

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES IN TVET PROGRAMS AND YOUTH PERFORMANCE IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs in the County Government of Nairobi play an important role in equipping youth with skills to meet labor market demands and drive socio-economic development. Despite its potential, youth performance in TVET institutions faces challenges linked to project selection and partnership development. This study explored the influence of strategic factors on youth performance in TVET institutions in the County Government of Nairobi, with a focus on project selection and partnership development. The study targeted a population of 142 individuals, including educators, administrators and policymakers within TVET institutions and affiliated stakeholders. Using Cochran's formula, a sample size of 104 respondents was determined. Data was collected through structured questionnaires designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 25.0. The results assisted policymakers, TVET administrators and development partners in implementing evidence-based strategies to align TVET programs with labor market demands, improving employability and sustainable development in the County Government of Nairobi, Kenya. The study findings revealed that project selection and partnership development significantly influence youth performance in TVET institutions within Nairobi County. Regarding project selection, 88.6% of respondents emphasized that feasibility analysis is critical for guaranteeing initiatives are realistic, while 87.5% highlighted the importance of impact assessments for long-term youth outcomes. Partnership development recorded comparatively lower implementation levels due to challenges in resource sharing and formalizing binding commitments. However, respondents acknowledged that effective partnerships directly increase opportunities for youth development and improve industry linkages. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 52.209$, $p < 0.05$), with project selection and partnership development positively influencing youth performance outcomes. The study concludes that although TVET institutions have established planning mechanisms, gaps still exist in the execution of partnership agreements and sustainability initiatives. Therefore, the study recommends the institutionalization of binding resource-sharing agreements and the strengthening of industry partnerships to bridge the gap between training and labor market demands. Furthermore, the establishment of integrated career transition and placement programs is recommended to enhance employability and practical skills acquisition among youth.

Key Words: Stakeholder Engagement Practices, TVET programs, Youth Performance, Project Selection, Collaborative Planning, County Government

Background of the study

Stakeholder engagement practices is a strategic process through which an organization or initiative interacts with individuals, groups, or entities that are affected by or can influence its operations. This process is particularly critical in youth performance projects, where stakeholders like governments, educational institutions, private sector employers, non-governmental organizations, and communities play a key role in shaping outcomes (Koros & Kamau, 2024). The objective of stakeholder engagement practices is to ensure that youth-focused initiatives are inclusive, well-coordinated, and aligned with the specific needs of young people, particularly in preparing them for employment, entrepreneurship, and active societal participation (Hussein, 2021). Through integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives, these projects can improve both program relevance and effectiveness in fostering youth development (Raha et al., 2021).

The constituents of stakeholder engagement practices are foundational in determining the success of youth performance projects. Key aspect is project selection, where stakeholders work together to identify and prioritize initiatives that directly target youth performance outcomes. Projects focusing on technical and vocational education, job placement services, and entrepreneurship support are often prioritized to bridge the gap between education and employment (Chelimo, 2022). Partnership development is an essential component of stakeholder engagement practices in youth projects. Effective partnerships between educational institutions and private sector employers, for example, can result in internships, apprenticeships, and job placements for young people (Maina & Muathe, 2023). These partnerships have evolved from ad hoc collaborations to structured, formalized agreements that ensure long-term benefits for youth.

Stakeholder engagement practices strategies in youth performance projects have evolved significantly over time. Traditionally, engagement was limited to consultation during the implementation phase (Raha et al., 2021). However, current approaches emphasize continuous engagement throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring that stakeholders contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages (Counties & Bor, 2021). This evolution reflects an increased focus on sustainability and the recognition that stakeholders are not just contributors but partners in youth empowerment. For instance, private sector involvement in TVET programs has expanded to include co-financing initiatives, offering mentorship, and designing curricula tailored to industry needs (Amubi & Kipkirui, 2023). These developments have made youth performance projects more dynamic and responsive to changing labor market demands (Njiiri, 2020). Engaging stakeholders in youth performance projects significantly improves outcomes by tackling issues like skill mismatches, unemployment, and limited resources. Through collaboration, stakeholders can develop pathways that help young people move into jobs or start their own businesses. The use of technology and digital tools has enhanced access to training and job opportunities, while virtual platforms have boosted efficiency and participation. Effective engagement leads to interventions that are relevant, sustainable, and impactful (Counties & Bor, 2021). This study examines how stakeholder engagement practices plays a role in TVET programs, highlighting essential success factors and evolving strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge in Kenya, contributing significantly to socio-economic issues and hindering the nation's development agenda. The youth unemployment rate stands at approximately 13.5%, with millions of young people struggling to access meaningful employment opportunities (KNBS, 2023). This alarming rate is compounded by a disparity in the skills acquired in education systems and those demanded in

