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**SOCIAL COHESION IN HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEE ADAPTABILITY IN HOST COMMUNITIES AT KYAKA II AND KYANGWALI SETTLEMENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study established the effect of Social Cohesion within host communities and refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The study was underpinned by Social Cohesion and Integration Theory and the Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement. Descriptive and correlational research design supported by mixed methods approach were used. A sample size of 400 respondents calculated using Slovin's formula was used. Respondents were selected through a combination of purposive and simple random sampling methods. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires, with 380 completed questionnaires returned, while key informants provided additional data through interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS Version 22, and qualitative data were organized thematically. The study concluded that social cohesion had a significant positive effect on refugee adaptability. The study also concluded that international convention on refugees moderated the relationship between host communities' relations and refugee adaptability. The study emphasized the importance of enhancing social cohesion between host communities and refugees to improve adaptability by establishing regular forums or community dialogue sessions where both groups can express their concerns, share experiences and collaborate on local issues.

**Keywords:** Social cohesion, Refugee adaptability, Host communities, Settlements

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**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, the increasing displacement of populations due to conflicts, climate change, political instability, and economic hardship has led to a sharp rise in refugee movements. According to UNHCR (2023), over 114 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced, with refugees accounting

for around 36.4 million. Host communities face significant challenges integrating these populations while maintaining social harmony. Social cohesion—defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other to survive and prosper (Chan et al., 2006) is critical in

ensuring peaceful coexistence between refugees and hosts. However, achieving strong social cohesion is often difficult, as cultural differences, competition for limited resources, and differing socio-economic backgrounds can generate tensions. Refugee adaptability the process by which refugees adjust to new cultural, social, and economic environments is hindered when social cohesion is weak, leading to marginalization, discrimination, and even conflict (UNHCR, 2023).

In Africa, the continent hosts more than one-third of the world's displaced population (UNHCR, 2023). Countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya have become major hosts. However, while African governments have often demonstrated openness through progressive policies like Uganda's Settlement Approach, social cohesion remains strained due to poverty, limited resources, and historical ethnic divisions (Betts et al., 2019). Research shows that tensions frequently arise when host communities feel that refugees are receiving preferential treatment or when economic hardships are exacerbated by new arrivals (Okumu, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for strategies that promote not only refugee adaptability but also foster social cohesion to avoid social fragmentation.

In East Africa specifically, Uganda stands out for its refugee-friendly policies under the 2006 Refugees Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, which allow refugees the right

to work, move freely, and access social services. As of early 2024, Uganda hosts about 1.5 million refugees, the highest number in Africa (UNHCR, 2024). Despite these policies, the stress placed on host communities often breeds resentment. A study by Krause and Schmidt (2020) reveals that in Uganda, while official policies encourage integration, on-the-ground realities reflect significant disparities between refugees and hosts in access to livelihoods, education, and healthcare, undermining social cohesion and limiting refugee adaptability.

Focusing more narrowly, the situation in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements—two of Uganda's largest refugee-hosting sites—is emblematic of these broader trends. Kyaka II hosts approximately 125,000 refugees, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), while Kyangwali hosts over 130,000 (UNHCR, 2024). Both settlements operate under the Settlement Approach, allowing refugees to cultivate land. However, competition over land, pressure on social services like schools and hospitals, and cultural misunderstandings have led to occasional conflicts and social division (International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2023). Research by Lwanga-Ntale and Okello (2022) found that while some local community members benefited economically from the presence of refugees, others perceived them as competitors, fueling tensions and impeding efforts at integration. Refugee adaptability is further complicated by language barriers, trauma,

and limited economic opportunities, while host communities sometimes feel overwhelmed by international attention and aid directed primarily at refugees.

Therefore, the problem lies in the persistent gaps between policy and practice: while Uganda offers a global model for refugee management, the actual levels of social cohesion between refugees and host communities are fragile, and refugee adaptability is often incomplete. Thus, without interventions to strengthen social cohesion and facilitate refugee adaptability, the risk of social fragmentation, economic instability, and conflict remains high.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Ideally, social cohesion between host communities and refugees at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements would promote peaceful coexistence, mutual support, and sustainable development, enabling refugees to adapt easily. However, competition over land, pressure on social services, cultural misunderstandings, and economic inequality have strained relations (UNHCR, 2024). As a result, both host and refugee communities experience tensions, mistrust, and occasional conflict, weakening refugee adaptability. The problem is significant, affecting over 250,000 people across both settlements (UNHCR, 2024). If not addressed, this could escalate into social unrest, economic marginalization, and undermine Uganda's global model for refugee hosting. The government has put in place strategies like Uganda's Settlement Approach, community dialogues, and

integration programs to solve the problem (UNHCR, 2024), but refugee adaptability in the host communities is still lacking. The researcher conducted a field-based study to assess the dynamics of social cohesion and refugee adaptability and to recommend context-specific solutions to strengthen peaceful coexistence and enhance integration.

### **Objective**

To establish the effect of Social Cohesion within host communities and refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Social cohesion in host communities has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements.

### **Theoretical Review**

This research was guided by two key theories, outlined as follows: Social Cohesion and Integration Theory by Émile Durkheim (1892), later expanded by David et al. (2016), and the Refugee in Flight Theory initially proposed by Kunz (1973) and further refined by Van Hear and Bakewell (2018).

