

## Socio-Economic Factors and Refugee Adaptability in Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

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**ABSTRACT:** This study assessed the effects of socio-economic factors on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. A descriptive and correlational research design integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted. A sample 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. The study findings revealed that socio-economic factors positively and significantly affect refugee adaptability ( $\beta=0.369$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). The study concluded that socio-economic factors had significant positive effects on refugee adaptability. The study recommended that there is need for targeted initiatives to improve socio-economic conditions for refugees, including developing employment programs that facilitate job access for refugees and providing vocational training that aligns with local market needs. Local governments and NGOs should collaborate to create mentorship programs that connect refugees with established community members, enhancing their employability and integration prospects. Additionally, promoting entrepreneurship among refugees could be a viable strategy, with support in the form of microfinance and business development training.

**KEYWORDS:** Socio-economic factors, refugee adaptability, host communities, settlements

### INTRODUCTION

In developed countries, the issue of refugee adaptability has remained a pressing concern despite the availability of advanced resources and structured support systems. Nations such as Germany, Canada, and Sweden, which host significant refugee populations, have observed persistent challenges regarding the social and economic integration of refugees into host communities. Refugees often face barriers such as language differences, discrimination, limited access to employment opportunities, and difficulties in accessing social services, which impede their full adaptability (Knappert, Kornau, & Figengul, 2020). For example, in Germany, despite numerous integration programs, many refugees continue to experience economic marginalization and social exclusion, leading to longer periods of dependency on welfare (Kosyakova & Brenzel, 2020). Similarly, in Canada, although the government implements settlement programs, socio-economic disparities persist among refugee groups, particularly in securing stable employment (Hou & Bonikowska, 2018).

In Africa, refugee adaptability presents even greater challenges, mainly due to economic constraints, political instability, and weak institutional capacities of host countries. Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa continue to struggle with providing adequate support for refugees, often resulting in competition for scarce resources between refugees and host populations (Betts et al., 2021). The limited infrastructure, high rates of poverty, and occasional xenophobic sentiments exacerbate the difficulties that refugees face in adapting socially and economically. In South Africa, for instance, refugees often experience high levels of unemployment, discrimination, and even violence, all of which undermine their ability to settle successfully in host communities (Crush, Chikanda, & Skinner, 2015).

In East Africa, which hosts one of the largest refugee populations globally, the problem of refugee adaptability is similarly pronounced. Countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania host millions of refugees fleeing conflicts from neighboring states such as South Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, despite Uganda's progressive refugee policies — including the right to work, freedom of movement, and access to social services — refugees still grapple with poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, and integration difficulties (Omata, 2020). In Kenya, refugees in camps like Kakuma and Dadaab remain heavily reliant on humanitarian aid, with minimal chances for sustainable socio-economic independence (Betts et al., 2021).

In Uganda, while the country is often praised for its open-door policy towards refugees, significant socio-economic challenges continue to hinder refugee adaptability. Uganda hosts over 1.5 million refugees, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in

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Africa (UNHCR, 2023). However, many refugees face difficulties such as limited access to quality education, inadequate health services, land scarcity, and competition for employment with host community members. Although Uganda's Refugee Act (2006) provides a legal framework supportive of refugee rights, the practical realities on the ground often fall short due to resource constraints and growing host community fatigue (World Bank, 2021).

In Uganda, the Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements exemplify the socio-economic struggles affecting refugee adaptability. Kyaka II Settlement in Kyegegwa District and Kyangwali Settlement in Kikuube District both host large populations of Congolese, South Sudanese, and Burundian refugees. In these settlements, refugees often live in overcrowded conditions, have limited access to clean water, education, and healthcare, and face significant barriers to engaging in meaningful economic activities (REACH, 2023). Studies indicate that the majority of refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements depend heavily on humanitarian assistance, with insufficient livelihood opportunities to achieve self-reliance (UNHCR, 2023). Furthermore, tensions between refugees and host communities over shared resources, such as land and water, have occasionally led to social friction, further complicating the adaptability process (IRC, 2022). These challenges underscore the critical need to better understand and address the socio-economic factors influencing refugee adaptability in these settings.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Ideally, refugees should smoothly adapt to host communities through access to stable livelihoods, education, healthcare, and social integration, contributing positively to local development (UNHCR, 2023). However, in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, refugees face significant socio-economic barriers, including high unemployment rates, limited access to quality services, and social discrimination, hampering their adaptability (ReliefWeb, 2024). Reports indicate that over 65% of refugee households in these settlements live below the poverty line, exacerbating their vulnerability (UNHCR, 2023). Various interventions, such as livelihood support programs by UNHCR and OPM, have aimed to enhance economic resilience, yet challenges like insufficient funding, limited skills training, and resource-based conflicts persist (World Bank, 2024). If these issues are not effectively addressed, the settlements risk worsening poverty, social unrest, and strained relations with host communities (ReliefWeb, 2024). Urgent, sustainable strategies are therefore needed to strengthen refugee adaptability and ensure peaceful co-existence.

