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INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAM IN KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP, TURKANA WEST, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the influence of stakeholder engagement on performance of Southern New Hampshire University Programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana West Kenya. The study was anchored on Stakeholder Theory. This study employed a mixed method approach using convergent parallel design. The study targeted 105 participants comprising of 98 enrolled students, 5 administrators and 2 CUE staff. Census and purposive sampling was used to ensure that all key stakeholders and students were represented. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA to assess relationships between variables. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, where recurring themes were identified, coded, and interpreted to complement the quantitative findings. The study found that stakeholder engagement was generally strong, with about two-thirds of respondents acknowledging involvement in decision-making and collaboration (M = 3.92). However, gaps remained in inclusivity and equitable access to services. The study recommend that SNHU should prioritize strengthening student support services to enhance accessibility and responsiveness while sustaining high performance in academics, skills application, and community acceptance.

Keywords: - Stakeholder management practices, Stakeholder engagement, Southern New Hampshire University, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana West

Introduction

University programs implemented in refugee contexts play a critical role in advancing access to higher education, fostering resilience, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals (UNHCR, 2022). These programs are increasingly recognized as vital tools in addressing inequalities, promoting self-reliance, and enhancing socio-economic opportunities for displaced populations. However, the performance of such programs has raised concerns globally, with challenges related to resource allocation, accessibility, and integration into local communities. International organizations such as UNHCR, the World Bank, and various universities have long recognized the importance of multi-

stakeholder collaboration in refugee education programs. These collaborations bring together governments, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities to ensure the success and sustainability of such initiatives. However, inadequate stakeholder engagement often hinder the effectiveness of these programs (Taylor et al., 2022).

In Africa, similar trends can be observed in refugee education programs. Countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania have implemented higher education initiatives for refugees, supported by partnerships between national governments, international universities, and agencies like UNHCR. These initiatives have expanded access to learning resources

and provided refugees with opportunities to join degree-awarding institutions (Abebe, 2023). However, weaknesses in stakeholder engagement have often slowed decision-making processes and hindered program efficiency. In Ethiopia, for instance, bureaucratic hurdles and insufficient coordination between stakeholders have delayed the implementation of educational programs for refugees (Anteneh&Melak, 2024).

Nigeria's situation highlights the increased demand for higher education among internally displaced persons (IDPs), a result of conflict-induced displacement. Various stakeholders, including universities, government agencies, and private sector actors, have responded by offering a mix of online, distance, and vocational programs (Okafor & Eze, 2020). These challenges have limited the opportunities for IDP learners to progress academically and integrate into the broader educational system (Ogunyemi, 2021).

Tanzania, another African country with a significant refugee population, has seen higher education provision expand within refugee camps like Nyarugusu and Nduta. However, fragmented gaps in stakeholder engagement have undermined the performance of these initiatives. Stakeholder participation remain problematic, particularly in ensuring that marginalized groups, such as women and students with special needs, are adequately included in decision-making processes (Lupogo, 2020).

Kenya's experience, particularly at Kakuma Refugee Camp, further exemplifies these challenges. The Kakuma Refugee Camp, located in Turkana County, is home to a large number of refugees, and its education programs are supported by a range of stakeholders, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Kenyan government, NGOs,

and universities. While these stakeholders are involved in education delivery from pre-primary to tertiary levels, challenges related to stakeholder management persist. Limited inclusivity in decision-making often sidelines marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and community-based leaders, which affects the overall effectiveness of the programs (Ivana, 2022). Weak accountability structures have also led to fragmented planning and delayed resource allocation, ultimately impacting program performance and learner outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Academic mobility and the integration of foreign degrees into local systems are increasingly critical to higher education internationalization and student transitions between universities. These processes directly influence student satisfaction, which in turn affects programme performance indicators such as retention, graduation rates, reputation, and overall academic outcomes (Jain & Varsha, 2024). However, ensuring that academic mobility contributes positively to programme performance requires effective coordination among multiple stakeholders, particularly in contexts where higher education initiatives intersect with local systems.

In Kenya, evidence shows that weak stakeholder management often undermines the performance of education and development initiatives, particularly in marginalized and resource-constrained contexts (Nderitu & Karanja, 2022). In Kakuma, where multiple actors influence education delivery, the lack of coordinated engagement has at times resulted in duplication of efforts, resource inefficiencies, and reduced trust among stakeholders (Mwangi & Wanjiru, 2023).