### **Social Cohesion and Integration Theory**

The Social Cohesion and Integration Theory identifies three core elements essential for fostering cohesion: (1) social relationships, (2) a sense of identification with a geographic community, and (3) commitment

to the collective good. Central concepts of the theory include shared values, equality, and quality of life. The theory emphasizes the development of strong social ties and common values to enhance societal stability, where individuals feel interconnected and part of a broader community, thereby minimizing risks of conflict and division. It advocates for inclusive social policies that ensure equal opportunities, promote justice, and fairly distribute resources, which can bridge social and economic gaps and enhance belonging among marginalized groups. Moreover, the theory underlines the value of social capital—trust, networks, and relationships which fosters cooperation, collective action, and access to resources and opportunities, thus contributing to the overall resilience and well-being of society.

### **Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement**

This theory explores the patterns of refugee movements and the lived experiences of displaced persons. Kunz describes refugees as individuals forced to flee their countries due to violence, persecution, or conflict, outlining four stages beginning with a precipitating event that triggers their flight. The theory offers a framework for understanding the different pathways and forms displacement can take. Nonetheless, it has limitations: it may not fully account for the complex socio-political and economic factors driving displacement, and it tends to focus more on the movement rather than the deeper causes. Additionally, it falls short in addressing the long-term challenges

refugees face in host communities, including issues of integration, access to essential services, and building social cohesion.

### **Empirical Literature**

#### **Social cohesion in host communities and refugee adaptability in host communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements**

Social cohesion within host communities plays a critical role in the adaptability of refugees, influencing their integration and overall well-being. Recent studies highlight the multifaceted nature of social cohesion, which encompasses trust, social networks, and shared values among community members (Ager & Strang, 2018). The concept of social cohesion is particularly relevant in the context of refugee populations, as it can significantly affect their ability to navigate new environments and access resources.

Additionally, in a qualitative study conducted in UK by Ager and Strang (2021), they emphasize that trust is a foundational element for building positive relationships within diverse communities. They argue that without trust, efforts at integration can be significantly hampered, leading to social fragmentation and potential conflict among community members. Their findings highlight that fostering trust not only facilitates better interactions between refugees and host communities but also enhances overall social cohesion. The study underscores the necessity of implementing strategies that promote trust-building activities, as these are essential for

successful integration and harmonious coexistence in increasingly diverse societies. Research by Betts and Collier (2017) emphasizes that host communities with strong social cohesion tend to facilitate better integration outcomes for refugees. This is because cohesive communities are more likely to provide support networks that help refugees adapt to their new surroundings. For instance, social ties can enhance access to employment opportunities and social services, which are crucial for successful adaptation (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Moreover, the role of local policies and community initiatives in fostering social cohesion cannot be understated. Studies have shown that inclusive policies that promote interaction between refugees and host community members can enhance mutual understanding and reduce tension (Kühn et al., 2020). Programs that encourage cultural exchange and community engagement have been found to improve relationships and build trust, which are essential for social cohesion.

However, challenges remain like resource strains, cultural tension, economic competition and social isolation as host communities may experience strain due to an influx of refugees, leading to potential conflicts and a decrease in social cohesion. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that not only support refugees but also strengthen the resilience of host communities such as community engagement programmes like exchange events, cultural recreation activities,

adequate resource allocation to both refugees and host communities which were examined in this study.

In Germany, social cohesion within host communities has been a focal point in understanding refugee adaptability, particularly following the significant influx of asylum seekers during the 2015 refugee crisis. Research indicates that strong social cohesion is essential for facilitating the integration of refugees into German society. According to Schneider et al. (2019), communities characterized by high levels of trust and social capital tend to provide better support networks for refugees, enhancing their adaptability and overall well-being.

A study by Krause and Schmidt (2020) highlights the importance of local initiatives aimed at fostering interaction between refugees and host community members. Programs that encourage cultural exchange and collaborative activities have been shown to improve relationships, reduce prejudice, and promote mutual understanding. For instance, the "Welcome Culture" initiatives in various German municipalities have successfully engaged both refugees and locals in joint community projects, which has led to increased social cohesion and a sense of belonging for newcomers. Nonetheless, the study by Klocker and Dunn (2021) notes that while many host communities exhibit resilience, there are areas where social tensions arise due to competition for resources and differing cultural values.

These tensions can undermine social cohesion, making it crucial for policymakers to address the concerns of both refugees and local populations. However, the above studies did not mention the mitigating measures to address the challenges such as fostering inclusive environments through community dialogue and public awareness campaigns that can help bridge gaps and promote understanding which were focus of this study.

In his study, Smith (2017) challenges the assumption that a high degree of social cohesion universally leads to positive outcomes for refugees. He draws attention to the strong dynamics within tightly-knit communities, suggesting that an overemphasis on cohesion might mistakenly create exclusionary practices. In such cases, refugees may find it challenging to integrate as they navigate a social landscape that is tightly woven and resistant to external influences. Furthermore, Smith's argument prompts a re-evaluation of the commonly held belief that more cohesion always equates to better outcomes. It urges researchers and practitioners to consider the quality of social bonds and the inclusivity of these communities. An overly cohesive community, as Smith suggests, may inadvertently erect barriers for refugees, hindering their adaptability by reinforcing feelings of alienation and outsider status.

