

EFFECT OF STAKEHOLDERS' FOCUS ON THE ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56293/IJMSSSR.2026.6201>

IJMSSSR 2026

VOLUME 8

ISSUE 3 MAY - JUNE

ISSN: 2582 – 0265

**Abstract:** The knowledge, innovation, and socio-economic development of Kenya are heavily dependent on the performance of its research institutions. This study examined the influence of customer focus on the organisational performance of research institutions in Kenya. This study employed a correlational research design. The study targeted 10756 employees in the 48 research institutions. Simple random sampling was used to select 386 employees in the research institutions who formed the sample size. Data collection was done using questionnaires. Data analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences software version 25. Both descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (regression and correlation) were carried out and results presented using graphs and tables. Descriptive results showed that the respondents agreed that stakeholders' focus affected the organisational performance of research institutions in Kenya. Regression findings revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between stakeholders' focus on organisational performance of research institutions in Kenya. Furthermore, stakeholders' focus was strongly and positively correlated with organisational performance of research institutions in Kenya. The study concluded that stakeholders' focus has a significant positive influence on the organizational performance of research institutions in Kenya.

**Keywords:** Customer focus, organisational performance, research institutions, Kenya

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the current global market becomes more competitive, organizations are under more pressure to enhance their performance and expand in the market in the long term (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2021). An organization can never be sure of surviving, unless it keeps on adapting and improving itself. With the growing rate of market transformation and the increasingly high competition across the globe, organizations should stand out through the development of sustainable competitive advantages (Mbamba & Kihoro, 2021). Research institutions, especially those in the developing nations such as Kenya experience distinguished challenges which pertain to performance. Such institutions have the responsibility to engage in advanced research that can result in scientific, economic, and social enhancement (Ongeti & Machuki, 2020). Nonetheless, most of the publicly funded research organizations in Kenya are limited by insufficient finances, poor infrastructure, and the unavailability of the necessary resources. Despite such challenges, research organizations must maintain a high level of performance to make sure that they will not become redundant and, therefore, become involved in the development of the country (Suda and Gikonyo, 2021).

Stakeholder focus concerns a strategic interaction with internal and external stakeholders with the aim of comprehending their requirements, anticipations, threats, and preoccupations and regularly incorporating these insights into the organizational quality enhancement programs (Rokhayati et al., 2021). Tarmidi and Arsjoah (2019) define effective stakeholder focus as one that is defined by open and clear communication channels, sharing information in a timely manner, and having a feedback and participatory decision-making mechanism. Individuals who are interested are more dedicated to quality results when they sense that they are listened to. There is a variety of tools available to the organization to engage the stakeholders in their views, such as surveys, focus groups, advisory committees, workshops, and regular consultative meetings (Micheni & Muchemi, 2019).

Such tools not only facilitate the use of data to drive quality, but also help build trust and promote collaboration and quality ownership at organizational levels.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on stakeholders' theory which was initially presented by Edward Freeman who claimed that organizations are tethered in a web of relationships that entail various groups of stakeholders whose interests can essentially shape the overall long term performance of an organization as well as its legitimacy (Freeman et al., 2023). The theory presupposes that value creation needs to take into account not just the shareholders, but all other stakeholders, and sustainable business prosperity should be regarded as the management of interdependent relationships, and not a one-dimensional way of financial gains (Mahajan et al., 2023). The recent stakeholder literature highlights the unity of ethical management and strategic management suggesting that the ethical factor cannot eliminate the productive management practice and that the engagement of stakeholders can lead to the legitimacy, trust and long-term performance. This thesis of integration has become a driver in the stakeholder research particularly where the interests of the society and corporate responsibilities meet.

