



Challenges and Opportunities in the Sustainable Reintegration of Ethiopian Returnees from Europe

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Addis Ababa University School of
Social Work in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Social Work**

**Addis Ababa University. College of Social Sciences, Humanities
and Arts
School of Social Work**

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June 2026

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled "Challenges and Opportunities in the Sustainable Reintegration of Ethiopian Returnees from Europe" is my original work. This thesis has not been presented for any other university, nor has it been submitted in fulfilment of any other degree requirement.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God Almighty for His guidance, blessings, and strength throughout this research journey.

I would like to extend my special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Ashenafi Hagos, for his invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, encouragement, and continuous support in the successful completion of this thesis.

I am sincerely grateful to the governmental and non-governmental organizations that supported and collaborated on this research. Their invaluable assistance in facilitating access to participants and providing essential support was instrumental to the successful completion of this study.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all participants who generously shared their time and experiences for this study, particularly the returnee migrants and key informants, whose honest contributions were essential to the success of this research.

Thank you all for your support and contributions.

List of Acronyms/Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Full Form
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CCE	Catholic Caritas Ethiopia
HRE	Hope for Returnees Ethiopia
HSCL-25	Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25
HTQ	Harvard Trauma Questionnaire
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAD	Positive Action for Development
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RRS	Refugees and Returnees Service
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRSP	Sustainable Reintegration Support to Ethiopian Returnees from Europe
UN	United Nations
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

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Abstract

This study investigates the multidimensional challenges of reintegration among Ethiopian returnees from Europe, focusing specifically on economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions in Addis Ababa. Employing a convergent mixed-methods research design, quantitative data were gathered from a total population of 847 registered returnees using stratified random sampling, yielding a sample of 385 respondents using Cochran's Formula with Finite Population Correction. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 30 returnees and 5 key informants from relevant institutions. The findings reveal that reintegration is severely challenging across all dimensions; however, economic reintegration is the most critical barrier, driven by persistent unemployment, unsustainable migration debt, and the absence of skill-utilization opportunities. Social stigmatization associated with "failed migration" substantially hinders social reintegration, while psychosocial recovery is impeded by unresolved trauma, emotional distress, and a fractured sense of identity and belonging. Return voluntariness, resources accumulated abroad, and quality institutional support emerge as the most significant predictors of positive reintegration outcomes across all three dimensions.

Keywords: Return migration, reintegration, mixed methods, Quantitative, Qualitative

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Migration is a complex and dynamic social phenomenon that rarely follows a simple linear trajectory. It involves multiple phases departure, settlement abroad, and ultimately, return to one's country of origin. Over the past three decades, return migration has attracted growing scholarly attention as a critical dimension of the broader migration cycle (Cassarino, 2004; King, 2000). Return migration refers to the movement of individuals back to their home country after a period of residence abroad, whether voluntarily, through assisted programs, or by compulsion.

Contemporary migration scholars increasingly recognize that the process of return is neither straightforward nor determined purely by individual agency. Rather, it is shaped by powerful structural forces, including global inequalities, restrictive immigration enforcement regimes, and shifting asylum policies (Cassarino, 2008; Hammond, 1999; Kuschminder, 2017). Forced returnees, in particular, frequently face repatriation because of rejected asylum applications, prolonged detention, and deportation from host countries circumstances over which they have limited or no control. Since the early 2000s, the scale of deportations, government-sponsored return programs, and bilateral readmission agreements has increased significantly, reflecting the centrality of return migration to contemporary migration governance (Scalettaris & Gubert, 2019).

Sustainable reintegration defined by the International Organization for Migration as the process through which returnees achieve the same level of economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being as non-migrants in their communities (IOM, 2017, p. 16) is increasingly recognized as a gradual and multidimensional process shaped by person-environment interactions. Economic reintegration encompasses employment, income generation, skill utilization, financial access, and debt management (Black & Gent, 2006). Social reintegration involves the re-establishment of family ties, community acceptance, social networks, and a sense of belonging. Psychosocial reintegration addresses trauma

recovery, identity reconstruction, emotional well-being, and social connectedness (Vathi, 2022).

Ethiopia has emerged as a significant source country for migrants to both the Middle East and Europe, driven by a combination of economic precarity, political insecurity, and increasingly available though often irregular migration pathways (ICMPD, 2010). While a substantial literature exists on Ethiopian returnees from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the specific experiences of those returning from Europe remain comparatively understudied (Abay, 2018; Nisrane, 2019). Furthermore, Ethiopia's reintegration infrastructure remains fragmented, with programs such as IOM's Sustainable Reintegration Support Program (SRSP) operating on short project cycles with limited scope and inadequate inter-institutional coordination (Abashula, 2019; IOM, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite a documented increase in the number of Ethiopian migrants returning from Europe, the body of scholarly literature on this specific group remains thin. The overwhelming majority of existing return migration studies in Ethiopia concentrate on returnees from the Middle East particularly female domestic workers deported from Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Nisrane, 2019; Wubeshet, 2021). While this body of work offers important insights into certain reintegration barriers, its findings cannot be generalized to European returnees, whose migration pathways, legal contexts, duration of stay, and reintegration experiences are qualitatively distinct.

Migration to Europe from Ethiopia typically involves highly irregular, protracted, and dangerous journeys often transiting through Libya and other conflict-affected zones where migrants face extreme vulnerability including trafficking, exploitation, abuse, and extended detention. Unlike the labor migration pathways dominant in Gulf-bound migration, European-bound Ethiopian migrants frequently enter irregular status for years, engage in asylum procedures with uncertain outcomes, and endure the psychological toll of protracted legal limbo. For those ultimately deported, reintegration begins with the compounded trauma of abrupt removal, unresolved legal status, unmet migration aspirations, and the social stigma of "failed" migration.

Existing literature on Ethiopian return migration focuses primarily on isolated economic factors such as job placement, income generation, and business start-up (Adamnesh et al., 2014; Embet, 2002). These studies do not account for the interdependencies between economic hardship, social exclusion, and psychosocial distress dynamics that are particularly pronounced among European returnees. The absence of a holistic, evidence-based understanding of this population makes it difficult to design effective reintegration programs and policies. Without context-specific data, interventions risk being modelled on assumptions derived from the Gulf returnee experience, which may be fundamentally inapplicable to European returnees.

The implications of this knowledge gap are significant. Inadequate understanding of European returnees' reintegration trajectories means that existing programs may fail to address their actual needs, and governmental and non-governmental actors alike may lack the evidence base required to design effective, targeted responses. This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration among Ethiopian returnees from Europe in Addis Ababa, contributing both to the academic literature and to the evidence base for policy and programming.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the multidimensional reintegration experiences of Ethiopian returnees from Europe.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study pursues the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the economic reintegration outcomes of Ethiopian returnees from Europe.
2. To explore the social reintegration experiences of Ethiopian returnees from Europe in the study area.
3. To assess the psychosocial reintegration outcomes of Ethiopian returnees from Europe in the study area.

4. To analyses the structural and institutional factors influencing these reintegration outcomes.

1.3.3 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the economic reintegration outcomes of Ethiopian returnees from Europe?
2. How do Ethiopian returnees from Europe experience social reintegration in the study area?
3. What are the psychosocial reintegration outcomes of Ethiopian returnees from Europe?
4. What structural and institutional factors influence the reintegration outcomes of Ethiopian returnees from Europe?

1.3.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance at multiple levels. At the policy level, findings can inform national reintegration frameworks and improve the design of programs targeting Ethiopian returnees from Europe. Academically, the research contributes to a comparatively neglected area within the broader Ethiopian return migration literature, establishing baseline empirical evidence about European returnees specifically. For social work practice, the study is relevant across micro, mezzo, and macro levels: it provides psychosocial and contextual understanding that can inform individual-level counselling and case management (micro level), supports the design of community-based support groups and peer networks for returnees (mezzo level), and provides the evidence base for policy advocacy and reintegration program design (macro level). It also advances migration-sensitive social work practice in the Ethiopian context.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses exclusively on Ethiopian migrants who returned from one or more European countries including Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands within the preceding five years, regardless of whether their return was voluntary, assisted, or

forced. This geographic and temporal delimitation is justified on several grounds, which are elaborated below.

The reason why European Returnees targeted is Ethiopian returnees from Europe constitute a distinct and understudied population whose migration and return trajectories differ fundamentally from those of returnees from the Gulf or Middle East. Migration to Europe typically involves irregular pathways, prolonged asylum procedures, detention, and, in most cases, deportation following rejection of asylum claims. These circumstances produce specific forms of economic precarity, social stigma, and psychological trauma that are not generalizable from Gulf returnee research. A study by Nisrane (2019) documented that Ethiopian irregular migrants in Europe frequently spend between three and seven years in legal uncertainty, during which they accumulate financial obligations and psychosocial vulnerability not experienced by labor migrants in Gulf countries. Focusing on European returnees allows the study to generate targeted, context-specific evidence.

Geographically, the study is confined to Addis Ababa, the capital and largest city of Ethiopia. This selection is justified by several empirical realities. First, Addis Ababa hosts the headquarters of all major institutions involved in returnee reintegration, including IOM Ethiopia, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA), the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), and key NGOs such as Catholic Caritas Ethiopia (CCE) and Positive Action for Development (PAD).

Second, administrative data obtained from IOM Ethiopia, MoWSA, and RRS confirm that Addis Ababa accounts for the largest concentration of registered Ethiopian returnees from Europe: of the 847 returnees forming the study's sampling frame, 54.5% (n=462) were recorded as residing in Addis Ababa at the time of data collection. Third, the city's diverse economic and social networks including informal labour markets, community organizations, and diaspora networks make it the most representative location for studying the full range of reintegration experiences. The researcher acknowledges that findings may not generalize fully to rural returnees, whose reintegration contexts differ in terms of economic structure, social expectations, and access to institutional support.

The study examines reintegration along three dimensions: economic (employment, income generation, debt management, livelihood sustainability, and skill utilization), social (family relations, community acceptance, social networks, participation, and stigma), and psychosocial (emotional well-being, trauma recovery, identity reconstruction, mental health, and coping). Structural and institutional factors including government policy, inter-agency coordination, and the quality and accessibility of reintegration services are examined as predictors of reintegration outcomes.

1.5 Organization of the Paper

Chapter One presents the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, and scope of the study. Chapter Two reviews theoretical perspectives on return migration, conceptualizes sustainable reintegration, examines global governance mechanisms, and surveys existing Ethiopian empirical evidence, concluding with the conceptual framework. Chapter Three describes the methodology, including research design, study area, population and sampling, instruments, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents' results, covering sampling achievement, participant characteristics, descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative thematic findings. Chapter Five discusses findings in relation to the literature, presents theoretical and policy implications, identifies limitations, and offers conclusions and recommendations for future research.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. The cross-sectional design captures reintegration experiences at a single point in time, limiting the ability to draw conclusions about long-term or dynamic outcomes. Although a retrospective approach and intention-to-remigrate measures are used as proxies for sustainability, longitudinal tracking would provide stronger evidence. Self-reported data may be affected by recall bias, social desirability, and selective disclosure, particularly on sensitive topics such as detention, trauma, income, and legal status. The geographic restriction to Addis Ababa limits generalizability to rural or small-town returnees. Finally, voluntary returnees were slightly underrepresented in the sample due to their relative invisibility in institutional data systems.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the academic literature on return migration and sustainable reintegration. It begins with core theoretical approaches ranging from neoclassical economics to structural, transnational, and intersectional frameworks and then examines the multidimensional concept of sustainable reintegration, global governance mechanisms, and empirical evidence from Ethiopia. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework that guides the study.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Return Migration

2.2.1 Neoclassical Economic Approaches

Neoclassical economic theory, rooted in the work of Lewis (1954), Todaro (1969), and Harris and Todaro (1970), conceptualizes migration as a rational individual calculation of costs and benefits. Under this framework, return migration is triggered when the perceived benefits of remaining abroad fall below the benefits of returning home arising from attaining savings targets, narrowing wage differentials, or when the psychological and social costs of living abroad outweigh economic advantages. The theory's limitations include its failure to account for uncertainty and imperfect information, its focus on individual rather than household decision-making, its neglect of political and legal constraints on migration, and its treatment of migration as an event rather than a dynamic process. While wage differentials are relevant to Ethiopian migration to Europe, neoclassical models fail to explain why migrants pursue high-risk irregular channels or why many return involuntarily.