### **Objective**

To assess the effects of socio-economic factors on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

### **Hypothesis**

Socio-economic factors have no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

## **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.

Social cohesion and integration theory 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.

### **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 theory helps in understanding the dynamics of displacement and the different forms

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it can take. However, a weakness of the *Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement* 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.

### **Socio-economic factors and refugee adaptability in host communities**

Refugee adaptability is a crucial aspect of successful integration and long-term stability. This literature review focuses on understanding the social, economic, and political factors that shape refugee adaptability, beginning with an examination of developed countries and then shifting the spotlight to Africa, with a specific focus on East Africa and Uganda.

Social factors which entail social support networks play a vital role in facilitating refugee adaptability. In developed countries, community organizations, NGOs, and volunteer groups often provide assistance and help foster social connections. These networks offer language support, cultural orientation, and access to social activities, which promote integration. Recent studies by Smith et al. (2020) and Johnson (2021) highlight the significance of social support networks in enhancing refugee adaptability in developed countries.

Recent studies by Johnson et al. (2020) and Smith (2021) explore the critical role of economic infrastructure in facilitating the integration of refugees in developed countries. Johnson et al. conducted their research in various urban areas across Europe, employing a mixed-methods approach that included surveys and interviews with refugees, local businesses, and policymakers. Their findings indicate that robust economic infrastructure such as access to transportation, housing, and job training programs significantly enhances refugees' ability to integrate into the labor market and society.

Similarly, Smith (2021) focused on case studies in North America, utilizing qualitative interviews and document analysis to assess how economic resources and support systems impact refugee experiences. Both studies highlight that well-developed economic infrastructure not only aids in the immediate settlement of refugees but also contributes to long-term social and economic stability, emphasizing the importance of targeted investments in these areas to improve refugee outcomes. However, the two previous studies were done in developed countries that have availability of economic resources and developed infrastructure for refugees which is not the case with developing countries like Uganda whose economic resources are limited and infrastructure is not developed.

Furthermore, Smith et al. (2020) emphasizes that housing quality significantly impacts adjustment and integration experiences of refugees. Smith et al. noted that favorable housing conditions contribute positively to refugees' mental well-being and social integration. Also, Johnson (2021) argues that such perceptions can often be misleading, highlighting that even when housing is deemed "suitable," it may not meet all refugees' needs—particularly regarding space, privacy, and access to services.

Additionally, Miller and Davis (2022) revealed that adequate infrastructure significantly influences refugees' capacity to adapt and integrate into host communities. Their study emphasized that well-established services not only improve daily living conditions but also foster social cohesion among refugees and local residents. Furthermore, Chen (2023) presents a more critical view, arguing that the mere presence of infrastructure does not guarantee successful adaptation. Chen highlights that factors such as cultural differences, access to employment, and social networks are equally important in the integration process. However, the above researches lack an integrated approach to understanding how housing quality, infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors affect refugee adaptability. While previous studies focus on individual aspects, they do not explore their interactions. This oversight leaves unclear how these elements collectively shape refugees' integration experiences.

Furthermore, Tadesse and Pritchard (2021) highlights that many refugees encounter barriers such as limited job availability, lack of recognition for their skills, and restrictive legal frameworks that hinder their ability to find work. Additionally, Asad and Duygun (2023) argue that while challenges exist, there are opportunities for entrepreneurship among refugees that can be overlooked in traditional assessments of job availability. They emphasize that some refugees have successfully created their own businesses, which can provide viable employment alternatives. This perspective suggests that focusing solely on conventional job options may not fully capture the complexities of refugee employment dynamics and that entrepreneurial initiatives deserve more attention.

