

KESSA CONFERENCE 2026

ABSTRACTS BOOKLET

Kenya Scholars & Studies Association

Theme:

***Scaling our Academic Prowess in a changing Geopolitical
and Economic environment***

Conference Dates:

4th September 2026 – 5th September 2026

Venue: Embassy Suites Lake Buena Vista Resort, Orlando, Florida, USA.



Celebrating Kenya's Intellectual capital Abroad & at Home!

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About KESSA

Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA) is a not-for-profit, 501c (3) professional association established in the State of Ohio in the United States for the exclusive purpose of advancing scholarly and scientific research work in/on the Republic of Kenya and the world at large. Its membership is drawn from all disciplines and persuasions. Select research publications by KESSA members can be found here [Recent Research Publications by KESSA members](#) and a sample of books authored by KESSA Scholars can be found here [KESSA Books' Authors](#). Donations to KESSA are federal tax deductible.

Our Mission

- To promote scholarly, scientific and research work in/on Kenya in all scholarly disciplines and persuasions.
- To promote and facilitate cooperation through the exchange of ideas and meaningful dialogue among groups and/or persons engaged in scholarly and scientific research work in/on Kenya.
- To encourage and facilitate the dissemination of information, [publications](#), [books](#) and other scholarly works on Kenya.
- To organize scholarly workshop panels, discussions, symposia, and [conferences](#) on Kenya.
- To [raise funds](#) in support of the foregoing activities.

Our History

KESSA was formed in 2008 by Profs. Kefa Otiso, Maurice Amutabi, C. Gichana Manyara and Francis Koti to primarily promote the intellectual and professional interests and welfare of Kenyan Diaspora scholars and their associates. Every year, since 2008, KESSA has held a conference that brings together scholars, professionals, policy makers, government officials, Embassy staff and well-wishers from USA, Canada, the UK, Kenya and Africa. The history of KESSA is briefly narrated by one of the founders Prof. Kefa Otiso in the Youtube video below;

[Prof. Kefa Otiso: History & benefits of annual Kenya Diaspora Scholars KESSA conference in USA – YouTube](#)

Our conferences have been held at Bowling Green State University, in Bowling Green, Ohio (2008-2013), Florence, Alabama (2014-2015), the Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, GA (2016-2019), Dallas, TX (2021-2022), and back to Atlanta, GA in (2023-2025). Some of the most momentous conferences were the 2008 inaugural conference, the 2013

conference that coincided with the Kenya bicentennial independence celebrations, the 2017 conference that marked KESSA's 10th anniversary and the 2024 conference graced by the late Literature icon Prof. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In 2025, Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Kenya, known for his contributions to law and human rights activism.

Importantly, KESSA seeks to promote scholarly, scientific and research work in/on Kenya in all scholarly disciplines and persuasions; promote and facilitate cooperation through the exchange of ideas and meaningful dialogue among groups and/or persons engaged in scholarly and scientific research work in/ on Kenya; encourage and facilitate the dissemination of information, publications, and other scholarly works on Kenya; organize scholarly workshop panels, discussions, symposia, and conferences on Kenya; and raise funds in support of the foregoing activities.

Since 2008 KESSA has pursued these objectives by especially holding annual conferences, sponsoring the publication of edited book volumes, publishing conference proceedings, mentoring Kenyan diaspora students and aspiring scholars, and creating networking opportunities for its members.

Message to KESSA Conference 2026 Attendees

Distinguished scholars, esteemed partners, honored guests, and members of the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA), as we gather for the KESSA Conference 2026, we celebrate a year of bold leadership, scholarly advancement, innovation, and institutional growth. The past year has been transformative for KESSA, marked by strategic decisions and initiatives that have strengthened our mission, enhanced member engagement, and positioned our association for sustainable growth and greater impact.

A defining milestone of 2026 has been the rebranding of KESSA toward a stronger scholarly outlook, reaffirming our commitment to advancing research, intellectual exchange, academic excellence, and evidence-based knowledge production. This renewed vision reflects our aspiration to be a premier global platform for Kenya-focused scholarship and interdisciplinary collaboration.

We are particularly proud of the revival of the Kenya Studies Review Journal Editorial Board, restoring an important avenue for scholars to publish original research and contribute to critical discussions on Kenya and related fields of inquiry. Complementing this achievement was the launch of a dedicated Publications Page on the KESSA website, providing increased visibility for members' scholarly work. We further expanded this recognition through the introduction of a Book Authors Page, celebrating members whose books and scholarly publications are enriching academic discourse and informing policy and practice.

Our commitment to intellectual engagement was further demonstrated through the successful reignition of the KESSA Webinar Series, creating regular opportunities for scholarly dialogue, professional development, mentorship, and networking among members and partners around the world.

KESSA's membership community has experienced remarkable growth during the year. Through enhanced member value, targeted outreach, and increased engagement, we achieved a doubling of membership subscriptions, a testament to the growing confidence that scholars and professionals place in our organization and its mission.

Recognizing the importance of professional recognition and digital engagement, KESSA introduced credentialed Digital Membership Certificates, enabling members to showcase their affiliation with a trusted and growing scholarly association. We also began issuing Certificates of Participation for KESSA events, recognizing the commitment and contributions of members who actively engage in our conferences, webinars, and professional development activities.

Innovation has remained central to our operations. Throughout 2026, KESSA strategically leveraged technology and artificial intelligence to automate and streamline repetitive administrative processes, enhancing operational efficiency, improving communication, and enabling our leadership and volunteers to dedicate more time to scholarship, strategic initiatives, and member services.

In support of academic excellence and equity, KESSA also launched a Merit-Based Conference Sponsorship Program, ensuring that conference support is awarded through a transparent and competitive process that recognizes scholarly achievement, innovation, and potential impact. This initiative reflects our commitment to nurturing talent and expanding access to professional and academic opportunities.

Perhaps one of the most significant decisions undertaken this year was the strategic relocation of the KESSA Conference from Atlanta, Georgia, to Orlando, Florida. This decision required courage, careful planning, and a willingness to embrace change. The move was driven by our commitment to fiscal responsibility and member value, with the objective of reducing conference costs while maintaining a high-quality experience for attendees. Importantly, we accepted 135 abstracts from scholars, students and professionals from USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Kenya and Somalia among other countries. These abstracts translated into 9 panel sessions and about 100 in-person oral presentations and approximately 10 virtual presentations. Furthermore, we carefully selected and invited two guest speakers, one is a patent-holding male Scientist and the other is an award winning female Social Scientist and community leader to grace our opening and closing ceremonies.

Consequently, we are proud to report that this strategic shift has enabled KESSA to attract membership, raise funds and deliver a balanced conference budget while simultaneously enhancing the overall member experience. Furthermore the choice of Orlando as a venue provides greater comfort, accessibility, and amenities for participants, creating a more welcoming environment for learning, networking, and collaboration. Importantly, the cost savings realized through this decision have been directly reinvested into the conference experience. As a result, KESSA is pleased to provide all meals on Day Two of the conference, ensuring that members can focus fully on scholarly engagement and community building while enjoying enhanced hospitality.

These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication, vision, and collective efforts of our members, leadership team, volunteers, sponsors, and partners. Together, we have strengthened the foundations of our association and demonstrated what can be achieved when scholarship, innovation, stewardship, and service work hand in hand.

As we celebrate our achievements in 2026, let us also look forward with confidence and purpose. The future of KESSA is bright. We remain committed to advancing research,

fostering meaningful collaboration, mentoring the next generation of scholars, and elevating Kenya-focused studies within the global academic community. Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to the mission of KESSA. The successes we celebrate today belong to each member of this community, and the opportunities before us are greater than ever.

KESSA Conference 2026 Planning Committee

Message from KESSA President

On behalf of the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA) Executive Board and the 18th KESSA Annual Conference Planning Committee, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 18th KESSA Annual Conference in the beautiful city of Orlando, Florida, this September 2026. We are delighted that you have joined us for this important gathering under the timely theme, "Scaling Our Academic Prowess in a Changing Geopolitical and Economic Environment."

This year's conference comes at a focal moment when scholars, educators, policymakers, and practitioners are called upon to rethink the role of higher education and research in addressing rapidly evolving global realities. Shifting geopolitical alliances, economic uncertainties and biases, technological advancements, and changing patterns of international collaboration present both unprecedented challenges and remarkable opportunities. As Kenyan scholars in the diaspora and our colleagues and partners around the world, we have a unique responsibility to harness our collective expertise, innovation, and leadership to shape knowledge that addresses local and global challenges while contributing meaningfully to Kenya's development and Africa's future.

For eighteen years, KESSA has served as a vibrant intellectual home for Kenyan scholars across disciplines, fostering scholarly excellence, mentorship, collaboration, and service. Our members have distinguished themselves in research, teaching, innovation, entrepreneurship, public service, and community engagement across the globe. This conference provides us with an opportunity not only to reflect on and celebrate these accomplishments but also to envision new pathways for strengthening our academic impact through interdisciplinary partnerships and sustained, impactful engagement with institutions in Kenya and beyond.

I wish to extend a special welcome to our graduate and undergraduate students, whose energy, curiosity, and fresh perspectives represent the future of scholarship and leadership. We are equally delighted to welcome our first-time conference attendees and participants from Kenya and elsewhere. We hope that KESSA becomes your academic home, providing opportunities for mentorship, professional development, lifelong collaborations, networking, and enduring friendships. I also extend our sincere appreciation to our donors, sponsors, and institutional partners, whose generous support makes this conference possible and continues to strengthen KESSA's mission of advancing scholarship and service.

As we reflect on this year's theme, I encourage Kenyan scholars throughout the diaspora to take advantage of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and Virtual Exchange (VE) as powerful tools for expanding equitable global partnerships. These innovative approaches enable meaningful collaboration between faculty and students across borders while overcoming financial, geographical, and geopolitical

barriers. By intentionally designing collaborative teaching, research, and community-engaged projects with universities in Kenya, we can help bridge persistent geopolitical and economic divides between the Global North and the Global South, broaden access to international learning, and create sustainable networks of scholarship that benefit all partners.

The conference program reflects the richness and diversity of our community. It offers opportunities to share cutting-edge research, exchange innovative ideas, establish new collaborations, strengthen existing partnerships, mentor emerging scholars, and engage in thoughtful dialogue about research. Beyond the scholarly sessions, I encourage you to expand your professional networks and fellowship that has become a hallmark of KESSA conferences. Organizing a conference of this scale requires extraordinary commitment and teamwork. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the KESSA Executive Board, the KESSA Governing Board, and the 18th Annual Conference Planning Committee for their tireless dedication, careful planning, and exceptional leadership in organizing this conference.

We are deeply honored by the presence of our distinguished keynote and plenary speakers, who have graciously accepted our invitation to share their expertise and insights. Their contributions will undoubtedly enrich our discussions and inspire us to think boldly about the future of scholarship, innovation, and international collaboration.

We also express our sincere appreciation to the Embassy of the Republic of Kenya in Washington, D.C. for its continued partnership and support of KESSA and for helping strengthen the ties between the Kenyan diaspora and institutions in Kenya. Such partnerships are essential in advancing our shared vision of academic excellence, innovation, and national development.

Finally, I thank each of you for choosing to be part of this conference. Your presentations, discussions, ideas, and active participation are the foundation of KESSA's continued success. Together, let us learn from one another, cultivate new collaborations, mentor the next generation of scholars, and reaffirm our commitment to leveraging scholarship for societal transformation.

I wish you a productive, engaging, and memorable conference in Orlando, Florida.

Jonathan Choti, PhD.

Associate Professor, Michigan State University



President, Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA)

Report from KESSA Treasurer

It is with immense gratitude and pride that I present this financial report to the KESSA membership as we gather in Orlando for our 18th Annual Conference. The period from September 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026 has been one of the strongest financial years in recent KESSA history, marked by steady growth in membership, robust conference registration, and disciplined fiscal stewardship that has kept our association on solid footing as we prepared for this year's gathering.

Membership Growth

Membership dues revenue grew from \$779.38 at the close of September 2025 to \$4,843.48 by July 31, 2026, an increase of more than six-fold over the fiscal year. This growth reflects the doubling of membership subscriptions, and reflects the confidence that scholars and professionals across the diaspora continue to place in KESSA. Even as membership grew, total operating expenses for the year remained modest at \$735.55, covering essential website and hosting services, leaving a healthy operating net of \$4,107.93.

