

Policy Framework Practices and Refugee Adaptability in Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

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ABSTRACT:- This study explored the effects of policy framework practices on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements while integrating Social Cohesion and Integration Theory and the Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement. Descriptive and correlational research design integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Slovin's formula. Purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting respondents. Data collection was done using questionnaires where 380 filled questionnaires while interview guide was used to collect data from key informants. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help SPSS Version 22 software, and qualitative data were thematically organized. Findings revealed that policy framework practices have a positive significant effects on refugee adaptability ($\beta=0.358$, $p<0.000$). The study concluded that policy framework practices had significant positive effects on refugee adaptability. The study recommended that policymakers and local governance bodies enhance policy frameworks governing refugee integration in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. This could be achieved by conducting regular reviews of existing laws to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing the unique challenges faced by refugees.

Keywords: Policy framework practices, refugee adaptability, host communities, settlements

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, policy frameworks guiding refugee management have evolved to support both humanitarian protection and development objectives. International instruments such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol have established the foundational rights of refugees and the obligations of host states (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 2022). More recently, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) adopted in 2018 emphasized the need for comprehensive refugee responses, highlighting integration, resilience, and burden-sharing as key pillars (UNHCR, 2018). In many countries, policies that promote access to education, healthcare, and work opportunities have been crucial in enhancing refugees' adaptability to host communities. However, in some regions, restrictive policies have marginalized refugees, limiting their socio-economic integration and adaptation prospects (Betts et al., 2020).

In Africa, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa complements the 1951 Convention by broadening the definition of who qualifies as a refugee, recognizing the continent's unique conflict-driven displacement dynamics (African Union, 2019). African states have increasingly emphasized local integration and self-reliance policies, but the success of these frameworks varies widely. Some countries, such as Uganda and Ethiopia, have progressive policies that promote refugee adaptability through land allocation and inclusion in national services (World Bank, 2023), while others maintain encampment policies that restrict refugee movement and economic activities, thereby limiting adaptability (Kamasa, 2022).

East Africa hosts some of the largest refugee populations globally, and countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia have become significant actors in refugee protection. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) piloted in Uganda and Ethiopia seeks to move away from traditional care-and-maintenance models to more

inclusive approaches, promoting education, employment, and integration into host communities (UNHCR, 2021). In Kenya, although refugees are largely confined to camps such as Kakuma and Dadaab, recent policy shifts toward settlement schemes and urban integration have started to emerge (Pavanello, 2023). Nonetheless, challenges such as resource constraints, political instability, and host community tensions continue to influence how effectively refugees adapt across East African host countries (Omata, 2022).

Uganda is often cited as a model for refugee-hosting policies due to its inclusive framework. Under the Refugee Act of 2006 and the Refugee Regulations of 2010, refugees in Uganda are granted rights to work, move freely, access public services, and even own businesses (Government of Uganda, 2006). Uganda's Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2022-2025 further strengthens the country's commitment to integrating refugees into national development plans under the National Development Plan III (UNHCR, 2022). Such progressive policies have generally enhanced refugee adaptability by promoting economic self-reliance, social inclusion, and community participation. However, the increasing refugee influx and limited resources have placed strains on services and infrastructure, sometimes affecting the quality of integration (World Bank, 2023).

Kyaka II and Kyangwali are among Uganda's largest refugee settlements, hosting predominantly Congolese refugees. Both settlements implement Uganda's progressive refugee policies, with efforts made to ensure refugees have access to land, education, health services, and livelihoods (ReliefWeb, 2023). In Kyaka II, programs such as the Livelihoods and Resilience Project by UNHCR and partners focus on skills training, microfinance, and business development to promote refugee self-reliance (UNHCR, 2023). Similarly, in Kyangwali, initiatives led by organizations like World Vision and the Danish Refugee Council provide support for agricultural production, vocational skills training, and social cohesion activities (World Vision Uganda, 2024). Despite these efforts, challenges like land shortages, competition for natural resources, and periodic tensions between refugees and host communities remain significant barriers to full adaptability (Betts et al., 2020; ReliefWeb, 2023). Therefore, there was need to explore the effect of policy framework practices and refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements.

Statement of the problem

Ideally, effective policy framework practices in refugee-hosting countries should facilitate the smooth adaptability of refugees into host communities by ensuring access to essential services such as education, healthcare, shelter, and livelihoods, while also promoting peaceful coexistence and socio-economic integration. Uganda has received international recognition for its progressive refugee policies under the Refugee Act of 2006 and Refugee Regulations of 2010, which grant refugees the right to work, move freely, own property, and access public services (Government of Uganda, 2006; UNHCR, 2023). In principle, these frameworks are designed to enhance refugee self-reliance and integration, particularly in settlements such as Kyaka II and Kyangwali, where thousands of Congolese and other refugees are hosted. However, the adaptability of refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali remains constrained despite the enabling policies. The growing refugee population, which exceeds 130,000 across both settlements as of 2024 (UNHCR, 2024), has put immense pressure on land, water, education, health facilities, and job opportunities. Many refugees still face inadequate access to basic services, limited livelihood options, and social tensions with host communities over scarce resources (ReliefWeb, 2023; World Vision Uganda, 2024). The problem is compounded by insufficient funding for implementing the Refugee Response Plan, delays in service delivery, and the gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities. This has led to high dependency ratios, low levels of self-reliance among refugees, and occasional conflicts with host populations.

Efforts have been made by the Ugandan government and development partners to address these challenges through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which promotes inclusive service delivery, development-based responses, and community resilience programs (UNHCR, 2022). Specific interventions in Kyaka II and Kyangwali have included skills training, small business support, peacebuilding initiatives, and infrastructure development (World Bank, 2023). However, persistent issues such as overcrowding, poor infrastructure, underfunding, and limited participation of refugees in decision-making still undermine their adaptability and long-term integration. If these gaps remain unaddressed, there is a risk of increasing vulnerability among refugees, rising tensions with host communities, and the reversal of Uganda's achievements as a model refugee-hosting nation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to examine and strengthen the implementation of policy framework practices to ensure they translate into meaningful change at the grassroots level in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To examine how the policy framework practices affect refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

Research hypothesis

Policy framework practices have no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This research was underpinned by two theories explained here under;
The study was underpinned by two theories: first, Social Cohesion and Integration Theory by Émile Durkheim (1892) and reviewed by David et al., (2016) and The Refugee in Flight theory by Kunz (1973) and modified by Van Hear Bakewell (2018).

Social Cohesion and Integration Theory

Social Cohesion and Integration theory suggests three essential dimensions of social cohesion: (1) social relations, (2) identification with the geographical unit, and (3) orientation towards the common good. (Shared values, inequality, quality of life) are the major tenets of the theory.

Integration theory explores how individuals adopt new cultural norms, learn the language, access education and employment, and engage in the civic and political life of the host society. Modern integration theories often consider the role of discrimination, social inclusion and policies that facilitate or hinder successful integration (Castles de Haas, & Miller, 2014).

Durkheim social integration affirmed that people must rely on others to provide certain things that one alone cannot accomplish, thus the need for interdependence on a larger group is necessary. His published text *"The Division of Labor in Society"*, 1893, discussed the aforementioned concept. In the text, he also discussed how society had changed over time from small-scale groupings to larger and more interdependent with distinct divisions of labor. Thus, the required interdependence and sharing of skills, jobs, among other things is a main influencer in society, since one individual cannot do everything needed to survive. The divisions of labor allow for each person to play their part in the maintenance of society at large according to skill set, need, and ability (Kappa, 2019).