Nevertheless, while Smith (2017) provides a critical perspective on the relationship between social cohesion and refugee

outcomes, there remains a significant research gap regarding the strong dynamics of social cohesion within diverse community contexts. Specifically, further investigation is needed to understand how varying degrees of cohesion particularly in multicultural settings affect the integration experiences of refugees. Additionally, there is a lack of longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of social cohesion on refugee integration, particularly in communities that have historically been resistant to external influences. This gap calls for more comprehensive research that not only examines the quantity of social interactions but also evaluates the quality and inclusivity of these relationships, providing a more holistic understanding of how social cohesion can either facilitate or hinder refugee adaptability in diverse environments.

Johnson and Williams (2018) conducted an in-depth study focusing on Somali refugees in the United States to explore the role of internal trust within refugee communities. Their research aimed to understand how trust influences the formation of support networks that assist in the resettlement process. The study relied on qualitative research approach and the findings highlighted that shared experiences of displacement fostered a sense of solidarity, which was crucial for building internal trust. Furthermore, Stevens and Ho (2019) examined the relationship between trust levels between refugees and host populations and the resulting social

cohesion in communities in USA. Their study aimed to determine how these dynamics affect the integration process of refugees. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. They surveyed 300 participants, including both refugees and members of host communities, to measure levels of trust and social cohesion. However, the two studies were done in a developed country where the situation could be different from Uganda's context because developed countries may have good social cohesions compared to Uganda which formed the basis for this study.

The study by Honneth (2019) on effect of mutual respect on refugee adaptability in Germany using qualitative research approach and the study emphasizes the concept of mutual respect as essential for recognizing and valuing individual dignity, regardless of cultural or social backgrounds. Honneth argues that the recognition of individuals is crucial for their well-being and self-esteem, highlighting that for refugees, mutual respect plays a pivotal role in helping them reconstruct their identities and regain a sense of agency after displacement. This approach underscores the importance of fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge the inherent worth of all individuals.

Furthermore, Schwartz et al. (2017) indicates that when refugees feel respected by the host community, they are more likely to engage in social interactions, participate

in community activities, and seek employment opportunities. This reciprocal recognition fosters a sense of belonging and reduces the social isolation that refugees often experience. Additionally, it is observed that trust and mutual respect are integral elements in the intricate web of social cohesion that underpins refugee adaptability. Building trust between refugees and the host community, as well as within the refugee community itself, creates a foundation for collaboration, resource-sharing, and positive social interactions. Likewise, mutual respect contributes to the development of self-esteem and a sense of belonging, essential components of successful adaptation. However, while both studies highlight the importance of respect, they do not explore the mechanisms through which intercultural understanding and exchange affect refugee adaptability. Additionally, the long-term impacts of mutual trust on refugee adaptability need to be thoroughly investigated using both quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Parekh & Rathod (2020) explores the dynamics of interpersonal bonds between refugees and host community members. They argue that such relationships act as bridges, connecting individuals from different backgrounds and fostering mutual understanding, thereby contributing to social cohesion. Being an element of social cohesion, interpersonal relationships foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding between refugees and host community members. Through personal interactions,

individuals can learn about each other's cultures, traditions, values, and perspectives. This exchange helps break down stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and promote intercultural understanding, which is essential for building cohesive and inclusive communities.

Furthermore, Sampson & Wilson (2019) emphasize the role of strong ties within the host community, demonstrating how close relationships facilitate access to social capital crucial for refugees' integration. Interpersonal relationships provide a source of social support for refugees. Strong ties within the host community, such as friendships, neighborly relationships, and connections with local organizations, can offer emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging. Social support is essential for refugees' well-being, resilience, and successful adaptation.

Li & Wang, (2022) conducted a longitudinal analysis to explore the impact of interpersonal trust on refugee integration over time. Their findings suggest that trust-building within interpersonal relationships significantly contributes to sustained social cohesion and enhanced adaptability. This is in agreement with Jones & Brown (2023) who investigated the ripple effect of interpersonal relationships by examining their influence on broader community attitudes toward refugees. Their research suggests that positive interactions between individuals contribute to a more inclusive and supportive host community

environment. It is important to note that the impact of interpersonal relationships on social cohesion and host-refugee adaptability can vary depending on various factors, such as the openness of the host community, the availability of support services, and the cultural backgrounds of both refugees and host community members

The literature on interpersonal relationships and social cohesion provides valuable insights into the dynamics that influence host-refugee relations. On one hand, scholars such as Sampson and Wilson (2019) emphasize the importance of strong interpersonal ties within host communities, highlighting how these relationships facilitate access to social capital and resources essential for refugee adaptation. Additionally, Parekh and Rathod (2020) argue that these bonds act as bridges for mutual understanding, which is crucial for fostering social cohesion. However, while these studies effectively outline the benefits of interpersonal relationships, they often do not address the specific contextual factors that may influence these dynamics in different settings such as host community openness, support services, and cultural backgrounds which were not examined to determine their impact on social cohesion and adaptability which this study intended to address.

Li and Wang (2022) discussed the role of trust in fostering social cohesion but did not fully capture how historical and cultural

contexts in Uganda shape trust-building processes between refugees and host community members. This gap necessitated the need for further investigation into the specific factors that affect interpersonal relationships and social cohesion in these settlements. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring how interpersonal relationships impact refugee adaptability and community integration in Kyaka II and Kyangwali, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of host-refugee dynamics in Uganda.