Conference Registration Momentum

Our decision to relocate the conference to Orlando has paid clear dividends. Conference registration revenue rose from \$2,509.61 in January 2026 to \$19,853.75 by the end of July, nearly an eight-fold increase in just seven months, as members and colleagues secured their place at this year's event. Combined with \$3,000 in generous tax-deductible donations from KESSA supporters, including Keon Enterprises, MYEB2, Nala Money, and other individual donors, total conference revenue reached \$22,853.75 against \$3,000 in venue deposit expenses as of 31 July 2026, for a conference net of \$19,853.75. Final book of accounts will be published at the end of the financial year. KESSA is a member sponsored organization, and we continue to encourage members to register and pay the appropriate registration fees to enable the team to bring you a great conferencing programming experience.

Overall Fiscal Position

Taken together, as of 31 July 2026, KESSA's membership and conference accounts reflect a financially healthy association, one that has reinvested strategically in its website, publications, and member services while maintaining a balanced conference budget, as noted in the Conference 2026 planning message.

Looking Ahead

As we welcome scholars, students, policymakers, and partners to Orlando, I am confident that KESSA's finances are positioned to support our mission. I extend my sincere thanks to our members, sponsors, and donors whose generosity and trust make this growth possible, and to the KESSA leadership and volunteers whose stewardship keeps our association strong.

Ruth Wangia Dixon, Ph.D. KESSA Treasurer (2024 - 2026)

KESSA Leadership

KESSA leadership consists of three arms that work in concert to steer the vision, strategy and operations of the association. These are the **KESSA Executive Council** also known as KESSA Executive Board, **KESSA Governing Council** and **KESSA Advisory Board**. The operations of KESSA are managed by a four-member team that includes the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Governing Council: consists of the Executive Board members, one regional representative from Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, West, and Midwest regions of USA, one Country representative from Canada and one from Kenya, the Editor and Associate Editor of Kenya studies Review, and one student representative. Recently, a representative of Kenyan entrepreneurs has been co-opted. The Governing Council plans, publicizes and coordinates all KESSA activities. The KESSA Advisory Council role is advisory and consists largely of KESSA founder members and currently the members are Profs. Kefa Otiso, Maurice Amutabi, Charles G. Manyara, Rachel Ndonge, Francis Koti and Elimelda Moige Onger.

KESSA Executive Board 25-2026



[Prof. Jonathan Choti](#) [Dr. Fidelis Ndombera](#)

President



Vice President



[Dr. Ruth W. Dixon](#)

Treasurer



[Prof. Jane Opiri](#)

Secretary

The **KESSA Executive Board** are elected officials who serve two-year terms and are responsible for the daily management of the association. Dr. Ruth Wangia Dixon who is completing her two-year term during this year's conference has served with dedication and passion, driving membership recruitment and conference registration while delivering timely monthly financial reports. Of note, is the delivery of a balanced budget two years in a row. The incoming Treasurer is Prof. Wilkista Otieno (pictured below), is the outgoing Midwest Regional Chair and is currently on-boarding and will serve for the



[Prof. Wilkista Otieno](#)

Chapter. She also served as the President Elect (2022-2023) and President

(2023-2024) of the Women in Operations Research and Management Sciences (a section forum) of the Institute For Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS). She currently serves as the faculty advisor of several professional and religious student chapters, including the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) and the Advent Campus Fellowship Group (ACF).

KESSA Advisory Board



[Prof. Kefa M. Otiso](#)



Prof. Shadrack Nasongo



[Prof. Charles Manyara](#)



[Prof. Francis Koti](#)



[Prof. Rachel Ndonge](#)

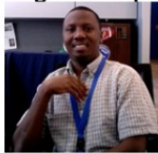


[Prof. Elimelda Moige Onger](#)

The KESSA Advisory Board role is advisory with hindsight and foresight of KESSA.

KESSA Regional Representatives

Northeast Regional Representative



[Prof. James Mutunga](#)

+1 814 206 4451

Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania



Southeast Representative



[Prof. G. Tongi Mugoya](#)

+1 520 272 3800

University of Alabama

Midwest Regional Representative



[Prof. Wilkistar Otieno](#)

+1 813 766 0398

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Student Representative in USA



[Twalha Abbass](#)

+1 812 650 8501

PhD. Student

Indiana University

West Regional Representative



[Prof. Moses Ochanji](#)

+1 951 816 1324

California State University, San Marcos, California

The incoming Southwest Regional Representative is Dr. Edward O. Manyibe who is a Research Professor at Langston University and a member of KESSA since its inception.



Dr. Edward O. Manyibe (pictured left) is a Research Professor at Langston University and a member of the Kenya Studies and Scholars Association (KESSA) since its inception. He serves as Research Director for two federally funded research centers, including the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Research and Capacity Building for Minority Entities. He is also Co-Principal Investigator on multiple federally sponsored research and technical assistance initiatives focused on strengthening research capacity at minority-serving institutions and advancing outcomes for underserved populations.

Dr. Eva Regional Chair from Prof. elected as Treasurer. Dr. Eva Professor of Biology at With over 15 years of experience advising students, She is deeply inclusive learning environments and personal growth. In the West Moses Ochanji has requested a Elections Board will preside over due course.



Nyutu takes over as Midwest Wilkistar Otieno who was Nyutu is an Assistant University of Detroit Mercy. teaching, mentoring, and committed to fostering that support both academic region, long-serving Prof. successor and the KESSA elections for this position in

The KESSA Governing Council includes a Representative from **Canada** and **Kenya** and representative of the Kenyan Business community. Prof. Janet Okoko represents Canada, Dr. Diane Uyoga represents Kenya and Mr. Omara Riechi represents the Business community.



Prof. Janet Okoko

Canada Representative



Dr. Diane Uyoga

Kenya Representative

KESSA Regional Structure

KESSA is organised into five US-based regions with a regional representative as below:

Region	States Included	Regional Representative
Northeast	Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Washington D.C.	Dr. James Mutunga (Pennsylvania State University–Harrisburg)
Southwest	Texas, Oklahoma	Dr. Edward O. Manyibe (Langston University)
Midwest	Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa	Dr. Eva Nyutu (University of Detroit-Mercy)
West	California, Arizona, Oregon, Nevada, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Alaska	To be filled
Southeast	Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia	Dr. G. Tongi Mugoya (University of Alabama)

Abstracts were received from all five US-based KESSA regions with Midwest having 11 institutions represented which is the highest followed by Southeast with 9, Northeast with 7, Southwest with 4, the west region with 1. Of note is that abstracts were received from 27 institutions based in Kenya.

Awards & Recognition

- *KESSA Service Award*
 - *KESSA Best Student Presentation Award*
 - *KESSA Conference Sponsor Award*
 - *KESSA Conference Keynote Speaker Award*
 - *KESSA Conference Volunteer Recognition*
- KESSA Conference Student Registration Support Awardees*

Conference Program Overview

Day 0-3rd September 2026 6.00 p.m.-9.00 p.m.

Day 1 – 4th September 2026

Room: Palm | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Room: Seminole | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Room: Buena Vista Ballroom | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Day 2 – 5th September 2026

Room: Palm | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Room: Seminole | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Room: Buena Vista Ballroom | Parallel Sessions | 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Program Schedule Grid

Preconference – Sept 3, 2026

Time	Palm	Seminole	Buena Vista Ballroom
6.00-9.00p.m.	Welcome Dinner	Registration	Registration

Day 1 – Sept 4, 2026

Time	Palm	Seminole	Buena Vista Ballroom
7.00-8.00 a.m.	Breakfast in the Atrium		
8.00-9.00 a.m.	Registration	Registration	Registration/Student Session
9:00-10:40 a.m	No Sessions	No Sessions	Opening Ceremony
10:50-1:00 p.m	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
1.00-2.00 p.m.	Lunch		
2:00-2:40 p.m	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Panel Sessions
2:40-4:00 p.m	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
4.00-5.00 p.m	KESSA Annual General Meeting		
6.00-8.00 p.m	Networking & Reception in the Atrium & Disney Springs		

Day 2 – Sept 5, 2026

Time	Palm	Seminole	Buena Vista Ballroom
7.00-8.00 a.m.	Breakfast in the Atrium		
8.00-9.00 a.m	Networking	Networking	Student Session
9:00-10:40 a.m.	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
10:50-1:00 p.m.	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
1.00-2.00 p.m.	Lunch/Networking		
2:00-2:40 p.m.	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Panel Sessions
2:40-4:00 p.m.	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
5.00-8.00 p.m.	Gala Dinner & Awards in Buena Vista Ballroom		
8.00-11.30 p.m	After Event Party at Disney Springs & International Drive		

Where to find on-site sessions by Theme in the KESSA Conference Agenda

Education & Higher Education

Buena Vista (majority of sessions)

Health, Public Health & Mental Health

Palm and Seminole

AI, Data Science & Technology

Seminole and Palm

Politics, Governance & International Relations

Palm

Music, Culture & Arts

Seminole

Student-Focused Activities

Buena Vista

- Friday 8:00 AM Student Immigration Session
- Saturday 8:00 AM CV & Resume Clinic

Keynote Speakers



Opening Keynote Speaker

Prof. Wilson Endege

Prof. Wilson O. Endege is a Kenyan molecular biologist, biotechnology entrepreneur, and founder of **Daktari Biotechnology Ltd**, a company established to advance the development and manufacture of affordable medicines, vaccines, and biopharmaceuticals for Africa. He holds a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology from the Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Biochemistry from the University of Nairobi.

Dr. Endege has built a career spanning more than two decades in academia, biotechnology, and the pharmaceutical industry in the United States. He has held research and leadership roles at the **Harvard Institute of Proteomics (Harvard Medical School)**, **Massachusetts General Hospital**, **Chiron Diagnostics**, **Millennium Pharmaceuticals**, and **AstraZeneca**. His work has focused on molecular biology, cancer biomarkers, therapeutic target discovery, and drug development. Dr. Endege has contributed to multiple patents related to cancer diagnostics and biomarkers, including inventions addressing ovarian, breast, and prostate cancer detection and therapy. His publications and **patented discoveries** have supported advances in cancer biomarker identification and precision medicine.

Since founding Daktari Biotechnology in 2016/2017, Dr. Endege has championed the establishment of local biotechnology capacity in Kenya and Africa, with a focus on biosimilars, long-acting therapeutics, vaccine development, and biotechnology education. He is also a founder and trustee of the Diaspora University initiative, which seeks to strengthen scientific research, healthcare innovation, and higher education in Kenya.



Closing Keynote Speaker

Dr. Truphena Choti

Dr. Truphena Choti is a Kenyan-born educator, social entrepreneur, researcher, and community leader who serves as the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of **AfriThrive Inc.**, a U.S.-based nonprofit dedicated to food equity, immigrant empowerment,

and community resilience among African diaspora populations. She holds a Ph.D. in International Education Policy from the University of Maryland, College Park, a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Georgia State University, and a Bachelor of Education degree from Moi University in Kenya.

Over a career spanning education, international development, policy analysis, and nonprofit leadership, Dr. Choti has held positions with organizations including Nascent Solutions, University Research Co. (URC), General Dynamics Information Technology, and the National Education Association (NEA). Her work has focused on educational access, leadership development, research, capacity building, and community empowerment.

In 2019, Dr. Choti co-founded AfriThrive with her husband, Prof. Charles Choti, to address food insecurity and cultural disconnection experienced by African immigrant communities in the United States. Under her leadership, AfriThrive has grown indigenous African vegetables, distributed millions of pounds of culturally appropriate food, and served tens of thousands of families across Maryland, Washington, D.C., and surrounding communities.

Dr. Choti's publications, public presentations, and community advocacy focus on international education, immigrant integration, food justice, cultural identity, and equitable access to resources. She is widely recognized for connecting academic research with community-driven solutions that strengthen health, dignity, and economic opportunity for underserved populations. Of note is the **\$800,000 Federal Grant (2026)** courtesy of Senator Van Hollen to AfriThrive to expand the Essex-based Community

Food Center. The funding supports year-round cultivation of culturally appropriate African vegetables (e.g., managu, saga, kunde), cold storage, food preparation areas, and improved distribution, nutrition education and “Food-as-Medicine” programs. KESSA is honored to have Dr. Truphena Choti as our Keynote speaker at the 2026 Conference.

Sponsors & Partners

KEON TRANSPORT

Keon Transport is a transportation company that was established in 2011 and is based in Central Pennsylvania. We provide friendly, safe, and reliable transportation services to various destinations in the area.

With a focus on customer service, we offer daily trips to several locations, including CIT, Goodwill, Hope Springs Farm, Red Tomato Farm, The Arc, and others, by providing comfortable and convenient door-to-door transportation services for our clients.

We are known for our commitment to offering reliable transportation services. We operate a fleet of sedans and vans that are comfortable and ensure a safe journey for our passengers.