Despite recognition of foreign degrees by Kenya's Commission for University Education, many graduates in Southern New Hampshire University Programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp still struggle with credit transfer, academic progression, and acceptance into local institutions (Murray & Höhn, 2023). Thus, this study sought to assess the influence of stakeholder management practices on performance of Southern New Hampshire University Programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana West Kenya.

While previous studies had explored stakeholder management in higher education, limited research had examined how higher education institutions could effectively operate in a multi-diverse setting such as Kakuma Refugee Camp. This highlighted a clear gap in understanding stakeholder management practices in refugee-hosting and multi-diverse environments like Kakuma, which was the focus of this study. Grounded in Stakeholder Theory, this research provided insights to SNHU management on the responsiveness of its competency-based education model to regulatory bodies, employers, and local universities, thereby enhancing the programme's success and outcomes (Gogiashvili, 2021).

Furthermore, it emphasized the inclusion of refugees in the job market, thereby aligning with Kenya's Vision 2030 social pillar, which aimed to improve the quality of life through human and social welfare projects, as well as with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focused on inclusivity and equitable quality education.

This research was particularly suited for Kakuma Refugee Camp because of its diverse stakeholders governing refugee affairs and the unique educational model of SNHU, which had no equivalent programmes in the region (Mwakumanya & Lusweti, 2024).

Stakeholder Theory

The Stakeholder Theory was first introduced by Freeman (1984) as a framework for understanding how organizations interact with and depend on their stakeholders. It emphasizes that the success of an institution is not solely determined by its internal resources or shareholders but also by its ability to effectively manage relationships with diverse groups that influence or are influenced by its activities. According to Harrison, Barney, Freeman, and Phillips (2019), organizations that prioritize stakeholder needs, values, and engagement are more likely to achieve sustainable performance.

In the context of higher education programs such as the Southern New Hampshire University initiative in Kakuma Refugee Camp, stakeholders comprise regulatory bodies like the Commission for University Education, local universities, employers, refugees, host communities, and international partners. Effective management of these groups ensures inclusivity, program sustainability, and enhanced outcomes for learners (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Stakeholder engagement is also central to the theory. Engaging diverse actors creates opportunities for co-creation, joint decision-making, and mutual accountability. In the case of SNHU's program in Kakuma, stakeholder engagement involves incorporating refugees' voices in curriculum adaptation, involving employers in aligning training with labor market demands, and partnering with local universities to ensure academic recognition. Such practices strengthen ownership and increase the likelihood of program sustainability (Friedman & Miles, 2006).

Stakeholder theory has been criticized for giving excessive importance to the role of government in promoting certain morally significant social values. This is done by assuming that some institutions are inherently better suited to fulfill specific stakeholder-related values, while leaving other institutions to address different dimensions. A more complex issue is that stakeholder's theory often fails to clearly define the government's role in advancing stakeholder interests. Notably, it struggles to explain how the interests of marginalized stakeholders are protected within the framework of stakeholder management (Hargrave & Smith, 2025).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A research design provides a structured framework that organizes the components of a study, ensuring alignment with objectives and logical coherence (Lindhult & Axelsson, 2021). This study adopted a mixed-method convergent parallel design, allowing quantitative and qualitative data to be collected concurrently. Quantitative data captured broad trends, while qualitative data explored deeper factors influencing stakeholder management in the Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) program at Kakuma Refugee Camp. Structured questionnaires administered to students provided numerical insights into program operations, while semi-structured interviews with administrators and Commission for University Education (CUE) staff captured experiences and perspectives. Findings from both strands were integrated to present a comprehensive understanding of how stakeholder practices enhanced program performance.

The study was conducted at SNHU in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana West, Kenya—one of the

largest refugee settlements, hosting people from South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Governance involves multiple stakeholders, including UNHCR, the Kenyan government, and host authorities, creating a complex environment. SNHU provides undergraduate and diploma-level programs using a mastery-based grading system that emphasizes learning outcomes over traditional letter grades.