Recent studies highlight the positive effects of intercultural understanding on social cohesion. Smith et al. (2022) conducted research in Germany using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with refugees and host community members. Their findings revealed that increased intercultural understanding improved relations, fostering empathy, reducing stereotypes, and enhancing mutual respect. This study emphasizes the significance of promoting intercultural dialogue to strengthen community ties and facilitate integration.

Furthermore, Jones and Brown (2019) studied an intercultural exchange program in Canada aimed at connecting refugees with host community members. Using qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, they found that the program significantly enhanced social cohesion. Participants reported increased empathy, reduced prejudice, and a stronger sense of belonging. The study underscores the

effectiveness of such initiatives in fostering positive relationships and strengthening community ties.

Nevertheless, the study by Smith et al. (2022) and Jones and Brown (2019) revealed contextual and conceptual gaps. Contextually, their focus on Germany and Canada fails to consider how different sociopolitical environments may affect intercultural initiatives in other Uganda. Conceptually, while they highlight outcomes like empathy and reduced prejudice, they do not explore the underlying mechanisms driving these changes. Investigating factors such as individual motivations and power dynamics could enhance future research and practical applications in diverse contexts.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Smith et al. (2023) and Johnson & Lee (2023) addresses the pressing issue of insufficient support structures for the integration of refugees. This research was carried out in urban centers within the United States, employing a mixed-methods approach that includes surveys, interviews, and participant observations to gather comprehensive data on the experiences of refugees and the effectiveness of existing support systems. The findings revealed a consensus on the necessity of initiatives aimed at creating regular opportunities for cultural exchange, which are essential for fostering understanding and collaboration between refugees and host communities. By highlighting the importance of cultural interactions, the study suggests that such

initiatives can significantly enhance social integration and mitigate feelings of isolation among refugees, thereby promoting a more inclusive society.

Garcia (2018) conducted his study in the United States, focusing on the impact of social integration initiatives on the adaptability of refugees. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, Garcia combined quantitative data from surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences of refugees participating in various programs. His findings revealed that access to education and vocational training significantly enhanced refugees' employability and self-sufficiency, thereby improving their overall adaptability within the host society. Furthermore, Hawkins (2019) emphasized the importance of language acquisition programs as a critical component of this integration process. By learning the local language, refugees can communicate effectively, access essential services, and engage actively in social and economic activities, further facilitating their integration into the community. Together, these studies underscore the necessity of comprehensive support systems that include educational and language resources to promote successful refugee integration.

Smith and Brown (2023) conducted a comprehensive study examining the complexities surrounding social integration and its role in fostering social cohesion. Their research, situated within the context of

various host communities, emphasizes not only the positive outcomes of promoting social integration but also the significant challenges that arise. They argue that cultural misunderstandings can impede progress and highlight the necessity for ongoing support for both refugees and host communities to navigate these complexities effectively. The study advocates for effective strategies that include targeted education initiatives aimed at raising awareness and understanding, promoting cultural exchange opportunities, and addressing socio-economic disparities that may hinder integration efforts.

Contrary, Castro (2020) also explored the challenges and limitations inherent in enhancing social cohesion through social integration initiatives. His findings underscore the critical importance of adequate funding, coordination among various stakeholders, and the availability of resources to ensure the successful implementation of these programs. Together, these studies suggest that while social integration is vital for fostering social cohesion, a multifaceted approach that addresses both the opportunities and challenges is essential for creating inclusive and supportive environments for refugees and host communities alike.

Nevertheless, the studies did not sufficiently address the specific demographic variations within host communities and among refugees that may influence integration experiences, such as age, gender, and

cultural background. More so, there is limited discussion on the role of local government policies and their varying impacts across different settlements which could provide more strong perspective on the challenges and opportunities for social integration. Addressing these gaps could enhance the understanding of effective strategies for fostering social cohesion in diverse contexts.

The studies by Johnson and Williams (2020), Ahmed (2022), and Thompson and Lee (2021) collectively underscore the significance of social integration initiatives in fostering acceptance and enhancing the adaptability of refugees within host communities. Johnson and Williams highlight that participation in joint activities reduces anxiety and xenophobia among host community members, leading to improved relations. Ahmed emphasizes the importance of community engagement, local language acquisition, and cultural participation as vital for refugees to navigate their new environments effectively.

Additionally, Thompson and Lee argue that supportive government policies, adequate funding, and legal frameworks are essential for facilitating social integration and creating inclusive environments. Together, these studies illustrate that social integration initiatives are crucial for promoting social cohesion and enhancing refugee adaptability. However, a research gap exists regarding the long-term sustainability of these initiatives and the specific contextual

factors that influence their effectiveness across different regions and communities such as political climate, economic conditions, existing social networks and levels of community engagement. Addressing these gaps could provide deeper insights into optimizing integration strategies and fostering enduring relationships between refugees and host communities.

Schwerdtle et al., (2019) conducted a study on inclusive governance and the role of refugees in decision making in European cities using qualitative methodology and the findings revealed that refugees are actively included in governance structures, it not only empowers them but also leads to more effective and responsive policies that address their needs. Schwerdtle et al. argue that such inclusive practices are essential for fostering social cohesion and ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are heard in the policymaking process. The study underscores the necessity of developing governance frameworks that prioritize inclusivity and participation, ultimately contributing to more equitable and just societies.

