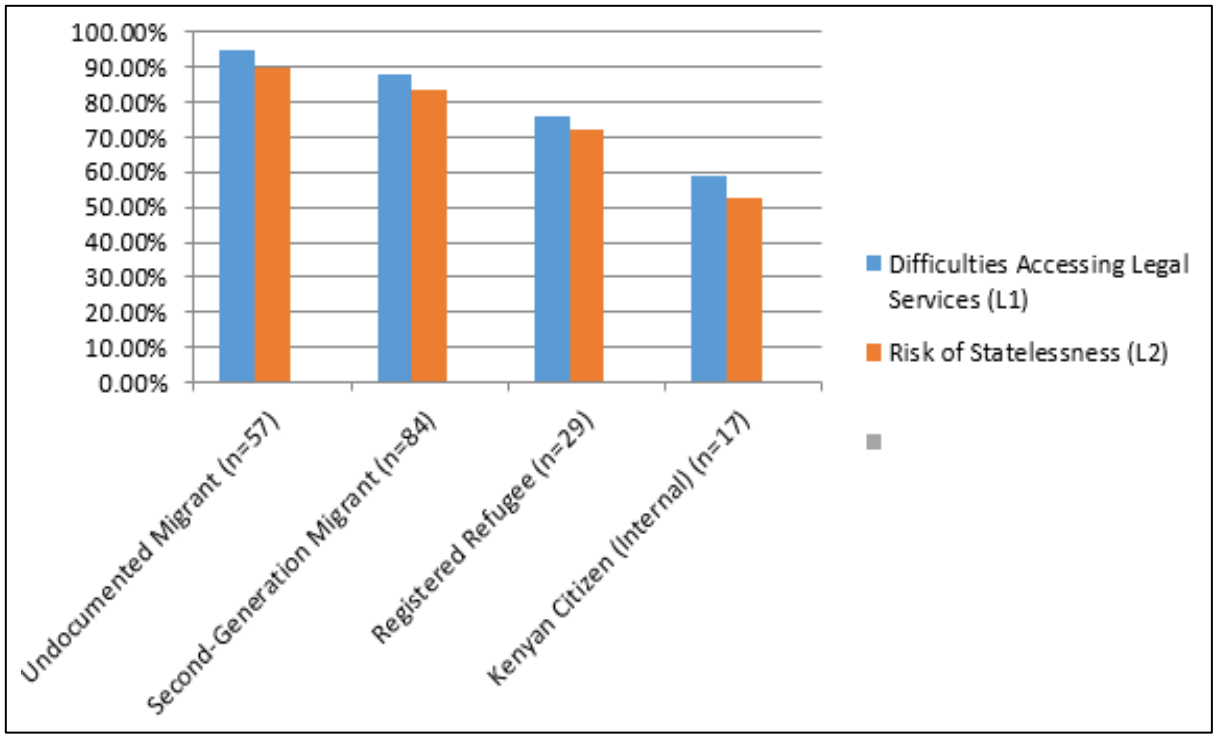


Fig 10 Perception of Legal Risks by Legal Status

The data is unequivocal: 94.7% of undocumented migrants report difficulties accessing legal services, and 89.5% fear statelessness for their children. This gradient effect provides powerful empirical evidence that the act of registration is the primary determinant in mitigating legal risk, moving a child from a position of extreme vulnerability toward a degree of legal security.

Qualitative Insights: The Reality of Legal Invisibility Open-ended responses gave a human voice to these statistics. A community advocate from Kayole shared, *"When a police arrest happens, the first thing they ask for is an ID. For these children, there is nothing. They have no name, no age in the system. They are treated as adults or worse, and there is no one to advocate for them because legally, they do not exist."* Another respondent, a parent from Eastleigh, stated, *"I was told I cannot file a case against my neighbor who assaulted my son because I could not prove he is my son. No birth certificate, no case. We had to just endure the injustice."*

➢ *Discussion and Conclusion on Objective Two*

In conclusion, the absence of civil registration documentation subjects to child migrants in Nairobi to severe and multi-faceted legal risks. The data confirms a direct and powerful correlation between undocumented status and the inability to access legal services, seek redress for abuses, and secure a recognized nationality. This state of legal invisibility creates a protective vacuum that leaves children acutely vulnerable to exploitation, arbitrary treatment, and a lifetime of marginalization. These findings provide robust empirical validation for the Legal Identity Theory, which posits that official documentation is the foundational prerequisite for legal personhood and state protection, as discussed by AbouZahr et al. (2019). The evidence leaves no doubt that for a child migrant, a birth certificate is not merely a piece of paper but the key to the legal system itself.