The target population included 98 students, five administrators, and two CUE staff, yielding 105 participants. Students were selected through a census approach, while administrators and CUE staff were purposively sampled for their specialized knowledge. This ensured that data reflected the perspectives of all key stakeholders directly engaged in the program. Sampling combined census and purposive techniques to ensure both breadth and depth of data (Verma & Verma, 2020; Levy & Goldfarb, 2021). Census sampling was appropriate due to the small student population, while purposive sampling of administrators and CUE staff ensured inclusion of expert views.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires for students and interview guides for administrators and CUE staff. A pilot study involving 11 respondents from Jesuit Worldwide Learning in Kakuma tested the instruments for clarity and reliability; these participants were excluded from the main study (Omair, 2025). Content validity was ensured through expert review by supervisors, lecturers, and a panel of subject-matter experts in education, program evaluation, and stakeholder management (Elhambakhsh, 2024). Reliability was assessed using a code-recode strategy, expert judgment, and Cronbach's

alpha, with values of 0.7 or higher considered acceptable (Taber, 2018).

Following the convergent parallel design (Kothari, 2019), quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. The researcher obtained permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and consulted local officials before fieldwork. Questionnaires were distributed using a drop-and-pick method to give respondents adequate time, while interviews with administrators and CUE staff provided deeper insights. Data collection and preliminary analysis occurred concurrently, allowing adjustments where needed.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized stakeholder engagement, and program performance. Pearson correlation measured associations between stakeholder engagement and program performance, while multiple regression tested their combined effect using the model. Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

determined the significance of the model before interpreting predictors.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Transcripts were reviewed, coded, and organized into themes on stakeholder practices and program outcomes. Direct quotations highlighted nuanced perspectives and enhanced authenticity. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a holistic view of how stakeholder management practices influence the performance of the SNHU program in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This subsection presents the categorization of respondents based on their current role within the SNHU learning ecosystem at Kakuma Refugee Camp or within the Commission for University Education. Respondents were asked to indicate their role at the college and the findings were presented in **Figure 4.1** below.

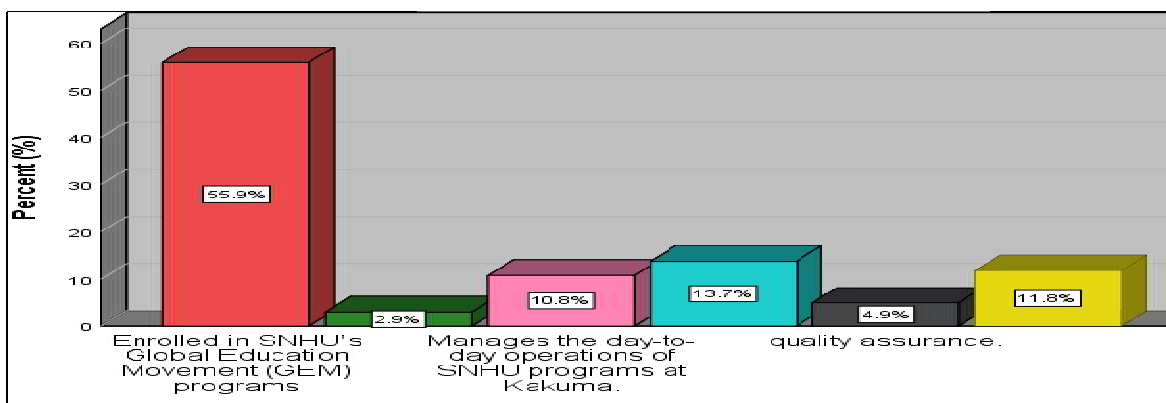


Figure 1: Respondents by Role at the College

The results in Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents, 57 (55.9%), were enrolled in Southern New Hampshire University's Global Education Movement programs. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of students as main stakeholders and

beneficiaries of the university's educational endeavors in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Furthermore, 14 respondents (13.7%) claimed that they handle logistics, demonstrating a strong operational support presence within the college structure. These

professionals are critical to the efficient delivery of learning services and day-to-day operations. The number of respondents who handle the day-to-day operations of SNHU programs in Kakuma was 11

(10.8%). This group is responsible for strategic program coordination, and resource planning. This segment shows how responders are distributed based on how long they have been affiliated with the college. The distribution is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