The theory has been highly criticized despite its popularity. One of the most significant criticisms is associated with the ambiguity in operations: critics state that the framework has a lot of conceptual appeal and little practical guidance on how organizations may prioritize and balance competing stakeholder interests in practice, which results in managerial complexity and problems with implementation (Lajems, 2021). In line with this, the issue may be that firms do not find it easy to draw a clear cut line on who counts as a stakeholder and whose interests should be met particularly where the stakeholder groups have opposing objectives. Other researchers have also argued that treating all the stakeholders equally may compromise focus and decision making ability which may affect the operational effectiveness especially in competitive high paces. Moreover, where there are no clear mechanisms to balance conflicting interests, stakeholder approaches can undermine accountability and leave managers with too much discretion and objective performance measure.

The Stakeholder Theory is applicable in this study since it highlights the significance of the relationships management with various internal and external participants. The theory offers an understanding of how work with staff, funding agencies, policymakers, and community can be used to improve the effectiveness of institutions, mobilize resources, and impact research by underlining that organizations are expected to create value to all stakeholders (Mahajan et al., 2023). Considering the Kenyan research institutions, it can be stated that the high stakeholder orientation can lead to the increased transparency, accountability, and collaboration and, consequently, lead to the improved institutional reputation, higher-quality research products, and further access to funding (Valentinov & Roth, 2024). In addition, the theory assumes that both ethical and strategic problems in the management of the stakeholders need a mix to improve the long-term sustainability. The Stakeholder Theory is applied in a purely empirical sense to define measurable variables in the area of the involvement of the stakeholders and determine how it has a direct and indirect influence on the performance of the institution.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Micheni and Muchemi (2019) undertook a study with an aim of investigating the impact of customer focus on performance of the agricultural firms which are listed in Nairobi securities exchange, Kenya (NSE). The research was anchored on Quality Improvement Theory and Crosby Quality Management Approach. It used descriptive research design, and focused on all the seven agricultural companies, thus it used census methodology. The information was gathered with the help of the structured questionnaires and processed with the help of the descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as the multiple regression analysis. A positive correlation between customer focus and the performance of agricultural firms which was statistically significant was found. The study focused on agricultural companies listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange, which are profit-oriented, publicly listed firms operating in a competitive commercial environment. Research institutions, on the other hand, are largely non-profit or public-interest organizations with different mandates, funding mechanisms, governance

structures, and performance indicators. Therefore, the findings from NSE-listed agricultural firms cannot be directly generalized to research institutions in Kenya and therefore a conceptual gap.

Tarmidi and Arsjah (2019) conducted a research to examine internal and external aspects of employee-on-employee performance and organizational performance. Taxi drivers were sampled. Snowball sampling method and an electronic questionnaire were used to collect data among 100 taxi drivers. SmartPLS 3 software was applied to process the data. The average score of all the variables was 5 and above with the standard deviation values being lower. Also, the internal factors related to employees were identified to impact directly and positively on employee performance, and indirectly and positively on the overall organization performance. The transport sector context lacks applicability to research institutions, where performance is not driven by direct customer service or mobility-related metrics and therefore a contextual gap.

Njoroge and Mbugua (2017) explored the influence of strategic alliance on the financial performance of Postbank financial partners. The researchers used financial information including one, three and five years prior and subsequent to the establishment of strategic relationships of ten financial partners of Postbank. Descriptive research design was utilized and the documents (financial performance statements and statements of comprehensive income) of the period between 2000 and 2016 were analyzed. In general, the results indicated that strategic partnerships positively affected the revenue growth as well as profitability of the financial affiliates of Postbank. The focus in this study was placed only on strategic alliances (external partnerships), ignoring internal stakeholders and diverse interest groups such as academic partners, regulatory agencies, and research beneficiaries and therefore a conceptual gap.

Rokhayati et al. (2021) conducted research aimed at examining the links among regulatory focus, performance measurement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) investment decisions. Within the framework of the study, the participants were assigned to prevention-focused or promotion-focused group and complementary or substitute performance measurement conditions. The findings indicated that regulatory focus was a better corporate social responsibility (CSR) investment decision predictor and a better motivational tool that prompted individuals to perform well at their workplaces. The study was more psychological in nature, focusing on individual motivation and CSR decisions, rather than on systemic stakeholder influence on organisational performance and therefore a conceptual gap.