➢ *Findings on Socio-Economic risks Faced by Child Migrants*

This section addresses the third research objective: To explore the socio-economic risks experienced by child migrants lacking civil registration documentation. The analysis demonstrates that legal invisibility has immediate and devastating consequences for a child's well-being, denying them the very building blocks of a dignified life: education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation. The descriptive statistics for the key socio-economic variables are summarized in Table 9 revealing near-unanimous agreement on the dire socio-economic exclusion faced by undocumented children.

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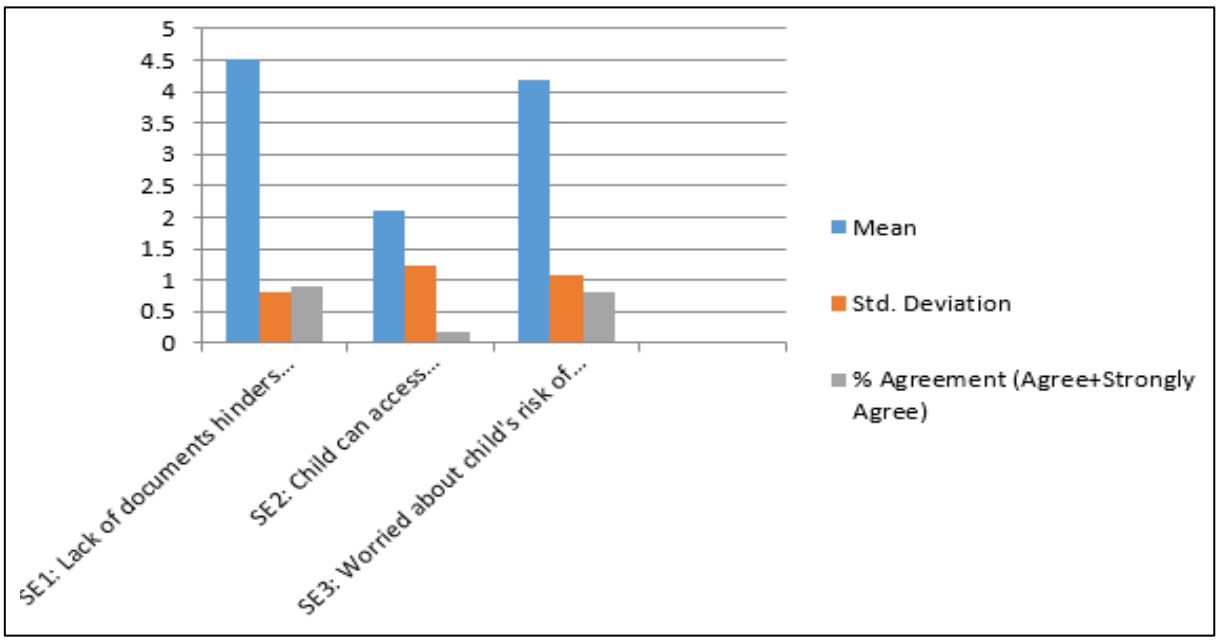


Fig 11 Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Socio-Economic Challenges

➢ *Systemic Exclusion from Essential Services*

The most strongly endorsed statement in the entire survey pertained to socio-economic exclusion. A profound 89.8% of respondents agreed that the lack of documents hinders access to education and healthcare (SE1: Mean=4.52). This was powerfully mirrored by the reversed statement (SE2), where 73.0% *disagreed* that their child could access these services easily. This demonstrates that the denial of services is not a peripheral issue but a central and almost universal experience for undocumented children. Schools and health clinics, by requiring a birth certificate for enrollment or service, become gatekeepers of exclusion, effectively barring children from their fundamental rights.

➢ *Heightened Vulnerability to Exploitation*

A significant majority of respondents (79.6%, Mean=4.18) reported being worried about their child's risk of exploitation and abuse (SE3). This fear is a rational response to a child's position outside the protective framework of the state. Undocumented children are more likely to be pushed into informal labor, early marriage, or situations where they are dependent on adults who can exploit their legal invisibility with impunity.