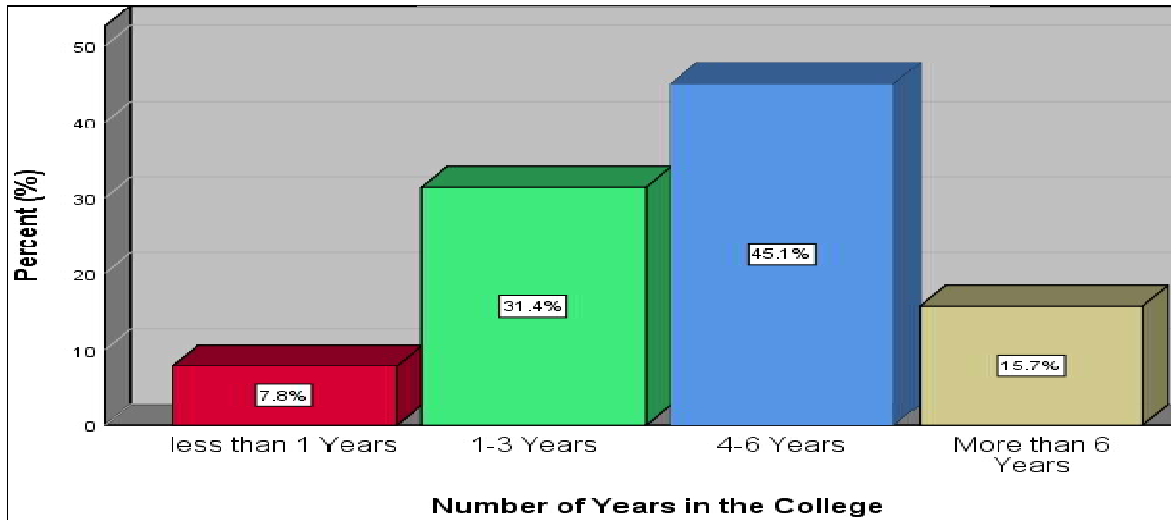


Figure 4.2: Number of Years in the College

The results in Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents, 46 (41.1%), reported being linked with the college for between 4-6 years, 32(28.6%) had been in the college for a period between 1-3 years. Most participants have a high level of experience and continuous engagement, which suggests that their replies are based on extensive exposure to the college's stakeholder practices, operations, and activities. Those who had been in the college of more than 6 years were 16(14.3%) while 8 (7.1%) respondents had been in the college for less than 1 year.

Stakeholder Engagement and Performance of Southern New Hampshire University

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements assessing how stakeholder engagement practices impact the performance of SNHU’s programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana West, Kenya. Responses were rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The findings were summarized and presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Response on Stakeholder Engagement Practices n=95

Stakeholder Engagement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		
Support services are siloed and not accessible to all stakeholders	9 9.5	19 20.0	22 23.2	28 29.5	17 17.9	3.26	1.20

Stakeholders are always involved in problem solving efforts	4	8	16	42	25	3.80	1.03
	4.2	8.4	16.8	44.2	26.3		
Stakeholders are not engaged in solving problems that affect them	11	20	18	30	16	3.21	1.24
	11.6	21.1	18.9	31.6	16.8		
Decision making processes are clear transparent and inclusive	3	6	19	41	26	3.85	0.96
	3.2	6.3	20.0	43.2	27.4		
Stakeholders do consultations before making decisions	5	7	15	43	25	3.80	1.01
	5.3	7.4	15.8	45.3	26.3		

Source: Researchers (2025)

Findings in **Table 1** highlight stakeholder perspectives on how effectively Southern New Hampshire University engages its stakeholders in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The analysis reveals both strengths and gaps in the university’s engagement practices. Regarding the statement “*Support services are siloed and not accessible to all stakeholders,*” a total of **28 (29.5%) agreed** and **17 (17.9%) strongly agreed**, suggesting a notable portion of respondents perceive a lack of inclusive access. However, **19 (20.0%) disagreed**, **9 (9.5%) strongly disagreed**, and **22 (23.2%) remained neutral**. The mean score was $M = 3.26$, with a relatively high standard deviation of $SD = 1.20$, indicating mixed perceptions. These results suggest that while support services are in place, access is inconsistent across different groups. This aligns with **Anthony and Mukong (2022)**, who argue that fragmentation in service delivery weakens stakeholder engagement in refugee-based educational initiatives. When asked whether *stakeholders are always involved in problem-solving efforts*, **42 (44.2%) agreed** and **25 (26.3%) strongly agreed**, while only **4 (4.2%) strongly disagreed**, **8 (8.4%) disagreed**, and **16 (16.8%) were neutral**. The mean score of $M = 3.80$, with a standard deviation of $SD = 1.03$, indicates a high level of engagement in collaborative problem-

solving. This suggests that SNHU provides platforms for stakeholders to participate meaningfully in addressing issues as they arise, consistent with **Tripathi (2024)**, who emphasized that shared problem-solving enhances trust and ownership in development projects.