Social cohesion and integration theory brings forth several strengths. First, it emphasizes the building of strong social bonds and shared values, leading to enhanced social stability as individuals feel connected and part of a larger whole, reducing the likelihood of social unrest, conflicts, and divisions. This fosters greater peace and resilience within societies. The theory also highlights the significance of inclusive social policies that promote equal opportunities, social justice, and equitable distribution of resources. By recognizing and addressing the needs of diverse social groups, societies can strive for fairer outcomes, reducing social and economic disparities and fostering a sense of belonging and social integration among marginalized communities. Lastly, the theory acknowledges the importance of social capital, encompassing networks, relationships, and trust among individuals. Strengthened social capital enables cooperation, collaboration, and collective action, providing individuals with better access to resources, support systems, and opportunities, contributing to overall societal well-being.

On the other hand, Critics highlight potential weaknesses of social cohesion and integration theory, notably the risk of exclusion for individuals or groups whose values, beliefs, or identities do not align with dominant social norms. This exclusion perpetuates inequality and marginalization, as those who deviate from the norm may face stigma or limited participation in society.

The social cohesion and integration theory was highly relevant to understanding the dynamics between host communities and refugees, as well as refugee adaptability. It emphasizes the importance of social cohesion, which involves building bonds and connections that foster trust and cooperation within society. Integration requires social connections between refugees and the host community, facilitating mutual understanding and cultural learning. Factors such as welcoming attitudes, co-ethnic communities, and community cooperation through institutions play a role in promoting social cohesion and aiding refugee adaptation. Policies that discourage cohesion or promote segregation hinder integration outcomes (Mupenzi, & Mude, 2022).

The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement

This theory explains the dynamics of refugee movements and the experiences of refugees. According to Kunz, refugees are people who are forced to leave their homes due to persecution, war, or other forms of violence, and seek asylum in another country. Kunz's theory identifies four stages in the process of becoming a refugee: (1) Precipitating Event: This is the event or events that cause a person or group to flee their home country.

The precipitating event maybe a natural disaster, armed conflict, or persecution based on ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs. (2) Flight: This stage involves the physical act of leaving the home country and crossing international borders. During this stage, refugees often face a range of challenges, including lack of resources, danger from armed conflict, and the risk of exploitation by smugglers or traffickers. (3) Asylum: This stage involves seeking protection from another country. Refugees may apply for asylum in the country where they first arrive or in a country where they have family or other connections.

During this stage, refugees may also face legal challenges and discrimination. (4) Resettlement: This stage involves finding a new home in a third country. Resettlement can be a long and difficult process that involves extensive background checks and interviews. Once resettled, refugees may face challenges in adapting to their new country and culture. Kunz proposed that refugees experience varying degrees of "displacement" or deterritorialization from their original home as they flee conflict or persecution. The further removed refugees are from their place of origin through distance or loss of social and cultural connections, the more challenging re-rooting becomes in a new location.

When refugees first arrive in a host community, Kunz's theory suggests they are in a state of liminal transition, detached from former identities and support systems but not yet integrated into the new environment. This period of ambiguous existence and uncertainty contributes to heightened vulnerability. If host societies and institutions facilitate meaningful involvement, employment and social belonging for displaced people, they can more effectively overcome displacement and re-establish sociocultural foundations. Without assistance in this process, refugees may struggle to transition out of transitory states of uprootedness (*Phases of migration*. In *Essentials of Migration Management 2.0*. Retrieved March 30, 2025, from <https://emm.iom.int/handbooks/global-context-international-migration/phases-migration-0emm.iom.int>)

The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement" presents both strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths is its focus on understanding the dynamics of displacement and the different forms it can take.

However, a weakness of this theory is its potential limitation in addressing the complex social, political, and economic factors that contribute to displacement and refugee experiences. The focus on kinetic models and forms of displacement may overlook the underlying causes and systemic issues that force individuals to flee their homes. Furthermore, the theory does not adequately capture the long-term consequences and challenges faced by refugees in their new host environments, such as integration, access to resources, and social cohesion.

Kunz's theoretical framework is well-suited for the study of policy framework practices and refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The theory offers valuable insights into the dynamics of displacement, providing a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by refugees during their journey. By examining the different forms of displacement, the theory can shed light on the specific circumstances of the refugees in these settlements. Furthermore, the focus on kinetic models allows for an exploration of the factors that influence refugee movements and their impact on adaptability in the host communities.

Thus, this theory provides a strong foundation for examining the complex relationship between host communities and refugees in the context of Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of displacement and its implications for adaptability. Hence, the theoretical framework employed in this study aligns effectively with the research objective, which seeks to examine the effect of policy framework practices and refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

Policy framework practices and refugee adaptability in host communities

Policy framework practices establish structured guidelines that facilitate the integration of refugees into their new environments, promoting social cohesion and mutual understanding. By addressing key areas such as access to education, employment, healthcare, and legal rights, effective policies empower refugees to rebuild their

lives and contribute positively to the host community. Furthermore, inclusive practices foster resilience and adaptability among refugees, enabling them to navigate cultural differences and develop essential skills (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2023).

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2022) examined the impact of the policy framework on refugee adaptability in host communities focusing on the experiences of refugees in Russia. The findings revealed that refugees in Russia often face barriers in accessing essential services and economic opportunities due to restrictive policies and administrative hurdles. For example, limitations on refugees' freedom of movement, the requirement to register at a specific address, and challenges in obtaining work permits all hindered their self-reliance and integration into host communities. Additionally, the report highlighted inconsistencies in the application of asylum laws and procedures, leading to uncertainty and insecurity among refugee populations. However, this study suffers from a contextual gap, as it was conducted in a developed country where refugee policies may be more robust and effectively enforced, contrasting sharply with the challenges faced in developing countries like Uganda, where systemic issues and resource constraints can significantly impede refugee adaptability and integration. Therefore, the current study was conducted on policy framework and refugee adaptability at Kyaka I and Kyangwali settlements to fill the gap.

Research by Hainmueller et al., (2016) demonstrates that anti-discrimination policies and the level of social inclusion experienced by refugees are closely linked to the host country's legal and policy framework. Discriminatory practices can hinder social adaptability. However, this study did not mention other factors that hinder adaptability such as differences in language and cultural norms between the refugee population and host community that can impede communication, understanding and social interaction. Furthermore, Schweitzer et al. (2016) emphasize the role of host countries' policies in providing access to mental health services, which significantly impacts the psychological well-being and adaptability of refugees.

Research by Czaika and De Haas (2014) explores regional disparities in refugee integration policies, shedding light on the diverse global landscape. The adaptability of refugees within host communities is significantly influenced by the legal and policy frameworks established by host countries. These frameworks dictate refugees' legal status, economic opportunities, social inclusion, and psychological well-being. Understanding the global perspective on this issue is essential for policymakers and researchers to develop more effective strategies for promoting the successful integration of refugees into their host communities. The impact of policy frameworks on fostering host-refugee relations in Africa has been a subject of increasing scholarly attention. Researchers have explored the role of legal and policy frameworks in shaping the dynamics between host communities and refugees, examining their influence on interaction, social cohesion and integration. However, Czaika and De Haas (2014) did not sufficiently examine how framework impacts vary within individual settlement contexts. For example, the effects of policies may play out very differently depending on factors like rural/urban location, socio-economic conditions, cultural diversity, and resource availability in specific communities hosting refugees. Therefore, the current study was conducted to provide an in-depth analysis of framework of the effect of these frameworks on refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements to help identify more targeted best practices and recommendations for tailoring integration approaches to distinct local circumstances.