2.2.2 The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), developed by Stark and Bloom (1985), reconceptualizes migration as a household risk-diversification strategy adopted in response to market failures. Under this framework, migration is pursued collectively by households to

manage credit constraints, smooth consumption risk, and invest in education, health, and productive assets through remittances. Return migration, in the NELM view, occurs when the household member has accumulated sufficient capital, skills, or savings to achieve household investment goals. However, NELM's assumptions of household homogeneity and planned, purposive migration is ill-suited to explaining forced return in the context of deportation or asylum rejection circumstances that characterize most Ethiopian returnees from Europe. Furthermore, NELM does not adequately account for intergenerational debt burdens arising from failed migration, which this study finds to be a defining economic reality for returnees.

2.2.3 Structural and Political Economy Approaches

Structural and political economy perspectives situate return migration within broader systems of global capitalism, geo-political inequality, and state power. Scholars such as Portes and Walton (1981) and Castles and Kosack (1973) argue that migration patterns are fundamentally shaped by economic asymmetries between origin and destination countries. The concept of "deportation regimes," advanced by De Genova and Peutz (2010), highlights deportation as a mechanism of sovereign power and border enforcement, where return is not a migrant's choice but a state-imposed condition. This perspective is directly applicable to Ethiopian returnees from Europe, the majority of whom (51.4%) returned through forced deportation. These frameworks clarify that reintegration challenges are not merely individual failures but outcomes of structural conditions and policy configurations that prioritize migration management over human well-being.

2.2.4 Transnational and Social Network Approaches

Transnationalism theory, developed by Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (1994), argues that migrants maintain simultaneous social, economic, and cultural ties to both their home and host societies, making return migration a continuation of transnational engagement rather than a terminal event. Social network theory, particularly as articulated by Boyd (1989), emphasizes the role of interpersonal ties in shaping migration decisions and reintegration processes. For returnees, the strength and quality of transnational connections and re-established home networks significantly influence economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration trajectories

2.2.5 Return Preparedness and Voluntariness

Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness framework provides a particularly relevant analytical lens for this study. Cassarino argues that returnees are not a homogeneous group but differ critically in their degree of voluntariness — the extent to which return is self-determined — and resource mobilization — the savings, skills, knowledge, and social networks accumulated abroad that are mobilized upon return. These two dimensions generate four ideal types of return: the "return of innovation" (voluntary, resource-rich), the "return of conservatism" (voluntary, resource-limited), "forced return with resourcefulness" (involuntary but resourceful), and "return of failure" (involuntary and resource-poor). Most Ethiopian returnees from Europe fall into the last category, given that 51.4% were deported and 77.4% failed to manage migration-related debt. This framework informs both the study's conceptual model and its sampling design.

2.2.6 Intersectionality and Gendered Approaches

Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality illuminates how overlapping social identities including gender, class, ethnicity, and legal status compound to produce differentiated vulnerabilities among returnees. Ethiopian women returning from the Middle East face distinct forms of stigma related to perceived moral failure and gender-specific expectations (Nisrane, Beyene, & Kuschminder, 2017; Wubeshet, 2021). While European returnees are predominantly male (60%), intersectional dynamics including the masculinized expectation of financial success associated with European migration create specific forms of social shame for men who return without resources. The study incorporates gender as a control variable in all regression models.

2.3 Conceptualizing Sustainable Reintegration

2.3.1 The Multidimensional Nature of Reintegration

The concept of reintegration has evolved from a narrow economic focus to encompass social, psychological, and political dimensions. This study adopts the IOM's (2017, p. 4) definition of sustainable reintegration as the process through which returnees achieve economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being comparable to non-migrants in their

communities, reducing the likelihood of re-migration. Cassarino (2004) identifies three interdependent reintegration domains economic, social, and psychological which Koser and Kuschminder (2015) supplement with a fourth political dimension. This study focuses primarily on the first three, while qualitative inquiry touches on political dimensions through questions about belonging and civic participation.

2.3.2 Economic Reintegration

Economic reintegration involves rebuilding livelihood capacity through employment, income generation, skill utilization, debt management, and access to financial resources (Black & Gent, 2006). For Ethiopian returnees from Europe, economic reintegration is complicated by the simultaneous burdens of migration debt (typically between 200,000 and 700,000 Ethiopian Birr), family financial expectations, and the mismatch between skills acquired informally in Europe and formal labour market requirements in Ethiopia. The societal assumption that migration to Europe yields financial success creates additional pressure on returnees who failed to achieve this expectation.

2.3.3 Social Reintegration

Social reintegration concerns the re-establishment of family bonds, community belonging, social networks, and civic participation (Cassarino, 2004). In Ethiopian communities, migration to Europe carries strong symbolic capital; failure to return with resources triggers stigma, social exclusion, and loss of status. Wubeshet (2021) documented how family rejection and social exclusion serve as primary barriers to reintegration, particularly for female returnees. For European returnees, stigma is qualitatively distinct from Gulf returnee stigma: rather than moral or sexual stigma, it derives from the perceived failure to capitalize on the opportunity that European migration was presumed to represent.

2.3.4 Psychosocial Reintegration

Psychosocial reintegration encompasses trauma recovery, emotional adjustment, identity reconstruction, and the restoration of self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Vathi, 2022). Many Ethiopian returnees from Europe have experienced detention in Libya and/or European facilities, subjected to violence, exploitation, and severe human rights violations. These

experiences produce clinically significant levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Beyond trauma, returnees must navigate a fragmented identity – the person they became in Europe and the person expected by their community at home often maintaining a face-saving public narrative that masks profound private distress.

2.3.5 Structural Conditions and Institutional Support

Reintegration outcomes are shaped not only by individual circumstances but by the quality and coordination of structural support systems. Effective reintegration requires coordinated services across employment, skills recognition, mental health, and livelihood domains. In Ethiopia, reintegration support has been characterized by inter-agency fragmentation, inconsistent service delivery, and the short-term orientation of European-funded programs that prioritize migration management over long-term reintegration investment (Abashula, 2019; Betelhem, 2015). IOM's AVR program, while providing initial financial assistance, is structurally constrained by short project cycles and limited psychosocial support provision (IOM, 2022).

2.3.6 Critical Synthesis and Theoretical Positioning

Taken together, the theoretical frameworks reviewed above suggest that successful reintegration is neither an individual achievement nor a linear process. It is a multidimensional, structurally embedded trajectory shaped by the conditions of migration, the mode of return, the resources mobilized during migration, and the quality of institutional support available upon return. This study builds on this synthesis to examine how these factors interact in the specific context of Ethiopian returnees from Europe.

2.3.7 Legal Factors in Return Migration and Reintegration

Return migration and reintegration are guided by international, regional, and national legal frameworks that protect the rights of returnees and promote their sustainable reintegration. Internationally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018) affirm the right to return, protect migrants' fundamental rights, and encourage states to support safe return and sustainable reintegration. Regionally, the African

Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and the African Union Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018–2030) call on African states to strengthen migrant protection and reintegration measures.

In Ethiopia, the Constitution (1995) guarantees fundamental rights relevant to returnees, while the Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1246/2021 and the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No. 1178/2020 provide legal provisions for protecting migrants and supporting their return and rehabilitation. However, Ethiopia does not have a single, comprehensive law dedicated specifically to the sustainable reintegration of returnees. Instead, reintegration is addressed through a combination of migration, labor, anti-trafficking, and social protection laws implemented by government institutions and development partners. This fragmented legal framework underscores the need for stronger coordination and more comprehensive reintegration policies.

Legal factors constitute a critical but often under-examined dimension shaping return migration experiences and reintegration outcomes. Legal status during migration, modes of return, and post-return documentation significantly influence migrants' ability to access services, secure employment, and re-establish social legitimacy in their home countries. According to de Haas (2010), migration trajectories are deeply embedded in legal and institutional frameworks that regulate mobility, determine rights, and structure vulnerabilities throughout the migration cycle.

One of the most influential legal determinants of reintegration is the migration status held in the destination country. Migrants who have experienced irregular entry, visa overstay, or asylum rejection often return with constrained legal identities that carry stigma and reduce their perceived legitimacy both abroad and upon return. In the European context, asylum procedures and return enforcement mechanisms frequently result in individuals being categorized as “failed asylum seekers,” a legal label that continues to shape social perceptions after return (Webber, 2011). This legal categorization not only affects dignity and social recognition but also influences access to reintegration assistance programs, many of which prioritize documented or “voluntary” returnees.

Deportation and detention further intensify legal vulnerability. De Genova and Peutz (2010) conceptualize deportation as a “deportation regime,” where legal enforcement becomes a mechanism of exclusion that produces lasting social and psychological consequences beyond the moment of return. Individuals who experience forced removal often lack proper documentation upon return, face difficulties verifying identity histories abroad, and may encounter administrative barriers in accessing reintegration support services. In contexts such as Ethiopia, where bureaucratic systems for recognizing foreign-earned skills and experiences remain limited, these legal discontinuities significantly hinder economic reintegration.

Legal access to reintegration assistance is another key dimension. Programs such as Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) are typically conditioned on specific legal classifications of return, particularly emphasizing “voluntary return” status. However, as Webber (2011) argues, the distinction between voluntary and forced return is often blurred in practice, raising concerns about unequal access to reintegration support based on legal categorization rather than actual need. This creates structural inequities where deported migrants often among the most vulnerable receive limited or delayed assistance.

In addition, legal barriers in the country of origin also shape reintegration trajectories. These include weak recognition of foreign-acquired qualifications, absence of legal frameworks for reintegration protection, and limited enforcement of returnee rights in employment and social protection systems. Without formal legal mechanisms to validate skills or protect returnees from discrimination, many migrants are forced into informal employment or prolonged unemployment, undermining sustainable reintegration.

Overall, legal factors operate at multiple level international migration regimes, destination-country immigration enforcement, and origin-country institutional frameworks. These overlapping legal structures shape not only the conditions of return but also the long-term ability of migrants to rebuild stable livelihoods and social identities. In the Ethiopian context, the interaction between deportation regimes in Europe and weak reintegration legal infrastructure in the country of origin creates compounded vulnerabilities that significantly constrain sustainable reintegration outcomes.

2.4 Global Governance of Return Migration

2.4.1 Institutional Architecture of Return

Over the past two decades, the governance of return migration has become increasingly institutionalized. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has emerged as the central multilateral actor, primarily through its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs, which provide logistical, financial, and reintegration support to returning migrants. European governments have complemented these efforts through bilateral readmission agreements with origin countries, embedding return migration governance within broader diplomatic and development frameworks (Scalettari & Gubert, 2019). The resulting architecture reflects an inherent tension between humanitarian reintegration objectives and European states' border management priorities.