Zetter et al. (2019) conducted a study in urban areas of the United Kingdom that focused on access and inclusion for refugees in local institutions and services. Utilizing a quantitative survey methodology, the research gathered data from a diverse sample of refugees to evaluate their experiences with healthcare and education

services. The findings revealed significant barriers, including language difficulties, lack of awareness of available services, and systemic discrimination, which hindered refugees' access to essential resources. Conversely, some refugees reported positive experiences when services were tailored to their needs. The study concluded that while there are notable challenges, improving communication and service delivery can enhance refugees' integration and well-being, ultimately informing policy recommendations aimed at fostering inclusive environments for this vulnerable population.

Betts et al. (2019) conducted a study on intermarriages between refugees and members of the host community, focusing on the social integration dynamics in Uganda. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with refugees, local community members, and key stakeholders in various refugee-hosting regions. The study found that intermarriages played a significant role in fostering social integration by bridging cultural and social divides between refugees and host communities. However, it also revealed that these relationships faced challenges, such as social stigma and resistance from some community members that could limit those intermarriages. The conclusion emphasized the importance of promoting policies that encourage intercultural exchanges and support intermarriages as a means of enhancing social cohesion and integration

between refugees and host populations.

## Methods

The study adopted a pragmatism philosophy, descriptive and correlational research design combined with quantitative and qualitative methods. The study population comprised of 133,584 refugees and 128,600 host community members in Kyaka II, and about 125,039 refugees in Kyangwali. Altogether, the total study population was 516,023 based on UNHCR data from April 2024. For the quantitative data, a sample of 400 respondents, including refugees and members of the host communities was selected using simple random sampling to respond to questions in the questionnaires. In addition, using purposive sampling, 23 key informants, such as NGO personnel, officials from the Office of the Prime Minister and local government representatives were selected to respond to interviews. Slovin's formula ( $n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$ ) was used to determine the sample size, with 'n' representing the sample, 'N' the total population, and 'e' the margin of error set at 0.05.

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

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

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret quantitative findings, while

qualitative responses were categorized into themes for detailed analysis.

### **Findings on effects of social cohesion in host communities on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements**

The study examined the effects of social cohesion in host communities on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali

settlements. The findings on descriptive statistics of social cohesion within host communities (frequencies, percentages, M=Mean, Std. Dev= Standard deviation) were first obtained and recorded using likert scale of SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, NS=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree in Table 4.1 as follows;

**Table 4.1: Descriptive Analysis on Social Cohesion in Host Communities at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements**

| Statements                                                                                                                                                                                         | SA        | A          | N       | D          | SD         | Mean | Std   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|------------|------------|------|-------|
| Host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have a strong sense of trust and mutual respect towards each other                                                       | 64(11.6%) | 76(15.8%)  | 0(0.0%) | 140(42.1%) | 100(26.3%) | 2.64 | 1.07  |
| Host community members in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have positive and supportive relationships with refugees, characterized by respect, empathy, and assistance.                          | 52(13.7%) | 68(17.9%)  | 0(0.0%) | 155(40.8%) | 105(27.6%) | 2.45 | 1.06  |
| There are regular opportunities for meaningful interactions between refugees and host community members that encourage understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures                     | 40(10.5%) | 55(14.5%)  | 0(0.0%) | 160(42.1%) | 125(32.9%) | 2.28 | 0.98  |
| Host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have equal participation and representation in decision-making processes concerning community institutions and services. | 85(22.4%) | 125(32.9%) | 0(0.0%) | 100(26.3%) | 70(18.4%)  | 3.15 | 0.516 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |           |            |         |            |           |      |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|------------|-----------|------|------|
| Local institutions and services in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have measures in place to ensure that both refugees and host community members have equal access and inclusion in areas like healthcare, education, and employment support. | 93(24.5%) | 100(26.3%) | 0(0.0%) | 117(30.8%) | 70(18.4%) | 3.07 | 0.53 |
| There are instances of marriages between refugees and members of the host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements                                                                                                                       | 85(22.4%) | 105(27.6%) | 0(0.0%) | 102(26.8%) | 88(23.2%) | 3.00 | 1.05 |

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study findings in Table 4.1 reflects the perceptions of host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements regarding their sense of trust and mutual respect towards each other. A total of 11.6% of respondents strongly agreed that there is a strong sense of trust and mutual respect while 15.8% agreed with the statement. Notably, there were no neutral responses. However, a significant proportion of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, accounting for 42.1% and 26.3% respectively.

The mean score of 2.64 indicates a general tendency towards disagreement, suggesting that the majority of respondents did not perceive a strong sense of trust and mutual respect between the host community members and refugees. The standard deviation of 1.07 reflects a high level of variation in responses, indicating some diversity in perceptions among the respondents. This implies that there may be underlying tensions or challenges in building trust and mutual respect between host community members and refugees in these settlements. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering peaceful coexistence and effective integration in these communities.