The reviewed studies reveal several key knowledge gaps that justify further investigation on organisational performance in Kenyan research institutions. First, a conceptual gap is evident in stakeholder-focused studies, as much of the existing literature concentrates on specific stakeholder dimensions such as customer focus, strategic alliances, or individual motivation without adopting a holistic, system-level stakeholder perspective that captures the complex and multi-actor nature of research institutions.

### 3.0 METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to a general approach or a plan of how a research study will be carried out and it includes such decisions as the method of data collection, sampling, measurement, and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It provides details of the methods and processes through which the researchers are going to answer their research questions or test their hypothesis and meet their study aims. An effective research study also makes data collection procedures suitable, trustworthy, and valid supporting the production of significant information and conclusions (Bryman, 2015). Correlational research design was used. It is non-experimental research design utilized to discover the connection between variables (Sekaran, 2016). In correlational research design, researchers are interested in knowing whether variation in one variable is related to variation in another variable but do not manipulate any variable. Instead, they simply observe and measure variables as they naturally occur (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

#### 3.2 Target Population

The target population is the entire group of individuals or elements that a researcher is interested in studying and to whom the research findings will be generalized (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). The target population was 10,756 employees working in the 48 research institutions in Kenya. The unit of observation was the individual employees, as data were collected directly from them through the research instruments while the unit of analysis was the research institution.

### 3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Quota sampling was used to select respondents in each of the 48 research institutions. Quota sampling in this study was carried out by first identifying the 48 research institutions that constituted the study population. Each institution was treated as a distinct group. To ensure equal representation, the researcher assigned a quota of eight (8) respondents to each research institution. In every institution, the respondents to the study who fit the necessary inclusion criteria were then sampled until the desired number of eight participants was attained. The sampling of respondents in the respective institutions was not random, but was done on the basis of accessibility and availability. This was done in all the 48 research institutions. In this way, the study has guaranteed that all the research institutions provide the identical amount of respondents, which made it possible to make meaningful comparisons across the institutions without affecting the creation of the sample structure as it was balanced and representative (Creswell, 2020). Sampled respondents were obtained using Yamane's (1967) formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$\text{Hence, } n = \frac{10756}{1 + (10756 \times 0.0025)} = 386 \text{ respondents}$$

### 3.4 Research Instruments

Data collection was done using questionnaires. Questionnaires are a research tool used to collect data from individuals about their opinions, attitudes, behaviors, or demographic information (Gall & Borg, 2014). They are generally a series of questions that can either be open-ended (that gives the respondents broad leeway and allows them to detail their response) or closed-ended (where the respondents are given one or more fixed responses from which they choose) (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Questionnaires allow the researchers to gather data in standardized fashion, or in the same manner, asking the same question and getting the same response. This standardization makes it possible to compare answers of different participants and is based on the validity of the data (Gall & Borg, 2014).

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures are systematic methods and techniques used to gather information or data for research purposes (Babbie, 2012). Respondents were expected to give informed consent before filling the questionnaires, so that the participation was informed and voluntary. The aspect of confidentiality and privacy was ensured through signing the consent form and giving privacy guarantees at the start of the data collection process. Respondents had up to one week to fill the questionnaires at their own time. Respondents who did not complete and return the questionnaires within the one-week period were followed up through reminders. Where no response was received after the follow-up period, the questionnaires were treated as non-responses and were excluded from the final analysis. The study proceeded with only the duly completed and returned questionnaires.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Prior to involving data analysis, data was cleaned by removing errors, missing values and homogenization of data. SPSS Statistical software version 25 was used. Data obtained was quantitative in nature. Inferential and descriptive statistics were applied. Descriptive statistical data such as mean, standard deviation were calculated. This helped result in the materialisation of the general trends and features of the variables. Inferential statistics were used in the study as correlation analysis and linear regression to describe the nature of association and strength of relationship

derived between variables and the testing of the study hypothesis (Hair et al., 2017). In linear regression, the regression model was used to explain the correlation between the independent and the dependable variables (Kothari, 2008). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which produced standardized responses across all respondents from the 48 research institutions. The use of closed-ended questions, including Likert-scale items, enabled the quantification of respondents' perceptions and characteristics, making the data suitable for regression modeling after appropriate scaling and aggregation. Regression analysis is particularly appropriate for questionnaire-based survey data because it allows for the examination of relationships among multiple measured variables simultaneously. Two measures, the magnitude and the direction, are provided by linear regression, which also indicates which predictors impact significantly on performance.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon_0$$