We are actively engaged in providing transportation, paratransit, and customer service, and have established a reputable transportation service in Central Pennsylvania which has been serving the community for several years. For more details visit <https://keontransport.com/>

MyEB2 LLC

MYEB2 was created from firsthand experience navigating the U.S. immigration system. Like many professionals, we faced confusion, overwhelming legal jargon, and expensive legal pathways that didn't always guarantee results.

Through persistence and research, we discovered that many highly qualified individuals already meet the criteria for EB-2 NIW or EB-1A but struggle with how to properly present their case. That realization led to the creation of this platform.

Today, MYEB2 exists to make the process clearer, more accessible, and achievable. We focus on strategy, positioning, and practical guidance so you can present your work in a way that aligns with U.S. national interest standards.

At MYEB2, we help highly skilled professionals such as researchers, engineers, physicians, entrepreneurs, and innovators build compelling EB-2 NIW and EB-1A petitions that clearly showcase their national importance and eligibility for U.S. permanent residency.

Email us at myeb2@myeb2.info. For more details, visit our website at www.myeb2.info.

KESNET

Kenyan Scientists in Diaspora Network (KESNET) is a Project of Kenyan Scientists in Diaspora Inc. a 501(c)3 non-profit organization incorporated in Indiana. We are a

diverse team of professionals in the STEM Fields committed to network and collaborate to solve societal problems abroad and at home.

For more details visit <https://www.kenyanscientistsindiaspora.com/>

Diaspora University Town

Diaspora University Town development plan is a 1,500 acres plan for creating 15,000 as a university of 5,000 students and a town of 25,000 residents is established.

The plan is being implemented in Taita Taveta County along the Voi-Taveta Highway.

The Plan developers are: Diaspora University Trust, Diaspora Kenyans, Ndara B Community, Kenyans, and Partners.

Nala Money Transfer Services

NALA is an international money transfer app that facilitates seamless money transfers from the UK , US , and EU  to various countries across the globe, including:

- Bangladesh 
- Cameroon 
- Cote d'Ivoire 
- Ghana 
- India 
- Kenya 
- Nigeria 
- Pakistan 
- Philippines 
- Rwanda 
- Senegal 
- South Africa 
- Tanzania 
- Uganda 

For more details visit [NALA - Making Money Move](#)

Individual Sponsors

Prof. Jonathan Choti

Dr. Fidelis Ndombera

Prof. Francis Koti

Pro bono Services

Live transmission, photography and video services provided by [**DiasporaScholarsTV**](#) in collaboration with ***Tales Asili Media (919 593 9570)***.

Visit [DiasporaScholarsTV - YouTube](#)

Follow KESSA Conference 2026 Live proceedings here [KESSA Conference 2026, Orlando, Florida, USA 4th-6th September 2026 - YouTube](#)

List of Abstract Titles at KESSA Conference 2026

ID	Title	Names	Affiliation
1	Developing Whom? A Critical Discourse Analysis of AI Solutionism in Kenya's Digital and Green Economy Narratives	George Ezekiel Aberi	Kisii University, Kenya, Department of Language, Linguistics, and Literature
2	Who Is Listening? AI, Emotional Distress, and the Future of Student Mental Health Support	Odhiambo Otieno	Western Michigan University
3	AI, Language Technology and African Linguistic Futures	Solomon Nyanamba	Multimedia University of Kenya
4	Adoption of AI-Enabled Accounting Systems in Kenya's Water Services Sector: Implications for Billing Accuracy and Revenue Management	Japheth Kogei	Moi University
5	Reimagining First-Year Academic Writing in Kenyan Universities for the Age of Generative AI	Diana Kitiabi	Georgia State University
6	Commercialization of Communication Networks leading to Emerging new style of Poverty in Africa: A Kenyan experience	Gilbert Nyakundi Okebiro & Elsie Gesare Nyakundi	Turkana University College & St.Monica Comprehensive Girls Primary School, Lodwar
7	AI-Powered E-Learning Platform with Personalized Recommendations	Wesley Mabera	Kisii university

8	Beyond the Panic: AI, Instructional Design, and Academic Integrity in a Changing Global Higher Education Landscape	Patrick Mose, Maina Faith; Koti Francis, Opiri Jane, Choti Jonathan, Lumumba Phelix	Ohio University, Texas Tech, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Arkansas, Michigan State University
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21	Re-centering African Epistemologies in Global Schooling: A Multi-Stakeholder Analysis of Afrocentric-IB Integration in a K-12 Context.	Faith Maina & Utheri Kanayo	Texas Tech University
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23	Multidimensional Motivation in Graduate Education: Examining Measurement Invariance and Demographic Differences Across Degree level, Gender and Age.	Kennedy Awuonda	Texas Tech
24	Aligning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with Workforce Demand in Marsabit County, Kenya: Curriculum Implementation Challenges and the Role of the Jua Kali Industry.	Halkano Hargura & Faith Maina	Texas Tech
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27	The Incomplete Learner: Visualizing Inequity in Competency-Based Education in Kenya.	Rose Njoroge	Kenyatta University
28	Co-creating university-level competencies for Competency-Based Education curriculum in Kenya.	Teresa Wasonga & Catherine Aura	Northern Illinois & Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
29	Two Paths to Understanding: The Value of Mixed Research Literacy for Graduate Students	Adam Marshall, Amani Zaier & Kennedy Awounda	Texas Tech
30	Accelerating Reading Fluency in sub-Saharan Africa – What's Hot, What's Not	Hellen Inyega Nasimiyu	University of Nairobi
31	Student Agency in Digital Learning Environments: A Phenomenological Study of Kenyan Graduate Students' Lived Experience in US Higher Education.	Collins Ketere	Ohio University
32	Demystifying Instructional Design: Scaling Academic Excellence in a Changing Global Landscape	Patrick Mose	Ohio University
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35	Growth of Women in Contemporary Music in Kenya	Kabei Cyndicate	Alabama State University
36	Navigating the Margins of Power: African Immigrant Women's Pathways to Leadership in Higher Education	Faith Maina & Amani Zaier	Texas Tech University
37	Kenya High School Literature Curriculum and Women's Literary Representation	Justine Walubengo	Vanderbilt University
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40	Overcoming the Opportunity Costs of Immigration: Expanding Financial Pathways to Accelerate the American Dream	John Munyui Muchira & Barnabas Kirui	University of Florida & Ascend Financial
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46	Insecurity And Its Effects On Tourism In Laikipia-Samburu Conflict Belt In Kenya; The Compounding Complexity of Marginalization, Cultural norms, Resources Scarcity and Proliferation of Arms.	Heather Kipchumba & Julius Musau	Kenyatta University
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48	Between Nyako and Dhako: Gendered Lexicon, Sexuality and the Politics of Naming in Dholuo Indigenous Language Systems	Quin Elizabeth Awuor Orwa	USIU-Africa
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60	Music as a Catalyst for Healing, Resilience, and Economic Empowerment in Conflict Zones	Everline Ogari	Andrews University
61	Composing, Performing and Interpreting African Sacred Texts: A Multiperspective Study of Swahili Setting of the Lord's Prayer	Kevin Kimutai, Sylvester Makobi & John Musila	University of Florida, & Indiana University
62	The Relational Communal Music Healing Model: Integrating Western Music Therapy and African Music Healing Concepts	Eric Murianki	University of Kansas
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65	The "NIKO KADI" Moment: Kiswahili & the new wave of youth political mobilization in Kenya	Prisca Orori	Nyanchwa Girls Senior School
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68	Social Media & the Kenyan Diaspora: Driving Scholarly Impact and Nation-Building	Jeremiah Okari	Minnesota State ARCC
69	Circular Horizons: Entrepreneurship, Investment, and Financial Innovation as Drivers of Sustainable Economic Transformation in East Africa	Omboi Bernard Messah	United States international university-Africa
70	When Laughter Carries the Load: Public Logotherapy in Kenyan Meme Culture	Japheth Peter Muindu	Garissa University
71	Meeting Africa's biopharmaceutical needs in the 21st Century	Wilson Endege, Frederick M. Boyce, & Benson J. Edagwa	Daktari Biotechnology Corporation

72	Health Misinformation and Media Literacy in the Digital Age: Implications for Health Education	Joseph Otundo , Jane Opiri	University of Arkansas Little Rock
73	Pawanax An AI Enabled Health Intelligence Platform for Strengthening Clinical Research and Health Systems in Africa	Fidelis Ndombera PhD.	Pawanax AI Solutions Inc., Kenya Scientists in Diaspora Inc. & Labcorp Drug Development
74	R(e)-Merging Zoonotic Viral Disease Threats in East Africa: Climate Change, Spillover Risks, and One Health Preparedness	Dorcus Omoga	Louisiana State University Health Shreveport
75	Community & Health worker perspectives on resource availability and Service Accessibility for Visceral Leishmaniasis Management in Baringo County, Kenya	Emily Kiptui, Sabella J. Kiprono and Gladys J. Mengich 3 Vincent K. Langat Daniel K. Chelal	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
76	Causal Inference for Non-Gaussian Response with Varying Treatment Effect Size	Victoria Kwamboka	Bowling Green State University
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78	The Silent Killer Among Us: The Mental Health Situation in Kenya's Construction Sites	James Kereril	Institutions
79	Global Justice Counseling: Mental Health in Kenya – Current Status and	Wangui Rugo	Grand Canyon Christian University
80	Water, hygiene, and gut health: The role of SIBO in Maasai children's growth outcomes in Narok South, Kenya	Shinina Shani	Baylor University
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82	Linda Mama and Health System Capacity: Neonatal Outcomes	Steve Muchiri	Eastern Connecticut State University
83	AI-enabled modeling of climatic factors and ecological determinants of tick population dynamics and pathogen transmission risks in Pennsylvania	James Mutunga, Angelina Santhosh, Pranav Balachander and Sayed Reza	Penn State-Harrisburg
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85	Assessment of the physicochemical quality assurance parameters in	Thomas Anyona Getanda,	Pwani University

	some commercial soap available in the Kenyan Market	Nyinge Mwadzomb o	
86	Decolonising Community Health: Why Language Matters	Margaret Barasa, Phylis Bartoo, Irene Chesire	Alupe University
87	Prevalence of postpartum contraception uptake among younger versus older women in Kenya	Harison Lagat, Tessa Concepcion, Jerusha Nyabiage, Felix Abuna, Eunita Akim, Grace John-Stewart, John Kinuthia, Laurén Gómez, Mary Marwa, Nancy Ngumbau, Ben Odhiambo, Celestine Adogo, Salphine Watoyi,	1. University of Washington, Seattle, United States, 2. Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya.

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88	Role of Culture and Stigma in Substance Use and Treatment: Case Study for Kenya	Tongi Mugoya	The University of Alabama
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92	Global distribution and multidimensional diversity of Chamaeleonidae: Spatiotemporal dynamics and conservation implications	Winnie Mambo, Khalifah Najjankosi, Samya Walker, Michael Chukwudi, & Micah Nneji	Howard University

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94	Population dynamics of Cyprinidae along a salinity gradient in the Lake Naivasha-Oloiden, Kenya	Guto Kerubo Carolyn, Njiru Murithi James, Getabu Albert, Gichana Moraa Zipporah	Kisii University & African Institute for Capacity Development, Technical University of Mombasa
95	Evaluating the Impact of Digital Extension Services on Climate-Smart Agriculture Adoption among Smallholder Farmers	Moseti Arnold	Kisii university
96	Multi-sensor Sar-Optical fusion for crop species and management classification: A single-date sensitivity analysis of fine-scale agricultural parcels	Denis Machanda	Bowling Green State University
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102	Adsorption Isotherms and Kinetics Studies on Adsorption of Copper onto modified and unmodified Biomass Tea Waste from Wastewater in Kisii County, Kenya	Omwancha Priscillah, Jackson Kiptoo, Ali Mohammed Salim. Anam Onditi	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
103	Mycotoxin Awareness and Contamination Levels in Rice and Rice Bran from Major- and Minor Production Regions in Kenya	Roxton Chirchir, Roxton, John, Irene & Ouna	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology
104	Beyond University Density: What Matters Most in Research and Development Productivity	Joshua Bagaka	KCA University, Nairobi, Kenya