the job market, leaving many young people without the tools to secure jobs (Amubi & Kipkirui, 2023). The consequences of unemployment among youth are dire, including increased poverty levels, mental health challenges, substance abuse, and heightened vulnerability to engaging in crime (World Bank, 2022).

The lack of structured youth empowerment programs has further exacerbated the situation, particularly in urban centers like Nairobi, where competition for limited opportunities is fierce (Mboya, 2023). Numerous youth-centered projects and initiatives have been introduced globally and regionally to mitigate unemployment and foster economic empowerment. However, in Kenya, many such programs are either underfunded, poorly implemented, or fail to address the root causes of unemployment (Njiri et al., 2024). Youth often face systemic barriers like inadequate access to capital for entrepreneurship, insufficient mentorship, and lack of platforms to showcase their skills. For instance, initiatives like the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) have shown promise but have been criticized for inefficiencies and limited outreach (Kariuki *et al.*, 2023).

Globally, youth-focused programs have demonstrated success in tackling unemployment through innovative approaches, including stakeholder-driven models. For example, countries like Germany and Australia have adopted apprenticeship systems to bridge skill gaps, integrating technical training and job placement (OECD, 2022). Besides, regional efforts in North and West Africa, like Morocco's National Initiative for Human Development, have focused on youth empowerment through vocational training and small business development. While these models provide valuable lessons, Kenya's unique socio-economic challenges require tailored approaches to address the specific needs of its youth (Amubi & Kipkirui, 2023).

despite efforts to empower Kenyan youth, the lack of stakeholder engagement practices in project planning and implementation remains a critical gap. key elements of stakeholder engagement practices like collaborative planning, project selection, and partnership development are often overlooked, resulting in initiatives that do not align with youth needs (Aluoch, 2021). The rapid evolution of the job market, driven by technological advancements and globalization, has outpaced the adaptive capacity of existing programs. For example, digital and creative economies, which present vast opportunities for youth, remain largely untapped due to inadequate training and investment in these sectors (Njiri et al., 2024). The persistent failure to address youth unemployment has far-reaching implications. Unemployed youth are more likely to experience social exclusion, reduced self-esteem, and mental health issues, exacerbating the challenges they face. Societal stigma around unemployment often results in youth being marginalized, which deters them from seeking help or engaging in initiatives that could improve their prospects (Mutua et al., 2022). These issues point out the urgent need for systemic and sustainable interventions to empower youth, with a specific emphasis on leveraging stakeholder engagement practices thus ensuring effectiveness and sustainability of youth performance projects.

In Kenya, while some youth-focused initiatives have been implemented, they often lack coordination and the active involvement of relevant stakeholders. This has resulted in fragmented efforts that fail to address the multifaceted challenges youth face (Odhiambo, 2022). This study therefore seeks to establish how stakeholder engagement practices in TVET Programs influence youth performance in Nairobi County.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of stakeholder engagement practices on youth performance in TVET programs in the County government of Nairobi, Kenya.

Specific Objectives of the Study

- i. To determine the influence of project selection on youth performance in TVET programs in the County government of Nairobi, Kenya.
- ii. To examine the influence of partnership development on youth performance in TVET programs in the County government of Nairobi, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by sociologists George Homans (1958) and Peter (1964), posits that human relationships are formed and maintained based on the exchange of resources both tangible and intangible between individuals or groups. The theory presumes that the cost-benefit framework directs social behavior, which is where people coordinate with actions that bring the highest net benefit (Mugalo, 2022). SET is being used comprehensively in the study of organizational and interpersonal relationships, like the choice of projects and development of partnerships. For TVET programs, participants like employers, policymakers, teachers, and learners are involved in these because they anticipate to gain, for instance, by gaining access to human capital with skills, enhanced employability, and social mobility (Onyango, 2023). Theory is interested in identifying the element of benefit for all in sustaining alliances because stakeholders invest where they will enjoy significant rewards, whether it is in funds, social contacts, or vocation (Semali, 2024).