Where:

Y	=	Performance of research institutions
$\beta_0$	=	Constant
$\beta_1$	=	Coefficients of Independent variable
$X_1$	=	Stakeholders' focus
$\epsilon_0$	=	Error term assumed to be a constant

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

To maintain the highest ethical standards, confidentiality and privacy was strictly observed by ensuring that all personal information obtained about the participants was kept confidential and used by the researcher only. The study involved an element of informed consent. Participation To authenticate the study and motivate the participants to cooperate, an introductory letter by the Catholic University of East Africa was secured. The ethics research board at the university was also involved in a rigorous ethical examination of the study. This review has seen to it that all the elements of the research design have been reviewed in the light of best practice and ethics. This multifaceted strategy ensures that the participants received all the information, their data were secured and their rights were honored during the research process.

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

The general profile of the respondents was evaluated where the leve of education and the lengh of time working for the rsearch institutions was established.

#### 4.1.1 Education Level of the Respondents

As shown in the results (Table 1), 59.4% of respondents held master's degree, while 27.2% had undergraduate degrees. Only 8.1% and 5.3% had PhD and diploma level of education respectively. The distribution of educational level shows the well-educated nature of the research staff of the research institutions of Kenya.

**Table 1: Education Level of the Respondents**

Education level	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	15	5.3
Undergraduate degree	77	27.2
Masters degree	168	59.4
PhD	23	8.1
Total	283	100.0

#### 4.1.2 Number of Years working for the Research Institutions

Findings (Figure 1) indicate that, 38.5% had worked in the research institutions in excess of 10 years, 35.3% had worked 6-10 years and 26.1% had worked in the research institutions for less than 5 years. This distribution indicates a balanced workforce with long-term institutional knowledge and fairly new perspectives.

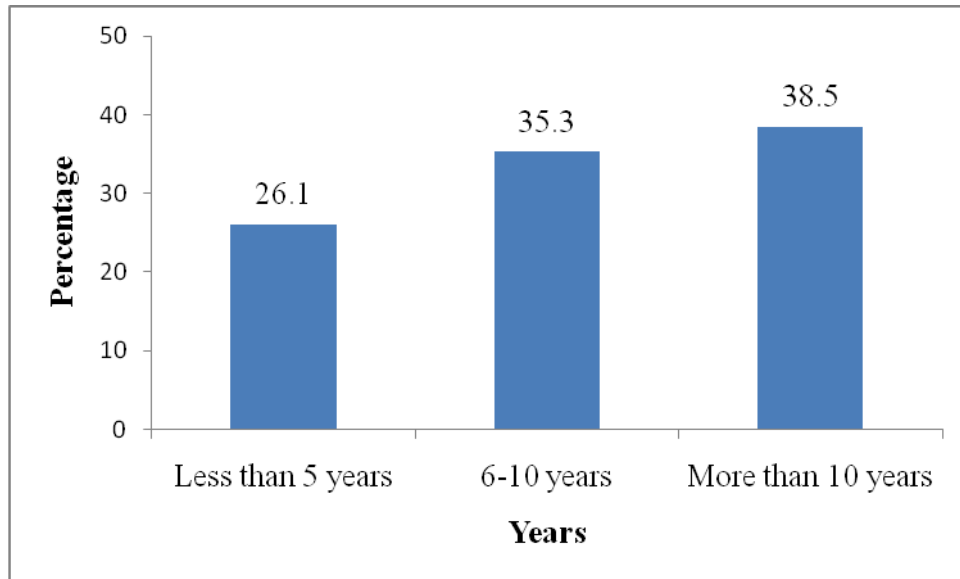


Figure 1: Number of Years working for the Research Institutions

#### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is a fundamental component of a research study that summarizes and organizes data to describe its main characteristics. Respondents were to indicate their level of agreement on the statements given where SD= Strongly disagree, D=Disagree, N= Neutral, A=Agree while SA= Strongly Agree. Results are presented in terms of percentages, means and standard deviations.