105	Scaling Educational Excellence in the Face of Geopolitical Change	Erick Agwata	Institutions hopeinternationalrescue@gmail.com
106	Exploration of Exchange Programs Beyond CADFP	Penina Kamina	SUNY Oneonta
107	Whither Kenya's Global Geopolitics?	Kefa Otiso, Shadrack Nasong'o & David Monda	Bowling Green State University, Rhodes College, Memphis, City University of New York
108	Governing Research Integrity in Africa: Institutional Fragmentation and	Moses Ogutu	Syracuse University
109	Roundtable: Who Gets to Move? Visa Systems, Mobility Inequality, and the Politics of Access	Moses Ogutu	Syracuse University
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111	Change Point Detection On Financial Stock Prices During Market Disruptions Under Skew-t Model Through Modified Energy Distance Approach	Joseph Njuki & Ryan Avallone	Coastal Carolina University
112	An Emerging Conceptual Framework for Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship:	Edward Manyibe, Corey L. Moore,	Langstone University

	Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Incubator	Andre L. Washington, Atashia Muhammad, James Nyamao	
113	Open by Design, Digital by Default: The Open University of Kenya as a Global Solutions Provider in the Architecture of Inclusive Knowledge Systems	Elijah Omwenga, Daniel Mulinge	Open University of Kenya
114	Staying Engaged in Academic Life Beyond Tenure: Barriers, Strategies, and Benefits	Francis Koti	Francis.Koti@mtsu.edu
115	Kenya's Affordable Housing Program and its Implications for low-income urban households-A Critical Policy Analysis	Margaret Gachuru	Institutions
116	Church Governance in Kenya: Accountability, Legitimacy, and Public Trust in a Changing Political Economy	Steven Lombo,	Institute of Certified Secretaries, Nairobi,
117	Career Progression On Gen Z Retention In Kenyan Commercial Banks	Sylvia Chumo	None
118	Raila Amolo Odinga in Memoriam: The People's President that Never Was	Shadrack Nasong'o	Rhodes College, Memphis
119	A Critical Policy Analysis of Kenya's Affordable Housing	Magaret Gachuru	None

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120	An Emerging Conceptual Framework for Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship: Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Incubator	Cunningham-Pullen Nyree, Dr. Edward O. Manyibe, Dr. Corey L. Moore, Dr. Kacie R. Dentleegrand, Bernard M. Manyibe, and Fane Webster	Langston University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Advancing Employment Equity for Multiply
121	Integrating African Languages Across Disciplines: A Case Study Of USIU – Africa’s Community Collaboration Initiatives	Kennedy Wanyama Shikuku	United States International University - Africa
122	Strategic Communication Approaches For Enhancing Organizational Performance at Kisii University, Kenya: A Systematic Review	Josephine Ondari, Elijah Maronga, and Eunicares Lumumba	Kisii University
123	Factors Influencing Growth Of Social Enterprises In Kenya: A Factor Analysis Approach	Justus Macharia, Michael Bowen	Daystar University

124	Title; Service Sector Employers' Perspectives On University-Industry Collaboration in Kenya	Charles Nyandusi	Moi University
125	Bridging The Diaspora Housing Gap: A Strategic Framework For The Bomayangu Affordable Housing Program	Joan Wanjiku	Olive Limited
126	The Influence Of Organizational Culture On The Implementation And Effectiveness of Quality Management Systems (QMS) in Uganda's Aviation Industry: A Case Study of Approved Training Organizations (ATO)	Robert Kiplimo Bett	Moi University
127	Interrogating Transborder Crime and Insecurity: A Study of the Kenya-Somalia Borderlands	Kehinde Ernest Fakanbi	Chrisland University
128	Alumni Engagement in Higher Education Institutions in Africa: Prospects	Damaris Choti	Michigan State University
129	Title: Industry-Academia Partnership in Preparing Industrial Engineers for the 21st Century Workforce	Wilkistar Otieno	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
130	Epidemiological and Genomic Patterns of Methicillin Resistance Staphylococcus Aureus Isolates obtained from patients seeking treatment in Nakuru County Referral and Teaching Hospital, Kenya.	Joan Soi	Nakuru County Referral and Teaching Hospital

131	From Donor Dependence to System Resilience: Lessons from a Decade of ADRA-Led Education Interventions in Somalia	Mary Muthoni Kinuthia	ADRA-Somalia
132	Predicting Gene Expression from Chromatin Accessibility Using Ridge Regression in Single-Cell Multi-ome Data	Fred Onyango & Geethanjali Karuturi	Indiana University
133	Understanding Kenyan Immigration Matters	Violet Akure	Directorate of Immigration of Kenya
134	Towards the Teaching of Indigenous Languages in Kenyan Schools	Lilian Kemunto	University of Embu
135	AI-Enabled UAV-Based Maize Crop Monitoring and Precision Spraying: Assessing Effectiveness and Adoption Potential in Kenya.	Patrick Wamalwa, Daniel Uyeh, Paul Kimurto and Sheila Matwek	Egerton University & Michigan State University

AI, Digital Futures & Technology Governance

Abstract ID: 1

Developing Whom? A Critical Discourse Analysis of AI Solutionism in Kenya's Digital and Green Economy Narratives

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Category: Paper

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Artificial intelligence has become central to Kenya's development of imagination. Kenya's National AI Strategy frames AI as a transformative tool that will enhance productivity, efficiency, and national progress, while the National AI Strategy 2025–2030 explicitly links AI to green economy goals, including climate resilience, smart agriculture, and clean energy. Yet the language through which these visions are constructed and sold to the public remains largely unexamined. This study investigates what legitimization strategies are used to authorize AI as a development solution, and whose voices and realities these narratives marginalize or silence. This gap at the intersection of language, power, and digital development policy provides the analytical motivation for this study. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and Van Leeuwen's legitimization theory, the study analyzes purposively sampled policy texts, including Kenya's National Digital Master Plan 2022–2032, the Draft National AI Strategy 2025–2030, and the Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan 2016–2030. Data are analyzed at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice, with attention to lexical choices, presuppositions, and intertextual references. Preliminary findings reveal that AI solutionism is legitimized primarily through rationalization and mythopoesis, framing AI as progressive while obscuring questions of data sovereignty, labor displacement, and structural inequality. Findings from this study will inform more equitable, community-centered AI policy in Kenya and comparable Global South settings.

Key terms: AI solutionism, critical discourse analysis, legitimization strategies, digital economy, green economy, development discourse, decoloniality, language and power, Kenya.

Abstract ID: 2

Who Is Listening? AI, Emotional Distress, and the Future of Student Mental Health Support

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Mental health issues continue to affect student persistence and academic success in higher education. International students seeking professional mental health support may also face added barriers such as cultural beliefs, stigma, lack of knowledge about counseling services, and concerns about seeking help. With the increasing availability of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, students may turn to these platforms for emotional support and guidance. This paper explores the behavior of six popular AI models, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, Grok, and DeepSeek, in the context of mental health issues encountered by international students, including social isolation, homesickness, difficulties with cultural adaptation, and academic stress. Standardized prompts were used to analyze responses for empathy, cultural sensitivity, crisis recognition, and referral to professional resources. Preliminary findings suggest that AI models generally provide empathetic responses and emotional validation but differ widely in cultural sensitivity and their recommendations about seeking professional help. The findings provide insights into the early role of AI in student support services and can inform higher education practitioners about the opportunities and limitations of AI-supported mental health counseling for international students.

Abstract ID: 3

AI, Language Technology and African Linguistic Futures

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AI and language technology are rapidly transforming communication across the world. However, many African languages remain underrepresented in modern AI systems. This paper examines the impact of AI on the future of African languages, arguing that the rapid progress of Large Language Models has transformed the field of Natural Language processing. However, these advancements have primarily concentrated on high resource languages, leaving many low-resourced languages, particularly African Languages, largely overlooked. Based on my research drawing on performance benchmarks of Large Language Models including ChatGPT and Google Translate across Kenyan Language inputs, this paper demonstrates how AI tools misrepresent, distort and altogether fail these languages, producing culturally inaccurate results that undermine their speakers' dignity and communicative power. It also raises concerns on the ethics of data extraction; how big tech companies harvest African linguistic data without community consent or benefit sharing. These issues demand collaboration between African linguists and technologists, effective adoption methods for African languages and university-led initiatives to train African AI developers who can build culturally grounded language tools. Kenya with its rich multilingual landscape and growing tech ecosystem in Nairobi's Silicon savannah, offers a compelling model for what African led language AI could look like.

Abstract ID: 4

**Title: Adoption of AI-Enabled Accounting Systems in Kenya's Water Services
Sector: Implications for Billing Accuracy and Revenue Management**

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Kenya's water service providers face a persistent revenue crisis, with non-revenue water levels ranging between 40% and 50% due to billing inaccuracies, manual processes, and collection inefficiencies. In response, several utilities have begun adopting artificial intelligence-enabled accounting systems, including automated meter reading, anomaly detection, and predictive analytics. However, systematic evidence on the determinants of adoption and its impact on billing accuracy and revenue performance remains limited. This study will examine the adoption and outcomes of AI-enabled accounting systems in Kenya's water sector. It will investigate: (1) the organisational, technological, and environmental factors influencing adoption; (2) the effect of AI adoption on billing accuracy; and (3) the relationship between AI adoption and revenue management performance. Grounded in an integrated framework combining UTAUT, TOE, and the DeLone and McLean IS Success Model, the study will employ a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Phase 1 will include a survey of senior managers and technical staff across 7–11 licensed water providers. Phase 2 will involve in-depth interviews and focus groups to explore implementation and equity implications. Data will be analysed using logistic regression, difference-in-difference models, and framework analysis. The study will provide the first systematic evidence on AI adoption in African water utilities and offer practical recommendations for regulators and utilities on effective and equitable implementation of AI billing systems.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Water Utility Billing, Revenue Management, Technology Adoption, Digital Transformation, Kenya

Abstract ID: 5

Title: Reimagining First-Year Academic Writing in Kenyan Universities for the Age of Generative AI

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Category: Paper / Panel / Poster

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"Generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) is rapidly transforming academic communication, research processes, and knowledge production across higher education globally. As such, universities are increasingly confronting changing student literacy practices in digital environments, including the need to develop students' core writing competencies, alongside multiliteracies necessary for the AI age. These shifts raise important questions about how first-year university writing courses could evolve to better prepare students for contemporary academic, professional, and technological communicative demands. This paper draws on findings from a mixed-methods task-based needs analysis conducted at a Kenyan private university whose first-year curriculum places greater emphasis on academic writing and research practices than are traditionally characteristic of the broader Communication Skills models within Kenyan higher education. Data was collected through student questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with instructors, administrators, and disciplinary experts, and analyses of curricular documents and instructional materials. Findings revealed that stakeholders consistently identified source-based writing, sustained academic reading, extended research and writing practices, as well as critical AI literacy as increasingly important competencies for first year university students. Participants also expressed concern regarding students' growing reliance on short-form digital discourse and AI-generated content at the expense of sustained engagement with academic texts and development of independent research practices. Drawing on insights from this needs analysis, the paper argues for reimagining first-year writing curricula in Kenyan universities to address the changing literacy and communicative demands of AI-mediated academic environments. The paper concludes by discussing implications for curriculum development and academic literacy instruction, aimed at fostering effective and equitable participation in increasingly AI-mediated knowledge economies within African higher education contexts.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, AI-mediated writing, first-year academic writing curriculum, Critical AI literacy, Kenyan higher education

Abstract ID: 6

Title: Commercialization of Communication Networks leading to Emerging new style of Poverty in Africa: A Kenyan experience

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The rapid commercialization of communication networks in Kenya has transformed social, economic, and cultural interactions. While mobile communication has enhanced connectivity, financial inclusion, and access to information, it has also introduced unintended consequences, particularly among low-income populations. This paper examines how the commercialization of communication networks contributes to a “new style of poverty” in Kenya. It argues that persistent daily expenditure on mobile communication-particularly airtime and data-reduces individuals’ capacity to save and invest, thereby reinforcing cycles of poverty. Using an analytical research design supported by qualitative insights from in-depth interviews, the study reveals that many Kenyans prioritize communication expenses over essential needs, including food and savings. The findings suggest that the normalization of daily communication spending has created a subtle but pervasive economic burden. The paper concludes by recommending behavioral, policy, and structural interventions aimed at promoting responsible communication expenditure and enhancing savings culture among citizens.

Keywords: Commercialization, Communication, Cellphones, Networks, Poverty

Abstract ID: 7

Title: AI-Powered E-Learning Platform with Personalized Recommendations

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The growth of digital learning has changed the way students access education and learning materials. Despite the increasing use of e-learning platforms, many systems still provide the same learning content to every student without considering individual learning styles, preferences, or performance levels. This often leads to low learner engagement, reduced motivation, and poor course completion rates. This project focuses on the design and development of an AI-powered e-learning platform that provides personalized recommendations to learners. The system uses artificial intelligence techniques to analyze learner behavior, academic progress, and interaction patterns in order to recommend suitable courses, study materials, and learning paths based on individual needs. The platform also includes features such as progress tracking, quizzes, and feedback mechanisms to support adaptive and effective learning. The proposed system aims to improve the overall learning experience by making online education more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered. By providing personalized recommendations, the platform helps learners focus on relevant content, improve understanding, and maintain motivation throughout the learning process. This study demonstrates the importance of integrating artificial intelligence into modern education systems and highlights how intelligent technologies can support inclusive and quality education. The project further contributes to ongoing discussions on digital transformation in education and the future of adaptive learning systems.