SET claims the quality of relation in alliances hinges on weighing cost versus benefit. In case either side feels unequal the giving too much and the getting less than the relationship ends or shrinks (Mugalo, 2022). For example, in industry-TVET collaborations, when industry players perceive that competitors', graduates are poorly equipped with necessary skills, they can pull out support or look for alternative training (Njiiri, 2020). On the other hand, where there is mutual gain, e.g., greater graduate employment and continued supply of trained labor to enterprises, collaborations succeed. SET has been used in different sectors to study collaboration dynamics. Research has established that effective partnerships, like infrastructure and community development partnerships, are based on perceived fairness and mutuality. In TVET programs, the institutions will partner with industry stakeholders whose objective is also to enhance the employability of youth, further establishing that partnerships are sustained by anticipated value exchange (Onyango, 2023).

Even worthwhile, SET has been criticized for favoring rational choice and self-interests as against other parameters like altruism, culture, and trust. It is quoted that not all is transactional there are stakeholders engaged in alliances as a social obligation or to help neighbourhood development even without short-term gain to measure (Semali, 2024). For instance, certain industry actors participate in TVET programs as corporate social responsibility without necessarily expecting immediate financial returns. Nevertheless, SET is still a useful tool for examining stakeholder relationships, providing information on the motivations, costs and benefits that underlie partnership development in TVET programs. Through understanding these dynamics, TVET institutions and industry players can organize more sustainable collaborations that enhance the performance of young people and align training to the needs of the labor market (Njiiri, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework explores the relationship between stakeholder engagement practices and youth performance in TVET programs in the County government of Nairobi, Kenya. Independent variables including project selection, and partnership development. Project selection ensures that viable, useful projects align with stakeholder needs, resulting in improved outcomes. Partnership development aims to establish trust and mutual benefits,

which lead to greater program sustainability and innovation. These activities are anticipated to lead to better skills acquisition, employability, and career progression for TVET students.

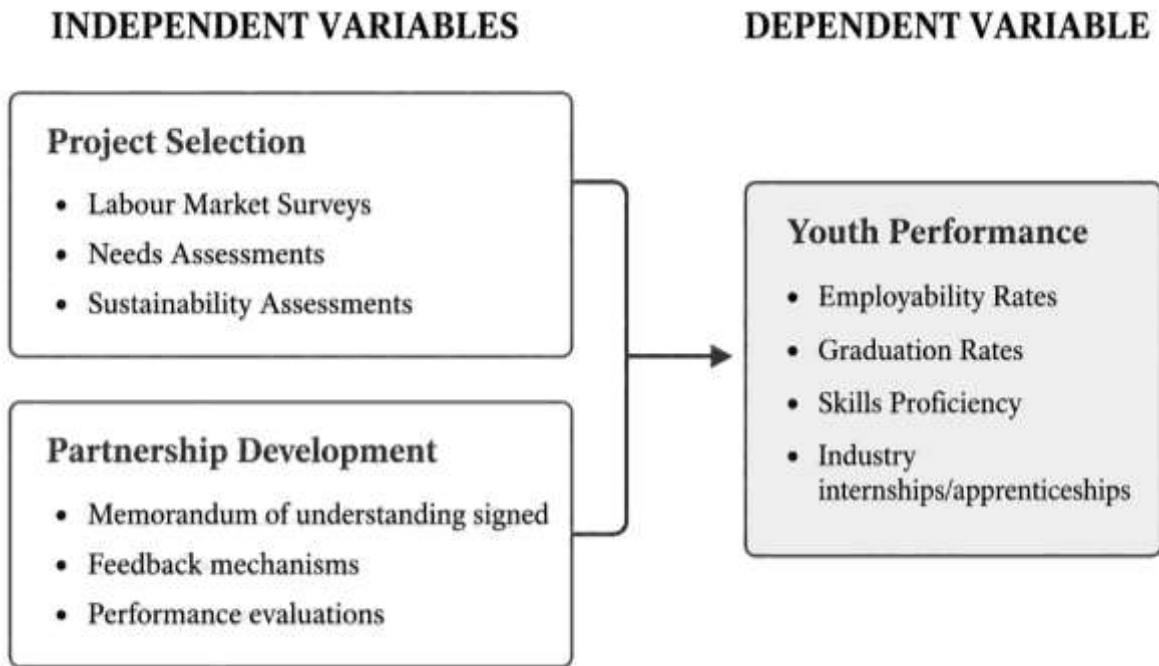


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2025)