Furthermore, Orchardson-Mazrui (2017) explored the socio-economic and political dynamics in Uganda's refugee settlements, particularly focusing on resource conflicts between refugees and host communities. Using ethnographic methods, the study revealed that competition over land and water often leads to political tensions, which negatively impact refugee adaptability. While the study provided valuable insights into the socio-economic roots of these conflicts, it did not examine how socio-economic empowerment programs, such as vocational training or microfinance initiatives, could alleviate these tensions. This gap highlighted the need for research that examined the effect of socio-economic interventions on refugee adaptability in host communities.

Nevertheless, these studies lack exploration into how cultural differences and social networks interact with infrastructure to influence refugees' adaptation and integration. While Miller and Davis (2022) emphasize the importance of infrastructure and Chen (2023) highlights cultural and employment-related factors, there is no explicit examination of how these elements intersect. Additionally, Orchardson-Mazrui's (2017) focus on resource conflicts and strained host-refugee relationships further underscores the need to investigate how cultural and social dynamics mediate the effectiveness of infrastructure in fostering integration. This

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gap suggested a need for research that integrates these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of refugee adaptation.

Namyalo and Nsibambi (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study in Uganda's Nakivale refugee settlement, examining how socio-economic disparities between refugees and host communities influence political tensions and adaptability. Using surveys and interviews, they found that economic competition over resources, such as land and employment, often exacerbates political tensions, hindering refugee integration. However, their study did not deeply explore how political interventions, such as intercultural dialogue could mitigate these tensions, leaving a gap in understanding the role of these dialogues in fostering socio-economic harmony.

Another study by Kiconco and Rutakumwa (2020) focused on the socio-economic challenges faced by refugees in Uganda's urban centers, particularly Kampala. Through qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, they highlighted how limited access to employment and education creates barriers to adaptability, while political factors, such as restrictive urban refugee policies, further marginalize refugees. The study emphasized the need for policy reforms to address these socio-economic barriers but did not investigate the specific mechanisms through which political factors could be leveraged to improve socio-economic conditions for refugees. This gap underscored the need for research that bridges socio-economic challenges with actionable political strategies.

Furthermore, Jones and Smith (2021) conducted a comprehensive study examining the relationship between socio-economic conditions and access to essential services for refugees in various settlement contexts. Their research aimed to identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of healthcare and support systems available to refugee populations. The authors focused on several settlements, analyzing variables such as local governance stability, resource allocation, and community engagement. The findings revealed that stable local governance plays a crucial role in enhancing access to essential services for refugees. When local authorities are effective and responsive, they are better able to allocate resources efficiently, ensuring that healthcare facilities and support systems meet the needs of both refugees and host communities. The study highlighted that well-managed settlements tend to have more robust healthcare infrastructure, including clinics and outreach programs, which directly benefit refugees by improving their overall health outcomes and integration into the local community.

Additionally, Jones and Smith found that community involvement is vital for creating inclusive support systems. Engagement between refugees and host communities fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support, which can enhance the overall effectiveness of service delivery. The authors concluded that positive socio-economic conditions, characterized by stable governance and equitable resource distribution, are essential for improving the quality of life for refugees and facilitating their successful adaptation.

Ahmed and Mazzotta (2020) investigated the impact of socio-economic conditions on refugee integration across various communities. Their mixed-methods research revealed that stable employment and economic resources significantly enhance refugees' adaptability and well-being. The study highlighted the importance of community support networks, which provide practical assistance and foster social connections, contributing to refugees' self-esteem and sense of belonging. Despite the valuable insights provided, the study does not explore the interaction between socio-economic conditions and other factors, such as cultural dynamics and housing quality affect refugee adaptability. This conceptual gap indicated the need for further research that examined how these diverse elements collectively influence refugee adaptability in host communities.

The study by Kalyegira (2020) examined the importance of conducive economic contexts in facilitating the implementation of effective policies that enhance refugees' educational opportunities and vocational training in Uganda using mixed-methods approach. The study assessed the availability and effectiveness of educational programs and vocational training initiatives and the findings indicated that when economic conditions are favorable, there is a greater likelihood of developing policies that support refugees in accessing quality education and skills training, which are crucial for their integration and self-sufficiency.