Abstract ID: 8

Title: Beyond the Panic: AI, Instructional Design, and Academic Integrity in a Changing Global Higher Education Landscape

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Aligned with the KESSA 2026 theme, Scaling Our Academic Prowess in a Changing Geopolitical and Economic Environment, this discussion addresses how global economic shifts, evolving labor markets, and geopolitical inequities in AI access shape instructional design decisions within African higher education and the diaspora. Panelists share actionable strategies for designing AI-resilient assessments, reframing academic integrity as a design challenge rather than a compliance problem and positioning instructional design as a strategic driver of institutional quality and innovation. Participants will leave practical insights, design principles, and policy-informed perspectives to support responsible AI adoption without compromising academic standards or institutional values.

Abstract ID: 9

Title: Teaching cybersecurity awareness to vulnerable groups in Australia

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Category: Paper

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Australia welcomes immigrants from diverse global contexts, many arriving with limited formal education and from low socioeconomic backgrounds, rendering them highly vulnerable to scams and fraud. These migrants face significant risks including fraudulent emails, text messages impersonating postal services, and telephone calls from unidentified sources. Yet cybersecurity literacy remains largely inaccessible within settlement services.

To address this gap, the Kenya Diaspora Board initiated a community education program funded by the Australian Department of Home Affairs. Employing posters, social media messages and dynamic visual materials, the program adopts culturally responsive pedagogy to address digital equity gaps among vulnerable migrant communities. Initial community consultations with newly arrived African migrants identified critical barriers to engagement: logistical challenges in convening groups; unmet expectations regarding venue support (catering, transport); limited social media literacy among participants; and communication accessibility issues across diverse linguistic backgrounds. Rather than imposing standardised training, we documented community needs through two public consultations, establishing foundations for co-designed cybersecurity awareness education. Early initiatives include targeted social media campaigns and planned follow-up community sessions. This paper presents our emerging community-led approach, detailing barriers identified by participants and our iterative responses. We position digital equity as integral to migrant settlement and belonging in Australia, recognizing that cybersecurity literacy constitutes a fundamental dimension of social inclusion and digital citizenship. Phase two will evaluate program effectiveness and explore pathways for scaling culturally responsive cybersecurity literacy education across diverse migrant communities. This research will contribute to evidence-based approaches that centre community voice and lived experience in digital literacy initiatives.

Abstract ID: 10

Title: Digital Governance and Public Accountability in Africa: Evaluating the Role of E-Government Systems in Combating Corruption – A Case Study of Kenya 2013 - 2025

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Category: Panel

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In the post-reform era, Kenya has made significant investments in digital transformation through e-government platforms to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability in public service delivery. However, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies remain deeply rooted within governance institutions. This study aims to examine the paradox between technological progress and ongoing corruption by asking: To what extent has the adoption of e-government systems enhanced public accountability in Kenya's public sector? Drawing on theories of good governance and technology-driven institutional change, the research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on key public institutions that implement e-procurement, digital revenue collection, and online service systems. Through desktop research, the study analyzes secondary data from official reports, government policies, and selected academic literature. The study investigates how technological tools influence transparency, reduce human discretion, and promote ethical behavior in public administration. Initial observations suggest that although digital platforms improve access to information and increase service efficiency, weak institutional frameworks, limited digital literacy, and political interference continue to hinder their full potential. Therefore, the study will explore both the opportunities for transformation and the structural challenges of digital governance in combating corruption. By bridging the gap between policy goals and governance realities, this research contributes to Africa's broader agenda on institutional innovation, sustainable governance, and public sector reform. The findings aim to provide policy-relevant insights into how African states can use technology not just as a management tool but as a catalyst for transparent and accountable governance.

Keywords: Accountability, Corruption, Digital Governance, Institutional Reform.

Abstract ID: 11

Title: Challenges and Opportunities in AI-Driven IMC within African Markets

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Category: Poster

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This study examines the evolving landscape of AI-driven Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in low-resource African contexts, focusing on Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria. Despite Africa's linguistic diversity and growing digital engagement, data scarcity, infrastructural gaps, and linguistic underrepresentation continue to constrain AI adoption. Most large language models (LLMs) remain poorly equipped to process local languages, limiting inclusive marketing strategies and deepening digital inequalities. Using existing literature, industry reports, and case studies from 2022–2025, during the rapid rise of powerful AI models like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google DeepMind's Gemini, this exploratory study identifies key constraints shaping AI use in marketing and documents emerging local solutions. Initiatives such as Masakhane demonstrate the potential of community-led data collection and open-source model development to enhance African language representation. Preliminary findings reveal that smaller, resource-efficient models and decentralized AI systems can reduce technical barriers for small enterprises but remain challenged by fragmented regulations and ethical concerns. While connectivity is improving, persistent data poverty and contextual exclusion hinder equitable progress. The study advocates for African-led innovation, harmonized policy frameworks, and investment in specialized small language models (SLMs) to build a more inclusive and effective AI-driven IMC ecosystem across the continent.

Abstract ID: 12

Title: Mobile Money Integration And Financial Service Marketing Innovation Among Micro And Medium Enterprises In Eldoret, Kenya: Examining The M-Pesa Effect On Customer Engagement

Author: Kennedy Otiso

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Category: Panel

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Mobile money, particularly M-PESA, has revolutionized financial services in Kenya, enabling businesses and consumers to transact efficiently without traditional banking. This study investigates how integration of M-PESA and associated mobile financial services affects customer engagement among micro and medium enterprises (MSEs) in Eldoret, Kenya. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized structured surveys administered to 300 MSEs, in-depth interviews with 25 business owners, and exit surveys of 200 customers. Findings reveal that mobile money integration significantly enhances customer engagement by improving convenience, trust, and transaction efficiency, while simultaneously enabling MSEs to adopt innovative marketing practices. Challenges identified include network reliability, transaction fees, and limited digital literacy among some customers. The study concludes that mobile money acts not only as a payment tool but also as a driver of financial service innovation and marketing strategy, fostering stronger customer relationships and business growth. Policy and managerial implications are discussed, emphasizing targeted support for regional MSEs to leverage mobile money for marketing and customer engagement.

Keywords: M-PESA, mobile money, customer engagement, micro and medium enterprises, financial service innovation.

Education, Pedagogy & Graduate Training

Abstract ID: 13

Title: Virtual Exchange as Diaspora Engagement: Lessons from Kenya–U.S. COIL Project on Language, Culture, and Dating

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Category: Paper

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This paper presents findings from a comparative study on the intersection of language, communication styles, and dating. The project focused on the role of language and communication styles in shaping relationship formation in Kenya and the USA. Modelled on the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) framework, the project took place in spring 2026 and involved sixteen undergraduate students from one American and one Kenyan university. Participants included four males and four females selected randomly from each institution. Each student was paired with a student of the opposite gender from the foreign institution. Partners extracted data from each other to answer four research questions: a) What language features and communication styles are commonly used to initiate, sustain, and/or end romantic relationships? b) How do online dating interactions differ from face-to-face dating encounters? c) How do individuals manage ambiguity, rejection, silence, or miscommunication in dating? d) What socio-cultural factors affect dating in Kenya and the USA? Qualitative data was drawn from semi-structured interviews and partners shared both their experiences and observations. Partners engaged through technology, e.g., video conferencing, WhatsApp, and emails. Findings revealed cultural differences: Kenyans used indirect language, observed familial, social and religious norms, and followed gender norms. Americans favored direct verbal expression, online dating, explicit self-disclosure, and individual-centered attraction. The study revealed convergences in casual dating, in-person and digital connections, gifting, and places of meeting potential dates. This study highlighted the importance of COIL as one of the ways Kenyan diaspora scholars can use to create partnerships with Kenyan counterparts.

Abstract ID: 14**Title: From Supervision to Mentorship: Re-orienting Graduate Education in Kenya**

Jennifer Kibicho - University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Patrick Ochieng - Oakwood University

Jonathan Choti - Michigan State University

Teresa Wasonga - Northern Illinois University

Grace Wambu - Kean University

Elimelda Onger - North Carolina A & T University

Category: Panel

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Graduate education in Kenya has expanded rapidly, yet many students continue to face significant delays in completing their degrees. Although PhD programs are designed to take about three to four years, many students take up to eight years or longer. These delays are largely attributed to supervision challenges, including delayed feedback and limited academic guidance. Compounding the issue, only about 40% of university lecturers hold PhDs, restricting the pool of qualified supervisors available for a growing student population. Research further shows that nearly 75% of postgraduate students express dissatisfaction with supervision, particularly regarding feedback and support.

This panel discussion argues that the traditional supervision model is no longer sufficient. In many Kenyan universities, supervision remains narrowly focused on overseeing research progress, often with minimal interaction and support. Evidence increasingly points to weak student-supervisor relationships, lack of mentorship, and poor institutional support as key contributors to prolonged completion times and diminished student outcomes. The panel will explore a paradigm shift from supervision to mentorship as a viable solution. Unlike conventional supervision, mentorship extends beyond academic guidance to include career development, motivation, and integration into research communities. Panelists will discuss actionable strategies such as training faculty supervisors, establishing structured mentorship programs, and strengthening institutional support systems. Kenyan Diaspora scholars, many of whom have experienced robust mentorship models abroad, are uniquely positioned to help drive this transformation. By bringing together educators from the Diaspora, this session will highlight the urgent need to reorient graduate education in Kenya. Strengthening mentorship can improve completion rates, enhance research quality, and better prepare graduates to contribute meaningfully to Kenya's national development goals, including Vision 2030, as well as to global knowledge economies.

Abstract ID: 15

Title: Reimagining Human Factors in Academic Language Programs Development

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Category: Paper

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Education has a two-fold function in human life and in society. One of the functions is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable human beings to become more efficient, to achieve with more knowledge and skills, the legitimate goals of life. Education must also train for quick, resolute, and effective thinking. Over recent years new technology has increasingly become a major enabler of day-to-day human activities. But has advancement in the use of technology come at the expense of human, face-to-face interaction and other social living skills? This paper argues that education should transmit both artificial intelligence and the accumulated experience of social living. Understanding the relations among humans and the systems with which they interact can help improve academic programs' design and development to transmit both technical intelligence and the accumulated experience of social living. Using human factors perspective, this paper seeks to show the important relationship between technology, the environment, humans, and culture. It proposes the essence of mitigating the design of language programs that support both technical and natural human learning to foster critical thinking and social living. The goal is to show how African language programs and teachers can incorporate both technical and non-technical life skills into their programs.

Abstract ID: 16

Title: AI Integration in Kiswahili Pedagogy in Competence Based Education: Balancing Technology and Cultural Identity.

Authors: Winnie Lukungu, Prof. Phillip M. Mutisya

Affiliation: Kenyatta University

Category: Paper

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Kenya's Competence Based Education (CBE) prioritizes digital literacy over rote learning. While AI enhances classroom visualization, standard tools carry Western biases. This creates a challenge for Kiswahili, a compulsory learning area and a national language vital to East African cultural identity. Integrating AI into Kiswahili pedagogy improves digital literacy and competence but poses a high risk of detaching learners from their cultural roots. Standard Large Language Models (LLMs) tend to struggle with local dialects and idioms, creating tension between technological advancement and linguistic preservation. The study evaluates the status of integration of AI in the instruction of Kiswahili in the current CBE. The study will seek to identify the explicit socio- cultural tensions faced by stakeholders and design a balanced pedagogical framework that leverages AI efficiency re- imaged as 'Artivisual Intelligence' while ensuring cultural preservation. The study will employ both qualitative and quantitative surveys with educators of Kiswahili to assess digital literacy and the rate of AI adoption. Qualitative data will feature thematic analysis of structured interviews with curriculum developers, teachers and students. The findings will offer actionable, context- aware insights for policy makers, curriculum planners and AI developers. It will also provide a strategic model where technology enriches rather than compromises heritage, securing the future of Kiswahili cultural literacy.