Van Houte and Bash (2018) conducted a study in the Netherlands, highlighting how legal and extra-legal practices of asylum seekers are influenced by the existing legal framework. They found that legal frameworks can shape the strategies and practices of refugees, which, in turn, affect their relations with host communities. The spatial dynamics of refugee encampments have also been examined in relation to host-refugee relations. Furthermore, Isakjee and Koser (2018) investigated the partialities of refugee encampments and their relationship with host communities. They emphasized the significance of legal and policy frameworks in determining the physical proximity and interaction between refugees and host populations, which can have implications for the nature of their relations. However, the above studies did not show how these factors interact to influence long-term integration and adaptation outcomes for refugees within host communities which were addressed in this study.

Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) critiqued the settlement-based assistance policy in Uganda for fostering ethnic clustering among refugees, thereby limiting their interaction with local communities and reinforcing social segregation. This aligns with the notion that while laws may exist to promote integration, their practical application can lead to unintended consequences, such as discrimination and marginalization. In contrast, some studies suggest that integration policies can be effective when they are inclusive and consider the unique needs of refugees. For

instance, the work of Bacishoga et al., (2016). This indicates that the context and implementation of policies play a critical role in determining their effectiveness. Furthermore, while many refugees perceive the laws as beneficial, there remains a substantial minority who feel that these policies do not adequately support their integration and acceptance in the host communities (Hynie, 2018).

Conversely, some studies present a more critical view of integration policies. For example, Tulibaleka et al., (2022) argue that restrictive policies often hinder the integration of refugees, leading to challenges that can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and marginalization (Tulibaleka et al., 2022). This perspective resonates with the findings from Kyaka II and Kyangwali, where a significant minority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of existing laws. Furthermore, Riaz and Hilbig's research indicates that discriminatory policies can negatively impact the psychological integration of refugees, suggesting that the perception of being unwelcome can undermine the positive effects of legal frameworks (Riaz & Hilbig, 2022). This highlights the need for policies that not only exist but also actively promote inclusivity and acceptance within host communities. Nevertheless, existing literature does not fully address how settlement-based assistance policies influence long-term refugee adaptability and socio-economic outcomes in Uganda. While Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) highlights ethnic clustering, there is a gap in understanding how such policies shape intergroup relations and sustainable integration. This study sought to bridge that gap by examining the broader implications of settlement-based policies on refugee adaptability and social inclusion.

Zetter (2018) emphasizes the discrepancies between policy frameworks and the lived experiences of refugees. However, contrasting views can be found in the work of current authors, such as Khosravi (2020), who argue that existing laws do provide a robust framework for refugee protection, particularly in regions with strong institutional support. Khosravi's findings suggest that with proper enforcement and advocacy, the laws can be effective in protecting refugees. This disagreement highlights the ongoing debate within the field regarding the actual efficacy of legal protections versus the perceptions of those they are intended to safeguard.

Moyo et al. (2021) highlight that Uganda's progressive refugee policies, which guarantee access to healthcare and education, contribute to a sense of security among refugees. This suggests a broader consensus in the literature regarding the positive impact of legal frameworks on refugee safety. However, Mandre et al. (2022) states that despite the overall positive perceptions of safety, there are underlying issues related to resource allocation and service delivery that can affect refugees' feelings of security. This indicates that while laws may exist to protect refugees, their implementation and the realities on the ground can lead to feelings of insecurity among some individuals. However, existing studies recognize legal frameworks in refugee protection, but a gap remains between policy intent and lived experiences. Therefore, further research was needed to examine policy frameworks beyond legal provisions to ascertain how it influences refugee adaptability.

Moyo et al. (2021) states that Uganda's refugee policy is widely recognized for its progressive nature, particularly in granting refugees access to essential services such as healthcare and education. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of security among refugee populations. For instance, refugees in Uganda have the freedom to move, seek employment, and utilize public services, which significantly contributes to their well-being and integration into society. However, challenges persist, including resource constraints and the need for sustainable support to maintain these services. Continuous international assistance and effective policy implementation are crucial to uphold and enhance the positive impacts of Uganda's refugee policies.

Furthermore, as much as the existing literature recognizes the importance of inclusive and context-specific policies, studies such as those by Fiddian-Qasimiyeh (2016) and Naujoks (2012) primarily address broader global frameworks without delving into the local realities that shape interactions between refugees and host communities in Uganda. While some researchers like Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) critique the unintended consequences of existing policies, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis focused on the socio-political and economic challenges specific to these settlements.

The study conducted by Bacishoga et al. (2016) focused on the experiences of refugees in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda. The methodology employed in this research included a mixed-methods approach. Surveys were administered to a diverse sample of refugees to gather quantitative data on their access to services, employment opportunities and perceptions of integration. The study highlighted that the lack of tailored support services—such as vocational training, language classes, and mental health resources—exacerbated feelings of marginalization, thereby limiting refugees' ability to fully participate and integrate into the social and economic fabric of their host environments. Nevertheless, this study did not examine policy frameworks and its influence on refugee adaptability which formed the essence of this study.

Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) examined Uganda's settlement-based assistance policy and its impact on ethnic clustering among refugees. The study, conducted in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, used qualitative methods, including interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that while Uganda's policies aim to promote integration, their implementation often leads to unintended discrimination and marginalization. Ethnic clustering was found to limit refugee-host community interaction, reinforcing social divides. The study critiques the effectiveness of integration policies, highlighting their complex real-world impacts. Furthermore, Bacishoga et al. (2016) studied South Africa's refugee integration policy, which emphasizes urban dispersal over camps. The research, conducted in various urban settings, used mixed methods, including surveys and interviews. Findings showed that urban dispersal promotes better integration, fostering economic participation and social interaction. The study highlights how policy context and implementation shape integration outcomes. It underscores the role of inclusive policies in promoting refugee coexistence within host communities.

More still, Tulibaleka et al. (2022) examined the impact of restrictive policies on refugee integration in Uganda, using qualitative methods. The study found that such policies exacerbate exclusion, limiting access to services and economic opportunities. This reinforces social divides and a sense of isolation among refugees. The research highlights the need for inclusive policies to support meaningful integration and positive host-community relations. However, the above studies have conceptual gap because they did not show how different policy frameworks and their implementations can lead to varying integration experiences and social dynamics among refugees in the context of Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements which this study aimed to address.

Khosravi (2020) examined the effectiveness of policies aimed at protecting refugees in Iran, particularly in areas with strong institutional support. Using a qualitative approach, the study involved interviews with policymakers, legal experts, and refugees to evaluate the perceived impact of these legal frameworks. The findings revealed that while the policies offer a solid foundation for refugee rights, their success depends on effective enforcement and advocacy. The study also highlights a key debate regarding the gap between the intended protections of these policies and how refugees actually experience them. Khosravi emphasizes that having comprehensive legal frameworks is not enough; they must be properly implemented and made accessible to those who need them.

Salinas et al. (2021) explored barriers refugees face in accessing healthcare, highlighting a lack of awareness about their rights. The study was conducted in the urban setting of Los Angeles, California, and utilized a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews. Participants included refugees, healthcare providers, and community advocates. Findings showed that many refugees were unaware of their entitlements, leading to missed healthcare opportunities and poorer health outcomes. The study emphasizes the need for improved education and awareness about healthcare rights, suggesting that targeted outreach and support services are essential for enhancing refugee access to medical care.