➢ *Cross-Tabulation: The Deepening of Socio-Economic Exclusion*

The burden of socio-economic exclusion, like legal risk, falls most heavily on those with the most precarious legal status.

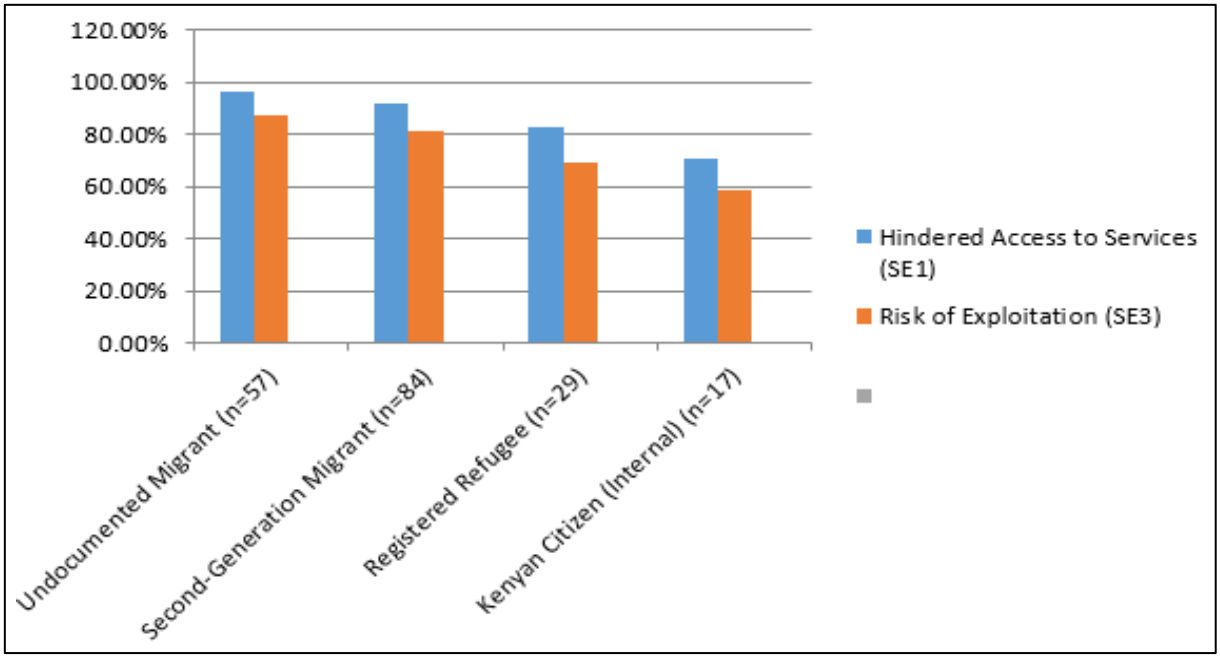


Fig 12 Perception of Socio-Economic risks by Legal Status (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

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The data reveals that 96.5% of undocumented migrants report being hindered from accessing essential services. This near-total exclusion creates a vicious cycle where lack of education perpetuates poverty, and lack of healthcare increases vulnerability, thereby entrenching the marginalization of an entire generation.

➢ *Qualitative Insights: The Cycle of Poverty and Precarity*

The qualitative data vividly illustrates this exclusion. A mother from Kibera explained, *"My daughter was sent home from school during Standard 8 exams because she had no birth certificate. They said she could not sit for the national paper. Her dream ended there."* A social worker in Mathare added, *"We see these children in the dumpsites, collecting scrap metal. They are not in school because they cannot be enrolled. Without an education, this is their life. The document that costs a few hundred shillings to get early on decides their entire future."*

➢ *Discussion and Conclusion on Objective Three*

In conclusion, the socio-economic challenges stemming from a lack of civil registration are both immediate and intergenerational. The data provides incontrovertible evidence that undocumented child migrants are systematically locked out of education and healthcare, severely limiting their lifelong opportunities and well-being. Concurrently, they are exposed to a significantly higher risk of exploitation and abuse. These findings offer powerful support for the Social Exclusion Theory, which frames this not just as material poverty, but as a systemic process of being shut out from the relationships, rights, and services that define full participation in society, as articulated by Levitas (2005). The analysis confirms that the socio-economic marginalization of child migrants is not an accident but a direct consequence of their administrative invisibility, creating a devastating link between a missing document and a life of poverty and precarity.