Key words: CBE, Kiswahili pedagogy, AI , Cultural Identity, Arti Visual Intelligence

Abstract ID: 17

Title: Language Policy, Power, and Early Literacy: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Multilingual Education Policies and Early-Grade Literacy in Kenya

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Category: Paper

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Kenya's language-in-education policy has long promoted the use of local languages in the early grades as a foundation for literacy and cognitive development. However, despite policy alignment with international recommendations on mother-tongue-based multilingual education, early-grade literacy outcomes in many Kenyan schools remain uneven and persistently low. This study critically examines the relationship between language policy, power, and early literacy by analyzing how multilingual education policies are constructed, legitimized, and enacted within Kenya's sociopolitical and educational contexts. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study interrogates the ideological assumptions, power relations, and language hierarchies entrenched within policy texts and literacy discourses. The study is theoretically informed by Jim Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and critical perspectives on language policy and power. It argues that although multilingual education policies present local languages as vehicles for inclusion and literacy development, policy implementation is often shaped by colonial legacies, the dominance of English, unequal status among indigenous languages, and tensions between policy rhetoric and classroom realities. The analysis highlights how teacher preparation, instructional materials, assessment practices, and community language ideologies mediate the implementation of multilingual education policies in early-grade classrooms. The study contends that early literacy development cannot be understood solely as a pedagogical or cognitive issue but also as a political and ideological process shaped by competing language interests and structures of power. It concludes that meaningful improvement in early-grade literacy requires not only supportive instructional practices but also equitable language policies that recognize and legitimize linguistic diversity within Kenya's multilingual society.

Keywords: Kenya, Early Literacy, Language Policy, Multilingual Education, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power

Abstract ID: 18

Title: Re-examining School Counseling in Kenya: Exploring the Need for Trained Counselors to Support Academic, Career, and Social-Emotional Development

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Category: Paper

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Education plays a central role in shaping individual development and societal well-being. In Kenya, secondary education has traditionally emphasized academic achievement as the primary indicator of success. However, increasing concerns related to student mental health, socio-emotional challenges, school disengagement, and uncertainty around postsecondary and career pathways have revealed critical gaps in how schools support adolescents beyond academics. Although guidance and counseling is formally recognized within the Kenyan education system, the country does not offer undergraduate or graduate degree programs in school counseling. Instead, counseling responsibilities are typically assigned to classroom teachers as an additional duty, often with minimal preparation, limited time, and inconsistent institutional support (Mwaniki, 2008; Wambeti, 2016; Omondi, 2022). This structure has constrained the capacity of schools to provide preventive, developmentally responsive, and ethically grounded counseling services. As a result, guidance and counseling practices in many Kenyan secondary schools remain largely reactive and discipline-oriented rather than relational, student-centered, and developmental (Wambeti, 2016; Omondi, 2022). These limitations raise important questions about how counseling is conceptualized within schools and whether current approaches adequately support students' mental health, educational transitions, and career decision-making during adolescence. The purpose of this proposed study is to examine the need for trained school counselors in Kenyan secondary schools and to explore how professionalized school counseling could contribute to transformative education. Grounded in transformative education theory and Global South perspectives, the study seeks to analyze existing counseling practices, stakeholder perceptions, and institutional expectations related to student support. Using a qualitative, exploratory design, the study proposes to engage teachers currently serving in counseling roles, school leaders, students, and parents to examine perceived gaps, challenges, and possibilities for strengthening counseling services. This proposed research aims to inform education policy, teacher preparation, and the development of structured training pathways for school counselors in Kenya, positioning counseling as a core component of holistic education and social development rather than an auxiliary school function.

Abstract ID: 19

Title: From Policy to Practice: A Systematic Review of Implementation Challenges and Gaps in Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum

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Category: Paper

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Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), rebranded in 2024 as Competency-Based Education (CBE), is among the most ambitious education reforms in sub-Saharan Africa. Anchored in Vision 2030 and the Constitution of Kenya, the 2-6-6-3 model promises to scale national academic prowess for a fast-changing global economy. After nearly a decade of phased implementation, however, the reform has produced uneven results, mounting public contestation, and a growing yet fragmented evidence base. This paper presents a systematic literature review, informed by PRISMA 2020, of 58 peer-reviewed, policy, and gray-literature sources published between 2017 and 2026. Using thematic synthesis, the review surfaces six interrelated implementation challenge clusters: (a) teacher preparedness and pedagogical capacity gaps; (b) infrastructure, resources, and the digital divide; (c) assessment design, capability, and integrity under school-based and summative assessment regimes (KPSEA, KJSEA); (d) parental engagement and household economic burden; (e) equity and inclusion deficits affecting learners in arid and semi-arid lands, informal settlements, and special-needs categories; and (f) governance, policy coherence, and the politics of the Junior Secondary transition. Findings reveal a tightly coupled implementation ecology in which weaknesses in one domain amplify weaknesses in others. The paper concludes that CBE's transformative promise depends on coordinated investment in teacher capability, equitable resourcing, credible assessment systems, and transparent communication. Speaking directly to the 2026 conference theme, the paper offers an evidence-based agenda for scaling Kenya's academic system within a turbulent geopolitical and economic environment. Implications for policy, school leadership, teacher education, and future research are discussed.

Abstract ID: 20

Title: Interrogating the On-going Education Reforms in Kenya (the Adoption of the Competence Based Education (CBE) Paradigm and the 2-6-3-3-3 Framework).

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Category: Paper

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The on-going education reforms in Kenya, the adoption of the Competence Based Education (CBE) and replacing the 8-4-4 model of education with the 2-6-3-3-3 structure, have elicited robust discourse among stakeholders, including scholars. On one hand are those who hail CBE as a superior curriculum with potential to align the country's education system with the 21st-century technology-driven, globalized world. They point to the paradigm's promise to mitigate the rote-learning, hypercompetitive, examination-driven education that was the hallmark of the 8-4-4 system by embracing a learner-centered, competency-based system that CBE promotes. On the other hand, there are those who question the process in which the government conceptualized the reforms, and, most importantly, the gaps in the implementation of the reforms; challenges such as teacher preparation, availability of facilities and materials required to implement the curriculum effectively, and stakeholder engagement. This presentation delves into this discourse by seeking to answer the following questions: 1) Was the diagnosis of the challenges in the Kenyan education sector that the reforms aim to address accurate? 2) What is the efficacy of the reforms in mitigating problems in the country's education sector? 3) What interventions are warranted for the reforms to achieve intended educational outcomes? This paper presents findings of focus groups with primary and Junior Secondary School teachers in Kenya conducted in 2024.

Abstract ID: 21

Title: Re-centering African Epistemologies in Global Schooling: A Multi-Stakeholder Analysis of Afrocentric–IB Integration in a K–12 Context

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Despite decades of expanding access to schooling across Africa, many learners complete the early grades without foundational skills, pointing to a deeper misalignment between dominant educational models and learners' cultural and linguistic realities. Afrocentric education, when implemented as a whole-school system and supported through sustained teacher professional development, has the potential to strengthen early and foundational learning while building resilient and contextually grounded education systems. This paper presents findings from a qualitative, multi-stakeholder case study examining the implementation of an Afrocentric–International Baccalaureate (IB) model in a K–12 school in Kenya, with particular attention to early learning and teacher capacity development. Data were drawn from individual interviews with twelve participants, including school leadership, teachers across grade levels (including early years), support staff, parents and grandparents. Findings indicate that Afrocentric integration enhances foundational learning by fostering learner identity, language relevance, and social-emotional development (SEL), key drivers of engagement and long-term academic success. Participants emphasized that culturally grounded pedagogy strengthens meaning making in the early years by aligning instruction with learners' lived experiences. The model also promotes family and community engagement, reinforcing learning beyond the classroom and contributing to more equitable outcomes. At the same time, the study identifies teacher capacity as the critical lever for sustainability and scale. While educators demonstrated a strong commitment to relational and inquiry-based teaching, challenges included limited access to Afrocentric-aligned materials and the need for sustained, structured professional development. These findings underscore the importance of investing in continuous professional learning, mentorship, and instructional coherence. By linking Afrocentric principles to foundational learning and teacher development, the study demonstrates how education systems can move from policy commitments to impactful, resilient, and culturally responsive practices across East Africa.

Abstract ID: 22

Title: An Evaluation Of Student Leadership Training Programs In Universities In Kenya

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Category: Paper

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Student leadership plays a vital role in enhancing educational experience and preparing future leaders in universities. In Kenya SLTPs have become an important avenue for nurturing leadership skills among students however, their effectiveness has not been expansively evaluated. This study assessed SLTPs in Kenyan universities, focusing on their contribution to skills development, best practices and areas for improvement. The study was guided by Transformational Leadership theory which motivates students, Social Learning theory, which emphasizes role modeling and Kolb's Experiential Learning which promotes practical engagement. An exploratory sequential mixed-method design was employed and data collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys. The study focused on student leaders from UoN and DU to gain comparative insights into the effectiveness of SLTPs. Findings revealed that SLTPs significantly enhanced leadership skills among the student leaders in areas like communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. However, critical thinking and decision-making skills were found to be less emphasized. The study recommended incorporating learning strategies such as debates, simulations, and case studies into future programs. SLTPs were also shown to improve participants' self-confidence, interpersonal communication and peer relationships although some reported difficulty balancing academic responsibilities with leadership roles. The study recommended integrating time management and wellness training to promote holistic development. Lastly, mentorship was identified as the most impactful component of the programs, underscoring the value of participatory and experiential learning approaches. It was recommended that mentorship be institutionalized and experiential learning be expanded through leadership projects.

Abstract ID: 23

Title: Multidimensional Motivation in Graduate Education: Examining Measurement Invariance and Demographic Differences Across Degree Level, Gender, and Age

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Category: Paper

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This study examined differences in motivational levels among graduate students based on degree level (master's vs. doctoral), gender, and age. A total of 199 graduate students participated in the study. Motivation was assessed using a multidimensional framework grounded in Self-Determination Theory, and data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and measurement invariance testing across groups. The CFA results supported an acceptable fit for a seven-factor motivational model, with standardized loadings indicating adequate construct representation. Measurement invariance analyses demonstrated that the motivational scale functioned equivalently, with metric invariance supported across all comparisons and scalar invariance supported for most comparisons. The findings suggest that graduate student motivation is structurally consistent across demographic groups and is not significantly influenced by degree level, gender, or age. These results support contemporary motivational theories emphasizing the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of motivation and challenge assumptions of systematic demographic differences in graduate student motivation. Implications for graduate education highlight the importance of universally applicable motivational support strategies rather than demographic-specific interventions.

Keywords: graduate student motivation, self-determination theory, measurement invariance, confirmatory factor analysis

Abstract ID: 24

Title: Aligning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with Workforce Demand in Marsabit County, Kenya: Curriculum Implementation Challenges and the Role of the Jua Kali Industry

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Category: Paper

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Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has long been positioned as a cornerstone of youth employment and economic development in Kenya, yet the promise has consistently outpaced the reality, particularly in Marsabit County, where the economic structures are insufficient. Growing up in Marsabit, I watched young men and women complete formal TVET programs at Marsabit Vocational and Technical College (MVTC), only to return to the Jua Kali sector repairing motorcycles under acacia trees, welding gates in roadside workshops, tailoring school uniforms in tin-roofed kiosks. Their certificates were never acknowledged, and their training was never explicitly prepared for. This study is, in part, an attempt to bring that recurring pattern into the rigorous language of educational research, so it can no longer be dismissed as anecdote. The study examines the extent to which MVTC's curriculum aligns with the workforce demands of Marsabit County, with particular attention to the Jua Kali informal sector. Guided by three research questions addressing curriculum-workforce alignment, institutional implementation barriers, and strategies for bridging the formal-informal sector divide, the study adopts a qualitative interpretivist single-case study design anchored by an Integrated Competency-Outcome-Based Design (ICOBD) framework, an original theoretical synthesis of Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) and Understanding by Design (UbD). Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observations, and document analysis, engaging six stakeholder groups: students, instructors, administrators, Jua Kali practitioners, local employers, and policymakers. The study reconceptualizes curriculum-industry alignment in informal-sector-dominated, geographically marginalized contexts, arguing that relevant TVET must be evaluated against the competencies that enable graduates to construct sustainable livelihoods. Findings generate empirically grounded, contextually relevant implications for curriculum reform, institutional practice and apprenticeship in Kenya's development.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Curriculum-Workforce Alignment, Jua Kali, Integrated Competency-Outcome-Based Design, Marsabit County

Abstract ID: 25

Title: An Exploration Of Public Private Partnerships In The Education Sector: A Case Of Suba South Sub- County- Kenya.