2.4.2 Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

AVRR programs typically provide return transportation, small reintegration grants, and short-term livelihood support. However, as Webber (2011) argues, the "voluntariness" of such returns is frequently compromised by migrants' fear of detention and deportation, raising significant questions about genuine agency. More structurally, AVRR programs are designed within short project cycles that often expire before returnees have stabilized economically or psychosocially. The cash grants provided typically equivalent to approximately 1,500 euros are demonstrably insufficient to address structural economic barriers including migration debt, which can exceed 500,000 Ethiopian Birr.

2.4.3 Externalization of Migration Control

European migration policy increasingly involves the "externalization" of border control shifting migration management responsibilities to transit and origin countries through agreements, technical assistance, and development aid conditionalities. In this context, reintegration support becomes instrumentalized as a tool of migration deterrence rather than as a genuine investment in returnees' long-term well-being (Scalettari & Gubert, 2019). The result is that reintegration programming tends to be short-term, narrowly economic, and insufficiently attentive to the social and psychosocial dimensions of sustainable reintegration.

This tension between migration control objectives and genuine reintegration investment constitutes a core structural constraint on the effectiveness of support available to Ethiopian returnees from Europe.

2.5 Empirical Studies on Return Migration and Reintegration in Ethiopia

Reintegration is the process of re-establishing individuals who have returned to their country of origin into the economic, social, and psychosocial life of their community in a sustainable way. It involves helping returnees regain stable livelihoods, rebuild social relationships, and adjust emotionally after their migration experience. Economic reintegration focuses on access to jobs or income-generating activities, social reintegration involves acceptance and rebuilding community ties, and psychosocial reintegration addresses emotional well-being and personal adjustment. Overall, reintegration is considered successful when returnees can live independently and participate fully in society without long-term external support.

2.5.1 Overview of Ethiopian Migration Research

Early empirical research on return migration in Ethiopia documented the fundamental challenges returnees face across economic, social, and emotional domains. Embet (2002) found that returning migrants experienced significant difficulty in securing employment, re-establishing social relationships, and accessing emotional support evidence that return is a complex process of socioeconomic and affective readjustment, not merely geographic relocation. Subsequent research extended these insights: Wubeshet (2021) documented the severe social stigma and occupational exclusion experienced by Ethiopian women deported from Saudi Arabia, while Nisrane, Beyene, and Kuschminder (2017) found that returnees from Middle Eastern countries faced acute income generation barriers. These studies, while valuable, focus exclusively on Gulf and Middle East returnees, leaving European returnees largely unexamined.

2.5.2 Institutional Responses and Service Delivery

Studies of institutional reintegration responses in Ethiopia have consistently documented coordination failures and service delivery gaps. Betelhem (2015) found that, despite the presence of multiple agencies, inter-agency responsibilities are poorly delineated and

coordination mechanisms between governmental and non-governmental organizations are weak, resulting in duplicated effort, service gaps, and inadequate support for returnees. Mestawet (2017) found that local NGOs in Addis Ababa frequently fail to provide sustained counselling and financial support to trafficked women, typically withdrawing after the initial post-return period. These structural deficiencies establish the institutional backdrop against which this study's findings must be interpreted.

2.5.3 Ethiopian Returnees from Europe: A Distinct Research Gap

Despite a documented increase in the number of Ethiopians returning from Europe, empirical research focusing on this group remains limited. The distinct features of European migration irregular entry, protracted asylum procedures, potential transit through Libya, extended legal uncertainty, and eventual deportation generate a reintegration profile that cannot be assumed to match Gulf returnee experiences. Ethiopian migrants in Europe frequently carry the legal and social identity of "failed asylum seekers" upon return, a designation with specific social consequences in Ethiopian communities that have come to associate European migration with social mobility. As Nisrane (2019) notes, the absence of research on European returnees represents both an academic gap and a policy planning failure. This study directly addresses this gap.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

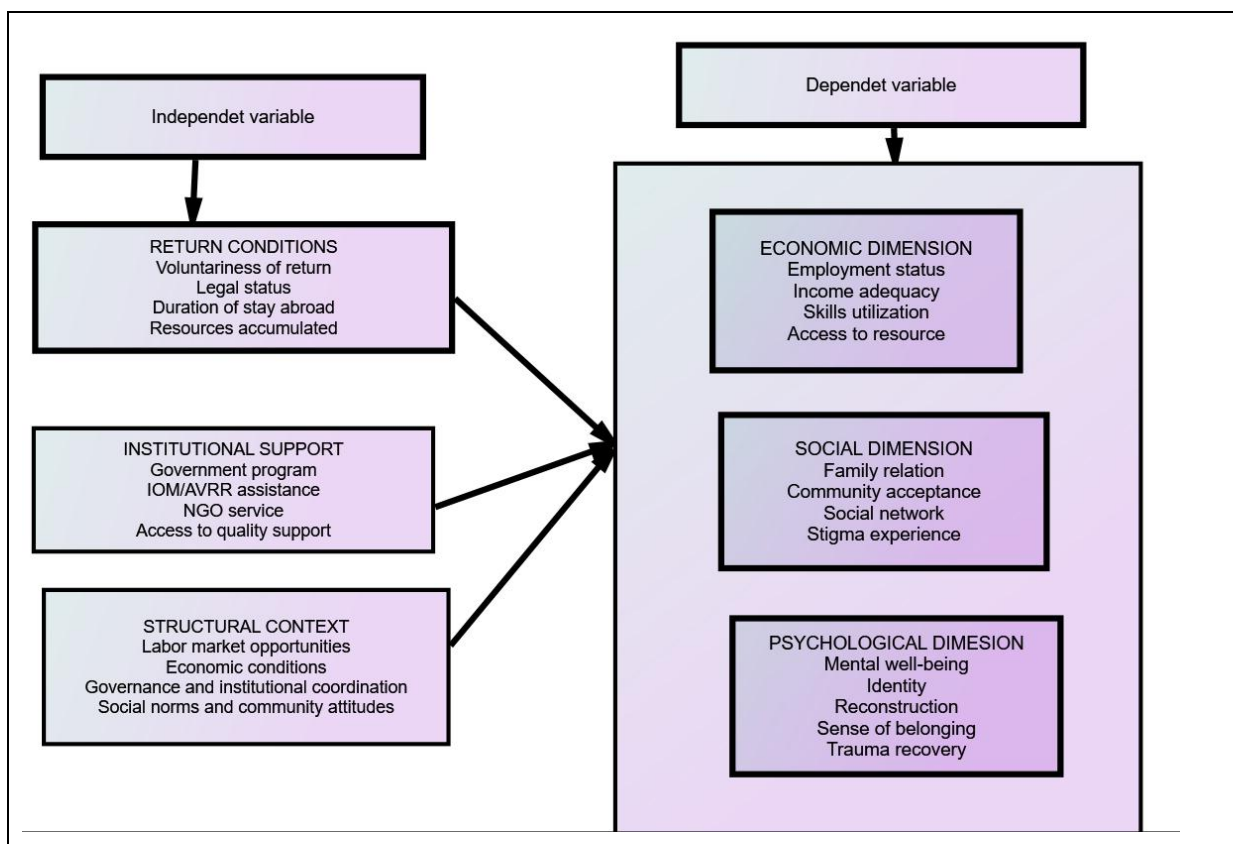
The conceptual framework guiding this study integrates insights from Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness model, IOM's (2017) definition of sustainable reintegration, and Kuschminder's (2017) multidimensional reintegration framework. The framework posits two categories of independent variables and three outcome (dependent) variables.

Independent Variables: Two categories of independent variables are examined. Return Conditions constitute the first category, encompassing voluntariness of return (whether the return was self-determined or coerced), duration of stay abroad, legal status during migration, and resources accumulated abroad (savings, skills, and social capital). Institutional Support constitutes the second independent variable, operationalized as the availability, accessibility, quality, and coordination of reintegration services provided by government agencies, IOM, and NGOs.

Dependent Variables: Reintegration outcomes are operationalized across three dimensions. Economic Reintegration captures employment status, income adequacy, livelihood sustainability, skill utilization, and debt management. Social Reintegration measures the quality of family relationships, community acceptance, social network reconstruction, civic participation, and the experience of stigma. Psychosocial Reintegration assesses mental health, trauma recovery, identity reconstruction, sense of belonging, life satisfaction, and coping capacity.

The framework recognizes that these three outcome dimensions are deeply interdependent: economic failure generates shame and social exclusion; social exclusion compounds psychological distress; and psychological distress impairs economic decision-making and social engagement. Consequently, effective reintegration support must be simultaneously and holistically targeted at all three dimensions rather than sequentially addressing economic needs alone.

Figure 1: conceptual framework of the study



CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Researcher's Stance

The researcher adopted a pragmatic epistemological stance, which underpins the convergent mixed-methods design used in this study. Pragmatism allows the researcher to draw on both quantitative and qualitative traditions based on the research questions rather than rigid methodological commitments (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The researcher acknowledges a degree of positionality as a social work researcher situated within the Ethiopian academic context, with access to institutional networks facilitating data collection. Reflexivity was maintained through a researcher's journal documenting analytical decisions, emergent interpretations, and potential biases throughout the fieldwork and analysis process.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed simultaneously and independently before being integrated at the interpretation stage (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The quantitative component assesses the prevalence, distribution, and statistical predictors of reintegration outcomes across a representative sample, enabling generalizability and the identification of systematic patterns. The qualitative component explores the meaning-making processes, contextual factors, and lived experiences behind those patterns, providing depth and explanatory power. The convergent design enables triangulation comparing results across methods to assess convergence, divergence, and complementarity and yields a fuller, more nuanced account of reintegration than either method could produce alone.

3.3 Research Approach

The quantitative approach follows a cross-sectional survey design, collecting standardized data from a stratified random sample at a single point in time. The qualitative approach employs in-depth phenomenological interviews, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, to explore returnees' subjective reintegration experiences and

institutional actors' perspectives. Both approaches were conducted in parallel during the same data collection period, and their outputs were merged in a joint display analysis (Section 4.8) to identify convergences and divergences.

3.4 Study Area

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. This selection is empirically justified for three reasons. First, Addis Ababa is the administrative and institutional hub for all major actors in Ethiopian returnee reintegration, including IOM Ethiopia, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA), the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), Catholic Caritas Ethiopia (CCE), and Positive Action for Development (PAD) the institutions whose registries formed the study's sampling frame. Second, IOM Ethiopia AVR data (2021/2025) indicate that Addis Ababa accounts for the largest concentration of registered European returnees in Ethiopia, representing over half (54.5%) of the verified sampling frame of 847 individuals. Third, the city's diverse economic landscape encompassing formal employment sectors, informal markets, and NGO services provides the most representative context for studying the full range of reintegration experiences. The researcher acknowledges that findings may not fully generalize to returnees residing in rural areas or smaller urban centres, where economic structures, social norms, and institutional access differ considerably.

3.5 Target Population and Justification for European Returnees

The study population consists of Ethiopian nationals who returned from one or more European countries including Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands within the preceding five years of data collection. The total verified population, drawn from the combined registries of IOM Ethiopia, MoWSA, RRS, CCE, and PAD, comprised **847** eligible returnees. All modes of return are included: voluntary return, Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), and deportation/forced return.