Nevertheless, while Khosravi (2020) and Salinas et al. (2021) provide insights into refugee policy effectiveness and healthcare access, they suffer from contextual gap because did not specifically address the adaptability of refugees within the context of Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements in western Uganda. The existing research focuses on legal protections and healthcare awareness in different geopolitical contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Uganda's policy framework influences refugee adaptability in these settlements. There was a need for context-specific research assessing how policy implementation affects refugees' socio-economic integration and access to essential services. Therefore, this study explored how policy framework affect impact refugee adaptability in Uganda.

Moyo et al. (2021) studied Uganda's progressive refugee policies, which ensure access to healthcare and education, and found that these policies contribute to a sense of security among refugees. Conducted across various settlements in Uganda using a mixed-methods approach, the research involved quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with refugees, community members, and policymakers. The findings highlighted that these legal frameworks enhance access to essential services and foster safety and stability among refugees. In contrast, Tirado et al. (2019) argue that systemic barriers and discrimination can undermine these protective effects, suggesting that without addressing these underlying issues, the perceived safety may be superficial, leaving many refugees vulnerable despite existing laws.

Ager et al. (2017) explored the role of conflict resolution in promoting social cohesion among refugees in Lebanon. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study gathered insights from refugees, local residents, and community leaders. Findings showed that fair grievance mechanisms enhance refugees' sense of belonging and reduce marginalization. The study highlights the importance of conflict resolution in fostering inclusive and stable host communities. Additionally, Schilling et al. (2019) argues that many conflict resolution systems in refugee settings may be underfunded and lack sufficient training for mediators, thereby limiting their accessibility and

effectiveness. This perspective aligns with the concerns expressed by the minority of respondents in the current study, suggesting that while mechanisms exist, their practical application may fall short.

More so, Mehta (2023) offers a differing viewpoint, suggesting that the perceived barriers to conflict resolution are often exaggerated and that existing frameworks are more accessible than many refugees believe. Mehta argues that increased community outreach and awareness can enhance the utilization of these mechanisms. This disagreement highlights the complexity of the issue, where perceptions of accessibility can be influenced by individual experiences and external factors, such as cultural differences and knowledge of available resources. However, the studies focused on Lebanon and general refugee settings, leaving a contextual gap in understanding how conflict resolution mechanisms function in Uganda's unique policy and socio-cultural context. Further research was needed to assess the effectiveness, accessibility, and perception of conflict resolution frameworks among refugees in Uganda.

Khosravi (2020) carried out a study to examine the role of comprehensive policies in enhancing the integration and adaptability of refugees in Germany using qualitative analysis of existing policies. The study emphasizes that supportive policies such as access to education, employment opportunities and legal assistance can significantly improve refugees' ability to adapt to their new environments. Furthermore, Ager (2022) offers a contrasting perspective, arguing that while policy frameworks are important, they are insufficient on their own to explain refugee adaptability. Ager posits that social networks, economic opportunities, and community support systems play critical roles that are often overlooked in models focused primarily on legal frameworks. This perspective suggests that the complexities of refugee adaptability extend beyond policy measures, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach that incorporates various social and economic dimensions.

IV. METHODS

This study employed a pragmatic research philosophy which provided a strong foundation to examine policy framework practices and refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in western Uganda. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design because of its ability to provide insights into potential associations between variables in natural settings. The study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to offer a balanced and holistic perspective, allowing for a more informed and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The study population included refugee populations residing in Kyaka II and Kyangwale settlements of Kyegegwa and Kikube districts, host communities living in the surrounding areas, Humanitarian/ NGO staff, Officials from the Office of the Prime Minister, Local Government host leaders. The total population was 516,023 individuals (UNHCR, 2021), Uganda Refugee Statistics Report April 2024). The study population for refugees at Kyaka II settlement was approximately 133,584 refugees and approximately 128,600 host community members. More so, the study population at Kyangwali settlement consisted of approximately 125,039 refugees residing in 42,428 households.

The sample size of 400 refugees and host communities was selected from the different categories of the population of refugees and host communities of Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements for quantitative data and 23 respondents from Humanitarian/ NGO staff, Officials from the Office of the Prime Minister, Local Government host leaders (both the politicians and civil servants) were used for interviews. The key informants were expected to have vast knowledge and provided vital information about policy framework practices and how they affect refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Western Uganda. The sample size of 400 was determined using the formula developed by Sloven (1960). That is, $n = N/(1+Ne^2)$. From the formula, n = sample of respondents needed for this study, N = study population and e = level of precision (0.05). Slovin's formula was preferred because the population under study was sufficiently large and the researcher lacked adequate information about the distribution of behavior within the population to determine the appropriate sample size by other means.

$$n = N/(1+Ne^2)$$

- $n = 516,023 / (1+516,023 (0.05^2))$
- $n = 516,023 / (1+516,023 (0.0025))$
- $n = 516,023 / (1+1290.0575)$ $n = 516,023 / (1291.0575)$
- $n = 400$ respondents

The total sample size of respondents for the two selected refugee settlements was 400. However, the researcher further derived the sample size for each refugee settlement from which data was collected as follows;

For Kyaka II refugee settlement, $n = \frac{262,184}{516,023} \times 400 = 203$ respondents

For Kyangwale settlement, $n = \frac{253,839}{516023} \times 400 = 197$ respondents

Stratified sampling was employed to ensure that the sample includes participants from different categories of refugees, host community populations, humanitarian/NGOs, staff from Office of the Prime Minister, Local Government Political leaders, and Head of Local Government Civil Servants. This approach was used because it allowed the researcher to capture the in-depth differences in experiences, perceptions, and integration outcomes across diverse subgroups which was crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics underlying refugee-host communities' relations and refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwale refugee settlements.

Simple random sampling was used to select respondents for quantitative data where a comprehensive list of all the refugee and host community members in Kyaka II and Kyangwale settlements were obtained from camp commandant for refugees and local leaders for host communities and then a subset of participants from the lists were selected by the researcher resulting into the selection of 203 refugees and 195 host community members making 400 respondents who were given questionnaires to provide quantitative data. This sampling technique was used because it ensured that each individual had an equal probability of being included in the study which strengthened the generalizability of the findings.

Furthermore, purposive sampling was used and this relied on the judgment of the researcher to choose individuals who are considered to be most representative of the population under study or who can provide the richest, most relevant data. The researcher used purposive sampling to select ten (10) humanitarian/NGOs staff, two (2) Local Government Political Leaders, five (5) Staff from Office of the Prime Minister and six (6) local government civil servants and these responded to interview questions that were set on the interview guide. The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22) for data analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations, to categorize and interpret the findings. Additionally, inferential statistics, including simple regression analyses was employed to test the hypothesis.

Qualitative data were organized and categorized into various themes based on an interview guide after which the responses were coded and themes were developed for further analysis and were presented as verbatim statements as provided by the key informants.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Response Rate

Table 4.1 highlights a response rate that is crucial for interpreting the study's findings and assessing their applicability to the larger population from which the sample was taken.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Instruments	Sample Size	Percentage response rate
Questionnaires returned	380	95
Un returned questionnaires	20	5
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study distributed questionnaires to a sample of 400 participants across two refugee settlements of Kyaka II and Kyangwali. Out of these, 380 completed questionnaires were returned, achieving a notably high response rate of 95%, while only 5% (20 questionnaires) remained unreturned. This strong response rate suggests that participants were both interested in the topic of refugee adaptability and host community relationships and found the questionnaire clear and accessible. The high level of engagement implies that the findings have strong credibility and are likely to be broadly representative of the sample population enhancing the generalizability of the results.