##### 4.2.1 Stakeholders' focus

Results in Table 2 shows that most respondents agreed (mean of 4.21) that the institution engages in regular consultation with government, civil society, or community groups to guide its research direction. Further, 52.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, another 30.0% agreed while 9.9% disagreed that the institution engages in regular consultation with government, civil society, or community groups to guide its research direction. There were 48.4% of respondents who strongly agreed while 32.5% agreed that collaboration with peer institutions enhances research quality, innovation, and institutional performance. The mean of 4.18 showed that majority of members agreed that collaboration with peer institutions enhances research quality, innovation, and institutional performance. Similarly, 43.1% of the respondents agreed that the expectations of partners (e.g., donors, sponsors, industry) are integrated into the institution's research strategies and objectives. About 36.7% strongly agreed and another 9.5% were neutral that the expectations of partners (e.g., donors, sponsors, industry) are integrated into the institution's research strategies and objectives. This was also supported by a mean of 3.89, showing that respondents agreed that the expectations of partners (e.g., donors, sponsors, industry) are integrated into the institution's research strategies and objectives.

Table 2: Stakeholders' focus

Statements	Percentages					Mean	SD
	SD	D	N	A	SA		

The institution aligns its research priorities with the needs of the local community and broader society	3.2	5.3	21.2	35.7	34.6	3.93	1.03
The institution effectively contributes to solving national or societal challenges through its research initiatives	3.2	7.8	18	37.8	33.2	3.90	1.05
The institution engages in regular consultation with government, civil society, or community groups to guide its research direction	2.1	9.9	5.3	30	52.7	4.21	1.06
The expectations of partners (e.g., donors, sponsors, industry) are integrated into the institution's research strategies and objectives	3.2	7.4	9.5	43.1	36.7	3.89	1.12
Effective partnerships and collaborations with other institutions are established and maintained and are aligned with their TQM practices	3.2	12	12.7	36.4	35.7	4.03	1.02
Assessment of the quality and performance of the partnerships and collaborations is usually done to ensure positive outcomes and organizational success	3.2	7.8	13.4	37.8	37.8	3.99	1.06
The institution frequently engages in knowledge sharing, benchmarking, or joint projects with peer research institutions	2.1	7.8	7.4	39.6	43.1	4.14	1.00
Collaboration with peer institutions enhances research quality, innovation, and institutional performance	2.1	7.4	9.5	32.5	48.4	4.18	1.02
<b>Overall mean score</b>						<b>4.03</b>	<b>1.04</b>

#### 4.2.2 Organisational Performance

Results in Table 3 showed that most respondents agreed (mean of 4.36) that patented innovations contribute to the institution's reputation, funding, or commercial success. Results further showed that 56.5% strongly agreed and 30.4% agreed that patented innovations contribute to the institution's reputation, funding, or commercial success. Similarly, 44.9% and 44.2% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that solving practical field problems has improved the institution's visibility, partnerships, and research impact. This is supported by a mean of 4.29 indicating that respondents agreed that solving practical field problems has improved the institution's visibility, partnerships, and research impact. Additionally, 39.2% and 38.2% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the research projects in the institution addresses real-life challenges faced by communities or industry sectors in Kenya. The statement had a mean of 4.08.