The decision to focus exclusively on European returnees, rather than other migrant populations, is grounded in substantive analytical rationale. Ethiopian returnees from Europe face a qualitatively distinct set of migration and reintegration conditions compared to those returning from the Gulf or the Middle East. Specifically: (1) migration to Europe typically

involves irregular, life-threatening journeys through Libya and the Mediterranean, exposing migrants to trafficking, detention, violence, and extreme exploitation; (2) European migration is socially constructed in Ethiopian communities as a pathway to economic success and social mobility, making deportation especially stigmatizing; (3) the asylum-seeking and irregular migration context in Europe generates specific legal vulnerabilities — prolonged detention, rejected claims, and deportation orders — that have profound psychosocial consequences absent from Gulf labor migration; and (4) existing Ethiopian return migration research has concentrated almost entirely on Gulf returnees (Nisrane, 2019; Wubeshet, 2021), creating a distinct research and policy gap for European returnees. The study does not include returnees from North America, the Middle East, Asia, or other regions, as the unique structural, legal, and social features of European migration warrant dedicated examination without conflation with other migration corridors.

In addition to returnees, the study includes key informants from governmental agencies, international organizations, and NGOs with mandates pertaining to migration management and returnee reintegration in Addis Ababa. Specifically, five (5) key informants were purposively selected from IOM Ethiopia, MoWSA, RRS, CCE, and PAD — one representative from each institution — based on their professional expertise and direct programmatic roles in returnee support.

3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

For the quantitative component, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that the sample adequately represents the diversity of European returnees with respect to three stratification variables: sex (male/female), mode of return (voluntary, AVRR, deportation), and duration abroad (under 3 years, 3–6 years, over 6 years). These stratification variables were selected based on Cassarino's (2004) framework, which identifies voluntariness and resource accumulation both related to these strata as the primary theoretical determinants of reintegration outcomes. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's (1977) formula for estimating proportions with finite population correction:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p(1 - p)}{d^2}$$

n= required sample size

Z= z-score at 95% confidence level (1.96)

P=estimated proportion (0.5, Used for maximum variability)

d: margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p(1 - p)}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p(1 - p)}{d^2}$$

=385

Where Z = 1.96 (at 95% confidence level), p = 0.50 (maximum variability assumption), and d = 0.05 (margin of error). This yields:

The required quantitative sample size is therefore 385 returnees. This figure was treated as the definitive and non-negotiable target. The sampling frame of 847 eligible individuals is sufficiently large to satisfy this requirement, and finite population correction was applied to confirm the adequacy of this sample size relative to the total population.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling with maximum variation was applied to select 30 returnees who differ in return conditions, gender, age, time spent abroad, and socioeconomic status. Maximum variation sampling was employed to ensure that the qualitative data captured the widest possible range of reintegration experiences. Data saturation was reached after 28 returnee interviews, confirmed by three additional interviews that yielded no new thematic content. In addition, exactly 5 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted: one each with a program officer from IOM Ethiopia, a senior official from MoWSA, a case manager from RRS, a program coordinator from CCE, and a field officer from PAD. These five KII participants represent all major institutional actors involved in returnee reintegration programming in Addis Ababa. The total qualitative sample is therefore 35 interviews (30 returnees and 5 key informants).

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured, face-to-face questionnaire, administered by trained data enumerators. The questionnaire covers five domains: (A) economic reintegration (6 items); (B) social reintegration (7 items); (C) psychosocial reintegration (7 items, incorporating adapted subscales from the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 (HSCL-25) to assess anxiety and depression, and validated subscales from the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) to assess trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms, both validated among migrant and refugee populations); (D) institutional support (7 items); and (E) return conditions (5 items). All items are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was translated into Amharic using a forward-backward translation procedure and pre-tested with 30 returnees prior to main data collection.

Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interview guides developed separately for returnees and key informants. The returnee guide explores migration routes, return circumstances, and economic, social, psychosocial, and institutional reintegration experiences. The key informant guide addresses policy environments, institutional coordination challenges, structural constraints, and programmatic recommendations. All interviews were conducted in Amharic, audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Recordings were transcribed verbatim.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection proceeded in three stages. In Stage 1, a sampling frame was constructed by combining and de-duplicating returnee registries from IOM Ethiopia, MoWSA, RRS, CCE, and PAD, yielding a total of 847 eligible individuals. Returnees were contacted by telephone and in person, provided with full study information, and invited to participate. Quantitative interviews were conducted face-to-face at mutually convenient locations, including IOM offices, NGO premises, and community centres. In Stage 2, a sub-set of survey participants and additional recruits were invited for qualitative in-depth interviews, while key informant interviews were conducted at participants' offices. In Stage 3, secondary document analysis

was performed on policy papers, IOM program reports, and NGO evaluation documents to triangulate institutional findings. Field notes were maintained systematically throughout.

3.9 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were computed for all variables. Composite scale scores were created by computing mean item scores after reverse-coding items where appropriate. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Bivariate analyses included Pearson correlation coefficients and one-way ANOVA (with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests).

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted separately for each reintegration outcome dimension (economic, social, psychosocial), with age, gender, education, duration abroad, voluntariness of return, resources accumulated abroad, and institutional support as predictors.

Regression diagnostics assessed multicollinearity (VIF), normality of residuals (Shapiro-Wilk test), homoscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan test), autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson test), and linearity (Ramsey RESET test). All analyses used $p < .05$ with 95% confidence intervals.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework in ATLAS.ti software, combining deductive coding guided by the theoretical framework and inductive coding from emergent themes. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through a joint display (Table 4.22), juxtaposing statistical findings with qualitative elaborations to assess convergence and divergence.

3.10 Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Quantitative rigor was ensured by validated instruments (HSCL-25, HTQ) adapted to the Ethiopian context and reviewed by migration experts, stratified random sampling, a target sample of 385, and systematic regression diagnostics confirming model specification. Cronbach's alpha values for all scales exceeded 0.70, confirming acceptable to good internal consistency.

Qualitative trustworthiness was assessed using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria. Credibility was established through extended engagement with participants, multi-source

triangulation (returnees, key informants, documents), and member-checking of emerging interpretations. Transferability was addressed through thick description of the research context and reintegration experiences. Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail of analytical decisions. Confirmability was achieved through direct participant quotation and systematic reflexivity journaling.

1.7 Operational Definitions

Operational definition refers to the specific way in which a concept or variable is defined, observed, and measured in a research study to ensure consistency, clarity, and replicability (Creswell, 2023).

Mode of Return: Mode of return refers to the way Ethiopian migrants return from Europe to Ethiopia, including voluntary return, assisted voluntary return, and deportation or forced return.

Voluntary Return: Voluntary return refers to the decision of a migrant to return to Ethiopia willingly without coercion, based on personal choice and adequate preparation for reintegration.

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR/AVRR): Assisted Voluntary Return refers to the voluntary return of migrants facilitated by organizations such as the IOM through transportation, counselling, and reintegration assistance.

Deportation/Forced Return: Deportation or forced return refers to the compulsory removal of migrants from a European country by immigration authorities due to irregular migration status or legal violations.

Detention Experience: Detention experience refers to the confinement of migrants by immigration or law enforcement authorities before deportation or return, which may affect their reintegration outcomes.

Deportation: Deportation refers to the legal process through which migrants are formally removed from a host country and returned to their country of origin by government authorities.

Social Stigma: Social stigma refers to the negative attitudes, discrimination, rejection, or social exclusion experienced by returnees because of their migration history, deportation, or perceived failure to achieve migration goals.

Institutional Support: Institutional support refers to the assistance provided by government institutions, IOM, NGOs, and other organizations through financial, legal, psychosocial, and livelihood services to facilitate returnees' sustainable reintegration.

Economic Reintegration: Economic reintegration refers to the extent to which returnees achieve sustainable livelihoods through employment, income generation, financial independence, business creation, and productive economic participation after return.

Social Reintegration: Social reintegration refers to the process through which returnees rebuild family relationships, regain community acceptance, participate in social networks, and overcome social stigma after returning to Ethiopia.

Psychosocial Reintegration: Psychosocial reintegration refers to the recovery of returnees' mental and emotional well-being, self-esteem, resilience, coping capacity, and sense of belonging following migration and return.

Failed migration: refers to a migration experience in which an individual is unable to achieve the intended migration objectives due to factors such as unsuccessful entry into the destination country, deportation, forced return, detention, irregular migration, inability to secure legal status or employment, or other circumstances that result in returning to the country of origin before accomplishing the intended goals.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University, prior to data collection. All participants received full information about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and guarantees of confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained; for participants with literacy limitations, verbal consent was recorded in the presence of an adult witness. All instruments and consent documents were provided in Amharic.

Participant anonymity was protected by pseudonyms, removal of all identifying information from transcripts and reports, and secure encrypted storage of all data on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Sensitive topics including detention, deportation, trauma, and stigma were addressed with care, and participants were explicitly informed of their right to decline any question or end the interview. Referrals to appropriate psychosocial support services were offered where needed. No remuneration was provided to participants. All data will be securely disposed of five years after completion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on multidimensional reintegration among Ethiopian returnees from Europe in Addis Ababa. The chapter is organized as follows: Section 4.2 reports sampling achievement and participant flow; Section 4.3 presents demographic and migration characteristics; Section 4.4 presents descriptive statistics for reintegration outcomes; Section 4.5 presents institutional support item-level analysis; Section 4.6 presents inferential statistics; Section 4.7 presents qualitative thematic analysis findings; and Section 4.8 presents integrated findings through a joint display. A total of 385 returnees participated in the quantitative survey, representing 100% of the planned sample. Thirty-five qualitative interviews were conducted in total: 30 with returnees and 5 with key informants (KIs) representing IOM Ethiopia, MoWSA, RRS, CCE, and PAD.

4.2 Sampling Achievement and Participant Flow

4.2.1 Sampling Frame and Recruitment

The sampling frame was constructed using returnee data from four institutional sources: the IOM Ethiopia AVRR database (2021–2025), the MoWSA registry of returnees receiving social assistance, the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) records, and the beneficiary databases of two NGOs Catholic Caritas Ethiopia (CCE) and Positive Action for Development (PAD). After de-duplication, the final sampling frame comprised 847 eligible individuals who had returned from Europe within the preceding five years and were resident in Addis Ababa. Stratified random sampling was then applied across three variables sex, mode of return, and duration abroad to select the target sample of 385. Stratification on these variables was theoretically motivated by Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness framework, which identifies voluntariness and resource accumulation as determinants of reintegration success.

Table 4.1: Target and Achieved Sample Distribution by Stratification Variables

Stratum	Target Proportion (%)	Target n	Achieved n	Achieved (%)	Difference
Gender					
Male	60	231	231	60.0	0.0
Female	40	154	154	40.0	0.0
Mode of Return					
Voluntary return	20	77	63	16.4	-3.6
Assisted Voluntary Return	30	116	124	32.2	+2.2
Deportation/forced return	50	192	198	51.4	+1.4
Duration Abroad					
Less than 3 years	30	116	110	28.6	-1.4
3-6 years	40	154	156	40.5	+0.5
More than 6 years	30	115	119	30.9	+0.9
Total	100	385	385	100	—

Source: Survey data, 2026

As shown in Table 4.1, the achieved sample closely mirrors the planned stratified distribution. Voluntary returnees were slightly underrepresented (16.4% vs. a target of 20%), a pattern consistent with the literature noting that voluntary returnees are less visible in institutional registries and harder to recruit (Cassarino, 2004). AVRR and deported returnees were slightly overrepresented. The distribution of duration abroad aligned closely with targets across all three categories.