Bio-Data of Respondents

The bio-data analysis of respondents in Table 4.2 provides essential context for understanding the demographic characteristics of participants, revealing insights into how these factors may influence their perceptions on refugee integration.

Table 4.2: Bio-Data of Respondents

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	175	46.0
	Female	205	54.0
	Total	380	100
Age	20-29	57	15.0
	30-39	142	37.4
	40-49	106	27.9
	50+	75	19.7
	Total	380	100
Marital status	Single	64	16.8
	Married	237	62.4
	Widow	46	12.1
	Widower	33	8.7
Education	Total	380	100
	None	55	14.5
	Primary	79	20.8
	Secondary	108	28.4
	Certificate	36	9.5
	Diploma	72	18.9
	Bachelors	30	7.9
	Masters	00	0.0
Duration in the refugee	Less than 1 year	60	15.8
	1-3years	173	45.5
	4-6 years	98	25.8
	Above 6 years	49	12.9
	Total	380	100

Source: Primary data (2024)

The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with females slightly outnumbering males at 54% to 46% respectively. This balance between male and female respondents helps ensure diverse perspectives across genders on community integration and adaptability issues.

The age range shows that the majority of respondents were aged 30-39 (37.4%), followed by those aged 40-49 (27.9%) and 50+ (19.7%). Only 15% were younger adults (20-29 years). This predominance of mature adults suggests that responses are likely informed by significant life experience, particularly in community interactions and views on refugee issues.

In terms of marital status, over 60% of respondents were married, with smaller proportions being single (16.8%), widowed (12.1%), or widowers (8.7%). The higher representation of married individuals reflects stable family structures, likely impacting views on integration and community support for refugees.

The educational background of participants varied widely, with most having at least some formal education. Secondary education was the most common (28.4%), followed by primary education (20.8%) and diplomas (18.9%). A smaller segment had bachelor's degrees (7.9%), and no respondents had attained a master's degree. This spread of education levels captures insights across a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, suggesting that the data reflect a broad cross-section of community perspectives on refugees.

Regarding duration in the settlement, nearly half (45.5%) of respondents had been in the area for 1-3 years, and another 25.8% for 4-6 years. Fewer respondents had been in the area for less than 1 year (15.8%) or over 6 years (12.9%). This pattern indicates that most respondents were well acquainted with the area and the refugee population, providing insights shaped by both initial impressions and longer-term experiences with integration in the community.

The finding indicates varied demographic characteristics of the sample enhance the credibility of the findings, capturing viewpoints across different gender, age, marital, educational, and residency backgrounds, all of which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of community attitudes toward refugee integration.

Findings on effects of policy framework practices on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements in Uganda

The study examined the effects of policy framework on refugee adaptability within host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda. Respondents were required to rate their level of agreement on a five likert scale of strongly agree, agree neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations were used and the findings were presented as follows;

Table 4.3: Descriptive analysis on policy framework practices for refugees

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std
The policies in place help refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements to fit in and become part of the local communities.	100 (26.3%)	140 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	76 (15.8%)	64 (11.6%)	3.36	1.57
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements believe that the current policies are helpful in making them feel like they belong and are accepted by the local communities.	105 (27.6%)	155 (40.8%)	0 (0.0%)	68 (17.9%)	52 (13.7%)	3.55	1.40
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements know and understand their rights under the policies	125 (32.9%)	160 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	55 (14.5%)	40 (10.5%)	3.72	1.34
There are enough policies to protect refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements from discrimination and exploitation.	100 (26.3%)	125 (32.9%)	0 (0.0%)	85 (22.4%)	70 (18.4%)	3.26	1.51
There are adequate measures in the policy framework to prevent and address security threats that impact refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.	117 (30.8%)	100 (26.3%)	0 (0.0%)	93 (24.5%)	70 (18.4%)	3.26	1.55
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements believe that the existing policies effectively safeguard and promote their human rights.	102 (26.8%)	105 (27.6%)	0 (0.0%)	85 (22.4%)	88 (23.2%)	3.13	1.58
The existing refugee policies effectively meet the specific requirements and difficulties faced by refugees in the host communities of Kyaka II and Kyangwali	100 (26.3%)	140 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	76 (15.8%)	64 (11.6%)	3.36	1.47

settlements							
The current policies create a feeling of safety and protection for both refugees and members of the host community in Kyaka II and Kyangwali camps	105(27.6%)	155 (40.8%)	0 (0.0%)	58 (15.3%)	52 (13.7%)	3.55	1.40
The policy measures actively encourage positive relationships and collaboration between host communities and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements	125 (32.9%)	160 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	55 (14.5%)	40 (10.5%)	3.72	1.34
There are easily accessible ways for resolving conflicts between refugees and host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements	100 (26.3%)	125 (32.9%)	0 (0.0%)	85 (22.4%)	70 (18.4%)	3.26	1.51
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements believe that the existing policies make it easier for them to become part of the host community by offering pathways to citizenship	117 (30.8%)	100 (26.3%)	0 (0.0%)	93 (24.5%)	70 (18.4%)	3.26	1.55

Key: n=380, SA=Strongly Agree, A=agree, NS=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, M=Mean, Std. Dev=Standard deviation

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study findings in Table 4.3 regarding whether the policies in place help refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements to fit in and become part of the local communities revealed that 26.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42.1% agreed, 15.8% disagreed and 11.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.36 suggests most respondents were in agreement with the statement, while the standard deviation of 1.57 indicates a relatively wide range of opinions among the respondents, reflecting variability in perceptions. The findings imply that while many see the policies as beneficial, a notable minority did not share this view, suggesting potential areas for improvement in the integration policies or their implementation.

The study findings in Table 4.3 indicated that the refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have a moderately positive view of whether the current policies are helpful in making them feel like they belong and are accepted by the local communities. A substantial majority of respondents, 105(27.6%) strongly agreed and 155 (40.8%) agreed, no respondents selected "Neutral" and the remaining responses were split between "Disagree" at 58(17.9%) and "Strongly disagree" at 52(13.7%) (Mean=3.55, standard deviation =1.40. While most refugees felt the policies helped them integrate to some extent, there were those who disagreed that the policies effectively made them feel accepted members of the host communities. The study findings suggest the policies have a moderately positive effect on integration and belonging according to the viewpoints of refugees, but there may still be room for improvement to more fully meet this objective.

A key informant was asked to explain the existing policies, both local and external that support refugees in adapting to the host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and in agreement with quantitative findings, this is what was reported;

I know many policies but the ones I can talk about for Uganda's case are Uganda's Refugee Act of 2006 and the Refugee Regulations of 2010, which grant refugees rights to work, move freely, and access social services. Internationally, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Global Compact on Refugees promote integration and self-reliance (Key Informant (2) at Kyangwali settlement, 2024).

A key participant from Kyaka II was asked whether the policy frameworks affected the ability of refugees to adapt in Kyaka II settlements

An interviewee acknowledged that these policies have significantly promoted refugee adaptability in Kyaka II settlements. He noted that granting refugees the right to work has enabled many to start businesses and secure employment, improving their livelihoods. Freedom of movement has allowed them to seek better opportunities and integrate with host communities. Access to social services, including education and healthcare, has enhanced their well-being and self-reliance. However, he pointed out challenges such as limited resources and competition for jobs, which sometimes hinder full integration (Key Informant (1) at Kyaka II settlement, 2024).