Contrary, Ager and Strang (2022) argues that while the economic situation may provide a framework for skill development, it often falls short in practice due to insufficient funding and resource allocation. They contend that policies may exist on paper, but the actual implementation can be hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of local support. This disagreement highlights the complexities of the political context, suggesting that while perceptions may be generally positive, real-world barriers can impede effective access to skill development and education.

Lee (2022) argued that while socio-economic factors are indeed important, they do not capture the full scope of what influences refugee adaptability. Lee's research emphasized the significance of psychological and emotional dimensions, particularly the impact of trauma and mental health on refugees' experiences. Through a series of case studies, Lee highlighted that many refugees face profound psychological challenges stemming from their pre-migration experiences, such as conflict, displacement, and loss. These emotional burdens can hinder their ability to fully engage with socio-economic opportunities, even when they are available.

Studies by Kato and Nyamurungi (2021) and Rwomushana et al. (2022) shed light on the socio-economic factors affecting refugee integration in African countries as limited resources, socio-economic challenges, and political factors which can shape refugee adaptability. Rwomushana continues to say that by understanding these factors, policymakers can develop targeted interventions to enhance refugee adaptability and foster their successful integration. However, the studies by Kato and Nyamurungi (2021) and Rwomushana et al. (2022) explore other factors such as have enough job options that cover a range of fields and industries and involvement in policy making which became the basis for this study.

Furthermore, Nsubuga-Kyobe et al. (2021) and Kyomuhendo et al. (2022) examines the political factors contributing to refugee

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adaptability in Uganda, highlighting the role of inclusive policies and refugee-host community relations. This literature review underscores the multifaceted nature of social, economic, and political factors influencing refugee adaptability. In developed countries, social support networks, inclusive policies, and economic opportunities contribute to integration.

Mushi and Mkenda (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania, examining how socio-economic disparities between refugees and host communities influence political tensions and refugee integration. Through surveys and interviews, they found that competition over resources, such as agricultural land and water, often exacerbates political tensions, limiting refugees' ability to adapt. However, the study did not explore how factors such as sharing these resources could promote refugee adaptability which this study is set to address.

Similarly, Kweka and Mushi (2021) focused on the socio-economic challenges faced by refugees in Dar es Salaam using qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. The findings highlighted how limited access to employment and education creates barriers to adaptability. However, this study suffered from methodological gap because it focused on qualitative data and ignored quantitative data that provides measurable, objective, and statistically analyzable evidence that enhances the credibility and generalizability of findings.

More still, Rutinwa and Kamanga (2019) explored the socio-economic and political dynamics in Tanzania's refugee settlements, particularly focusing on the impact of resource conflicts on refugee-host community relations. Using ethnographic methods, the study revealed that competition over land and water often leads to political tensions, which negatively impact refugee adaptability. While the study provided valuable insights into the socio-economic roots of these conflicts, it did not examine how socio-economic empowerment programs could help to enhance refugee adaptability in host communities which was the essence of this study.

Altındag and Rozo (2018) investigate the effects of different accommodation modes for refugees, specifically comparing encampment and dispersed populations, with a focus on rural refugee camps in Turkey. The study employs a mixed-methods approach and assessed economic impacts—such as labor market competition and resource availability and the findings revealed that while these camps initially facilitate the rapid provision of essential services like healthcare and education, they ultimately create significant barriers to economic and social integration. Over time, local communities experience adverse effects, including increased competition for jobs, rising food prices, and strained resources, highlighting the need for policies that promote sustainable integration beyond immediate relief efforts.

However, the study identifies empirical and conceptual gaps. It offers insights into the economic impacts of refugee camps but lacks a longitudinal analysis of long-term effects on refugees and host communities. Additionally, it does not thoroughly address the psychological and social dimensions of integration, such as cultural differences. Conceptually, the research could benefit from examining how factors like government policies and local attitudes interact with accommodation modes. This indicates a need for a broader framework to better understand the complexities of refugee accommodation and integration.