4.2.2 Response Rate and Participant Flow

Table 4.2: Participant Flow and Response Rate

Stage	Number	Percentage (%)
Total returnees sampled and contacted	385	100.0
Completed questionnaires returned	385	100.0
Declined participation	0	0.0
Incomplete questionnaires	0	0.0
Final analytic sample (quantitative)	385	100.0
Quantitative respondents who agreed to follow-up interview	112	29.1
Additional returnees recruited via snowball sampling (qualitative)	8	—
Total returnee interviewees (qualitative)	30	—
Key informant interviews (IOM, MoWSA, RRS, CCE, PAD)	5	—
Total qualitative interviews	35	—

Source: Survey and interview records, 2026.

A total of 385 returnees were sampled and contacted for the quantitative survey. All sampled participants completed and returned the questionnaires after careful completion, resulting in a response rate of 100%. The achievement of a full response rate was facilitated by effective coordination with partner institutions, the commitment of researcher, and clear communication regarding the purpose of the study and confidentiality safeguards.

Among the 385 survey respondents, 112 consented to participate in follow-up qualitative interviews. From this group, 30 participants were purposively selected to ensure maximum variation in demographic and migration-related characteristics. In addition, 8 returnees were recruited through snowball sampling to enrich the qualitative data. Furthermore, 5 key informants were purposively selected from partner institutions, with one representative interviewed from each organization. Consequently, a total of 35 qualitative interviews were conducted.

4.3 Demographic and Migration Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=385)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	231	60.0
	Female	154	40.0
Age Group	18–25 years	41	10.6
	26–30 years	87	22.6
	31–35 years	112	29.1
	36–40 years	75	19.5
	41–45 years	42	10.9
	46 years and above	28	7.3
	Mean age (SD)	35.2 (7.8) years	
Marital Status	Single	172	44.7
	Married	156	40.5
	Divorced	42	10.9
	Widowed	15	3.9
Education Level	No formal education	31	8.1
	Primary (grades 1–8)	58	15.1
	Secondary (grades 9–12)	123	31.9
	Diploma	89	23.1
	Bachelor's degree	68	17.7
	Postgraduate degree	16	4.2
Region of Origin	Addis Ababa	210	54.5
	Oromia	98	25.5

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Amhara	52	13.5
	Southern Nations	15	3.9
	Other regions	10	2.6

Source: Survey data, 2026

The sample is predominantly male (60.0%), consistent with the male-dominated nature of Ethiopian migration to Europe, as documented by Nisrane (2019). The mean age of 35.2 years indicates a predominantly working-age sample. Regarding educational attainment, 31.9% completed secondary education, and an additional 45% hold a diploma or higher qualification, suggesting a relatively educated migrant cohort. Most respondents (54.5%) originated from Addis Ababa, with the remainder from Oromia, Amhara, and other regions, reflecting established urban migration networks.

4.3.2 Migration and Return Characteristics

Table 4.4: Migration and Return Characteristics (N=385)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Primary Destination	Norway	98	25.5
	Sweden	87	22.6
	Germany	76	19.7
	Switzerland	54	14.0
	Netherlands	31	8.1
	Other European countries	39	10.1
Duration Abroad	Less than 1 year	32	8.3
	1–3 years	78	20.3
	4–6 years	156	40.5
	More than 6 years	119	30.9

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Mean Duration (SD)		4.7 (2.3) years	
Legal Status Abroad	Irregular (no documents)	184	47.8
	Asylum seeker (pending)	156	40.5
	Regular visa/permit	32	8.3
	Other	13	3.4
Detention Experience	Detained at any point	231	60.0
	— Detained in Libya	178	46.2
	— Detained in Europe	89	23.1
	— Detained in both	36	9.4
Mode of Return	Voluntary return	63	16.4
	AVRR	124	32.2
	Deportation/forced return	198	51.4
Time Since Return	Less than 6 months	45	11.7
	6–12 months	98	25.5
	1–2 years	112	29.1
	2–3 years	55	14.3
	More than 3 years	75	19.5
Mean Time Since Return (SD)		1.9 (1.3) years	

Source: Survey data, 2026

Norway (25.5%), Sweden (22.6%), and Germany (19.7%) represent the principal destinations, reflecting established Scandinavian asylum pathways among Ethiopian migrants. The mean duration abroad of 4.7 years is substantially longer than the 2.5-year mean documented for Gulf returnees (Nisrane, Beyene, & Kuschminder, 2017), reflecting the protracted nature of European asylum processes, which can extend three to seven years.

Critically, 60.0% of participants were detained at some point during their migration 46.2% in Libya and 23.1% in European facilities highlighting the pervasive exposure to traumatic detention conditions. Deportation or forced return accounts for 51.4% of the sample, making it the modal return mode.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Reintegration Outcomes

Table 4.5: Reliability Statistics for Composite Scales (N=385)

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Economic Reintegration	6	0.84	Good
Social Reintegration	7	0.79	Acceptable
Psychosocial Reintegration	7	0.86	Good
Institutional Support	7	0.81	Good
Return Conditions	5	0.73	Acceptable
Total Reintegration Score	20	0.89	Good

Note: All Cronbach's alpha values significant at $p \leq 0.001$. Source: Survey data, 2026

All composite scales demonstrate acceptable to good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.73 to 0.89, all exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The total reintegration score achieves a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high overall scale reliability. These results confirm that the instruments are appropriate for the subsequent descriptive and inferential analyses.

4.4.2 Overall Reintegration Outcomes

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for Reintegration Outcome Dimensions (N=385)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	Skewness
Economic Reintegration	2.32	0.45	2.33	1.17	3.67	0.12
Social Reintegration	2.75	0.52	2.71	1.29	4.14	0.08
Psychosocial Reintegration	2.89	0.61	2.86	1.14	4.57	0.15
Total Reintegration Score	2.65	0.48	2.64	1.23	4.01	0.11
Institutional Support	2.18	0.48	2.14	1.00	3.86	0.23
Return Conditions	2.41	0.67	2.40	1.00	4.20	0.18

Note: All items scored 1–5; higher scores indicate better outcomes. Reverse-coded items inverted prior to composite calculation. Source: Survey data, 2026

All reintegration dimensions record mean scores below the neutral midpoint of 3.0, indicating broadly poor outcomes across the sample. Economic reintegration is the most severely impaired dimension (M=2.32), while institutional support records the lowest mean of all constructs (M=2.18), signalling critical inadequacy in formal support provision. Near-zero skewness values confirm approximate normal distributions, indicating that these challenges are broadly experienced across the sample rather than concentrated in a sub-group.

4.4.3 Economic Reintegration: Item-Level Analysis

Table 4.7: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics Economic Reintegration

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
A1	My current income is sufficient to meet my basic needs	2.15	0.89	68.3	13.3
A2	I can use skills I gained abroad in my current work	2.08	0.92	71.2	13.5
A3	I have access to financial resources to support my	2.03	0.94	74.0	13.5

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
	livelihood				
A4	I have successfully managed debts related to migration	1.96	0.96	77.4	12.5
A5	My job matches my qualifications and experience	2.11	0.91	72.5	13.5
A6	I feel economically independent since returning	2.14	0.93	70.1	13.8

Note: % SD/D = Strongly Disagree or Disagree; % A/SA = Agree or Strongly Agree. Source: Survey data, 2026

Debt management (A4, M=1.96) is the most severely impaired item, with 77.4% of respondents disagreeing that they have successfully managed migration-related debt. The following participant account illustrates the structural dimensions of this financial crisis:

They forced me to return. I had spent three years in Germany working without permission living in fear every day that they would send me back. I returned home to a family carrying a 500,000-ETB debt, and I had no job. My parents cannot even sell the property they mortgaged to finance my journey. We live under shame and pressure every single day. (Male, 34, deportee from Germany)

This experience aligns with NELM's conceptualization of migration debt as a collective household burden rather than an individual obligation (Stark & Bloom, 1985). The inability to utilize skills acquired abroad (A2, M=2.08; 71.2% disagreeing) reflects the absence of any formal skill recognition system in Ethiopia. Only 13.3% of respondents report income sufficiency (A1), and merely 13.8% feel economically independent (A6).

4.4.4 Social Reintegration: Item-Level Analysis

Table 4.8: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics Social Reintegration (N=385)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
B1	I have re-established strong family relationships	3.45	1.12	24.4	57.4
B2	I feel accepted by my community	2.94	1.21	35.6	46.0

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
B3	I actively participate in community activities	2.67	1.18	48.6	31.4
B4	I have rebuilt my social networks	2.71	1.20	46.2	34.1
B5*	I experience stigma due to my migration history (reverse coded)	2.39	1.15	—	61.5
B6	My social status in the community is positive	2.78	1.19	44.9	33.8
B7	I feel socially connected to others	2.93	1.24	40.5	39.0

Note: *B5 is reverse coded; higher score = less stigma. For B5, 61.5% Agree/Strongly Agree that they experience stigma. Source: Survey data, 2026

Family ties (B1, M=3.45) emerge as the strongest sub-dimension of social reintegration, with 57.4% of respondents reporting restored family relationships. However, qualitative data reveal that these family ties carry emotional complexity that aggregate scores conceal:

My mother still loves me and gives me shelter and food. But I feel ashamed every time I see her face. She sacrificed her savings to finance my journey, and I returned with nothing. Her love is real, but it comes with a weight I cannot describe. (Female, age: 29, AVRR from Sweden)

This testimony illustrates how apparent family support can co-exist with profound shame and economic dependency, aligning with Carling and Pettersen's (2014) observation that perceived family obligation can undermine rather than reinforce autonomous well-being. The widespread experience of stigma (B5: 61.5%) reflects the specific nature of European returnee stigma: distinct from the moral stigma faced by Gulf returnees (Wubeshet, 2021), it derives from the failure to fulfil the community's expectation of financial success associated with European migration, an expectation that constructs European returnees as symbols of failed aspiration.

4.4.5 Psychosocial Reintegration: Item-Level Analysis

Table 4.9: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics — Psychosocial Reintegration

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
C1	I feel a strong sense of belonging	2.71	1.14	47.8	28.6
C2	I am satisfied with my life after return	2.44	1.08	61.3	19.5
C3*	I experience emotional distress related to migration (RC)	2.52	1.17	—	57.1
C4	I can cope effectively with challenges	3.12	1.09	27.8	48.6
C5	I feel confident about my future	2.67	1.15	51.2	27.8
C6	I have recovered from stressful migration experiences	2.45	1.13	62.1	21.0
C7	I feel emotionally stable	2.88	1.18	36.9	38.2

Note: *C3 is reverse coded; 57.1% Agree/Strongly Agree that they experience ongoing emotional distress. Source: Survey data, 2026

Psychosocial functioning is severely impaired across multiple domains. Over 62.1% of respondents report not having recovered from stressful migration experiences (C6), and 57.1% report ongoing emotional distress (C3). Life satisfaction is critically low, with 61.3% dissatisfied (C2). These findings are consistent with the expected psychosocial burden of a sample in which 60% experienced detention and 46.2% were detained in Libya. The sole item scoring above the neutral midpoint coping capacity (C4, M=3.12) suggests that despite severe distress, many returnees demonstrate meaningful psychological resilience that reintegration programming should recognize and reinforce.