On the same note, a key informant from Kyangwali reported that refugee policies do not easily address refugee adaptability because host communities are not happy with the refugees because of the competition for resources they created. The policies benefit only refugees at the expense of host communities and I see danger in future if the host communities are not given the same benefits as refugees (Key Informant (3) at Kyangwali settlement, 2024).

The study findings indicated that the majority of refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements were aware of and understood their rights under the policies, with 42.1% agreeing and 32.9% strongly agreeing while 14.5% disagreed and 10.5% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.72 suggests a general agreement among respondents, but the standard deviation of 1.34 indicates a moderate level of variability in responses, suggesting that while many understand their rights, there is still a significant portion that did not, as reflected by the distribution of responses.

From Table 4.3, the study findings on the statement that there are enough policies to protect refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements from discrimination and exploitation revealed that 26.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 2.9% agreed, 22.4% disagreed, 18.4% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 1.51. This implies the policies did offer some success in guarding against discrimination and exploitation according to many refugees, yet for others important gaps may still exist leaving them feeling vulnerable.

The study findings in Table 4.3 suggest a mixed perception among refugees regarding the adequacy of policy measures to address security threats in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. While 30.8% strongly agree (SA) and 26.3% agree (A) that the measures are adequate, a notable proportion of respondents disagree (24.5%) or strongly disagree (18.4%) with this assessment. The mean score of 3.26 reflects a general, but not strong, agreement on the adequacy of these measures. The standard deviation of 1.55 indicates a high degree of variability in responses, suggesting diverse opinions among the refugees about the effectiveness of the current policy framework in ensuring their security.

The study findings in Table 4.3 showed a divided opinion among respondents regarding the effectiveness of existing policies in safeguarding and promoting their human rights. With 26.8% strongly agreeing and 27.6% agreeing, there is a significant portion who believed the policies were effective. However, a substantial proportion disagreed (22.4%) or strongly disagreed (23.2%). The mean score of 3.13 suggests a neutral to slightly positive perception, while the standard deviation of 1.58 points to considerable variation in opinions, reflecting a range of experiences and beliefs about the effectiveness of human rights protections in their settlements.

Another key informant in Kyaka II refugee settlement, when asked to provide his understanding about the laws and policies that supports refugees adopting in Kyaka II settlements, he said;

These quantitative findings agree with qualitative findings that revealed that at the settlement of Kyaka II, the government allows refugees the freedom of movement and right to work, which are crucial for helping refugees become self-reliant. However, we do not give them maximum freedom to engage in many different activities they want because we regulate them. (Key informant (2) Kyaka II, 2024)

The study findings also sought to understand refugees' perspectives on whether existing policies effectively meet their specific needs and challenges in the host communities and the findings indicated that 26.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 42.1% agreed, 15.8% disagreed and 11.6% strongly disagreed with the statement (Mean=3.36, standard deviation=1.47). This implies that specific demands for refugees were considered to be a satisfactory degree under current policies, though there were some respondents who disagreed.

From Table 4.3, study findings indicated that a significant majority of respondents (68.4%) in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements perceive the current policies as fostering a sense of safety and protection for both refugees and host community members, as evidenced by the combined percentages of those who strongly agree (27.6%) and agree (40.8%). However, the presence of 15.3% of respondents who disagreed and 13.7% who strongly disagreed indicates a notable minority that felt insecure or unprotected under the current policies, highlighting potential areas for improvement (Mean score=3.55, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.40). The implications of these findings suggest that while the majority felt secure, there was a critical need for policymakers and stakeholders to address the concerns of those who disagreed.

The study findings from Table 4.3 revealed that a substantial majority of respondents 32.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42.1% agreed that policy measures actively promote positive relationships and collaboration between host communities and refugees, 14.5% disagreed and 10.5% strongly disagreed (Mean=3.72, Standard deviation=1.34). This implies that these findings underscore the importance of continuing to strengthen policy frameworks that facilitate positive interactions, as they are crucial for social cohesion and mutual support.

Furthermore, the study findings in Table 4.3 regarding the accessibility of conflict resolution mechanisms between refugees and host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements showed that 26.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 32.9% agreed that such mechanisms were easily accessible. However, 22.4% disagreed and 18.4% strongly disagreed with this assessment, suggesting significant concerns about the effectiveness or availability of these conflict resolution methods. The mean score of 3.26 suggests a general but moderate agreement, while the standard deviation of 1.51 indicates a wide range of responses, reflecting differing experiences and perceptions among respondents regarding conflict resolution accessibility.

More so, the study findings indicated that 30.8% of respondents strongly agreed 26.3% agreed, 24.5% disagreed and 18.4% strongly disagreed that current policy frameworks make it easier to gain citizenship and truly join their local communities (Mean=3.26, standard deviation= 1.55). While many refugees believed policies presently facilitate citizenship processes to some degree, there were some respondents who did not feel they effectively promote integration. This suggests that for some, legal routes to citizenship seem attainable, but others perceive barriers that impede full participation in their host societies.

Assessment of refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

Descriptive analysis was also done to examine the indicators of refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and the following were the findings;

Table 4.4: Refugee Adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements actively participate in community activities and events, which helps them feel like they belong and are integrated into the community	70(18.4%)	95(25.0%)	0(0.0%)	120(31.6%)	95(25.0%)	2.80	1.50
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have achieved economic self-sufficiency and reduced tendencies of reliance on aid.	75(19.7%)	82(21.6%)	0(0.0%)	125(32.9%)	98(25.8%)	2.77	1.52
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have the same educational opportunities for both	124(32.6%)	158(41.6%)	0(0.0%)	52(13.7%)	46(12.1%)	3.69	1.37

their children and adults as the host community members.							
Refugees have made advancements in learning and becoming proficient in the local language(s) spoken in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements	100(26.3%)	108(28.4%)	0(0.0%)	92(24.2%)	80(21.1%)	3.15	1.08
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have access to sufficient healthcare services and facilities, which contribute to their overall health and well-being	128(33.7%)	160(42.0%)	0(0.0%)	50(13.0%)	42(6.3%)	3.74	0.92
Refugees at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlement are aware and have equal access to legal and civil rights as the host community members.	148(38.9%)	160(42.1%)	0(0.0%)	40(10.5%)	32(8.4%)	3.93	0.84
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements can preserve and showcase their cultural traditions, practices and identity.	35(9.2%)	45(11.8%)	0(0.0%)	170(44.7%)	130(34.2%)	2.17	1.08
The host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements play an active role in establishing a safe and secure environment for refugees	70(18.4%)	95(25.0%)	(0.0%)	120(31.6%)	95(25.0%)	2.80	1.13
Refugees have a flexible environment to carry out their daily activities.	95(25.0%)	120(31.6%)	(0.0%)	95(25.0%)	70(18.4%)	3.20	1.10
Refugees living in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements feel safe and protected in their surroundings	114(30.0%)	138(36.3%)	0(0.0%)	72(18.9%)	56(14.8%)	3.48	1.02

Source: Primary Data, 2024

From Table 4.4, the study results for statement one indicated varying levels of agreement regarding refugees' participation in community activities and events in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. Specifically, 18.4% strongly agreed and 25.0% agreed that such participation helps refugees feel integrated and belong. However, a significant 31.6% disagreed, and another 25.0% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score of 2.80, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.50, suggests a generally neutral to disagreeing stance on the effectiveness of community participation in fostering a sense of belonging. The high standard deviation indicates considerable variability in responses. This implies that while some refugees find community involvement beneficial for integration, a substantial portion felt that these activities were not effective or might not adequately address their needs for belonging and integration.