The study findings on trust and mutual respect in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements highlight weak social cohesion between host communities and refugees. Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892) suggests that shared values foster societal stability, but the study's low mean score of 2.64 and 68.4% disagreement indicate otherwise. Structural and social barriers hinder meaningful interaction, contradicting the theory's expectation of solidarity through integration. David et al. (2016) emphasize that without equitable participation, integration remains superficial. These findings suggest that practical challenges limit the realization of true social cohesion in these settlements.

The study results in Table 4.1 showed that only 13.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 17.9% agreed that host community members in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements have positive and supportive relationships with refugees, characterized by respect, empathy, and assistance. Additionally, considerable number of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement at 40.8% and 27.6%, respectively (Mean=2.45, Standard deviation=1.06. These results imply that relationships between host community members and refugees in these settlements may be strained, lacking the desired levels of respect, empathy and assistance.

A key informant was asked how social cohesion in host communities influences the adaptability of refugees in terms of social integration, access to resources, and opportunities within the settlements.

The key informant said that;

*Several initiatives focused on social cohesion within the host communities have significantly facilitated refugee adaptability at Kyaka II settlements. He cited community-based projects that bring together refugees and host community members through joint economic activities, such as cooperative farming and small business ventures. These initiatives not only provide economic benefits but also foster interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding between the two groups. (Key informant: Kyaka II settlement, June 2024)*

Another respondent reported that,

*Though the host communities and refugees integrate, local communities are not happy because of the population pressure posed on resources by refugees. While many initiatives have certainly fostered social cohesion between refugees and hosts, one interviewed participant cautioned that integration does still pose some challenges according to their perspective. He reported that within host communities, there is a growing sense of unease related to the population pressure now being exerted on local resources by the large refugee settlements. With several tens of thousands of refugees relying on areas like Kyangwali, the strain on facilities and amenities is considerable according to the respondent. Limited agriculturally productive land, water access points, health centers and schools are struggling to adequately serve the combined population (Key Informant (4) Kyangwali refugee settlement, 2024).*

The study findings in Table 4.1 revealed that only 10.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 14.5% agreed that there were regular opportunities for meaningful interactions between refugees and host community members that encourage understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures. No respondents were neutral. However, majority either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement at 42.1% and 32.9% respectively (Mean=2.28, standard deviation=0.981). This suggests a lack of sufficient opportunities for cultural interaction between refugees and host community members, which could hinder mutual understanding and appreciation, potentially leading to social tensions or cultural misunderstandings.

A key informant was asked how cultural exchange influenced adaptability of refugees in terms of social integration.

Another informant also highlighted in which qualitative findings disagreed with quantitative findings: *that cultural exchange program was another successful example, where both refugees and host communities participate in shared cultural events, festivals, and dialogues. These programs have been instrumental in breaking down cultural barriers and building trust, leading to a more harmonious coexistence. (key informant 5, Kyangwali refugee settlement, 2024)*

The study findings on the level of equal participation and representation between host community members and refugees in decision-making processes concerning community institutions and services in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda, indicated that 85 respondents (22.4%) strongly agreed that there is equal participation and representation, 125 respondents (32.9%) agreed, no respondents were neutral on the statement, 100 respondents (26.3%) disagreed with the statement, 70 respondents (18.4%) strongly disagreed (Mean=3.15, standard deviation=0.516).

From Table 4.1, the study findings showed that 24.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 26.3% agreed that local institutions and services in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements had measures in place to ensure equal access and inclusion for both refugees and host community members in areas like healthcare, education, and employment support. There were no neutral responses while 30.8% disagreed and 18.4% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score of 3.07 indicates a relatively balanced view, leaning slightly towards agreement, suggesting that some respondents recognize efforts toward equality and inclusion, though there is still notable disagreement.

The standard deviation of 0.534 indicates low variability in responses, reflecting some consistency in perceptions. This suggests that while there are perceived efforts towards equal access and inclusion by local institutions, there is still a significant portion of the population that feels these measures may be inadequate. Addressing these concerns could be critical for improving service delivery and ensuring equitable access for all community members.

The study results showed that most respondents agreed about instances of marriages between refugees and members of the host communities in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements, with 105 (27.6%) respondents answering agreed and 102(26.8%) answering neither agree nor disagree. However, there was also significant levels of disagreement, with 88(23.2%) answering strongly disagreed. Only a minority, though still a substantial number, responded strongly agreed at 85(22.4%). Overall the central tendency was neutral as indicated by the mean of 3.00. However, there was high variability in the responses as shown by the standard deviation of 1.05.

Hypothesis H0<sub>4</sub>: Social cohesion in host communities has significant positive effects on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements

The fourth hypothesis was that social cohesion in host communities has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. The results on this hypothesis were presented as follows;