On the negatively framed item, “*Stakeholders are not engaged in solving problems that affect them,*” **30 (31.6%) agreed** and **16 (16.8%) strongly agreed**, while **18 (18.9%) remained neutral**, and **31 (32.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**. The mean score was $M = 3.21$, with a higher standard deviation of $SD = 1.24$, reflecting contradictory experiences. This item reveals that while many stakeholders feel excluded from solving relevant problems, others perceive adequate engagement. Such inconsistency may be due to differences in stakeholder categories (e.g., students vs. administrators), a finding that echoes **Diniz (2025)** who observed disparities in participatory practices within multi-stakeholder education systems.

On the item assessing whether *decision-making processes are clear, transparent, and inclusive*, the responses were overwhelmingly positive: **41 (43.2%) agreed** and **26 (27.4%) strongly agreed**, with only **3 (3.2%) strongly disagreeing**, **6 (6.3%) disagreeing**, and **19 (20.0%) neutral**. The high mean of $M = 3.85$

and relatively low standard deviation of **SD = 0.96** demonstrate strong consensus. This suggests that SNHU maintains transparent and participatory governance processes. As noted by **Cao (2024)**, such practices improve institutional legitimacy and foster long-term stakeholder commitment.

Lastly, on whether *stakeholders consult before making decisions*, 43 (45.3%) agreed and 25 (26.3%) strongly agreed, while 15 (15.8%) were neutral, and only 5 (5.3%) strongly disagreed and 7 (7.4%) disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.80$, with a standard deviation of **SD = 1.01**, indicates that stakeholder consultation is a regular practice at SNHU. This aligns with **Sakwe (2024)** who argued that systematic consultation ensures decisions reflect diverse stakeholder interests and prevents conflict.

The findings show that SNHU generally performs well in stakeholder engagement, particularly in fostering transparency, inclusion in decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving. However, some concerns remain about unequal access to support services and occasional lapses in direct engagement,

especially for certain groups. These results emphasize the need for SNHU to strengthen inclusive mechanisms and ensure consistent participation across all stakeholder categories.

Relationships Between the Independent and Dependent Variables

This section presents the inferential analysis used to assess the relationship between stakeholder management practices (independent variables) and the performance of the Southern New Hampshire University programme (dependent variable) in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Two key statistical techniques were employed: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was conducted to determine the degree of linear association between stakeholder engagement, and the performance of the SNHU programme. The results are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	r-value	Sig. (p-value)	Relationship
Stakeholder Engagement	0.592	0.000	Strong, positive

Stakeholder engagement showed a strong relationship ($r = 0.592$). These findings are consistent with those of Saima and Nadeem (2025) and Manzoor and Asmawi (2024) who found that stakeholder involvement significantly boosts educational programme performance in fragile contexts.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was used to assess the combined and individual influence of stakeholder management practices on SNHU’s programme performance. The model included the four stakeholder management dimensions as predictor variables. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
Regression	0.723	0.522	0.497	0.703

The model results presented in Table 3 yielded an R² value of 0.522, indicating that approximately 52.2% of the variance in performance of the SNHU programme can be explained by the combined stakeholder management practices. The Adjusted R² of 0.497 accounts for model complexity and confirms the model's overall fitness.

Table 4: ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Regression	66.427	4	16.607	33.58	0.000
Residual	60.748	90	0.675		
Total	127.175	94			

The ANOVA results from the regression model (**F = 33.58, p = 0.000**) indicate that the model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that stakeholder engagement significantly explain the variation in the dependent variable, which is the performance of the Southern New Hampshire University programme. This finding supports the core argument of the study that stakeholder management is not merely an administrative process, but a strategic contributor to institutional success, especially in fragile and resource-constrained environments like Kakuma Refugee Camp. The result shows that at least one, and likely several, of the stakeholder engagement have a statistically meaningful impact on how well SNHU performs in delivering its academic mission in the camp.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	1.048	0.314	—	3.338	0.001
Stakeholder Engagement	0.319	0.096	0.287	3.323	0.001

The regression coefficients further confirm that stakeholder engagement ($\beta = 0.287$) emerged as one of the most influential predictors. This underscores the critical role of active stakeholder participation in enhancing program delivery, accountability, and learner satisfaction.