Empirical Literature Review

Project Selection and Youth Performance

Project selection is a critical determinant of youth performance in various vocational and training programs worldwide. It involves the systematic evaluation and prioritization of potential projects based on factors like feasibility, alignment with objectives, resource availability, and potential impact (Sgarz, 2021). Studies globally and in Africa have shown how strategic project selection can significantly influence the success of initiatives aimed at improving youth skills and employability (Makato, 2022). Globally, research shows the importance of aligning project goals with youth needs and market demands. In Canada, a study by Hussein, (2021) on TVET programs emphasized the role of project selection in youth skill development. The researchers found that programs focused on industries with high employment potential, like technology and healthcare, resulted in higher employability rates among graduates. Besides, in Germany, Elsayegh (2021) examined the relationship between project selection and youth apprenticeship performance. The study revealed that selecting projects based on local industry demands and integrating practical skill training significantly enhanced youth productivity and job placement rates. These findings emphasize the importance of aligning project goals with labor market trends to maximize youth performance (Makato, 2022).

Strategic project selection has proven crucial regionally in enhancing youth outcomes in vocational programs. In Nigeria, research by Aiman (2023) on government-sponsored TVET projects found that selecting initiatives that incorporated practical training and industry partnerships boosted youth employability. For example, projects targeting the agricultural value chain not only provided relevant skills but also facilitated entrepreneurial ventures, leading to improved youth performance. Besides, in South Africa, a study by Sgarz (2021) on youth skills development projects highlighted that prioritizing project addressing specific

community needs, like renewable energy or IT training, significantly improved youth engagement and job-readiness.

In Kenya, the role of project selection in youth performance has also been explored. A study by Mwangi & Gichuhi (2022) on TVET programs in Nairobi County revealed that selecting projects aligned with emerging industries, such as digital marketing and green energy, had a positive impact on youth skills acquisition and employment opportunities. The researchers emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement during the project selection process, ensuring that the chosen initiatives addressed both youth aspirations and market needs (Aluoch, 2021). Moreover, Kariuki & Kiende (2024) found that youth performance improved when project selection considered factors like resource availability, mentorship opportunities, and alignment with long-term career paths.

Further examples from other countries illustrate similar trends. In India, Aiman (2023) studied government-led entrepreneurship projects targeting rural youth and found that selecting initiatives focused on technology-driven industries enhanced innovation and self-employment rates. Likewise, in Australia, research by Semali (2024) demonstrated that youth engaged in projects aligned with industries like renewable energy and information technology displayed higher completion rates and better performance outcomes. Both studies highlight the universal relevance of aligning project goals with market demands to optimize youth potential. Therefore, the empirical literature explains that project selection plays a significant role in influencing youth performance across diverse contexts. Through selecting initiatives that align with market demands, resource availability, and youth aspirations, programs can foster better engagement, skills development, and employability among young people (Makato, 2022). These insights emphasize the need for careful planning and strategic decision-making during project selection to ensure the success of youth-focused initiatives.

Partnership Development and Youth Performance

Partnership development has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing youth performance in TVET programs globally. Establishing strong partnerships between governments, educational institutions, industries, and other stakeholders ensures that training programs align with labor market demands. A study by Gachunga, Karanja & Kihara (2020), examined the role of partnerships between vocational training institutes and the mining industry in enhancing youth performance in Western Australia. The research found that collaborative training programs designed with input from mining companies resulted in improved technical skills and job readiness among young participants. The partnerships provided access to cutting-edge mining equipment, internships, and mentorship opportunities, allowing students to gain practical, hands-on experience (Elsayegh, 2021). These partnerships significantly increased youth employment rates in the mining sector, demonstrating the importance of aligning training with industry demands.