➢ *Findings on the Impact of Strengthened Civil Registration*

This section addresses the fourth research objective: To evaluate the potential impact of strengthened civil registration on reducing legal and socio-economic risks among child migrants. The analysis reveals strong consensus about specific, practical interventions that could fundamentally alter the landscape of protection and inclusion for vulnerable migrant children.

The descriptive statistics for variables measuring potential solutions demonstrate overwhelming support for targeted system reforms.

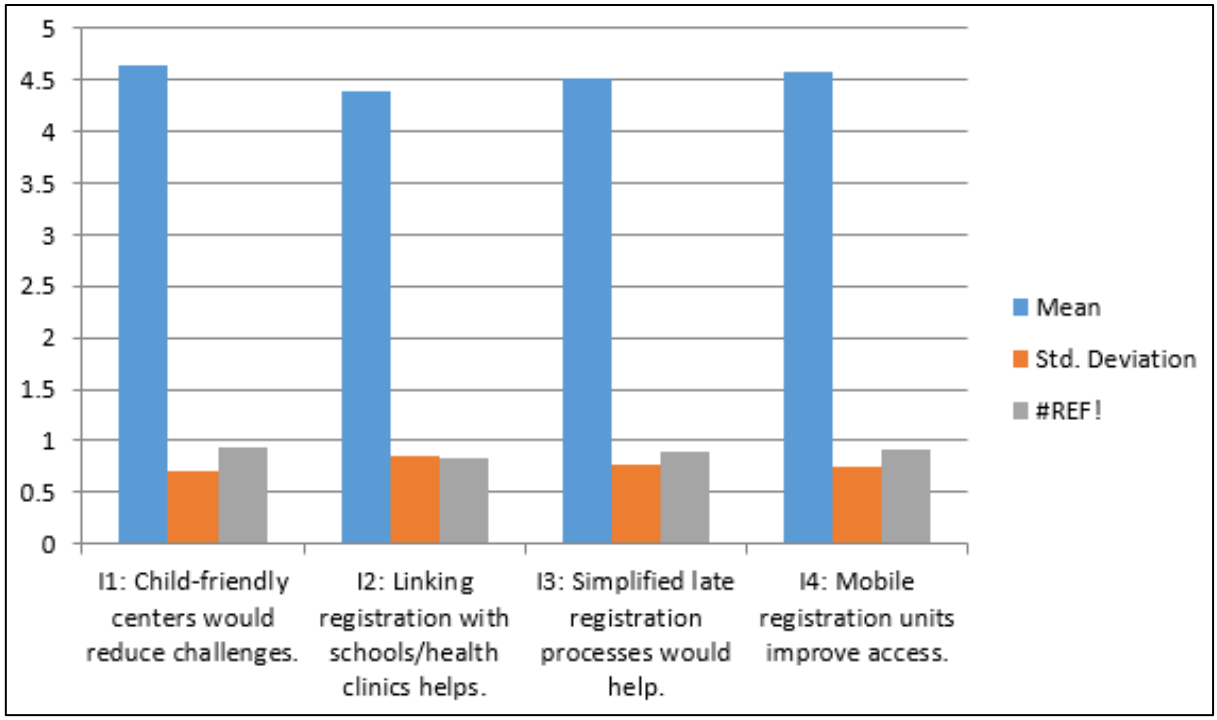


Fig 13 Descriptive Statistics for Strengthened Registration Impact

➢ *Overwhelming Support for Child-Centered Approaches*

The data reveals remarkable consensus around the transformative potential of child-friendly registration approaches. The creation of child-friendly centers (I1) received the strongest endorsement in this category (Mean=4.63), with 93.9% of respondents agreeing this would significantly reduce registration challenges. This near-unanimous support indicates that current registration environments are perceived as intimidating, bureaucratic, or otherwise unsuitable for vulnerable migrant families.

➢ *Integration with Existing Service Pathways*

There was strong support (83.7% agreement, mean=4.38) for linking civil registration with schools and health clinics (I2). This finding suggests that families see service institutions as natural and trusted points of access for registration, potentially overcoming barriers of awareness and distance that characterize stand-alone registration offices.