4.5 Institutional Support: Item-Level Analysis

Table 4.10: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics Institutional Support

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
D1	I received adequate government support after return	2.11	0.97	72.5	12.7
D2	NGO/IOM reintegration programs improved my situation	2.24	1.01	67.8	16.4

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	% SD/D	% A/SA
D3	I have access to employment opportunities locally	2.05	0.96	76.1	11.4
D4	Government policies support returnee reintegration	2.19	0.99	69.4	14.3
D5	Institutions supporting returnees are well coordinated	1.98	0.93	78.7	9.9
D6	I can easily access reintegration services	2.09	0.98	74.3	12.0
D7	Local economic conditions support livelihoods	2.41	1.02	59.7	21.8

Source: Survey data, 2026

All institutional support indicators reflect serious systemic inadequacy. Institutional coordination (D5, M=1.98) is the lowest-rated item, with 78.7% of respondents rating it negatively confirming Abashula's (2019) finding of "weak institutional coordination" and Betelhem's (2015) documentation of "fragmented reintegration governance." The following account from an IOM key informant locates the structural source of this inadequacy:

The AVRR program provides funding that covers, at most, the first three months of a returnee's life here. When that funding ends, it ends completely. We know returnees need support for two to three years to achieve stable reintegration, but European funding cycles simply do not allow for that. We are perpetually designing long-term programs with short-term money. (IOM Programme Officer, Key Informant Interview)

This account illustrates the structural tension between European funding cycles governed by migration management objectives and the longer-term investment required for sustainable reintegration. Government policy support (D4) and service accessibility (D6) are also rated poorly, indicating systemic rather than situational failure.

4.6 Inferential Statistics

4.6.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.11: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Age	Gender	Educ.	Dur.	Vol.	Res.	Inst.	Econ.	Soc.	Psych.
Age	—									
Gender	−0.08	—								
Education	0.11*	−0.06	—							
Duration abroad	0.34**	−0.12*	0.09	—						
Voluntariness	0.08	−0.04	0.15*	0.12*	—					
Resources	0.14*	−0.09	0.23**	0.41**	0.38**	—				
Inst. support	0.06	−0.03	0.18*	0.09	0.21**	0.34**	—			
Econ. reint.	0.12*	−0.05	0.31**	0.15*	0.52**	0.58**	0.47**	—		
Social reint.	0.09	0.04	0.28**	0.12*	0.44**	0.49**	0.51**	0.62**	—	
Psych. reint.	0.10	0.03	0.26**	0.11	0.49**	0.46**	0.53**	0.59**	0.68**	—

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$ (two-tailed). Source: Survey data, 2026

The correlation matrix reveals several theoretically important patterns. Migration-related variables resources accumulated abroad ($r=0.58$ with economic reintegration; $r=0.49$ with social; $r=0.46$ with psychosocial), voluntariness of return ($r=0.52$, 0.44 , and 0.49 respectively), and institutional support ($r=0.47$, 0.51 , and 0.53 respectively) are substantially more strongly associated with reintegration outcomes than demographic variables. The strongest inter-outcome correlation is between social and psychosocial reintegration ($r=0.68$), confirming the deep entanglement of social belonging and emotional well-being. Low VIF values (Table 4.14) confirm the absence of multicollinearity, supporting the suitability of these variables for regression analysis.

4.6.2 One-Way ANOVA: Reintegration Outcomes by Return Mode

Table 4.12: One-Way ANOVA Reintegration Outcomes by Return Mode

Outcome Variable	SS Between	df	MS	F	p-value	η^2
Economic Reintegration	18.34	2	9.17	14.32	<0.001	0.21
Social Reintegration	12.45	2	6.23	8.76	0.002	0.14
Psychosocial Reintegration	15.89	2	7.95	11.45	<0.001	0.18
Total Reintegration Score	21.56	2	10.78	15.67	<0.001	0.23

Note: Post-hoc Tukey HSD: all pairwise comparisons significant at $p \leq 0.05$. Effect sizes: $\eta^2 \geq 0.14$ = large (Cohen, 1988). Source: Survey data, 2026

Return mode significantly predicts all reintegration outcomes, with effect sizes ranging from $\eta^2=0.14$ (social reintegration) to $\eta^2=0.23$ (total reintegration score) all qualifying as large effects under Cohen's (1988) criteria. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests confirm significant pairwise differences across all three return mode groups, with voluntary returnees consistently scoring highest and deported returnees scoring lowest, providing strong empirical support for Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness framework.

Table 4.13: One-Way ANOVA Reintegration Outcomes by Education Level

Outcome Variable	F-value	p-value	η^2
Economic Reintegration	4.72	0.001	0.06
Social Reintegration	4.11	0.002	0.05
Psychosocial Reintegration	3.45	0.009	0.04

Source: Survey data, 2026

Education level exerts statistically significant but modest effects on all three reintegration dimensions ($\eta^2 = 0.04$ – 0.06 , qualifying as small to medium effects). Higher educational attainment is associated with marginally better economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration outcomes, likely through improved labour market access and social capital mobilization. However, the small effect sizes underscore that structural conditions

particularly return mode and resources accumulated exercise substantially greater influence on reintegration outcomes than educational background.

4.6.3 Regression Diagnostics

Table 4.14: Multicollinearity Diagnostics Variance Inflation Factor

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Age	0.84	1.19	Acceptable
Gender	0.91	1.10	Acceptable
Education level	0.82	1.22	Acceptable
Duration abroad	0.76	1.32	Acceptable
Voluntariness of return	0.68	1.47	Acceptable
Resources accumulated abroad	0.58	1.72	Acceptable
Institutional support	0.71	1.41	Acceptable

Source: Survey data, 2026

Among the predictors, resources accumulated abroad recorded the highest VIF value (1.72) and the lowest tolerance value (0.58), indicating a slightly stronger association with other predictors compared to the remaining variables. However, this value remains well within acceptable limits and does not indicate problematic multicollinearity. Gender exhibited the lowest VIF value (1.10) and the highest tolerance value (0.91), suggesting very little correlation with the other independent variables.

Overall, the diagnostic results confirm that the predictor variables are sufficiently independent of one another and can be included simultaneously in the regression model without compromising the validity and stability of the estimated coefficients. Therefore, the assumptions regarding the absence of severe multicollinearity were satisfied.

Table 4.15: Normality of Residuals (Shapiro-Wilk)

Model	Shapiro-Wilk	p-value	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interpretation
Economic Reintegration	0.992	0.087	0.12	−0.34	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Social Reintegration	0.991	0.076	0.08	−0.21	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Psychosocial Reintegration	0.990	0.064	0.15	−0.18	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Total Reintegration Score	0.992	0.082	0.11	−0.27	Normal ($p > 0.05$)

Source: Survey data, 2026

Table 4.15 presents the results of the normality tests conducted on the residuals of the regression models using the Shapiro–Wilk statistic, together with measures of skewness and kurtosis. Assessing the normality of residuals is important because it is one of the key assumptions underlying regression analysis. Residuals that are normally distributed contribute to the validity of statistical inferences and significance tests. The results indicate that the residuals for all four models are approximately normally distributed. The Shapiro–Wilk statistics range from 0.990 to 0.992, with corresponding p-values between 0.064 and 0.087. Since all p-values are greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis of normality cannot be rejected. This suggests that the residuals do not significantly deviate from a normal distribution.

Further evidence of normality is provided by the skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness coefficients range from 0.08 to 0.15, indicating very slight positive skewness but remaining close to zero. Similarly, the kurtosis values range from −0.34 to −0.18, suggesting distributions that are only slightly flatter than a perfectly normal distribution. Both skewness and kurtosis values fall well within commonly accepted thresholds for normality.

Among the models, the Psychosocial Reintegration model exhibited the lowest Shapiro–Wilk statistic (0.990) and the highest skewness value (0.15), but these values remain within acceptable limits. The Economic Reintegration and Total Reintegration Score models showed the strongest evidence of normality, with Shapiro–Wilk values of 0.992 and non-significant p-values.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the residuals of all regression models satisfy the assumption of normality. Therefore, the regression analyses can be considered statistically reliable, and subsequent interpretations of model coefficients and significance tests are unlikely to be affected by violations of the normality assumption.

Table 4.16: Breusch-Pagan Test for Homoscedasticity

Model	BP χ^2	Df	p-value
Economic Reintegration	8.34	7	0.302
Social Reintegration	7.89	7	0.342
Psychosocial Reintegration	9.12	7	0.245
Total Reintegration Score	8.67	7	0.278

Source: Survey data, 2026

Table 4.16 presents the results of the Breusch–Pagan (BP) test conducted to assess the assumption of homoscedasticity in the regression models. Homoscedasticity refers to the condition in which the variance of the residuals remains constant across all levels of the independent variables. Violation of this assumption, known as heteroscedasticity, can lead to inefficient coefficient estimates and biased standard errors, thereby affecting the reliability of statistical inference.

The results show that the Breusch–Pagan test statistics for the four models range from 7.89 to 9.12, with 7 degrees of freedom in each case. The corresponding p-values range from 0.245 to 0.342, all of which are greater than the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity cannot be rejected for any of the models.

Specifically, the Economic Reintegration model yielded a BP χ^2 value of 8.34 with a p-value of 0.302, indicating no evidence of heteroscedasticity. Similarly, the Social Reintegration model produced a BP χ^2 value of 7.89 and a p-value of 0.342, providing the strongest support for homoscedasticity among the four models. The Psychosocial Reintegration model recorded the highest BP χ^2 value (9.12) and the lowest p-value (0.245); however, the result

remains statistically non-significant and therefore does not indicate heteroscedasticity. The Total Reintegration Score model also satisfied the homoscedasticity assumption, with a BP χ^2 value of 8.67 and a p-value of 0.278. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the residual variances are constant across all regression models. The absence of statistically significant Breusch–Pagan test results indicates that heteroscedasticity is not a concern in the data. Therefore, the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied, supporting the validity and reliability of the regression estimates and associated significance tests.

Table 4.17: Durbin-Watson Test for Autocorrelation

Model	Durbin-Watson d	Interpretation
Economic Reintegration	1.92	No autocorrelation
Social Reintegration	1.88	No autocorrelation
Psychosocial Reintegration	1.94	No autocorrelation
Total Reintegration Score	1.90	No autocorrelation

Source: Survey data, 2026

Table 4.17 presents the results of the Durbin–Watson test, which was conducted to assess the presence of autocorrelation among the residuals of the regression models. Autocorrelation occurs when residuals are correlated with one another rather than being independent. The absence of autocorrelation is an important assumption in regression analysis because correlated residuals can lead to biased standard errors and unreliable statistical inferences.

The Durbin–Watson statistic ranges from 0 to 4, where a value close to 2 indicates no autocorrelation, values substantially below 2 suggest positive autocorrelation, and values substantially above 2 indicate negative autocorrelation. In practice, values between 1.5 and 2.5 are generally considered acceptable and indicative of independent residuals.

The results show that the Durbin–Watson statistics for all four models are very close to the ideal value of 2. The Economic Reintegration model recorded a Durbin–Watson value of 1.92, indicating no evidence of autocorrelation. Similarly, the Social Reintegration model produced a value of 1.88, while the Psychosocial Reintegration model yielded a value of

1.94. The Total Reintegration Score model had a Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.90. All these values fall within the acceptable range and are sufficiently close to 2, suggesting that the residuals are independent. Overall, the findings indicate that there is no significant autocorrelation in any of the regression models. The independence of residuals assumption was therefore satisfied, enhancing the reliability of the regression estimates and supporting the validity of subsequent statistical tests and interpretations.