In the U.S., a study by Elsayegh (2021) analyzed the impact of partnerships between community colleges and manufacturing firms on youth skill development. These collaborations created specialized programs in advanced manufacturing, incorporating internships, workplace simulations, and mentorships. The study revealed that youth who participated in these programs showed higher graduation rates, job placement success, and industry-relevant skills (Mbeche, Riechi & Akala, 2023). The partnerships addressed skill gaps in the manufacturing sector while simultaneously improving youth performance and employability. In Germany, a dual apprenticeship system highlights the success of partnerships between vocational schools and industries. According to Makato (2022), this collaboration bridges the gap between theoretical learning and practical experience, leading to higher employability rates among youth. The structured integration of industry-specific training ensures that students graduate with the requisite expertise needed to perform efficiently in the workforce. Besides, in Japan, partnerships between public and private sectors have advanced youth skill development. As

observed by Gachunga, Karanja & Kihara (2020), collaborative initiatives between the government and technology firms introduced youth to emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics, equipping them with cutting-edge skills and improving their performance in high-demand industries.

Partnership building has greatly enhanced TVET youth performance in Africa. There were documented partnerships between TVET institutions and the automotive sector in Gauteng, South Africa, which resulted in the establishment of specialized training facilities. These partnership initiatives enhanced technical competence and employment rates, while other forms of support like scholarships and career counseling enhanced youth motivation (Mbeche et al., 2023). In Uganda, collaboration between agribusiness firms and TVET institutions offered technical farm competencies and work experience, and enhanced the productivity of youths and motivated them to become entrepreneurs (Elsayegh, 2021). Collaboration with agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia transformed rural youths' work through the introduction of modern farming methods (Mbeche et al., 2023). In Rwanda, public-private partnerships transformed TVET curricula in terms of addressing the requirements of the job market, particularly in construction and hospitality, to make sure that the youth were well equipped for the economy (Maina & Muathe, 2023). Ghana, too, experienced the success of collaboration between NGOs, corporations, and local governments, which supported youth entrepreneurship, mentored them, and opened markets for them (Mbeche et al., 2023).

Kenya's Ajira Digital Program, which is government, private technology firm, and international donor-backed, illustrates the strength of partnership in enhancing youth performance. Through the provision of digital skills and tools, this program enhanced youth participation in digital environments (Muthoni & Karanja, 2020). The above illustrations illustrate how such high-strength partnerships can improve the quality of youth training, tailor programs to labor market needs, and create sustainable economic opportunities (Elsayegh, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized descriptive research design with a quantitative approach (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population comprised approximately 142 stakeholders, including decision-makers, implementers and policymakers involved in TVET programs within the County Government of Nairobi. These included the CEC for Education and Youth Affairs, County Director of Vocational Training, vocational training officers, TVET Agencies, development partners, industry employers, trainers, liaison officers and TVET trainees. The study sought to capture the perspectives of these stakeholders to gain an all-inclusive comprehension of how stakeholder engagement practices influence youth performance in TVET programs.

A stratified random sampling method was utilized to sample participants undertaking TVET programs in Nairobi County, Kenya. The population was divided into separate strata based on characteristics such as institution, course specialization and year of study. Random sampling within each stratum helped provide balanced representation and reduce selection bias. Cochran's (1977) sample size formula was adopted because it is widely recognized for determining sample sizes in quantitative studies involving proportions (Singh & Masuku, 2023). The study achieved a sample size of 104 respondents drawn from the target population of 142 stakeholders.

A questionnaire served as the main data collection instrument and primary data was collected systematically to enhance accuracy, reliability and ethical compliance. The research license was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and approved by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). Quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended questionnaire items, including

Likert scale questions, were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 25.0 for analysis.

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data collected. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were utilised to examine the characteristics of the data and assess stakeholder engagement factors. Tables and figures were used for data presentation. Inferential statistics involved Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis to determine the nature and strength of relationships between stakeholder engagement practices and youth performance outcomes in TVET programmes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study targeted a sample size (n) of 104 respondents. The figure is determined using a suitable sampling formula from a target population (N) of 142. The study achieved a response rate of 84.6%, with 88 out of 104 distributed questionnaires returned. This high return rate indicates strong respondent engagement and exceeds the recommended statistical threshold of 70%. Thus, confirming the data is sufficient for reliable analysis and generalization of findings.

Project Selection

This section analyzes the how project selection influences youth performance in TVET programs within Nairobi County.