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➢ *Critical Need for Procedural Reform*

The data indicates that procedural reforms would have substantial impact, with simplified late registration processes (I3) receiving 89.3% agreement (Mean=4.52). This finding directly addresses the bureaucratic hurdles identified in previous objectives, particularly for second-generation migrants and those who missed the initial registration window.

➢ *Mobile Solutions for Hard-to-Reach Populations*

Mobile registration units (I4) were viewed as highly effective (91.8% agreement, mean=4.57), underscoring the need to bring services directly to migrant communities rather than expecting vulnerable populations to navigate formal bureaucratic systems.

➢ *Cross-Tabulation: Universal Demand for Systemic Reform*

The demand for strengthened civil registration systems cuts across all demographic categories, with particularly strong support from the most vulnerable groups.

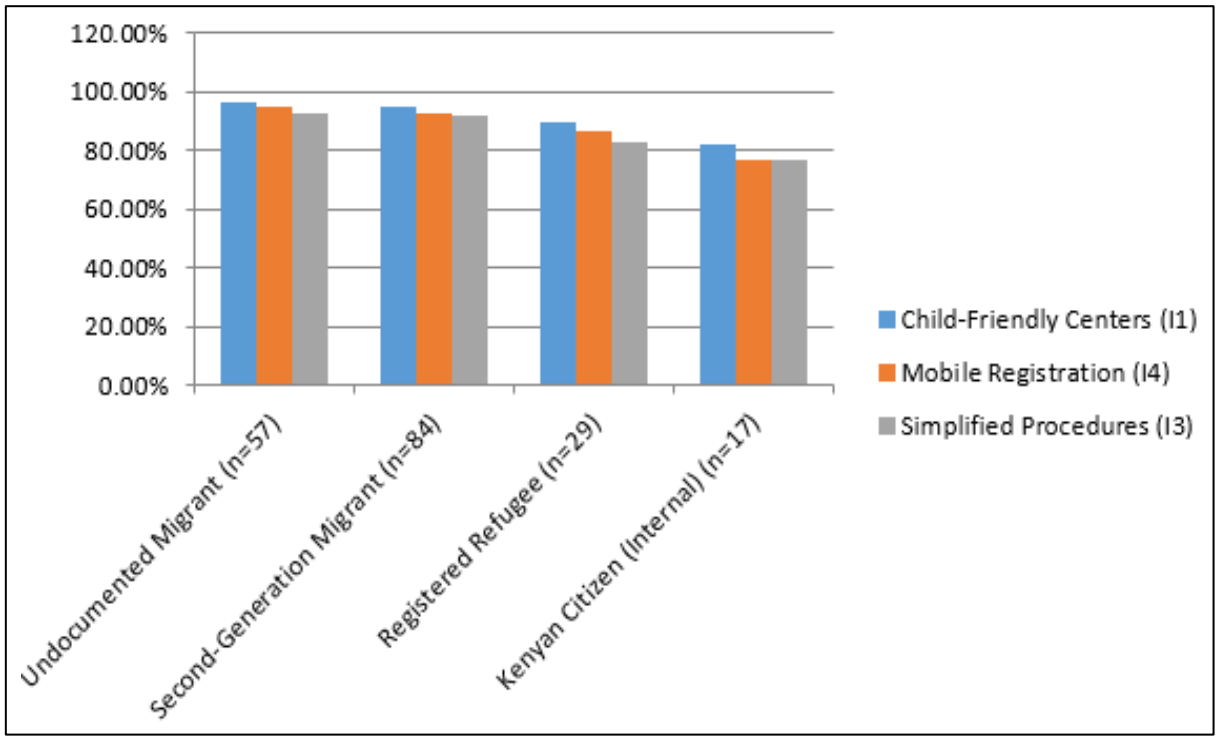


Fig 14 Support for Strengthened Registration by Legal Status (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

The gradient remains clear, with the most vulnerable groups expressing the strongest belief that system strengthening would address their challenges. The fact that over 90% of undocumented and second-generation migrants support each key intervention demonstrates both the severity of current system failures and the clear consensus about solutions.