**Table 3: Organisational Performance**

Statements	Percentages	Mean	SD
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	SD	D	N	A	SA		
The research institution is very successful in securing external research funding from donors, grants, or government programs	1.1	7.8	7.4	40.6	43.1	4.15	1.03
There has been increased funds acquisition which has enhanced institution's research capacity and overall organisational performance	2.1	3.2	11	34.3	49.5	4.26	0.93
The institution often produces patentable innovations or technologies from its research activities	2.1	4.2	10.2	41.3	42	4.17	0.93
Patented innovations contributes to the institution's reputation, funding, or commercial success	2.1	3.5	7.4	30.4	56.5	4.36	0.92
The research projects in the institution addresses real-life challenges faced by communities or industry sectors in Kenya	2.1	3.5	17	39.2	38.2	4.08	0.94
Solving practical field problems has improved the institution's visibility, partnerships, and research impact	1.1	3.2	6.7	44.2	44.9	4.29	0.81
<b>Overall mean score</b>						4.22	0.93

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) as shown in Table 4. A p-value of less than 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance, indicating that the observed correlation was not due to chance.

**Table 4: Correlation Results**

		Organisational Performance	Stakeholder' focus
Organisational Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	283	
Stakeholders' focus	Pearson Correlation	.666**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	283	283

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.666 between stakeholders' focus and organizational performance of research institutions indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two variables. This finding suggests that as stakeholder focus improves organizational performance also increases. Research institutions that actively

identify and address the needs and expectations of their stakeholders are more likely to achieve higher efficiency, improved service delivery, and better overall outcomes.

#### 4.4 Regression Analysis

The study found that the stakeholders’ focus variable is positively and significantly related to organizational performance ( $\beta = 0.201, p > .05$ ) as shown in Table 5. This indicates that increased emphasis on stakeholder engagement, communication, and participation contributes to improved performance outcomes. Therefore, stakeholders’ focus has a significant influence on the organizational performance of research institutions in Kenya. The t-statistic of 4.652 and the positive coefficient 0.201 indicate that the stakeholders’ focus is positively related to the research findings. It indicates that the concentration of the stakeholders has a positive relation with the organizational performance and the correlation is significant at the statistical significance of 0.00.

$$Y = 0.440 + 0.201X_1$$

Y = Organizational performance of research institutions

X<sub>1</sub> = Stakeholders’ focus;

**Table 5: Regression Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.440	.157		2.803	.005
Stakeholders’ focus	.201	.043	.224	4.652	.000

a) Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Demographics of the Respondents

The results of the education level of the respondents show that the research institutions in Kenya have a significant workforce that is well educated and this is critical in meeting their research, innovation and knowledge dissemination mandate. A large proportion of the respondents with master degree (59.4) level is consistent with the fact that the research institutions are a knowledge-based organization, with advanced academic training levels that equip the staff with specialized expertise of research design, data analysis, and evidence-based decision making. These competencies are essential to deliver high quality research products and underpin the policy development and technological progress. Other researchers have found that the level of higher education of research personnel improves analytical ability, research efficiency, and performance in the institution on the whole (Richard, 2024). This is also reflected in the significant number of respondents who are undergraduate degree graduates (27.2) which suggests that the research does have a lot of technical and operating knowledge base to help in the day to day research activities. At the same time, the fact that the number of PhD holders (8.1%) is also comparatively small supports the ability of the institutions to conduct advanced research, supervise, and mentor junior employees. Researchers at the doctoral level typically have a significant part in securing research funding, spearheading multidisciplinary initiatives, and boosting institutional visibility in scholarly publications (Biegon 2024).