Frequency Distribution for Project Selection

Table 2 Frequency Distribution for Project Selection

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Feasibility analysis ensures initiatives are realistic.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	6 (6.8%)	34 (38.6%)	44 (50.0%)	4.33	0.84
Feasibility analysis helps identify potential risks.	2 (2.3%)	2 (2.3%)	8 (9.1%)	37 (42.0%)	39 (44.3%)	4.24	0.92
Proper analysis ensures efficient resource allocation.	2 (2.3%)	3 (3.4%)	9 (10.2%)	41 (46.6%)	33 (37.5%)	4.14	0.91
Cost-benefit evaluation ensures best value.	3 (3.4%)	4 (4.5%)	13 (14.8%)	35 (39.8%)	33 (37.5%)	4.03	1.03
Cost-benefit helps prioritize impactful initiatives.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	10 (11.4%)	39 (44.3%)	35 (39.8%)	4.18	0.85
Cost-benefit contributes to efficient use of resources.	3 (3.4%)	5 (5.7%)	8 (9.1%)	38 (43.2%)	34 (38.6%)	4.08	1.02
Impact assessments identify long-term effects.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	7 (8.0%)	33 (37.5%)	44 (50.0%)	4.32	0.85
Previous assessments guide future initiatives.	2 (2.3%)	4 (4.5%)	12 (13.6%)	36 (40.9%)	34 (38.6%)	4.09	0.98
						4.18	0.92

The results show a total mean of 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.92, indicating that project selection is a significant determinant of youth performance. Respondents strongly believe that a systematic evaluation of potential projects is essential for aligning TVET initiatives with youth needs. The highest-rated item, feasibility analysis, ensures initiatives are realistic" (M = 4.33, SD = 0.84), underscoring the importance of the systematic evaluation described by Sgarz

(2021). This finding aligns with the research by Hussein (2021) and Elsayegh (2021), who found that selecting projects based on realistic local industry demands significantly enhances job placement rates. In the context of Nairobi County, this feasibility focus reflects the insights of Mwangi & Gichuhi (2022), who argued that selecting projects aligned with emerging industries like digital marketing and green energy provides the most realistic pathways for youth skill acquisition.

The high mean for impact assessments identifying long-term effects ($M = 4.32, SD = 0.85$) validates the regional findings of Sgarz (2021) in South Africa, where prioritising projects that address specific community needs improved long-term job readiness. Thus, TVET managers in Nairobi are effectively mirroring the strategic project selection processes that Makato (2022) identified as crucial for maximising youth potential.

The items regarding cost-benefit evaluation ($M = 4.03, SD = 1.03$) and previous assessments ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.98$), while still high, showed slightly more variation in responses. This suggests that while there is consensus on the value of these tools, their practical application in prioritising impactful initiatives (Aiman, 2023) may vary depending on the specific resource constraints of the institution. As Kariuki & Kiende (2024) noted, youth performance improves significantly when selection considers resource availability and mentorship, suggesting that the best value is not just financial but also involves the long-term career support provided to the graduates.

Partnership Development

This section examines the fourth objective, which sought to establish the influence of partnership development on youth performance in TVET programs within Nairobi County.

Table 3 Frequency Distribution for partnership development

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Formal partnership agreements are clearly defined.	3 (3.4%)	7 (8.0%)	13 (14.8%)	38 (43.2%)	27 (30.7%)	3.90	1.05
Terms of agreements are regularly reviewed.	4 (4.5%)	8 (9.1%)	17 (19.3%)	34 (38.6%)	25 (28.4%)	3.77	1.11
Clear agreements are essential for setting mutual goals.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	5 (5.7%)	37 (42.0%)	42 (47.7%)	4.32	0.81
There is effective sharing of resources.	5 (5.7%)	10 (11.4%)	19 (21.6%)	32 (36.4%)	22 (25.0%)	3.64	1.15
Stakeholders contribute necessary resources.	4 (4.5%)	8 (9.1%)	15 (17.0%)	36 (40.9%)	25 (28.4%)	3.80	1.09
Resource-sharing agreements are respected.	3 (3.4%)	7 (8.0%)	21 (23.9%)	35 (39.8%)	22 (25.0%)	3.75	1.04
All stakeholders gain mutual benefits.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	8 (9.1%)	42 (47.7%)	34 (38.6%)	4.20	0.82
Stakeholders understand shared benefits.	2 (2.3%)	4 (4.5%)	12 (13.6%)	41 (46.6%)	29 (33.0%)	4.03	0.94
Mutual benefit ensures sustainability.	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.4%)	8 (9.1%)	35 (39.8%)	42 (47.7%)	4.32	0.78
						3.97	1.00