➢ *Qualitative Insights: Visions of an Effective System*

Open-ended responses provided rich details about what effective registration would mean. A community health worker in Mathare explained: *"If we could register babies and issue birth certificate right here at the clinic when they come for immunization, we would catch almost everyone. But now we send them to the district office, and most never go."*

A civil registration officer acknowledged systemic gaps: *"We know mobile registration drives work. When we set up in the community for three days, we register hundreds of children who would otherwise remain invisible. But we lack the vehicles and staff to do this regularly."*

Perhaps most powerfully, a mother of three undocumented children expressed: *"If they made it simple for us to get these documents, it would change everything. My children could go to school properly. I wouldn't worry about what will happen to them if I am gone. It would mean they exist in this world."*

➢ *Regression Analysis: Predicting Risk Reduction through System Strengthening*

A linear regression analysis was conducted to predict the perceived reduction in overall risks (legal and socio-economic) based on support for specific system-strengthening measures. The model was statistically significant ($F(4, 191) = 28.43$, $p < .001$) and explained 37.3% of the variance in perceived risk reduction.

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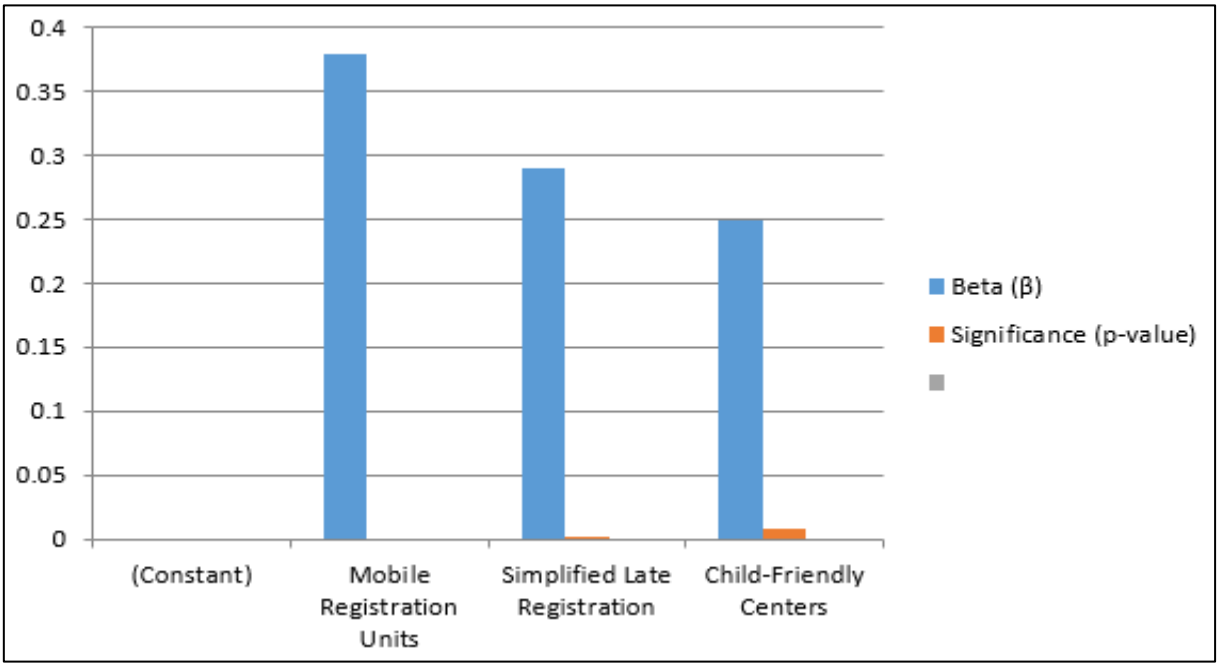


Fig 15 Regression Model Predicting Risk Reduction through System Strengthening

The analysis indicates that mobile registration units (β=.38, p<.001) and simplified late registration procedures (β=.29, p=.002) are the strongest predictors of perceived risk reduction. This quantitative finding validates the qualitative data, suggesting that proximity and procedural accessibility are the most critical factors in transforming system effectiveness.

➢ *Discussion and Conclusion on Objective Four*

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate clear consensus about the transformative potential of specific, practical interventions to strengthen civil registration systems. The data reveals that relatively straightforward reforms—mobile registration, child-friendly services, simplified procedures, and integration with existing service pathways—are perceived by stakeholders as having profound impact on reducing both legal and socio-economic risks. These findings align with and extend the work of (Chege and Barasa 2021), who documented the success of community-based registration models in Nairobi's Eastlands area. The strong empirical support for mobile registration and service integration provides concrete evidence for the strategies proposed by (Otieno and Lando, 2023), who advocated for registration desks in schools and health centers.