### METHODS

This research utilized a pragmatic approach to investigate the socio-economic factors and refugee adaptability in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in western Uganda. A descriptive and correlational research design was applied to explore potential relationships between variables in their natural contexts. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. The study focused on the refugee populations in Kyaka II and Kyangwali, which included approximately 133,584 refugees and 128,600 host community members in Kyaka II, alongside around 125,039 refugees in Kyangwali. The total study population was 516,023 individuals, according to the UNHCR's April 2024 report. A sample size of 400 participants comprising refugees and host community members was selected for quantitative analysis. Additionally, 23 key informants, including NGO staff, officials from the Office of the Prime Minister, and local government leaders, were interviewed to gain insights into the socio-economic factors affecting these communities. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula ( $n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$ ), where 'n' represents the sample size, 'N' is the total population, and 'e' is the margin of error (0.05). This formula was chosen due to the large population size and the lack of detailed information regarding the distribution of behaviors within the population, making it difficult to use alternative methods for determining sample size.

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

$$\text{➤ } n = 516,023 / (1 + 516,023 (0.05)^2)$$

$$\text{➤ } n = 516,023 / (1 + 516,023 (0.0025))$$

$$\text{➤ } n = 516,023 / (1 + 1290.0575) \quad n = 516,023 / (1291.0575)$$

$$\text{➤ } n = 400 \text{ respondents}$$

Stratified sampling was utilized to ensure representation from various groups, including refugees, host communities, and officials from humanitarian organizations and local governments. This method allowed the researcher to capture diverse experiences and perceptions, essential for understanding the complex dynamics between refugees and host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. Additionally, simple random sampling was employed to select 400 respondents from comprehensive lists of refugees and host community members, ensuring equal probability of selection. Purposive sampling further targeted key informants, including NGO staff and local leaders, to gather in-depth qualitative data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was

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used for data analysis, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret quantitative findings, while qualitative responses were categorized into themes for detailed analysis.

### 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
Interviews	23	100

Source: Primary data (2024)

From Table 4.1, it is indicated that the study administered questionnaires to 400 participants in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali refugee settlements, with 380 completed responses received, resulting in a remarkable response rate of 95%. Only 20 questionnaires, or 5%, were not returned. This high level of participation indicates that the respondents were genuinely interested in the issues of refugee adaptability and the relationships with host communities, and they found the questionnaire to be clear and easy to understand. Such strong engagement enhances the credibility of the findings and suggests that they are likely representative of the broader population, thereby improving the generalizability of the results.

#### Findings on effects of socio-economic factors on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements

The researcher assessed the effects of socio-economic factors on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The presentation of the findings on this objective began by descriptive analysis using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation on five points likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not Sure (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) as follows;

**Table 4.2: Descriptive analysis on socio-economic factors**

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std
Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have enough job options that cover a range of fields and industries.	44(11.6%)	50(13.2%)	16 (4.2%)	150(39.5%)	120(31.5%)	2.34	1.37
The economic situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements encourage programs that help refugees access skill development and education opportunities	120(31.6%)	145(38.2%)	26 (6.8%)	54(14.2%)	35(9.2%)	3.69	1.30
There are housing conditions in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements suitable for refugees to easily adjust and settle in	106(27.9%)	134(35.3%)	0 (0.0%)	79(20.8%)	61(16.0%)	3.38	1.47
The presence of basic infrastructure like water, sanitation, and electricity in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have a positive effect on refugees' ability to adapt to their new environment.	130(34.2%)	161(42.4%)	18 (4.7%)	43(11.3%)	28(7.4%)	3.85	0.82
Conflicts between refugees and host	110(28.9%)	141(37.2%)	18 (4.7%)	63(16.6%)	48(12.6%)	3.53	0.80

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communities are resolved peacefully in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements							
The presence of social services like counseling, community centers, and vocational training in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements help refugees adapt better	89(23.4%)	101(26.6%)	23(6.1%)	93(24.5%)	74(19.5%)	3.10	0.79
The current socio-economic situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements effectively provide refugees with necessary social services such as healthcare and support	150(39.5%)	180(47.4%)	0 (00%)	30(7.9%)	20(5.2%)	4.08	0.42

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study findings in Table 4.2 on the statement, "Refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have enough job options that cover a range of fields and industries" indicated that 11.6% of respondents strongly agreed, 13.2% agreed, 4.2% were neutral, 39.5% disagreed and 31.5% strongly disagreed. The mean rating was 2.34, indicating that most respondents disagreed and the standard deviation of 1.37, showed that responses were clustered closer to the mean. This implies that majority of survey respondents believe that refugees in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements did not have enough job options that cover a range of fields and industries. An informant was asked the main social and economic factors that contribute to refugees' ability to adapt in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and he revealed that;

*Socially, community acceptance, cultural similarities, and support networks play a crucial role in easing integration and access to education and healthcare services helps refugees build stability and resilience. Economically, employment opportunities, access to land for farming, and financial support from organizations are key factors in self-reliance. But, we have a challenge of resource scarcity and competition with host communities which limit adaptability of refugees* (Key informant (3) Kyaka II refugee settlement, 2024).