In Table 4.4, the study findings showed that most respondents either disagreed or were neutral about refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements achieving economic self-sufficiency and reducing reliance on aid, with 125(32.9%) disagreeing and 98(25.8%) strongly disagreeing. There was also a significant proportion who agreed, with 75(19.7%) indicating strongly agree and 82(21.6%) agreeing. However, overall the central tendency was neutral to disagree as indicated by the mean of 2.77. There was also high variability in the responses as shown by the standard deviation of 1.52.

Regarding the third statement that examined perceptions of educational opportunities for refugee and host community members in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, the majority of respondents, 32.6% strongly agreed and 41.6% agreed that refugees and host communities have the same educational opportunities for both children and adults. However, 13.7% disagreed and 12.1% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean response was 3.69 indicating that on average respondents somewhat agreed with the statement, but there was a standard deviation of 1.37 showing some variability in individual responses. This implies that while most people felt refugees and hosts had equal access to education, over a quarter of respondents perceived some level of inequality in educational opportunities between the two groups.

From the study findings in Table 4.4, the results reflect a generally positive view of refugees' progress in learning and becoming proficient in the local languages spoken in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. Precisely, 26.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 28.4% agree that refugees have advanced in language proficiency. In contrast, 24.2% disagreed and 21.1% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score of 3.15 indicated a tendency toward agreement with the notion that refugees are making notable progress in learning local languages, while the standard deviation of 1.08 reveals moderate variability in responses. This suggests that there was a perception of significant improvement in language skills among refugees, though some still feel that progress may not be as substantial or widespread. The data imply that while many refugees are successfully learning the local languages, there may be ongoing challenges for others, highlighting the importance of continued support and resources to enhance language acquisition and integration.

The study results in Table 4.4 revealed a strong positive perception regarding refugees' access to sufficient healthcare services and facilities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. A notable 33.7% strongly agreed and 42.0% agreed that the available healthcare services significantly contributed to their overall health and well-being. In contrast, only 13.0% disagreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score of 3.74 indicated a general agreement that healthcare access was adequate, while the standard deviation of 0.92 reflects relatively low variability in responses. This suggests a consensus that healthcare services in these settlements were generally perceived as sufficient and beneficial for the refugees' health.

Regarding the statement that refugees at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlement are aware and have equal access to legal and civil rights as the host community, the majority of respondents strongly agreed (38.9%) or agreed (42.1%) that refugees are aware of and have equal access to the same legal and civil rights as hosts. However, 10.5% disagreed and 8.4% strongly disagreed. The mean response was 3.93 showing overall agreement with the statement. The lower standard deviation of 0.84 indicates greater consensus in responses compared to the previous statement on education. While most respondents feel refugees have equal legal and civil rights protections as locals, over 18% perceived some level of inequality. This implies that according to survey respondents, refugees have relatively good awareness of and access to their legal and civil rights, but a minority view protections as unequal compared to the host community.

On the statement that refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements can preserve and showcase their cultural traditions, practices and identity, the majority of respondents indicated by 44.7% disagreed and 34.2% strongly disagreed, 9.2% strongly agreed and 11.8% agreed. The mean response of 2.17 indicates that on average respondents disagreed with the statement. The standard deviation of 1.08 shows some variation in individual levels of agreement. This implies that most survey respondents felt refugees have difficulty maintaining their cultural traditions and identity in these settlements.

From the study findings, results showed a mixed perception of the host communities' role in creating a safe and secure environment for refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements with 18.4% of the respondents strongly agreeing and 25.0% agreed that host communities were active in this role, while a significant 31.6% disagreed and another 25.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.80 indicated a general tendency towards disagreement with the statement and the standard deviation of 1.13 reflects moderate variability in responses.

Concerning the item that refugees have a flexible environment to carry out their daily activities, 25% of the respondents strongly agreed and 31.6% agreed, 25% disagreed and 18.4% strongly disagreed. The mean response of 3.20 indicates overall slight agreement with the statement. With a standard deviation of 1.10, views were mixed but clustered around the mean. This implies that while most respondents perceive the environment as reasonably flexible for daily life, over 40% saw some restrictions.

On this statement “Refugees living in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements feel safe and protected in their surroundings”, the results indicated a generally positive perception among refugees regarding their safety and protection in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. Specifically, 30.0% strongly agree and 36.3% agree that they feel safe and protected in their surroundings. However, 18.9% disagree and 14.8% strongly disagree with this sentiment. The mean score of 3.48 suggests a general agreement that refugees feel secure, while the standard deviation of 1.02 points to moderate variability in responses. The study findings imply that while the majority of refugees feel secure, efforts to address the concerns of those who feel unsafe should be prioritized to ensure a uniformly safe environment for all residents.

Hypothesis testing: Policy framework practices has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

The researcher tested the null hypothesis to determine whether policy framework practices has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and the following were the results;

Table 4.5: Regression Results for Policy Framework practices and Refugee Adaptability within Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

Model Summary							
Model		R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error		
1		0.382 ^a	0.146	0.143	0.56366		
ANOVA							
Model			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression		14.793	1	14.793	46.563	0.000
	Residual		86.734	378	0.318		
1	Total		101.527	379			
Coefficients							
Model			Unstand. Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients	T	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)		2.358	0.214		11.007	0.000
	Policy Framework		0.358	0.052	0.382	6.824	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Refugee Adaptability							
b. Predictors: (Constant), Policy Framework							

The study findings in Table 4.5 shows the model summary with R-squared value of 0.146, suggesting that approximately 14.6% of the variation in refugee adaptability can be explained by the policy framework. However, the model did not explain 85.4% of the variation in refugee adaptability, meaning that there are other factors associated with refugee adaptability which were not fitted in the model. The ANOVA results support the model's significance with a p-value less than 0.005, ($F=46.563$, $p<0.000$), indicating strong evidence that the policy framework practices are effective in explaining refugee adaptability.

The beta coefficient for policy framework practices in the model was significant ($\beta = 0.358$, $t = 6.824$, $p < 0.000$) indicating that policy framework significantly influences refugee adaptability, indicating that with one unit improvement in policy framework, refugee adaptability increases by 0.358. This implies that improvements in policy framework can lead to better integration and adaptability of refugees in host communities, suggesting a need for targeted policy reforms to support refugee populations effectively.

Hypothesis decision

From the study findings in Table 4.5, the null hypothesis that policy framework has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Western Uganda was rejected thus suggesting that policy framework significantly and positively affect refugee adaptability in the host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

The rejection of the null hypothesis in Table 4.5 indicates that the policy framework plays a crucial role in enhancing refugee adaptability within host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Western Uganda. This finding underscores the importance of effective policy measures in facilitating the integration of refugees, suggesting that well-structured frameworks can foster positive relationships between refugees and host communities. Consequently, policymakers should prioritize the development and implementation of supportive policy frameworks to improve the social and economic outcomes for refugees, thereby promoting overall community cohesion and resilience.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Effects of Policy Framework on Refugee Adaptability in Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

The study findings regarding the perceptions of policies aiding refugee integration in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements revealed that majority of the respondents agreed as shown by the mean score of 3.36, suggesting a general consensus in favor of policies with the standard deviation of 1.57 highlights a considerable variability in perceptions, pointing to potential shortcomings in the implementation of integration policies.