Table 4.18: Ramsey RESET Test for Linearity

Model	RESET F-value	Df	p-value
Economic Reintegration	1.45	(2, 375)	0.236
Social Reintegration	1.23	(2, 375)	0.293
Psychosocial Reintegration	1.67	(2, 375)	0.189
Total Reintegration Score	1.52	(2, 375)	0.221

Source: Survey data, 2026

All diagnostic tests confirm that the regression assumptions are satisfied. All VIF values fall below 2.0 (Table 4.14), indicating no multicollinearity. Shapiro-Wilk tests confirm normality of residuals (all $p > 0.05$; Table 4.15). Breusch-Pagan tests confirm homoscedasticity (all $p > 0.05$; Table 4.16). Durbin-Watson statistics range from 1.88 to 1.94, confirming residual independence (Table 4.17). Ramsey RESET tests confirm correct model specification and linearity (all $p > 0.05$; Table 4.18). These results collectively establish the statistical validity and reliability of all three regression models.

4.6.4 Multiple Linear Regression Analyses

Table 4.19: Model 1 Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Economic Reintegration

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P	Partial r
(Constant)	1.18	0.19	—	6.21	<0.001	—
Age	0.01	0.01	0.06	1.34	0.181	0.07
Gender (Female=1)	0.07	0.06	0.05	1.21	0.227	0.06
Education level	0.11	0.05	0.10	2.21	0.028	0.11

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P	Partial r
Duration abroad	0.08	0.06	0.06	1.33	0.184	0.07
Voluntariness of return	0.35	0.07	0.28	5.00	<0.001	0.25
Resources accumulated abroad	0.42	0.07	0.33	6.00	<0.001	0.29
Institutional support	0.29	0.06	0.22	4.83	<0.001	0.24

Model Summary: $R=0.768$, $R^2=0.590$, Adjusted $R^2=0.582$, Std. Error=0.291. ANOVA: $F(7,377)=77.63$, $p\leq 0.001$. Source: Survey data, 2026

Model 1 is statistically significant ($F(7,377)=77.63$, $p\leq 0.001$) and explains 59.0% of the variance in economic reintegration ($R^2=0.590$; Adjusted $R^2=0.582$). Resources accumulated abroad exerts the strongest independent effect ($\beta=0.33$, $p<0.001$), confirming Cassarino's (2004) argument that capital and skills mobilized during migration are the primary determinant of post-return economic outcomes. Voluntariness of return ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.001$) and institutional support ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$) are also significant positive predictors. Education exerts a small but significant positive effect ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.028$). Age, gender, and duration abroad do not reach significance as independent predictors, indicating that structural migration conditions outweigh demographic characteristics in determining economic reintegration.

Table 4.20: Model 2 — Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Social Reintegration

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P	95% CI	Partial r
(Constant)	1.45	0.21	—	6.90	<0.001	[1.04, 1.86]	—
Age	0.01	0.01	0.05	1.12	0.263	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.06
Gender (Female=1)	0.09	0.07	0.06	1.29	0.198	[-0.04, 0.22]	0.07
Education level	0.12	0.06	0.09	2.00	0.046	[0.01, 0.23]	0.10
Duration abroad	0.06	0.06	0.05	1.00	0.318	[-0.06, 0.18]	0.05
Voluntariness of return	0.31	0.08	0.22	3.88	<0.001	[0.15, 0.47]	0.20
Resources accumulated abroad	0.38	0.08	0.26	4.75	<0.001	[0.22, 0.54]	0.24
Institutional support	0.14	0.08	0.10	1.75	0.081	[-0.02, 0.30]	0.09

Model Summary: $R=0.712$, $R^2=0.507$, Adjusted $R^2=0.497$, Std. Error=0.368. ANOVA: $F(7,377)=55.21$, $p \leq 0.001$. Source: Survey data, 2026

Model 2 explains 50.7% of variance in social reintegration ($R^2=0.507$). Resources accumulated abroad ($\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$) and voluntariness of return ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$) again emerge as the dominant predictors, suggesting that the economic capital and agency associated with voluntary migration are central to social acceptance and relationship reconstruction. Institutional support approaches but does not reach significance ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.081$), suggesting that social reintegration is primarily driven by returnees' own resources and relational dynamics rather than formal programming. Education again makes a small but significant contribution ($\beta=0.09$, $p=0.046$), while age, gender, and duration abroad remain non-significant.

Table 4.21: Model 3 — Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Psychosocial Reintegration

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P	95% CI	Partial r
(Constant)	1.31	0.24	—	5.46	<0.001	[0.84, 1.78]	—
Age	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.88	0.379	[-0.01, 0.03]	0.05
Gender	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.75	0.454	[-0.10, 0.22]	0.04
Education level	0.09	0.06	0.07	1.50	0.135	[-0.03, 0.21]	0.08
Duration abroad	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.71	0.478	[-0.09, 0.19]	0.04
Voluntariness of return	0.44	0.08	0.30	5.50	<0.001	[0.28, 0.60]	0.27
Resources accumulated abroad	0.36	0.09	0.22	4.00	<0.001	[0.18, 0.54]	0.20
Institutional support	0.41	0.08	0.28	5.13	<0.001	[0.25, 0.57]	0.26

Model Summary: $R=0.731$, $R^2=0.534$, Adjusted $R^2=0.524$, Std. Error=0.421. ANOVA: $F(7,377)=61.78$, $p \leq 0.001$. Source: Survey data, 2026

Model 3 explains 53.4% of variance in psychosocial reintegration ($R^2=0.534$). Voluntariness of return is the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.30$, $p<0.001$), followed by institutional support ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.001$) and resources accumulated abroad ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$). Notably, institutional support exerts a significantly stronger effect on psychosocial reintegration

($\beta=0.28$) than on social reintegration ($\beta=0.10$, non-significant), suggesting that formal support services particularly counselling, trauma-informed case management, and psychosocial programming are a distinct and high-leverage determinant of emotional well-being. All demographic variables remain non-significant, reinforcing the structural rather than individual nature of reintegration outcomes.

4.7 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

4.7.1 Overview of Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of 30 in-depth returnee interviews and 5 key informant interviews, conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework in ATLAS.ti, generated five major themes: (1) the debt trap and economic paralysis; (2) the "failed migrant" stigma and contested belonging; (3) fractured identity and the burden of reversed expectations; (4) invisible wounds: trauma, detention, and psychosocial neglect; and (5) institutional abandonment and the gap between policy and practice. These themes are mapped directly onto the four research objectives and provide explanatory depth for the quantitative patterns reported in Sections 4.4 to 4.6.

4.7.2 Theme 1: The Debt Trap and Economic Paralysis

The dominant economic reintegration narrative centred not on unemployment as an abstract condition, but on migration debt as an acute, family-borne, and intergenerational financial crisis. Every participant had financed their migration journey through informal borrowing from relatives, community members, or informal moneylenders typically between 200,000 and 700,000 Ethiopian Birr. Deportation rendered these debts non-recoverable, triggering immediate financial collapse:

I spent three years working without authorization in Germany, living in terror that they would send me back. When they did, I arrived home to a family holding a 500,000-ETB debt and no job. My parents cannot even sell the land they mortgaged to send me. We face shame and pressure every single day.
(Male, 34, deportee from Germany)

Key informants uniformly confirmed that existing reintegration programs contain no debt management component. As one IOM Programme Officer stated:

The cash grant we provide around 1,500 euros equivalent helps with the first month. But if someone has 500,000 ETB in debt, this is symbolic at best. We know this. But European funding does not allow us to design programs around debt management. (IOM Programme Officer, Key Informant Interview)

The lowest quantitative item score (A4, M=1.96) debt management converges directly with this theme, establishing debt as the primary economic reintegration barrier and one that formal programming has failed to address.

4.7.3 Theme 2: The 'Failed Migrant' Stigma and Contested Belonging

Social reintegration was profoundly obstructed by a distinctive social stigma attached to the identity of the "failed European migrant." Unlike the moral or gender-based stigma documented among Gulf returnees (Wubeshet, 2021), the stigma experienced by European returnees derives from the community's perception of Europe as a definitive pathway to material success. Return without resources is experienced as social failure in the most public sense:

When I left, the whole family celebrated. People took loans. They sold things. When I was deported, the person they sent off no longer exists. I became a shame. I cannot even go to Kebele) the lowest administrative unit in Ethiopia's government structure. meetings now). Everyone wants to know where the car is, where the money is. (Male, who aged 31, deportee from Norway)

I used to have respect. I was educated. Now all the neighbours' even children know I was deported. People say things. My own brother stopped introducing me to his friends after he found out. (Male, aged 38, AVRR returnee from Sweden)

This stigma operates as a self-reinforcing cycle of exclusion: the inability to attend community events (B3, M=2.67) and rebuild social networks (B4, M=2.71) forecloses the informal employment opportunities and mutual-aid mechanisms that depend on social

capital, thereby compounding economic precarity and confirming the theoretical interdependence of the economic and social reintegration dimensions.

4.7.4 Theme 3: Fractured Identity and the Burden of Reversed Expectations

A pervasive theme across psychosocial narratives was identity rupture the collapse of the purposeful, aspirational self that had been constructed during migration and the absence of a coherent replacement identity upon return. Returnees described an irreconcilable split between the person they had become in Europe and the person their communities expected them to be:

In Europe, even when I was cleaning floors, I told myself it was temporary. I had a plan. When they deported me, they did not just send me home they ended the story I was telling myself. Now I do not know who I am. I am 36 years old and living in my mother's house like a teenager. (Male, 36, deportee from Switzerland)

My friends who stayed in Addis think I had adventures, that I saw Europe. But inside, I only saw detention centres and courts and rejection letters. There is a gap between what I look like from the outside and what I feel inside. I cannot tell anyone the truth. (Female, age 27, deportee from Netherlands)

This double narrative maintaining a face-saving public identity while privately experiencing profound distress constitutes a significant psychosocial burden that simultaneously prevents the social support-seeking that might alleviate it. These findings provide explanatory depth for the severely depressed sense of belonging (C1, M=2.71) and life satisfaction (C2, M=2.44) observed quantitatively.

4.7.5 Theme 4: Invisible Wounds Trauma, Detention, and Psychosocial Neglect

Sixty percent of quantitative respondents had been detained at some point during their migration. Qualitative narratives from participants who had experienced detention in Libya which 46.2% of the sample had described severe physical violence, extortion, witnessing

deaths, and sexual abuse. Participants meeting clinical criteria for PTSD were identifiable through narrative descriptions of persistent nightmares, hypervigilance, emotional numbing, and intrusive re-experiencing:

I stayed in Libya for four months. I will not say what happened there. Since I returned, I cannot sleep. When I close my eyes, I see things. I wake up shouting. My wife is threatening to leave because I am a different person now. I have never spoken to a professional about this. Who would I go to? There is no budget for this kind of help. We are just expected to go back to normal life.
(Male, 29, deportee from Italy, formerly detained in Libya)

Key informants from NGOs corroborated the absence of systematic trauma-informed psychosocial services:

We see clients showing signs of PTSD every day. We can recognize it. But our funding is for livelihood support business training, seed capital. Our staff are not trained as therapists, and there is no system to refer clients to specialized mental health services. It simply does not exist. (NGO Program Coordinator, Key Informant Interview)

These testimonies explain the apparent paradox in the regression results: institutional support is a significant predictor of psychosocial reintegration ($\beta=0.28$, Model 3) despite having the lowest mean score of all constructs ($M=2.18$). The few returnees who do access psychosocial support services experience meaningful benefits; the majority, however, receive no psychosocial assistance whatsoever.