The regression analysis provides compelling evidence that geographic accessibility (mobile units) and procedural simplicity are the most powerful drivers of perceived impact. This suggests that system strengthening efforts should prioritize bringing services physically closer to migrant communities while simultaneously reducing bureaucratic complexity. The overwhelming support for these interventions across all demographic groups, but particularly among the most vulnerable, indicates that the path forward is clear and widely endorsed. Implementing these evidence-based reforms would represent a significant step toward realizing the goal of universal birth registration and fundamentally altering the life trajectories of Nairobi's most vulnerable child migrants.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ *Summary of Findings*

The analysis of data revealed several critical findings concerning the effectiveness of civil registration systems and the consequent risks and potential solutions for child migrants in Nairobi County.

On the current effectiveness of civil registration systems, the study found a critical implementation gap. While there was moderate satisfaction with support services (68.4% agreement), the system was perceived as largely inaccessible unresponsive. Significant barriers included the physical inaccessibility of registration offices (with only 55.1% finding them accessible) and profoundly ineffective community outreach, which nearly 55% of respondents did not find effective. A stark gradient was observed, where undocumented migrants reported the lowest levels of system effectiveness across all indicators.

On the legal risks faced by child migrants, the findings revealed a state of profound legal precarity. An overwhelming majority of respondents (86.7%) reported that children faced difficulties accessing legal services due to a lack of documentation, and 81.6% expressed concern about statelessness. The cross-tabulation demonstrated a clear vulnerability gradient, with 94.7% of undocumented migrants reporting high legal risks, confirming that legal invisibility exacerbates vulnerability to exploitation and denies access to justice.

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On the socio-economic challenges, the data indicated severe and systematic exclusion. The most strongly endorsed statement in the survey (89.8% agreement) was that a lack of documents hinders access to education and healthcare. Furthermore, 79.6% of respondents worried about their child's risk of exploitation and abuse. This exclusion was most acute for undocumented migrants, 96.5% of whom reported being hindered from accessing essential services, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and marginalization.

On the impact of strengthened civil registration, there was an overwhelming consensus on practical, transformative interventions. Over 90% of respondents supported the establishment of child-friendly centers (93.9%), the deployment of mobile registration units (91.8%), and the simplification of late registration procedures (89.3%). Regression analysis identified mobile registration (β=.38) and simplified procedures (β=.29) as the strongest predictors for reducing risks, providing a clear, evidence-based roadmap for reform.

➢ *Conclusions*

Based on the comprehensive analysis of data collected from 196 respondents, the following conclusions are drawn in direct response to the study's research objectives.

- *Conclusion on the Current Effectiveness of Civil Registration Systems*

The study concludes that the current civil registration system in Nairobi County is characterized by a fundamental disconnect between policy and practice, rendering it largely ineffective for child migrant populations. The system's passive, office-based model and its failure to implement proactive, migrant-sensitive outreach strategies systematically exclude the most vulnerable—undocumented and second-generation migrants. This operational failure validates the critiques of Oloo et al. (2020) and Wanjiku and Odhiambo (2023), confirming that without a deliberate effort to reach marginalized communities, legal reforms and digital advancements will fail to achieve universal birth registration.

- *Conclusion on the Legal Risks Faced by Child Migrants*

The study conclusively finds that the absence of a birth certificate subjects child migrants to severe legal invisibility, effectively negating their legal personhood and access to state protection. There is a direct, measurable correlation between undocumented status and the denial of legal recourse, heightened vulnerability to arbitrary detention, and a tangible risk of statelessness. This finding provides robust empirical validation for the Legal Identity Theory (Abou Zahr et al., 2019), demonstrating that for a child migrant, a birth certificate is the foundational document upon which all other rights and protections depend.

- *Conclusion on the Socio-Economic risks Faced by Child Migrants*

The study concludes that a lack of civil registration directly causes severe socio-economic exclusion, locking child migrants out of education and healthcare and exposing them to exploitative labor and abuse. This is not merely a consequence of poverty but a direct result of systemic exclusion, powerfully illustrating the principles of Social Exclusion Theory (Levitas, 2005). The administrative act of non-registration initiates a devastating, intergenerational cycle of marginalization by denying children the essential services and protections required for healthy development and social mobility.