The results show an aggregate mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 1.00. This is the lowest aggregate score among the four independent variables, suggesting that while partnership development is considered important, its practical implementation faces more challenges than

the planning phases. The highest-rated items, clear agreements, are essential for setting mutual goals (M = 4.32, SD = 0.81) and mutual benefit ensures sustainability (M = 4.32, SD = 0.78), emphasising the findings of Gachunga, Karanja & Kihara (2020). Their study on Australian mining partnerships demonstrated that training programmes designed with mutual goals led to improved job readiness. The high mean supports the success of the Ajira Digital Program mentioned by Muthoni & Karanja (2020), where government and private firm alignment created sustainable economic opportunities for youth.

The item all stakeholders gain mutual benefits (M = 4.20, SD = 0.82) aligns with the findings of Makato (2022) regarding the German dual apprenticeship system, which bridges the gap between theory and practice through mutual benefit. This is consistent with Mbeche et al. (2023), who noted that partnerships in South Africa's automotive sector enhanced youth motivation and employment because both the industry and the institutions saw the value in the exchange. However, the variable was pulled down by lower scores in effective sharing of resources (M = 3.64, SD = 1.15) and resource-sharing agreements being respected (M = 3.75, SD = 1.04). These findings highlight a practical gap discussed by Elsayegh (2021) in the Ugandan agribusiness sector, where the productivity of youth depends heavily on the actual transfer of technical farm competencies and equipment. The higher standard deviation in these areas indicates a lack of consensus among respondents, suggesting that while stakeholders agree on the theory of partnership, the actual exchange of resources remains a friction point in Nairobi County. This reflects the challenges of establishing the specialised training facilities and equipment access described by Mbeche et al. (2023) as essential for high-strength partnerships.

Youth Performance

This section provides the descriptive analysis of the dependent variable which is youth performance.

Table 4 Frequency Distribution for Youth Performance

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mea	SD
						n	
Youth demonstrate improved practical skills.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	8 (9.1%)	38 (43.2%)	38 (43.2%)	4.24	0.8 4
Quality of training impacts employability.	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.5%)	32 (36.4%)	51 (58.0%)	4.51	0.6 2
Soft skills training improves adaptability.	2 (2.3%)	3 (3.4%)	10 (11.4%)	39 (44.3%)	34 (38.6%)	4.14	0.9 1
Employer involvement enhances skill relevance.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)	7 (8.0%)	35 (39.8%)	42 (47.7%)	4.30	0.8 3
Modern training facilities improve performance.	3 (3.4%)	8 (9.1%)	13 (14.8%)	34 (38.6%)	30 (34.1%)	3.91	1.0 8
Partnerships improve job market placement.	2 (2.3%)	4 (4.5%)	9 (10.2%)	36 (40.9%)	37 (42.0%)	4.16	0.9 5
Internships enhance technical competency.	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	3 (3.4%)	30 (34.1%)	53 (60.2%)	4.52	0.6 6
						4.25	0.8 4

The results in the table show an aggregate mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.84, indicating a high level of agreement that stakeholder-driven interventions directly impact youth outcomes. The highest-rated item, internships enhance technical competency (M = 4.52, SD = 0.66), reflects the empirical findings of Elsayegh (2021) and Makato (2022). In the German dual apprenticeship system and Ugandan agribusiness sector, internships were identified as the primary bridge between theoretical learning and industry-ready skills. Besides, quality of training impacts employability (M = 4.51, SD = 0.62) and supports the observations of Hussein

(2021), who found that TVET programmes focused on high-demand industries result in higher employability rates.

Employer involvement enhances skill relevance (M = 4.30, SD = 0.83) and validates the research by Onyango (2023) and Mbeche et al. (2023), which emphasises that curriculum design in Nairobi and South Africa must be co-created with industry players to ensure skills are not obsolete. The high mean suggests that employer engagement is viewed as more than just a partnership; it is a quality assurance mechanism for youth success.