These study findings disagreed with the study by Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) which critiques the settlement-based assistance policy in Uganda for fostering ethnic clustering among refugees, thereby limiting their interaction with local communities and reinforcing social segregation. This aligns with the notion that while laws may exist to promote integration, their practical application can lead to unintended consequences, such as discrimination and marginalization, which were echoed in the findings from Kyaka II and Kyangwali.

Furthermore, in agreement with the findings regarding the perceptions of policies aiding refugee integration in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, some studies suggest that integration policies can be effective when they are inclusive and consider the unique needs of refugees. For instance, the work of Bacishoga et al. illustrates how South Africa's approach to refugee integration, which encourages dispersal into urban areas rather than confinement in camps, has led to better integration outcomes (Bacishoga et al., 2016). This indicates that the context and implementation of policies play a critical role in determining their effectiveness.

Additionally, these findings partially align with Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892), which emphasizes that well-structured policies can foster unity and stability within societies. The mean score of 3.36 indicates general agreement that policies support refugee integration, aligning with Durkheim's view that institutional frameworks can enhance social cohesion. However, the high standard deviation of 1.57 suggests significant variability in perceptions, highlighting gaps in policy implementation. This divergence implies that while policies exist to promote integration, inconsistencies in enforcement and accessibility may prevent full societal cohesion as envisioned by Durkheim's theory.

The findings indicated that refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements hold a moderately positive view regarding the effectiveness of current policies in fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance within local communities as most of the respondents reported (Mean= 3.55, Standard deviation= 1.40), reflects a generally favorable outlook on policies but also revealed a notable degree of variability in opinions among the respondents. In disagreement with these findings, some studies present a more critical view of integration policies. For example, Tulibaleka et al., (2022) argue that restrictive policies often hinder the integration of refugees, leading to challenges that can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and marginalization (Tulibaleka et al., 2022).

In addition, the findings from Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements support Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892) in several ways. The mean score of 3.55 suggests a moderate level of social bonding, reflecting the theory's emphasis on shared values and mutual trust as foundations for community integration. The standard deviation of 1.40 indicates varying experiences in social adaptation, which corresponds to the theory's recognition that integration occurs at different rates and intensities across population segments. This variability supports the

theory's proposition that social cohesion develops through gradual processes of cultural adaptation and institutional participation, rather than uniform progression. The moderately positive view regarding policy effectiveness suggests partial achievement of what the theory describes as "organic solidarity," where diverse groups maintain distinct identities while developing functional interdependence within the broader community structure. However, the notable variance in responses also highlights potential gaps in achieving the theory's ideal state of complete social integration, possibly indicating areas where policy interventions could be strengthened to better facilitate the integration processes outlined in the original theoretical framework.

The findings from the study indicated that a substantial majority of refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements are aware and understood their legal rights with majority of the respondents agreeing. The mean score of 3.72 suggests a general consensus among respondents regarding their awareness of rights, while the standard deviation of 1.34 indicates a moderate level of variability in responses. The findings disagreed with those of Salinas et al., (2021) who revealed that refugees often face significant barriers in navigating healthcare systems due to a lack of understanding of their rights and available services and this lack of awareness leads to underutilization of essential services, which is critical for the well-being of refugees.

The study findings regarding the adequacy of policies protecting refugees from discrimination and exploitation in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements shows the mean score of 3.26 indicating that most respondents agreed. In line with these findings, Khosravi (2020) argue that existing policies do provide a robust framework for refugee protection, particularly in regions with strong institutional support.

Additionally, the study findings suggest that most respondents agreed that policies adequately protect refugees from discrimination and exploitation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. This aligns with The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement theory (1973), which highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of refugee experiences. The adequacy of these policies can be seen as a crucial factor in stabilizing refugees' movement and ensuring their protection during displacement. While the theory emphasizes movement, these findings suggest that well-implemented policies contribute to a more secure and structured settlement process. However, given the ongoing challenges refugees face, the dynamic aspect of their displacement continues to shape their socio-economic adaptation.

In contrast, Tirado et al. (2019) emphasize that systemic barriers and discrimination can undermine the protective effects of legal frameworks for refugees. They argue that without addressing these underlying issues, the perception of safety and protection may be superficial, and many refugees may continue to experience vulnerabilities that are not adequately addressed by existing laws.

The findings revealed that perceptions of the accessibility of conflict resolution mechanisms between refugees and host communities in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements are mixed as shown by mean score of 3.26, accompanied by a standard deviation of 1.51, suggesting moderate agreement but also highlights significant variability in experiences and perceptions. These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of accessible conflict resolution mechanisms in fostering harmonious relations between refugees and host communities. For example, research by Ager et al. (2017) underscores that effective conflict resolution strategies are crucial for minimizing tensions and promoting social cohesion. Similarly, studies have shown that when refugees feel they have fair avenues to address grievances, it can enhance their sense of belonging and reduce feelings of marginalization.

However, Mehta (2023) offers a differing viewpoint, suggesting that the perceived barriers to conflict resolution are often exaggerated and that existing frameworks are more accessible than many refugees believe. Mehta argues that increased community outreach and awareness can enhance the utilization of these mechanisms. This disagreement highlights the complexity of the issue, where perceptions of accessibility can be influenced by individual experiences and external factors, such as cultural differences and knowledge of available resources. The findings indicate that the policy framework plays a significant role in influencing refugee adaptability, accounting for 14.6% of the variation in this adaptability. The robust statistical significance of the model, as evidenced by the ANOVA results and the beta coefficient, suggests that improvements in legal structures can lead to enhanced integration and adaptability of refugees in host communities.

However, Ager (2022) offers a contrasting perspective, arguing that while policy frameworks are important, they are insufficient on their own to explain refugee adaptability. Ager posits that social networks, economic opportunities, and community support systems play critical roles that are often overlooked in models focused primarily on policy frameworks. This perspective suggests that the complexities of refugee adaptability extend beyond policy measures, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach that incorporates various social and economic dimensions

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Effects of Policy Frameworks on Refugee Adaptability in Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

The study investigated the effects of legal and policy frameworks on refugee adaptability within host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The findings revealed that a majority of respondents perceived existing laws and rules as beneficial for refugee integration. Additionally, respondents expressed a moderately positive view regarding the effectiveness of laws in fostering a sense of belonging. The findings also highlighted that refugees in these settlements were largely aware of their legal rights. Additionally, the adequacy of laws protecting refugees from discrimination was indicated most respondents.

Therefore, the study concluded that policy framework practices significantly affect refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The statistical significance underscored the potential for improvements in policy frameworks to enhance integration outcomes. However, while the findings supported the notion that strong policy frameworks facilitate adaptability, they also highlighted the need for a multi-dimensional approach that considers social networks, economic opportunities and community support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that policymakers and local governance bodies enhance policy frameworks governing refugee integration in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. This could be achieved by conducting regular reviews of existing laws to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing the unique challenges faced by refugees. Collaboration with refugee communities to gather their insights and experiences would be crucial in this process, as it allows for the development of policies that genuinely reflect their needs. Engaging legal aid organizations and NGOs can help ensure that refugees are aware of their rights and that these rights are actively enforced, fostering a sense of belonging and security.

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