- *Conclusion on the Impact of Strengthened Civil Registration*

The study concludes that there is a clear, evidence-based pathway to significantly reduce the risks facing child migrants through targeted system strengthening. Stakeholders overwhelmingly endorse a package of interventions focused on accessibility, simplicity, and integration. The strongest potential for impact lies in decentralizing services through mobile registration, simplifying complex bureaucratic procedures for late registration, and integrating registration with existing service points like schools and health clinics. Implementing these reforms would constitute a fundamental shift from a passive, state-centric model to an active, child-centered one.

➢ *Recommendations*

Derived from the conclusions above, the following actionable recommendations are proposed for various stakeholders to enhance civil registration systems and protect child migrants in Nairobi County.

- *Recommendations for the National and County Governments*

The study recommends that national and county governments prioritize fundamental reforms to make civil registration systems more inclusive and accessible. This should begin with the decentralization of services through regular mobile registration units targeting informal settlements with high migrant populations. Simultaneously, a legislative review should be undertaken to simplify late registration procedures, particularly for second-generation migrants and children born at home, by reducing documentary requirements and introducing alternative verification mechanisms. Furthermore, integrating birth registration with existing service points such as primary healthcare facilities and early childhood education centers would create natural access points for hard-to-reach populations, ensuring children are registered at the earliest possible opportunity.

- *Recommendations for Civil Registration Authorities*

Civil registration authorities should focus on operational improvements to enhance service delivery and public trust. This necessitates the development and implementation of standardized child-friendly protocols across all registration points, ensuring both the physical environment and staff conduct are welcoming and appropriate for children and vulnerable families. A program of comprehensive training for registration officers is essential, focusing on migrant-sensitive approaches, child protection principles, and the specific legal frameworks governing vulnerable children. Additionally, authorities should launch targeted multi-lingual public awareness campaigns in partnership with community-based

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organizations to effectively disseminate information about simplified procedures, mobile registration schedules, and the importance of birth registration.

- *Recommendations for NGOs and Development Partners*

Non-governmental organizations and development partners are advised to strategically reorient their support toward strengthening government systems rather than maintaining parallel, short-term initiatives. This can be achieved by co-funding essential infrastructure, such as mobile registration units, and providing technical assistance to develop training resources and data management systems for government staff. NGOs should also scale up specialized legal aid and case management services to help families navigate complex late registration and citizenship procedures. The evidence and experience gathered through this direct service provision should be systematically utilized to advocate for evidence-based policy reform at both county and national levels, ensuring sustainability and wider impact.

➢ *Areas for Further Research*

While this study provides significant insights, it also identifies avenues for further research to deepen the understanding of this field. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies that track registered versus unregistered child migrants over an extended period. Such research provides crucial evidence about how registration status ultimately affects life outcomes, including educational attainment, health status, access to formal employment, and social integration. By following cohorts of children over 5-10 years, researchers could establish causal relationships between legal identity and long-term socioeconomic mobility, providing stronger evidence for policy interventions than the cross-sectional data available in this study.

Further investigation is needed to understand the implementation gap between civil registration policies and their practical execution. Research should examine the bureaucratic processes, institutional constraints, and inter-agency coordination challenges that hinder effective service delivery to migrant populations. This would include analyzing budget allocations, staff capacity, monitoring systems, and the everyday decision-making processes that ultimately determine who can access registration services. Such implementation research would identify specific leverage points for improving system efficiency and equity.

Comparative research across different urban contexts in Kenya and the East African region would yield valuable insights into alternative registration models and their effectiveness. Additionally, with increasing digitalization, studies should investigate the potential of technological innovations such as mobile registration platforms, biometric identification systems, and block chain-based documentation to improve accessibility while critically examining associated challenges including digital literacy requirements, data privacy concerns, and the risk of excluding the most marginalized populations from digital solutions.

Several specialized areas merit dedicated research attention, including the gendered dimensions of registration access, particularly how maternal documentation status and household power dynamics affect children's registration prospects. Research should also examine the specific situation of second-generation migrant youth transitioning to adulthood with ambiguous legal status, investigating how this affects their access to higher education, formal employment, and full social participation. Economic research conducting cost-benefit analyses of registration reforms would also provide valuable evidence for policymakers by quantifying the returns on investment in registration systems.

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