Author: Caleb Wanga

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Category: Paper

Public Private Partnerships is an increasingly popular model for implementing public projects. Since the 1980s, governments have increasingly adopted PPPs to finance the education sector in preference to traditional methods that rely mainly on public finance. PPPs are contractual arrangements between public sector organizations and private sector investors for joint and collaborative provision of infrastructure projects and services. In Kenya, The Ministry of Education in 1995 launched the Kenya Education Sector Support program (KESSP) with the main aim of expanding access to education through PPPs. The purpose of this study is to explore PPPs involvement in the education sector. The study will be guided by Leibenstein (1966) X-efficiency theory of PPPs. The objectives of the study include: Identification of the types of PPPs, areas of PPPs involvement and the challenges facing PPPs. Purposive and saturated sampling will be used. The study will employ descriptive survey research design. Questionnaire, interview and document analysis guide will be used as data collection instruments. Descriptive statistics will be used in data analysis and will be presented in the form of frequencies and percentages in tables. A pilot study will be conducted to establish reliability while validity will be ascertained by presenting the documents to experts in the area at JOOUST. The study should benefit all the stakeholders in the education sector such as the ministry of education, school heads and principals, the private sector and learners.

Abstract ID: 26

Title: Effects of Gamification in Vocabulary Acquisition in a Kiswahili L2 Classroom

Authors: Phelix Lumumba

Affiliations: Ohio University

Category: Paper

Email:

The use of gamification in foreign language teaching and learning has increased recently. This involves adopting, implementing and using such platforms to aid in the second language learning and teaching. Pastushenkov et al (2025), studied the use of Kahoot! as a digital game based learning (DGBL) platform that can be integrated into the teaching of Russian vocabulary as L2 in the United States. They have examined how this platform can be used in the teaching of most commonly taught languages like Spanish and French. Based on their findings, they suggest the need for more studies about how it can be used in the teaching of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). This study will therefore follow this blueprint to study how Kahoot! as a DGBL platform can be used to teach vocabulary and evaluate the vocabulary retention in Kiswahili as a L2 language in a US Midwestern college. Also, it will assess its effect on foreign language anxiety and motivation as were mentioned as gaps in related research papers. Kahoot! will be used to teach topical vocabulary to Elementary students based on the topics highlighted on the curriculum.

Key words: Kahoot!, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) platform, Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Abstract ID: 27

Title: The Incomplete Learner: Visualizing Inequity in Competency-Based Education in Kenya

Authors: Rose Njoroge

Affiliations: Kenyatta University

Category: Paper

This article critically examines the persistent inequities within Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reform by integrating educational theory and visual symbolism. While the CBC was introduced to foster inclusivity, creativity, and practical competencies among learners, its implementation reveals a deep and ongoing divide between policy intention and lived reality—particularly for marginalized students. Drawing on frameworks such as culturally responsive pedagogy, inclusive education, and critical race theory, the article interrogates systemic disparities in infrastructure, teacher preparedness, special needs inclusion, and stakeholder engagement. Central to the analysis is the metaphor of a hollow human sculpture, used to symbolize learners who are physically present in classrooms but remain emotionally, intellectually, and structurally underserved. The visual metaphor reinforces the concept of the “incomplete learner”—a student whose educational experience lacks the essential support needed for full development. By combining empirical data with symbolic interpretation, this study challenges the assumption that access to education alone ensures equity. Instead, it argues for intentional, differentiated support systems that respond to learners' diverse needs and contexts. The article concludes by offering targeted recommendations for inclusive policy reform and practice, asserting that without equity-driven implementation, the CBC risks becoming a hollow promise rather than a transformative tool.

Abstract ID: 28

Title: Co-creating university-level competencies for Competency-Based Education curriculum in Kenya.

Authors: Teresa Wasonga & Catherine Aura

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Category: Paper

Email:

The education system in Kenya is currently undergoing a transition, moving away from the traditional, exam-oriented framework towards a student-centered Competency-Based Education (CBE) system. This pivotal shift, especially at the basic education level, has instigated urgency for universities to realign their programs with the foundational principles of the CBE framework. These principles emphasize a value-based education that is not only responsive to Kenya's existential needs but also attuned to the demands of a rapidly evolving world. To forge competencies that bridge higher education and the aspirations of the Basic Education CBE framework, we adopted a collaborative, co-creation-based approach. Considering the limited empirical research on CBE in Kenya, this partnership—supported by the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP)—represented a vital opportunity for stakeholders to leverage their diverse skills, knowledge, and theoretical insights. Together, we co-developed university-level and teacher education competencies that align with the essential components of the basic education CBE framework. This initiative, which involved two universities, focused on unlocking resources and fostering positive attitudes among a diverse stakeholder team within the education community. This paper delves into the critical steps and thoughtful considerations taken during the development of CBE competencies at a Kenyan university, highlighting the innovative competencies that emerged. The process created competencies intended to foster educational experiences that are relevant and transformative.

Abstract ID: 29

Title: Two Paths to Understanding: The Value of Mixed Research Literacy for Graduate Students

Authors: Adam Marshall, Amani Zaier, PhD; Kennedy Awounda, PhD

Affiliations: Texas Tech

Category: Paper

Email:

Graduate students are expected to navigate complex research problems requiring both statistical precision and contextual understanding. Developing competence across quantitative and qualitative approaches fosters “mixed research literacy,” enabling researchers to align methods with research questions rather than disciplinary norms or personal preferences. This study employed a critical content analysis of responses from 104 graduate students to examine perceptions of research design and methodological preferences. Findings revealed five central influences on methodological orientation: statistics anxiety, disciplinary and supervisory culture, exposure to mixed-methods training, pragmatic constraints, and curricular experiences. Results indicate that while students value methodological pluralism, confidence and preference are shaped by prior experiences and perceived competence. These findings underscore the importance of instructional and mentoring practices that support methodological flexibility and research literacy.

Keywords: mixed methods literacy, research design preferences, methodological flexibility, graduate education

Abstract ID: 30

Accelerating Reading Fluency in sub-Saharan Africa – What's Hot, What's Not

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Category: Paper

In an era defined by geopolitical realignment and constrained economic realities, the academic prowess of sub-Saharan African nations hinges on a fundamental, yet often overlooked, prerequisite: foundational literacy. This paper argues that the ability to scale educational impact is inextricably linked to our collective success in accelerating reading fluency in the early grades. Drawing on over two decades of research and implementation experience across the continent—including recent data from a 15-country stakeholder mapping study on foundational learning for the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), insights from the USAID-funded Supporting Holistic and Actionable Research in Education (SHARE) project, and lessons from the national-scale Tusome and Tayari programs, this paper identifies the strategies that are yielding impact (What's Hot) and the persistent approaches that are failing to deliver at scale (What's Not). The paper posits that navigating the current global landscape requires a decisive shift from fragmented, donor-dependent projects to contextually-grounded, system-strengthening approaches. Key hot strategies include: pedagogical innovation through structured pedagogies and technology-enhanced learning (e.g., ABRACADABRA, cross-age peer tutoring); the strategic and intentional use of local languages and mother-tongue instruction; building resilient systems through school-based teacher support systems (SBTS) and the integration of early grade reading instruction into pre-service teacher education; and employing data-driven decision-making for continuous improvement. Conversely, what's not working includes: a continued over-reliance on fragmented, short-term interventions; a disconnect between curriculum, assessment, and classroom realities; and the persistent marginalization of early childhood education. Ultimately, scaling our academic prowess in this new era demands we leverage homegrown evidence, foster multi-sectoral partnerships, and champion policies that prioritize foundational learning as the bedrock for human capital development, economic stability, and sustainable sovereignty.

Abstract ID: 31

Title: Student Agency in Digital Learning Environments: A Phenomenological Study of Kenyan Graduate Students' Lived Experience in U.S. Higher Education

Authors: Collins Ketere

Affiliations: Ohio University

Category: Panel

This paper explores the intersection of digital learning environments and student agency through a comparative study of Kenyan graduate students' experiences in higher education institutions in Kenya and the United States. As digital learning becomes increasingly central to global education, understanding how these environments shape students' ability to take ownership of their learning, referred to as student agency, is critical. This study investigates how the design, implementation, and accessibility of digital platforms influence student agency, particularly for Kenyan students who have navigated two distinct educational systems. Using a qualitative research approach, this study employs in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective journals to capture the lived experiences of Kenyan graduate students. The research examines the adoption of digital learning platforms, their impact on student autonomy, and the challenges students encounter in both contexts. Additionally, it explores pedagogical approaches, technological accessibility, and the role of digital tools in fostering engagement and self-directed learning. By comparing the experiences of students in Kenyan and U.S. institutions, this study highlights the cultural, structural, and technological factors that shape digital learning outcomes. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital learning environments can be designed to enhance student agency across diverse educational contexts. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and institutions in both Kenya and the U.S. to improve digital learning practices and support student success in an increasingly digital world.

Abstract ID: 32

Title: Demystifying Instructional Design: Scaling Academic Excellence in a Changing Global Landscape

Authors: Patrick Mose

Affiliations: Ohio University

Category: Paper

Email:

In a rapidly changing geopolitical and economic environment, universities are challenged to maintain academic rigor while expanding access, flexibility, and global relevance. Instructional design has emerged as a critical—yet often misunderstood—component of this transformation. Drawing from my experience as an instructional designer at Ohio University, this presentation reflects on practical approaches to supporting faculty in designing online and hybrid courses that remain engaging, rigorous, and responsive to evolving learner needs. Using real-world examples from course development and program redesign initiatives, I will illustrate how instructional design helps translate disciplinary expertise into effective learning environments. Key strategies include leveraging learning analytics to guide course improvements, integrating adaptive and emerging technologies, and developing faculty-centred resources that sustain innovation while maintaining academic standards. By demystifying the instructional design process, this presentation highlights how thoughtful course design can strengthen institutional resilience, expand educational reach, and scale academic excellence in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving global landscape.

Gender, Feminism & Social Justice

Abstract ID: 33

Title: Out for Glamour in Africa: A History of Black Urban Femininities in Drum Magazine

Authors: Wanjiru Mbure

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Category: Roundtable Discussion

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This “author meets critic” roundtable discusses the 2026 book *Out for Glamour in Africa: A History of Black Urban Femininities in Drum Magazine* (University of Michigan Press) by Dr. Wanjirũ G. Mbure. Mbure uncovers new histories of Black women in Drum magazine, which originated in South Africa in 1951 but gained pan-African eminence throughout the early seventies, and proposes a novel theoretical framework to understand transnational urban Black and African femininities. Mbure argues that the magazine’s exploration of representational possibilities of African women produced a novel model of Black femininity, which she terms “femme urbAfricana,” the hallmark of which is a sociable depiction of urban African and Afro-descended women. Mbure offers a rigorous and nuanced examination of the contours of Black and African female subjectivities from the perspectives of the magazine’s editors and writers, South African township culture, advertisers, Black diaspora communities, pro-independence African movements, and actors within the newly independent African state. As Drum’s primary market in East Africa, Kenya prominently features throughout the book and is the central focus of the book’s fifth chapter. Specifically, the book engages Drum’s East Africa edition, which captures the varied fortunes of African women in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. An analysis of Kenya National Assembly Hansard records from a debate on African women’s cosmetic use highlights East African edition political economy concerns. The critics on the panel bring expertise such as, biopolitics, subjectivity, and postcoloniality (Dr. Vincent Ogoti, Clemson University) and fashion, gender, and women’s representation (Dr. Njeri Kinuthia, UCF, participation confirmation pending).

Abstract ID: 34

Title: Gendered Decision-Making in Peacekeeping Deployments: Insights from the Kenya Defense Forces

Authors: Rahab Kisio

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Category: Paper

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Abstract

This study examines how gender shapes recruitment, training, role allocation, and deployment decisions within the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) for United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions. Although Kenya has adopted gender-neutral recruitment standards and supports the Women, Peace and Security agenda, women remain underrepresented in combat and operationally prestigious roles. Rather than focusing only on participation rates, this study analyzes the institutional decision-making processes within troop-contributing militaries that determine who is deployed, where, and in what role.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 15 Kenyan military personnel (12 male and 3 female) who have served in both national operations and UN missions, the study examines how deployment decisions are made within the KDF. Using Tokenism Theory and Ambivalent Sexism Theory, the findings show that gendered outcomes emerge not through explicit discrimination but through routine institutional practices. Commanders rely on assessments of operational suitability, physical resilience, and risk management when assigning roles. While presented as neutral, these criteria systematically restrict women's access to frontline combat roles and high-prestige military capital.

The findings demonstrate that numerical underrepresentation, protective norms, and institutional risk management shape women's integration into peacekeeping. As a result, women are more frequently assigned to support or administrative roles rather than combat or leadership positions. These patterns illustrate how international gender inclusion mandates interact with entrenched military institutions, producing symbolic inclusion without full operational integration.