4.7.6 Theme 5: Institutional Abandonment and the Gap Between Policy and Practice

Across all participant groups, a consistent narrative of institutional abandonment emerged: support that was visible and present in the first weeks of return then disappeared entirely, leaving returnees to navigate long-term economic, social, and psychological challenges without professional assistance:

They gave me a cash grant to start a business. What business? With 15,000 ETB? That money was gone in two months rent, food. I was given a

caseworker's telephone number. I called. They never picked up. (Male, 34, AVRR beneficiary from Sweden)

Multiple organizations claim to help returnees. There are documents, meetings, sophisticated language about sustainable reintegration. But on the ground, the services are not there. The offices close at five. The paperwork is complicated. By the time you sort it out, the six-month program window has expired. (Male, 40, voluntary returnee from Germany)

Key informants identified structural fragmentation as the root cause of this coordination failure. As a MoWSA official explained:

Each ministry has its own mandate labour, social affairs, health. No single caseworker follows a returnee across all three systems. To access job placement, mental health support, and debt counselling, a returnee must navigate three different institutions independently. This is not reintegration. This is bureaucracy. (MoWSA Senior Official, Key Informant Interview)

This structural fragmentation, documented empirically by Betelhem (2015) and Abashula (2019), directly produces the lowest institutional coordination score (D5, M=1.98) and constitutes a systemic barrier to reintegration across all three outcome dimensions.

4.8 Integrated Findings: Convergence and Divergence

Table 4.22: Joint Display — Quantitative and Qualitative Integration

Dimension	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Elaboration	Convergence/Divergence
Economic	M=2.32; 77.4% unable to manage debt; only 13.3% report income sufficiency	Debt is intergenerational, family-borne, and the primary driver of re-migration intent; formal programs do not address it	Convergence: both methods identify debt as the central economic barrier

Dimension	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Elaboration	Convergence/Divergence
Social	M=2.75; 61.5% report stigma; family ties (M=3.45) strongest sub-dimension	Stigma is specific to the 'failed asylum seeker/deportee' identity; family ties quantitatively strong but qualitatively fraught with shame and economic dependency	Divergence: quantitative overstates family relationship quality; qualitative reveals conditional, shame-laden nature
Psychosocial	M=2.89; 57.1% report emotional distress; 62.1% not recovered from migration trauma	PTSD symptoms widespread among detainees; identity rupture and a double narrative (public face-saving vs. private distress) systematically block help-seeking and recovery	Convergence with additional depth: qualitative explains the mechanisms blocking psychosocial recovery
Institutional	M=2.18 (lowest); significant predictor of economic ($\beta=0.22$) and psychosocial ($\beta=0.28$) outcomes but not social ($\beta=0.10$, ns)	Support is formally present but short-term, sectoral siloed, and limited empirical studies for psychosocial needs; structural fragmentation prevents coordinated case management	Convergence: both methods confirm systemic inadequacy; qualitative identifies the structural mechanisms

Source: Integrated analysis, 2026

The most analytically significant finding emerging from integration concerns the divergence regarding family social capital. Quantitatively, B1 (family relationships, $M=3.45$) is the strongest social reintegration indicator, and might be interpreted as a protective factor. Qualitative evidence, however, reveals that this apparent strength is substantially qualified: family support is experienced as conditional, emotionally freighted, and frequently compounded by financial obligation and shame. The practical implication is that reintegration programs should not assume family networks constitute reliable social capital resources without accounting for the complex relational dynamics — including economic dependency and role reversal — that characterize post-deportation family relations.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter integrates and contextualizes the quantitative and qualitative findings within the theoretical framework, research objectives, and existing literature. The core findings are discussed in relation to their theoretical implications, followed by policy recommendations, a reflection on limitations, overall conclusions, and directions for future research.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 The Primacy of Return Conditions in Shaping Reintegration Outcomes

The most robust finding of this study is that return conditions specifically voluntariness of return and resources accumulated abroad are the strongest and most consistent predictors of reintegration outcomes across all three dimensions, dwarfing the influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, and duration abroad. ANOVA analyses (Tables 4.12–4.13) reveal a clear gradient of outcomes by return mode, with effect sizes ranging from $\eta^2=0.14$ to $\eta^2=0.23$ all qualifying as large effects (Cohen, 1988). Post-hoc tests confirm significant pairwise differences across all three return mode groups.

These findings provide strong empirical support for Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness framework. The majority of deported returnees who constitute 51.4% of the sample exhibit characteristics consistent with what Cassarino terms the "return of failure": involuntary return with minimal accumulated resources. The abruptness of deportation, the absence of preparation time, and the lack of material capital combine to produce simultaneous economic, social, and psychological crises upon return. This is not a matter of individual deficit but of structural vulnerability imposed by forced migration and forcible return a structural argument that directly challenges deficit-oriented narratives about reintegration failure.

5.2.2 Multidimensional Interconnection and Reinforcing Vulnerability

The strong inter-correlations between reintegration dimensions ($r=0.59-0.68$) and the parallel qualitative evidence demonstrate that economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration do not operate as independent processes. Economic failure produces shame, social withdrawal, and restricted access to community networks; social exclusion compounds psychological distress and impairs decision-making; and psychological distress reduces economic productivity and increases social isolation. This circular, mutually reinforcing dynamic what might be termed a "reintegration trap" means that single-dimensional interventions targeting only economic outcomes are structurally insufficient to break the cycle of compound vulnerability.

This finding has direct theoretical implications for the IOM's (2017) definition of sustainable reintegration, which is operationalized as encompassing economic, social, and psychosocial well-being simultaneously. The present study provides empirical confirmation that this multidimensionality is not merely definitional but operationally interdependent: progress in one dimension without parallel progress in the others is structurally constrained.

5.2.3 Institutional Support: Significant but Structurally Limited

Institutional support registers as the lowest-rated construct in the study ($M=2.18$) yet is a significant predictor of both economic ($\beta=0.22$) and psychosocial ($\beta=0.28$) reintegration. This apparent contradiction is resolved by the qualitative evidence: the small minority of returnees who access adequate and sustained institutional support particularly those with access to psychosocial services experience meaningful benefits, while the majority receive short-term, sectoral siloed assistance that is insufficient to address their multi-dimensional needs. The structural mechanisms of this failure project-cycle-constrained funding, inter-agency fragmentation, and the subordination of reintegration investment to European migration control objectives are clearly identified by both key informants and the documentary evidence.

This finding suggests that improving the reach, duration, and quality of institutional support represents the highest-leverage policy intervention available to the Ethiopian government and its international partners. Marginal improvements in institutional support quality and

coordination could produce disproportionately large gains in reintegration outcomes, given that the baseline is so demonstrably low.

5.2.4 The Distinctive Psychosocial Profile of European Returnees

The mean psychosocial reintegration score of 2.89 for this sample falls notably below the 3.24 score reported by Vathi (2022) for Balkan return migrants and reflects the specific burden of traumatic transit and detention that characterizes Ethiopian migration to Europe. The qualitative theme of "invisible wounds" reveals that psychosocial impairment is not merely a matter of individual distress but of a systematic structural absence: there are not publicly funded, accessible mental health or trauma-informed services for returnees in Addis Ababa. The institutional support infrastructure that exists focuses almost exclusively on economic dimensions livelihood grants, skills training, business capital while psychosocial needs remain entirely unaddressed by formal programming.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This study extends Cassarino's (2004) return preparedness framework in three analytically significant ways. First, it disaggregates the relationship between duration of stay abroad and resource accumulation, which correlate only moderately ($r=0.41$), demonstrating that time abroad is not a reliable proxy for resources mobilized. Second, it introduces detention and traumatic transit as analytically distinct variables that affect reintegration through psychosocial channels independent of economic resources an important extension given that detention is absent from Cassarino's original framework.

Third, it empirically documents differentiated effects of institutional support across reintegration dimensions, with significantly stronger effects on psychosocial ($\beta=0.28$) than social outcomes ($\beta=0.10$, ns), suggesting that formal support and local relational dynamics play distinct roles in different dimensions of reintegration.

The NELM framework's conceptualization of migration as a household risk-diversification strategy is confirmed and extended by the finding that migration debt is not experienced individually but collectively, producing intergenerational economic insecurity that extends the burdens of failed migration beyond the individual returnee to their families and

communities. This suggests that future theoretical models of return migration should treat the household, rather than the individual, as the primary unit of analysis.

5.4 Policy Implications

The findings carry several concrete implications for policymakers, international organizations, NGOs, and development partners. Adequate and sustained financial support. Current AVRR grant levels (approximately 1,500 euros equivalent) are demonstrably insufficient given the scale of migration debt. Funding should be substantially increased to a minimum of USD 5,000 per returnee, disbursed in structured instalments over 12 to 18 months rather than as lump sums, with clear linkage to reintegration milestones.

Mandatory psychosocial support services. Psychosocial support must become a mandatory, funded component of reintegration programming, including systematic PTSD screening, professional counselling, trauma-informed case management, and referral pathways to specialized mental health treatment. This is currently limited empirical studies from the institutional landscape.

Integrated case management. A unified national case management system for returnees should be established to eliminate inter-agency fragmentation, ensure continuity of support, and provide a single point of coordination across economic, social, and psychosocial services over a period of at least two to three years. Debt management mechanisms. Given that migration debt is the primary economic barrier for most returnees, the government and NGO partners should develop targeted debt restructuring, microfinance, and flexible repayment mechanisms specifically designed for returnees.

Skills recognition and certification. A formal system for recognizing and certifying skills acquired informally abroad should be developed in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Skills, enabling returnees to access formal employment aligned with their actual competencies. Community-level stigma reduction. Anti-stigma campaigns, community education programs, and social inclusion initiatives should be designed to address the specific "failed European migrant" stigma, fostering environments more conducive to social reintegration.

Pre-return planning. Reintegration planning should begin at the point of asylum rejection and return decision not upon arrival in Ethiopia to allow migrants time to prepare financially, socially, and psychologically.

Long-term European funding. European governments and development partners should commit to multi-year (three to five year) reintegration funding cycles, recognizing that sustainable reintegration is a long-term process incompatible with short project cycles driven by migration management objectives.

5.5 Limitations

The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw conclusions about long-term reintegration trajectories. Voluntary returnees are slightly underrepresented, and findings may not generalize to rural Ethiopia. Self-report bias may affect estimates of sensitive variables including income, trauma severity, and legal history. The study does not include comparative groups (Gulf returnees, North American returnees) that would allow causal attribution of findings specifically to the European migration context. Broader structural factors including Ethiopia's economic conditions during the study period may have independently influenced reintegration outcomes.

5.6 Conclusions

This study provides the first comprehensive empirical examination of multidimensional reintegration among Ethiopian returnees from Europe, generating a convergent body of quantitative and qualitative evidence that leads to unambiguous conclusions. Ethiopian returnees from Europe face severe, structurally embedded, and mutually reinforcing barriers to reintegration across economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions.

These barriers arise primarily from the structural conditions of forced migration and deportation not from individual deficits. Return voluntariness and resources accumulated abroad are the strongest predictors of positive outcomes; demographic variables are statistically non-significant. Institutional support, though meaningful where adequately provided, is structurally insufficient in its current form. Reintegration failure is not a personal inadequacy but a policy failure.

A decisive shift from short-term, single-dimensional economic assistance to long-term, coordinated, multidimensional reintegration support is the central policy imperative arising from this study.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research in this field should prioritize: longitudinal studies tracking reintegration trajectories over three to five years to assess sustainability; comparative research examining how national variations in European asylum procedures and deportation practices shape reintegration outcomes; household-level studies examining the impact of migration debt and return on non-migrant family members; rigorous evaluation studies assessing the effectiveness of specific reintegration program models; and qualitative studies focused on successfully reintegrated returnees to identify resilience factors and enabling conditions.

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