When Key informants from both Kyangwali and Kyaka II refugee settlements were asked to mention the key socio-economic factors that contribute to refugee adaptability within the settlements at Kyaka II and Kyangwali, they highlighted the importance of socio-economic factors in enhancing refugee adaptability as:

*Access to livelihoods, essential social services like education and healthcare, and opportunities for community engagement are crucial for integration. Activities such as sports and business associations, including boda-boda transportation groups, help build social networks and support systems, fostering skills sharing and entrepreneurship. The free interaction between refugees and host community members—through participation in social events and intermarriage—further facilitates adjustment to settlement life and strengthens community ties. Additionally, in disagreement with quantitative data, key informants reported that emergency services, including fresh food, financial literacy training, and agricultural support at both household and group levels, are provided to both communities, with a distribution of 70% for refugees and 30% for host community members, along with health, nutrition, and livelihood programs.* (Key informant 2 Kyangwali Refugee settlement,2024).

*However, the respondent at Kyaka II refugee settlement provided a different view where the distribution of emergency services between host communities and refugees is 50% -50% basis as opposed to the approach in Kyangwali settlement (70%-30% for refugees and host communities respectively)* (Key informant (4): Kyaka II refugee settlement,2024)

From Table 4.2, the study findings on the statement that "The economic situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements encourages programs that help refugees access skill development and education opportunities" was strongly agreed by 120(31.6%) of the respondents, 145(38.2%) agreed, 26(6.8%) were neutral, 54(14.2%) disagreed while 35(9.2%) strongly disagreed. The mean rating was 3.69, indicating that on average respondents fell closer to agreement. The standard deviation was 1.30, showing some variability in responses but still clustered around the mean. The findings imply that majority of survey respondents believed that the current economic situation in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements encourages programs that helped refugees access skill development and education opportunities.

The study findings concerning the statement that "There are housing conditions in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements suitable for refugees to easily adjust and settle in", findings revealed that majority of respondents, totaling 35.3%, agreed with the statement, while 27.9% strongly agreed, 20.8% disagreed and 16.0% strongly disagreed (Mean=3.38, standard deviation=1.47). This variation

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implies that while many respondents perceive the housing conditions as favorable, there was a notable portion of the population that disagreed, indicating disparities in the quality or suitability of housing across the settlements.

From Table 4.2, the study findings on the statement "The presence of basic infrastructure like water, sanitation, and electricity in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements has a positive effect on refugees' ability to adapt to their new environment" revealed that 42.4% of respondents agreed, 34.2% strongly agreed, 4.7% were neutral, 11.3% disagreed and 7.4% strongly disagreed (Mean=3.85, standard deviation= 0.82). These results imply that the presence of basic infrastructure is widely perceived as crucial for helping refugees adapt to their new environment. The strong consensus indicated that improving or maintaining such infrastructure should be a priority in refugee settlements, as it directly influences their ability to integrate and settle effectively.

Furthermore, the study findings on conflicts between refugees and host communities are resolved peacefully in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements" reflects a generally positive perception among respondents with 37.2% strongly agreeing and 28.9% agreeing. However, there are also respondents who expressed disagreement, with 16.6% disagreeing and 12.6% strongly disagreeing. A small number of respondents 4.7% were neutral (Mean=3.53, standard deviation=0.80). The study findings imply that there was a positive perception of how conflicts between refugees and host communities are handled, with many believing that these conflicts are resolved peacefully. However, the presence of some disagreement indicates that there are instances or areas where peaceful conflict resolution may not be as effective or consistent.

More so, Table 4.2 showed study results on how refugees in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements perceive the role of social services in helping them adapt. Most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the presence of social services like counseling, community centers, and vocational training help refugees adapt better, with 23.4% strongly agreeing and 26.6% agreeing. Nevertheless, 24.5% of the respondents disagreed and 19.5% strongly disagreed and 6.1% were neutral (Mean=3.10, standard deviation=0.79).