Discussions

Findings revealed that SNHU demonstrates generally strong stakeholder engagement practices in Kakuma

Refugee Camp, particularly in areas of collaborative problem-solving and inclusive decision-making. Most stakeholders indicated that they are regularly consulted and involved in addressing issues, supporting **Tripathi (2024)**, who highlights shared problem-solving as key to building trust and ownership in educational projects. Respondents also expressed satisfaction with the clarity and transparency of decision-making processes, suggesting a well-structured governance approach.

This aligns with Cao (2024), who notes that transparent institutional practices contribute to legitimacy and sustained stakeholder commitment. However, concerns emerged regarding unequal access to support services and inconsistent engagement across different stakeholder groups. Some respondents perceived service delivery as fragmented or inaccessible, which reflects the findings of Anthony and Mukong (2022) on the challenges of inclusivity in refugee education settings. Similarly, mixed responses on whether stakeholders are engaged in solving issues that affect them point to **varying** experiences across roles a concern echoed by Diniz (2025) in multi-stakeholder educational environments.

Performance of Southern New Hampshire University

The findings indicate that Southern New Hampshire University has largely met its institutional performance goals in Kakuma Refugee Camp, particularly in terms of academic relevance, practical skill application, and positive stakeholder perception.

Most respondents affirmed that SNHU's programs meet the academic needs of learners, with a strong mean of $M = 3.94$. This consistency highlights the alignment between the curriculum and learner expectations, reflecting the importance of contextualized learning as emphasized by Saima & Nadeem (2025).

Similarly, the belief that SNHU graduates can apply acquired skills to solve real-life problems reflects high satisfaction with the program's practicality ($M = 3.91$). This supports Manzoor and Asmawi (2024), who argue that competency-based learning is particularly effective in enhancing employability and resilience in marginalized settings.

The learning environment was also positively reviewed ($M = 3.81$), suggesting that SNHU has created relatively supportive academic conditions in a challenging refugee context consistent with Thomas (2025), who links effective delivery to strong infrastructure and instructional support.

In terms of community respect and program acceptance, findings show broad approval ($M = 3.77$), though with minor dissent. This reinforces Maniriho (2024)'s point that stakeholder legitimacy and trust are crucial for sustained educational impact in humanitarian settings.

However, student support services drew more varied opinions, with the lowest mean score ($M = 3.64$) and highest variability. While most respondents expressed satisfaction, others reported inconsistencies in accessing timely help echoing Samuel (2022), who highlighted the need for equitable and scalable support systems in remote education programs.

CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings indicated that SNHU maintains strong engagement practices by involving stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving efforts. The processes were perceived as transparent and inclusive, which contributes positively to institutional trust and ownership. Nonetheless, some stakeholders reported limited access to support services, reflecting inconsistencies in engagement across different groups. This points to the importance of enhancing the inclusivity of support mechanisms to ensure all stakeholders benefit equitably from engagement opportunities.

The study concluded that stakeholder engagements significantly influence the performance of the Southern New Hampshire University programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Engagement efforts were

positively received, but some inconsistencies suggest the need for more equitable application.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings on the influence of stakeholder engagement on the performance of the Southern New Hampshire University programme in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the following recommendations are proposed:

While existing stakeholder engagement mechanisms provide a foundation, there is an opportunity to enhance participatory decision-making within the program. SNHU can build on its current efforts by institutionalizing inclusive platforms that actively engage stakeholders in planning and dialogue. Regular mechanisms such as feedback forums, student councils and partner consultative meetings will help foster a culture of inclusivity, shared ownership and collaborative problem-solving.

The study highlights an opportunity to enhance service delivery and program support to further strengthen the performance of the SNHU program. By routinely assessing the quality and accessibility of support services, SNHU can ensure they remain responsive to stakeholder needs. Coupling this with continuous monitoring and strong feedback mechanisms will help identify areas for improvement and drive more effective program performance.

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