On work experience, the findings indicate that there is a balance in both long-serving and relatively new employees in the research institutions. The existence of high staff retention rates, especially among staff members with a ten-year experience level (38.5%), is an indicator of good institutional memory, continuity, and stability, which are essential in maintaining the quality of the research, organizational culture, and consistency in research processes and policies (Kamau et al., 2024a). Veteran workers are highly contextualized about institutional systems, the mechanism of funding and networks of stakeholders, which allows them to provide good solutions and mentorship to the junior employees. Simultaneously, those employees who have been less than five years of

experience (26.1%) bring new ideas, novel thoughts, and new technical capabilities, which become essential in coping with new research tendencies and technological progress. This population tends to be more flexible to change and open to the use of modern research methods and online resources. The gap is also bridged by the employees who have mid-level experience between six to ten years, and have a sense of institutional familiarity as well as an openness to innovation. This is because the long serving and newer employees co-exist and enable knowledge transfer, capacity building and collaborative learning. This kind of diversity in experience will make it creative, facilitate succession planning, and better the overall performance of the organization. These findings are consistent with recent studies in public research institutions, which emphasize that a balanced workforce experience profile strengthens innovation, efficiency, and sustainable institutional growth (Kamau et al., 2024b).

### 5.2 Descriptive Analysis

Most respondents strongly or generally agreeing (82.7%) with a mean of 4.21 that their research institutions consult government, civil society or community groups suggests meaningful stakeholder engagement which correlates with stronger performance in Kenyan research organizations. Studies in Kenya find that regular stakeholder involvement boosts accountability, alignment with public needs, and funding support (Waiharo & Otieno, 2023). For example, community-based, participatory public health interventions have a higher level of achieving the desired health services and community satisfaction. Besides, the extent of community participation in water projects was positively related to the achievements achieved in terms of timeliness and relevance in Nakuru County (Kamau, Lango, & Onsarigo, 2023). This is further demonstrated in the research aspirations of these institutions and indicates that there is a likely increase in the level of consultation to generate socially relevant and sustainable research, policy impact and performance.

The mean was 4.03 and standard deviation was 1.04 which implies that the respondents agreed to the view that the focus of stakeholders influenced the organizational performance. Somewhat high mean values (on average, 5 points on a 1-5 point Likert scale) and moderate dispersion indicates a combination of both similarity and relative consistency of the responses (Sahal & Bett, 2022). Studies in other sectors in Kenya found that participation by stakeholders has a positive influence on performance of renewable energy projects. From SOCE, research has confirmed that stakeholder engagement is high and it has strong influence on the financial performance (Bett, Andemariam and Abraham, 2023); and from health based NGOs that the outcome of projects depends on stakeholders engagement and feedback (Mbai, Senelwa and Muchelule, 2024). These studies reconfirm the general finding that, where the opinions of stakeholders are taken into consideration through participatory decision-making, where respect is shown for the interest represented, where there is appropriate dialogue between research organizations, there is a greater propensity for performance.

The observation that the average of 4.36 with 56.5 percent strongly agree and 30.4 percent agree that patented innovations are significant to the institution reputation, funding, or business achievement is congruent with the prevailing trends in the innovation ecosystem in Kenya. The universities and research institutions of Kenya are now starting to develop Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) and to build intellectual property policy frameworks to enable the transfer of research outputs into marketable and patentable products. This is a strategic change that should increase visibility, institutional credibility, and draw in local and international funding (Nakamura et al., 2025). According to a research publication by Nakamura et al. (2025) on Intellectual Property (IP) Commercialization in Kenya, it is noted that Kenyan universities are becoming very active in patenting and licensing of inventions, which is an activity that is contributing to their academic branding and economic gains. The study shows that, a company with clear IP strategies has a higher probability of achieving a more powerful partnership and enhanced research investments. In addition, a research by Mutinda (2023) has shown that in Kenya, many universities have developed Intellectual Property Rights Offices (IPROs) to ensure that an innovation is patented and commercialized. These IPROs come in quite handy in order to make patent applications and institutional gain associated with licensing agreement. These offices can lead to increased organisational competitiveness directly, as well as introduce new sources of income and cooperation.