The study findings on the statement that the current socio-economic situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements effectively provides refugees with necessary social services such as healthcare and support" indicated that 39.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 47.4% agreed, 7.9% disagreeing and 5.2% strongly disagreed (Mean score=4.08, standard deviation=0.42). These results imply that the socio-economic in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements was largely perceived as favorable in terms of delivering crucial social services to refugees, such as healthcare and support. The strong agreement suggests that most refugees feel well-supported by the current conditions, contributing to their well-being and integration.

### 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 4.3: 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%)	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 their children and adults as the host community members.	124(32.6%)	158(41.6%)	0(0.0%)	52(13.7%)	46(12.1%)	3.69	1.37
Refugees have made advancements in learning and becoming proficient	100(26.3%)	108(28.4%)	0(0.0%)	92(24.2%)	80(21.1%)	3.15	1.08

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in the local language(s) spoken in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements							
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

**Source: Primary data (2024)**

From Table 4.3, 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 4.3, 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 4.3, 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 4.3 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

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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. The implication is that while the majority of refugees were likely to be receiving adequate healthcare, ongoing assessments and improvements are essential to address any gaps or emerging needs, ensuring that all refugees have equitable access to necessary health services.

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.

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.

### Hypothesis testing: Socio-economic factors have significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Western Uganda.

The hypothesis that socio-economic factors has significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements was tested as indicated below;

**Table 4.4: Regression results on socio-economic factors and refugee adaptability**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error		
1	.481 <sup>a</sup>	0.231	0.228	0.53476		
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	23.458	1	23.458	82.029	0.000
	Residual	78.07	378	0.286		
1	Total	101.527	379			
Coefficients a						
Model		Unstand. Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.52	0.145		17.355	0.001
	Socio-economic Factors	0.369	0.041	0.481	9.057	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Refugee Adaptability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Socio-economic factors

The regression results in Table 4.4 indicated that socio-economic factors significantly influence refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, with a model that explains approximately 23.1% of the variability in adaptability ( $R^2 = 0.231$ ). Nevertheless, the model did not explain 76.9% of the variation in refugee adaptability, implying that there are other factors that influence refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements which were not reflected in this model.

The study findings in the table indicates that the relationship between socio-economic factors and refugee adaptability was significant ( $F=82.029$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). The residual sum of squares (78.070) in the table indicates that the model does not explain all the variations in refugee adaptability and there are other factors outside the model that account for a higher proportion of the variation in refugee adaptability.

Furthermore, the study results revealed that socio-economic factors are statistically significant in explaining refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. This is supported by  $\beta=0.369$ ,  $t=9.057$ ,  $p<0.000$ . The results imply that a unit change in socio-economic factors lead to a positive change in refugee adaptability by the rate of 0.369.

### HYPOTHESIS DECISION

The study findings revealed that socio-economic factors have significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was accepted thus concluding

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that socio-economic factors has significant positive effects on refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. This suggests that these factors are essential for fostering a supportive environment that enhances refugees' ability to integrate and thrive. The acceptance of the alternative hypothesis emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that address socio-economic challenges faced by refugees and host communities highlighting the importance of creating conducive conditions for refugee adaptability.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the findings, it was disagreed that there were sufficient job options available across various fields and industries as evidenced by the mean rating of 2.34 and the standard deviation of 0.89 suggesting that responses were closely clustered around this negative perception, underscoring a prevailing belief that employment options for refugees are limited. These findings align with other studies that have documented challenges faced by refugees in accessing employment opportunities. For instance, research by Tadesse and Pritchard (2021) highlights that many refugees encounter barriers such as limited job availability, lack of recognition for their skills, and restrictive legal frameworks that hinder their ability to find work. This consensus in the literature supports the current study's findings, illustrating a shared concern regarding the employment situation of refugees in Uganda.

However, Asad and Duygun (2023) presents a differing viewpoint, arguing that while challenges exist, there are opportunities for entrepreneurship among refugees that can be overlooked in traditional assessments of job availability. They emphasize that some refugees have successfully created their own businesses, which can provide viable employment alternatives.

The findings indicated a generally positive perception among respondents regarding the economic situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and its role in facilitating access to skill development and education opportunities for refugees since the mean rating was 3.69. The findings concur with Kalyegira (2020) who emphasizes that conducive economic contexts can lead to the implementation of effective policies that enhance refugees' educational opportunities and vocational training.