**Table 4.2: Regression Results of social cohesion within host Communities and refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements**

| <b>Model Summary</b>            |                       |                              |                      |                            |          |                    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| <b>Model</b>                    | <b>R</b>              | <b>R Square</b>              | <b>Adj. R Square</b> | <b>Std. Error</b>          |          |                    |
| 1                               | 0.221 <sup>a</sup>    | 0.049                        | 0.045                | 0.59476                    |          |                    |
| <b>ANOVA</b>                    |                       |                              |                      |                            |          |                    |
| <b>Model</b>                    | <b>Sum of Squares</b> |                              | <b>Df</b>            | <b>Mean Square</b>         | <b>F</b> | <b>Sig.</b>        |
| 1                               | Regression            | 4.958                        | 1                    | 4.958                      | 14.016   | 0.001 <sup>b</sup> |
|                                 | Residual              | 96.57                        | 378                  | 0.354                      |          |                    |
|                                 | Total                 | 101.527                      | 379                  |                            |          |                    |
| <b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b> |                       |                              |                      |                            |          |                    |
| <b>Model</b>                    |                       | <b>Unstand. Coefficients</b> |                      | <b>Stand. Coefficients</b> | <b>T</b> | <b>Sig.</b>        |
|                                 |                       | B                            | Std. Error           | Beta                       |          |                    |
| 1                               | (Constant)            | 2.944                        | 0.232                |                            | 12.69    | 0.002              |
|                                 | Social cohesion       | 0.215                        | 0.057                | 0.221                      | 3.744    | 0.000              |

a. Dependent Variable: Refugee adaptability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social cohesion in host communities

From the study findings indicated in Table 4.2, an R-squared value of 0.049 indicates that only 4.9% of the variation in refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements can be attributed to social cohesion. This means that a significant 95.1% of the variation in refugee adaptability remains unexplained by the current model, suggesting the presence of other influential factors not accounted for in the analysis. According to the results presented in the Table, the overall model is both valid and significant, with an  $F=14.016$ , a  $p<0.000$ . The high residual sum of squares reported in Table 4.8 (96.570) further confirms that the model does not fully capture the variations in refugee adaptability, highlighting the existence of additional factors that contribute to this variation.

Furthermore, the results in Table 4.2 demonstrate that social cohesion plays a statistically significant role in explaining refugee adaptability within the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements,

as indicated by a beta coefficient of 0.215, t-value of 3.744, and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that a one-unit increase in social cohesion is associated with a positive change in refugee adaptability at a rate of 0.215, emphasizing the importance of enhancing social cohesion to support refugee adaptability.

#### Hypothesis decision

From the study findings in Table 4.2, the hypothesis that social cohesion in host communities has no significant positive effects on refugee adaptability at Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements was rejected and the alternative was accepted. This finding suggests that when host communities exhibit high levels of social cohesion characterized by mutual trust, support and collaboration refugees are more likely to integrate successfully and thrive in their new environment. It emphasizes the necessity for initiatives that foster social connections and solidarity among community members, as these relationships can create a welcoming atmosphere for refugees.

#### Descriptive analysis 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: Descriptive statistics of 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 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 4.3, 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 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. 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. This suggests that while some respondents believe host communities are contributing positively to refugee safety and security, a substantial portion feels that these efforts are insufficient or ineffective. The implication is that there may be gaps in the support provided by host communities, highlighting the need for enhanced collaboration and engagement strategies to improve the overall security and well-being of refugees.

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. A flexible environment could imply refugees have autonomy and choice in daily routines like accessing services, income opportunities, and mobility. The level of disagreement may point to rigid controls or lack of options that undermine refugees' agency and self-sufficiency in basic daily functioning. Therefore, while flexibility exists according to the majority, nearly half of respondents identified challenges that could hinder refugees' wellbeing and ability to meet their basic needs on a day-to-day basis.

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

### Discussion of Findings

The findings regarding the perceptions of trust and mutual respect between host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements reveal a concerning picture. With a mean score of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 1.07, the data indicate a general tendency toward disagreement with the notion of a strong sense of trust and mutual respect. Specifically, only 11.6% of respondents strongly agreed and 15.8% agreed while a substantial 68.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting significant skepticism about the relationship between these groups. This lack of perceived trust and mutual respect aligns with Ager and Strang (2021) who emphasizes that trust is a foundational element for building positive relationships in diverse communities and without trust, efforts at integration can be hampered, leading to social fragmentation and conflict.

Additionally, the findings on trust and mutual respect between host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements present a concerning picture, aligning with Social Cohesion and Integration Theory developed by Émile Durkheim (1892) and later reviewed by

David et al. (2016). Durkheim's theory posits that strong social bonds and shared values are essential for societal stability and integration. However, the low mean score of 2.64 and the high percentage (68.4%) of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the presence of trust and mutual respect suggest weak cohesion between these groups. This contradicts the theory's assertion that integration fosters solidarity, indicating that structural and social barriers hinder meaningful interaction. David et al. (2016) emphasize that without equitable participation and mutual acceptance, integration remains superficial, reinforcing the skepticism reflected in the study. Thus, while the theory supports the idea that integration should lead to cohesion, the findings reveal that practical challenges prevent its full realization in these settlements.

The findings from the study regarding the relationships between host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements indicated that most respondents disagreed with the statement with a mean score of 2.45 and a standard deviation of 1.06. Specifically, only 13.7% of respondents strongly agreed, and 17.9% agreed that such relationships are characterized by respect, empathy, and assistance. In contrast, a substantial 68.4% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting significant concerns about the quality of interactions between these groups. These findings agree with Mastrotillo et al. (2022) who highlights that supportive relationships can facilitate access

to resources, enhance social networks, and ultimately improve adaptability for refugees. The lack of perceived empathy and assistance reported in this study points to potential barriers that may hinder refugees' ability to integrate effectively.