The general mean was 4.22 and standard deviation of 0.93 that indicated that the respondents were in agreement that quality management practices influenced the overall performance of the research institutions in Kenya. The quality management practices in terms of leadership commitment, customer or stakeholder focus, continuous

improvement, employee training, and process control are probably perceived as the driving force toward efficiency enhancement, innovation, output quality, and institutional image. In India's Deming-Award industries, studies showed that various TQM practices directly and positively impact organisational performance, including both satisfaction and business efficacy (Mittal et al., 2023). In Malaysian higher education, quality management practices related to strategic leadership, vision, training and support have been found to foster innovative work behaviour and thereby improve academics' work performance (Chand & Lee, 2022). Also, in Tunisia, researchers found that TQM practices enhance organisational performance and innovation, particularly when mediated through organizational learning, showing how continuous learning and improvement bolster performance outcomes (Tajouri & Lakhali, 2024).

### 5.3 Correlation analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.666 between stakeholders' focus and organizational performance of research institutions demonstrates a strong positive relationship, indicating that effective stakeholders' focus significantly contributes to enhanced organizational performance. This finding is similar to the studies in multi sector fasciculus in other countries of the world. For instance, when using the above definition of stakeholder oriented behavior, the study of Colombian companies showed that stakeholder (employee, customer, society) engagement was significantly related to predicting high reputation, financial performance and market performance (Stakeholder Orientation Model) (Gonzalez et al., 2020). In another context, the analysis of the banking sector at Oman (Bank Dhofar) has concluded that the relationship between stakeholders of the company and the establishment (staff, customers, shareholders) is strongly correlated with the performance of the internal establishment or profitability and customer satisfaction.

### 5.4 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis results demonstrate that stakeholders' focus has a positive and statistically significant relationship with organizational performance in research institutions in Kenya. The positive beta value ( $\beta = 0.201$ ) also shows that the increase in stakeholder-based practices results in the following growth in the performance of the organization. The strategic significance of putting stakeholders first in organization planning and quality improvement programs is highlighted by this finding. The t-statistic of 4.652 reported is another detail that supports the strength of the given relationship because it is possible to say that the focus of stakeholders can be considered a solid predictor of performance consequences. Also, the level of significance that is reported to be 0.000 shows that the relationship is significant meaning that the effect reported is unlikely to have just happened. These results align with stakeholder theory, which posits that organizations that actively consider and integrate stakeholder interests tend to perform better due to enhanced trust, cooperation, and resource support. In the context of research institutions, effective stakeholder focus may translate into improved research relevance, better resource mobilization, stronger partnerships, and increased institutional credibility (Turnbull et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There was a positive and significant relationship between stakeholders' focus and organizational performance. Stakeholders' focus was strongly and positively correlated with organizational performance. Respondents agreed that stakeholders' focus affected the organizational performance of research institutions in Kenya. The research found out that those institutions that are keen to involve the government agencies, civil society, communities and other partners are likely to offer better outcomes of the relevant, impactful and sustainable research results. The correlation was high and respondents agreed that stakeholders' focus affected the organizational performance which means that institutions that have a high stakeholder involvement are more receptive to societal requirements, adjustable to national priorities, and would be supported, funded, and trusted. This justifies that stakeholder focus is a strategic pillar in the increase of the relevancy of research and institutional legitimacy in the rest of the research landscape in Kenya.

The study recommends that the research institutions in Kenya should establish well-defined architecture of stakeholders' engagements in research as a way of ensuring the aspect of inclusiveness, transparency and responsiveness in their research planning and implementation. This may involve the formation of stakeholder

advisory boards, periodic consultations and alignment of research objectives to those of stakeholders. In this manner, such institutions will not only enhance their relevance and credibility but, also, will draw in funding, increase collaboration and impact policy. The long-term relations with the key partners will also be maintained through training of the staff on the stakeholder mapping and communication. Feedback loops should be emphasized in order to make sure the voices of stakeholders are always incorporated in the institutional strategies. I consider the incorporation of systematic stakeholder engagement practices important since stakeholders such as researchers, funding partners, policymakers, and community groups are very significant in institutional priorities and long-term research outputs. To increase a sense of legitimacy and resource inflow, institutions must match engagement with strategic objectives. Studies conducted in other similar organizational set ups show that organizations that have strong stakeholder feedback mechanism experience more positive and sustainable results.

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