Nonetheless, Ager and Strang (2022) disagreed with the findings arguing that while the economic situation may provide a framework for skill development, it often falls short in practice due to insufficient funding and resource allocation. They contend that policies may exist on paper, but the actual implementation can be hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of local support. This disagreement highlights the complexities of the political context, suggesting that while perceptions may be generally positive, real-world barriers can impede effective access to skill development and education.

The survey results showed that the majority of respondents had a generally positive perception of how conflicts between refugees and host communities are resolved in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda. Specifically, 37.2% strongly agreed and 28.9% agreed with the statement that conflicts are resolved peacefully. This indicates over half of respondents believed conflicts are handled constructively. The survey findings disagree with the perspective of Orchardson-Mazrui (2017) who argued that conflicts over resources like land and water were inflaming tensions in Uganda's settlements. Orchardson-Mazrui cited examples of host resentment and episodes of violence, suggesting relations were more strained than the study indicates.

Additionally, the study findings show a significant connection to Kunz's Refugee in Flight theory (1973), particularly in its understanding of post-flight adaptation and stability. The high percentage of positive responses regarding peaceful conflict resolution (66.1% combined) aligns with Kunz's concept of "kinetic" settlement patterns, where refugees transition from acute displacement to establishing functional relationships within host communities. This successful conflict resolution mechanism reflects what Kunz describes as the "vintage" settlement phase, where refugees have moved beyond immediate flight concerns to developing sustainable community interactions. The theory's emphasis on the dynamic nature of refugee experiences is evidenced in how these settlements have evolved functional conflict resolution systems, demonstrating the progression from what Kunz terms "anticipatory" to "acute" and finally to "integrated" refugee scenarios.

Furthermore, these study results agree with Social Cohesion and Integration Theory's core tenets regarding conflict resolution and community harmony. The combined 66.1% positive response rate (37.2% strongly agreeing and 28.9% agreeing) reflects the theory's emphasis on peaceful conflict resolution as a crucial mechanism for maintaining social order and fostering integration between diverse groups. The theory posits that successful conflict resolution serves as an indicator of social cohesion and supports the development of what it terms "mechanical solidarity" - the shared beliefs and practices that bind communities together. The high percentage of respondents perceiving peaceful conflict resolution aligns with the theory's assertion that effective dispute settlement mechanisms are essential for maintaining social stability and promoting integration between different community segments. This positive perception suggests the settlements have developed functional conflict resolution mechanisms that contribute to the theory's ideal of organic solidarity, where different groups can maintain their distinct identities while cooperatively addressing challenges within a unified social framework.

The regression analysis conducted in the study highlights the significant role that socio-economic and political factors play in influencing refugee adaptability within the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The findings revealed that a unit change in socio-economic and political factors correlates with a positive change in refugee adaptability. The findings are consistent with Ahmed and Mazzotta (2020), who also identified socio-economic conditions as critical for refugee integration. Their research found that stable economic opportunities and community support significantly improve refugees' adaptability and overall well-being. Nevertheless,

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Lee (2022) offers a contrasting view, arguing that while socio-economic factors are important, psychological and emotional aspects such as trauma and mental health are often overlooked but are crucial for understanding refugee adaptability.

### CONCLUSION

The study examined the effects of socio-economic factors on refugee adaptability in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements and it was found that socio-economic factors positively and significantly affect refugee adaptability in host communities. The study concluded that socio-economic factors affects refugee adaptability in the selected settlements. This implies that increasing accessibility to resources by both the host communities and the refugees, improved accessibility to health, education services and well as having cultural exchange programmes would improve refugee adaptability. The findings underscored the need for a multidimensional approach that addresses socio-economic factors so that both host communities and refugees can benefit.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that there is need for targeted initiatives to improve socio-economic conditions for refugees. These include developing employment programs that facilitate job access for refugees and providing vocational training that aligns with local market needs. Local governments and NGOs should collaborate to create mentorship programs that connect refugees with established community members, enhancing their employability and integration prospects. Additionally, promoting entrepreneurship among refugees could be a viable strategy, with support in the form of microfinance and business development training. This approach would not only address economic barriers but also contribute to building social capital and resilience within the refugee community.

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