Interestingly, 'modern training facilities improve performance' received the lowest mean (M = 3.91, SD = 1.08) and the highest deviation. This mirrors the discussion in your literature review regarding the disparity between planning and resource sharing. The data suggests that respondents prioritise industry-aligned curricula (Mbeche et al., 2023) and practical work experience (Makato, 2022) as the more critical drivers of performance, especially when high-tech equipment might be inaccessible or poorly maintained.

Correlation Analysis

The study used Pearson Correlation to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Table 5 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Youth Performance	Project Selection	Partnership Development
Youth Performance	1.000		
Project Selection	0.714	1.000	
Partnership Development	0.521	0.412	1.000

Project selection was followed with a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$), validating Makato (2022)'s view on strategic alignment. Partnership development showed a moderate yet significant correlation ($r=0.521$), aligning with descriptive findings that resource-sharing challenges slightly dampen the correlation coefficient.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was conducted to assess the predictive power of the four stakeholder engagement practices on the dependent variable.

Table 6 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.846	0.716	0.702	0.458

The Coefficient of Determination (R^2) of 0.716 indicates that 71.6% of the variance in youth performance in Nairobi County TVET programmes is explained by the combined effect of project selection, and partnership development. The adjusted R^2 of 0.702 remains high, suggesting the model has strong generalisability. This result provides robust empirical support for stakeholder theory, demonstrating that systematic engagement accounts for the vast majority of performance outcomes.

Table 7 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.854	4	10.964	52.209	.000b
Residual	17.430	83	0.210		
Total	61.284	87			

The ANOVA results reveal an F-statistic of 52.209 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the regression model is a statistically significant fit for the data and that the independent variables collectively are reliable predictors of youth performance.

Table 8 Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	0.842	0.312		2.698	0.008
Project selection	0.285	0.076	0.265	3.750	0.000
Partnership development	0.142	0.068	0.132	2.088	0.040

The regression equation is: $Y = 0.842 + 0.285X_1 + 0.142X_2$

The coefficients indicate that all the variables are statistically significant predictors of youth performance ($p < 0.05$).

Project Selection (X_1) had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.265, p = 0.000$), supporting Makato (2022) regarding market-aligned initiatives.

Partnership Development (X_2) showed the least, yet still significant, unique contribution to the model ($\beta = 0.132, p = 0.040$). The smaller beta value likely reflects the implementation and resource-sharing friction identified by Mbeche et al. (2023) in the descriptive analysis.

Conclusions

The research concludes that the technical feasibility of TVET initiatives is highly dependent on the quality of pre-investment evaluation on project selection. The high agreement on feasibility and impact assessments indicates that the current institutional culture values evidence-based decision-making. However, the study finds that the integration of risk assessment into the selection phase remains a critical area for improvement. A project selection framework that prioritizes long-term employability over short-term political visibility is essential for ensuring that TVET investments produce a high return on human capital.

The study identifies an execution inconsistency in partnership development. The theoretical framework for collaboration defined that MOUs and shared visions is strong, however, the practical execution regarding resource sharing is lagging. Besides, the research concludes that partnerships in the TVET sector are currently more strategic than operational. Therefore, the County Government must move beyond formalizing agreements and focus on enforcing the tangible contribution of assets, equipment and expertise from private sector partners.

Recommendations

The analysis of project selection showed that while feasibility is considered, there is room to improve how projects are prioritized. The study recommends that the County treasury and the TVET directorate adopt a weighted selection matrix that prioritizes projects based on projected job placement rates rather than just cost-efficiency. This matrix should require a mandatory letter of support from at least three major industry players for any new TVET project and facility upgrade (Dos Santos et al., 2023). Besides, the County ensures that public funds are directed toward training programs that have a guaranteed direction to employment for the youth through fixing project selection in documented industry demand.

The current ad-hoc placement methods are insufficient as 94.3% of respondents identified internships as the most critical factor for technical competency. The study recommends that Nairobi County establishes a centralized career transition hub that connects all TVET institutions to a unified database of employers. Based on Snell-Siddle et al. (2019), the hub should manage a mandatory work integrated learning program. The hub will help students match with industry partners based on their skill sets. Therefore, the County can better monitor the quality of internships and ensure that every youth in a TVET program receives the industrial exposure needed to turn theoretical knowledge into professional expertise.

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