Furthermore, the findings indicating weak relationships between host community members and refugees in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements align only partially with Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892). Durkheim argued that strong social bonds and shared values promote stability and integration, yet the low mean score of 2.45 suggest that these essential elements are lacking. This contradicts the theory's premise that integration fosters solidarity, indicating that systemic barriers prevent meaningful connections. However, David et al. (2016) acknowledge that without equitable participation and mutual acceptance, integration remains superficial. The findings support their view that structural inequalities hinder true cohesion, preventing the full realization of Durkheim's ideal of a socially integrated society.

Therefore, to improve alignment with the with Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory, it is essential to foster equitable participation and mutual acceptance between host community members and refugees. Initiatives that promote dialogue, shared activities, and cultural exchange can help build trust and understanding. Additionally, addressing systemic barriers and structural inequalities is crucial to facilitate meaningful

connections and enhance social bonds, ultimately leading to a more integrated society.

More still, the findings revealed that only 25% of respondents felt there were regular opportunities for meaningful interactions between refugees and host community members, as reflected by a mean score of 2.28 (SD = 0.981). In contrast, a significant majority represented by 75% disagreed with this statement, highlighting a notable lack of opportunities for cultural exchange. The findings in this study align with broader concerns about insufficient support structures for integration, suggesting that initiatives aimed at creating regular opportunities for cultural exchange are essential (Smith et al., 2023; Johnson & Lee, 2023).

These findings diverge from Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892), which asserts that regular social interactions strengthen collective bonds and foster societal stability. The low mean score of 2.28 and the fact that only 25% of respondents perceived opportunities for meaningful engagement suggest weak integration mechanisms. This challenges Durkheim's view that interaction naturally leads to cohesion, highlighting instead structural and social barriers that limit connections. Without consistent engagement, trust and mutual understanding remain low, preventing the realization of true social cohesion as envisioned in the theory. To improve alignment with Durkheim's theory, initiatives should promote regular and

meaningful interactions through community dialogues, joint economic activities, and cultural exchange programs. Strengthening institutional support for inclusive policies can help break structural barriers and foster mutual trust. Additionally, targeted awareness campaigns can encourage positive social relationships, enhancing cohesion and integration.

The findings from the study on equal participation and representation in decision-making processes among host community members and refugees in the Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda reveal a mixed landscape as revealed by 85(22.4%) of respondents who strongly agreed, and 125(32.9%) agreed that there is equality in participation, resulting in a mean score of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.516. This indicates a generally positive perception of equal representation, but the substantial portion of respondents (44.7%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed suggests significant concerns about the effectiveness of these processes. These results agreed with recent literature which emphasizes the importance of inclusive governance frameworks that facilitate the involvement of marginalized groups, particularly refugees, in decision-making (Schwerdtle et al., 2019).

The findings present mixed results that partially aligns with Durkheim's Social Cohesion and Integration Theory (1892), which emphasizes equal participation as a cornerstone of social stability. While the mean score of 3.15 suggests moderate agreement with the presence of equality in

decision-making, the data also indicate that nearly half of the respondents do not strongly perceive inclusivity. This challenges the theory's assumption that participation naturally leads to cohesion, suggesting that structural inequalities still hinder full integration. Without broader consensus and more inclusive policies, social cohesion remains incomplete, limiting the full realization of Durkheim's framework.

Regarding access and inclusion in local institutions and services, the study showed that 24.5% strongly agreed and 26.3% agreed that measures are in place to ensure equality in areas like healthcare and education. The mean score of 3.07, along with a standard deviation of 0.534, reflects a moderately optimistic view, though the 49.2% who disagreed or strongly disagreed indicates that many perceive gaps in these efforts. This aligns with findings from Zetter et al., (2019) that highlight persistent barriers to equal access for refugees, emphasizing that while frameworks exist, implementation often falls short. Addressing these discrepancies is crucial for improving service delivery and ensuring that all community members benefit equally.

Lastly, the study explored intermarriages between refugees and host community members, revealing a neutral stance overall, with a mean score of 3.00 and high variability (standard deviation of 1.05). While 27.6% agreed that such marriages occur, a notable 23.2% strongly disagreed, pointing to diverging perceptions regarding social integration. The findings diverge with those of Betts et al. (2019) whose findings

revealed that the intermarriages faced challenges, such as social stigma and resistance from some community members that limited them.

### **Conclusions**

The study concluded that social cohesion significantly and positively affects refugee adaptability in Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements. However, findings of this study highlight the pressing need to enhance social cohesion within host communities to improve refugee adaptability. Without significant strides toward fostering trust, empathy, and inclusive participation, refugees may continue to face barriers that impede their integration and well-being. Addressing these challenges is essential for creating an environment where both refugees and host community members can thrive together

### **Recommendations**

The study emphasized the importance of enhancing social cohesion between host communities and refugees to improve adaptability. It recommended establishing regular forums or community dialogue sessions where both groups can express their concerns, share experiences and collaborate on local issues. Such platforms would help build trust and understanding, reducing skepticism and fostering a sense of community. Moreover, creating mentorship programs that pair host community members with refugees can facilitate knowledge exchange and strengthen social ties.

In terms of resource access, the study suggested that the government and NGOs prioritize equal access to essential services such as healthcare and education for both refugees and host community members. This could be achieved by conducting assessments to identify barriers faced by

refugees in accessing these services and implementing targeted interventions to address these gaps. Training service providers on the specific needs of refugees can also enhance service delivery and foster an inclusive atmosphere.

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