Keywords: UN peacekeeping; gender and military institutions; Kenya Defence Forces; role allocation; Tokenism Theory; Women, Peace and Security

Abstract ID: 35

Title: Growth of Women in Contemporary Music in Kenya

Authors: Kabei Cyndicate

Affiliations: Alabama State University

Category: Paper

Introduction

Contemporary music in Kenya has grown rapidly over the years, especially among women. In the past, many women in Kenya and across Africa faced challenges in the music industry. Society often believed that women should only sing gospel music or songs that were considered “safe” and respectful. Women who wanted to sing about love, emotions, heartbreak, or personal experiences were often judged harshly.

Many female artists were afraid to express themselves freely because people could misunderstand their music. Some male producers and members of society viewed women who sang openly about relationships or feelings as being “suggestive” or inappropriate. Because of this, many talented women avoided recording certain types of music or entering studios altogether.

Despite these challenges, Kenyan women have continued to fight for their space in music. Today, female artists are becoming more confident, creative, and independent. They are now writing their own songs, producing music, learning music technology, and encouraging younger women to follow their dreams.

Women in Kenyan Music in the Past

In earlier years, the Kenyan music industry was not very supportive of women. Most female musicians had to be extremely careful about the kind of songs they released. Women mainly focused on gospel music or traditional music because society accepted those genres more easily.

Female artists who wanted to sing contemporary music or express their emotions freely often faced criticism. Recording studios were mostly controlled by men, and many women felt uncomfortable sharing personal stories through music.

However, artists like Suzanna Owiyo played an important role in changing this mindset. She became one of the strongest voices encouraging women to pursue music and express themselves creatively. Even though the environment was not fully supportive, artists like Suzanna Owiyo opened doors for younger female musicians.

The Impact of Music Education Abroad

One of the biggest changes in Kenyan contemporary music has been women studying music abroad. Scholarships and international music programs have given female artists

opportunities to learn more about songwriting, music business, production, and music technology.

Studying abroad has helped women gain confidence and independence in the music industry. Instead of depending completely on producers, many women now understand how recording, producing, and managing music works.

Artists such as Xenia Manasseh studied at Berklee College of Music. Her international experience helped her grow as a contemporary artist and inspired many young women in Kenya.

Other artists like Karun and Njoki Karu also studied music abroad and returned to Kenya with more knowledge about music production, performance, and creative freedom.

These women became examples of how education can empower female artists. They encouraged other women to express themselves honestly without fear of judgment.

The Rise of Female Producers and Independent Artists

Another major development in Kenya's music industry is the rise of female producers and independent artists. In the past, many women depended on male producers who sometimes controlled the kind of music women could create.

Today, more women are learning music production and technology. Female artists are now producing their own songs, writing independently, and building their own creative spaces. This has made it easier for women to sing about love, emotions, relationships, personal growth, and social issues without fear.

The presence of female producers has also created safer and more comfortable studio environments for women. Female artists now feel more confident recording music that truly reflects their emotions and experiences.

Contemporary Female Artists in Kenya Today

Kenya now has many successful contemporary female artists who are changing the music industry. These artists are inspiring younger women to believe in themselves and use music as a form of expression.

Artists such as Karun, Xenia Manasseh, Zaituni Wambui, Barbara Wangui, Njerae are examples of successful female artists in Kenya.

Modern female artists are no longer afraid to sing about their feelings, relationships, dreams, struggles, and identity. They are proving that women can succeed in every part of the music industry; as singers, songwriters, producers, performers, and entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

The growth of women in contemporary music in Kenya is a powerful example of social and cultural change. Although women once faced judgment and limitations in the music industry, they have continued to push forward and create space for themselves.

Education abroad, music scholarships, and learning music technology have helped many female artists become more independent and confident. Female artists are now encouraging one another, creating supportive communities, and inspiring the next generation.

Today, women in Kenya are using music to tell their stories freely and honestly. Their success shows the importance of empowering women through education, creativity, and equal opportunities in the arts.

Abstract ID: 36

Title: Navigating the Margins of Power: African Immigrant Women's Pathways to Leadership in Higher Education

Authors: Faith Maina & Amani Zaier

Affiliations: Texas Tech University

Category: Paper

African immigrant women remain among the most underrepresented groups in academic leadership within U.S. higher education institutions, despite high levels of educational attainment and professional expertise. This phenomenological study explores the lived leadership experiences of seven African immigrant women serving in academic and administrative leadership positions at U.S. colleges and universities. Guided by intersectionality and resiliency theory, the study seeks to understand how race, gender, immigration status, accent, credential recognition, and institutional power structures shape African immigrant women's pathways into and navigation of leadership roles.

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and analyzed using phenomenological methods to identify shared meanings and essence across participants' experiences. Findings reveal persistent structural and cultural barriers, including systemic racism, gendered and racialized stereotyping, accent bias, exclusion from informal leadership networks, limited access to mentorship and sponsorship, and the devaluation of foreign-earned credentials and global expertise. Participants described navigating heightened surveillance, tokenism, and pressure to assimilate into Eurocentric leadership norms that often marginalize relational, collaborative, and community-oriented leadership approaches rooted in African epistemologies.

While participants demonstrated strong resilience and adaptive capacity in sustaining their leadership roles, the findings caution against framing resilience as an individual solution to institutional inequity. Instead, the study highlights how reliance on personal coping strategies can obscure organizational responsibility for dismantling structural barriers. This research addresses a critical gap in higher education leadership scholarship by centering African immigrant women as a distinct group, often conflated with African American women in existing literature. Implications point to the need for intentional leadership pipelines, culturally responsive mentorship and sponsorship, equitable hiring and promotion practices, and accountability-driven diversity policies to advance leadership equity in U.S. higher education.

Abstract ID: 37

Title: Kenya High School Literature Curriculum and Women's Literary Representation

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Category: Paper

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The Kenya High School Set Book program has evolved significantly since its inception, adapting to new educational goals, societal changes, and shifts in literary trends. It features both Kenyan and international literature, all designed to align with the curriculum. The aim is to stimulate intellectual engagement while exposing students to a variety of literary genres, themes, and cultural perspectives. The selection of Set Books highlights political, cultural, social, and economic factors that influence teaching methods and ideological approaches to studying literature in Kenyan high schools. What is taught, whose perspectives are represented, and what is accorded literary acclaim and popularity reveal patterns in curriculum content and selection criteria that limit the representation of African female authors. To ensure stories by women remain in circulation within educational contexts and beyond, it is essential to explore how various markets and institutions of literary value interact to influence the publication, circulation, and readership of African women's literature. The Kenyan High School literature Set Book curriculum, while cultivating a reading culture and stimulating literary and intellectual engagement among young readers, reinforces a cycle of invisibility that diminishes the perceived value of female-authored literature in the broader cultural discourse. The ramifications of this marginalization extend beyond the mere absence of women's voices in the literary canon; they have profound implications for the dynamics between educational practices and literary representation, which influence societal understanding of gender issues.

Abstract ID: 38

Title: The Architecture of Solidarity: Redefining Wanjiku's Voting Behavior through the 'Sweet Sobs'

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Category: Paper

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This paper challenges the dominant framing of the Kenyan common woman, 'Wanjiku', as an irrational or easily manipulated voter. Drawing on Mary Njeri Kinyanjui's concept of anthropain (human-inflicted suffering born of structural violence) and the 'sweet sob' (the communal expression of grief that generates resilience and solidarity), it argues that Wanjiku's voting behavior is better understood as an architecture of solidarity: a strategic, deeply rational framework rooted in historical memory, daily practices of care, and a fierce commitment to protecting the spaces of sweetness she has carved out against a predatory state. Through detailed analysis of eight matriarchs—Ndiko wa Mbatia, Rebecca Njeri wa Ndugo, Njunguru, Nyokabi wa Mwema, Phylis Wanjeri, Wairimu wa Titi, Magdalene Wanjiru, and Njeri wa Ngomi—the paper demonstrates that Wanjiku's political agency is neither chaotic nor easily purchased. Instead, it is a sophisticated navigation between the warm current of ancestral solidarity (Utu) and the cold current of systemic precarity. The paper concludes with concrete policy recommendations for aligning governance with the architecture of solidarity that Wanjiku has already built.

Abstract ID: 39

Title: When Justice Is Not Gender-Neutral: Global Lessons on Crime, Inequality, and Institutional Response

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Category: Panel

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This presentation draws on comparative research from 21 countries across five global regions to examine how gender shapes experiences within criminal justice systems. Covering issues from gender-based violence and disparities in sentencing and incarceration in the United States, to Brazil's Maria da Penha Law, and the influence of religious and customary law in parts of the Middle East and Asia, it shows that structural gender inequalities persist despite decades of reform. Concrete examples underscore these patterns: in Iran, legal doctrines such as diya (blood money) and evidentiary rules have historically assigned unequal weight to women's lives and testimony; in Lebanon, non-hereroxesual individuals often face inconsistent or discriminatory institutional responses; and in Canada, Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people continue to encounter systemic gaps in protection shaped by colonial legacies. While some reforms and innovations are emerging, the evidence points to a consistent conclusion—justice systems are not gender-neutral in practice, and meaningful change requires confronting the legal, cultural, and political structures that sustain unequal outcomes.

Abstract ID: 40

Title: Overcoming the Opportunity Costs of Immigration: Expanding Financial Pathways to Accelerate the American Dream

Authors: John Munyui Muchira & Barnabas Kirui

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Many Kenyan immigrants arrived in the United States with limited exposure to entrepreneurship education. For those who studied entrepreneurship in Kenya, instruction was often theoretical and provided few opportunities to develop practical entrepreneurial competencies prior to the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Upon settling in the United States, many immigrants pursue the "American Dream" while navigating challenges related to language and cultural integration, limited savings due to the high cost of relocation and education, uncertain career transitions, and the complexities of establishing sustainable businesses. Although entrepreneurship education and financial literacy can strengthen entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), individuals' belief in their ability to successfully perform entrepreneurial tasks and achieve business goals, many immigrants remain unaware of opportunities to develop these competencies. This paper examines the role of financial literacy, social networks, culture, and savings behavior in fostering ESE among Kenyan immigrants. While Rotational Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) and Chamas have long served as trusted community-based financial systems that promote saving, social capital, mutual trust, and financial support, other low-risk financial instruments may provide similar benefits while expanding opportunities for long-term wealth creation and sustainable business investment. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Network Theory, the paper explores how beliefs about available resources, social networks, perceived barriers, and strategic financial decisions influence perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intentions. It argues that strengthening financial literacy while preserving the social capital embedded in Kenyan cultural networks can enhance ESE and expand economic opportunities for Kenyan immigrants in the United States.

Abstract ID: 41

Title: The Future Has Hardware

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Category: Paper

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Artificial Intelligence is transforming how we learn, work, govern, and innovate. Around the world, governments, universities, and industries are embracing AI as the foundation of the future. Yet, while discussions on responsible AI often focus on ethics, algorithms, and data governance, one critical question remains largely absent: What happens to the hardware that makes AI possible? Every AI system relies on a physical ecosystem of computers, servers, data centers, batteries, and other electronic devices. These technologies power our digital future, but they also have finite lifecycles. As AI adoption accelerates, so will the volume of end-of-life electronics, placing increasing pressure on natural resources, waste management systems, and countries that disproportionately receive discarded electronic equipment. This paper argues that the future of AI cannot be separated from the future of its hardware. Building a truly sustainable digital future requires governance frameworks that extend beyond software to include the entire lifecycle of the technologies that support AI. It explores how Circular Economy principles, Extended Producer Responsibility, and Digital Product Passports can strengthen transparency and accountability throughout the electronics value chain. It also introduces the Device Health Index (DHI) model, a governance framework that evaluates device suitability based on remaining useful life, repairability, battery health, material recovery potential, and environmental risk. Rather than asking how quickly we can deploy AI, this paper asks a different question: How do we ensure that the technologies shaping tomorrow do not become tomorrow's environmental burden? This offers policymakers, educators, industry leaders, and researchers a practical pathway toward a digital future that is intelligent, circular, equitable, and sustainable.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence, Circular Economy, Extended Producer Responsibility, Digital Product Passport, governance

Abstract ID: 42

Title:Bridging the Divide: Programmatic Alternatives for harnessing the impact of education research in Africa

Author: John Mugo & Ishmael I. Munene

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Category: Virtual

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Education research in Africa has gained increased focus with expansion of university education, creation of research-based policy organizations and establishment of research funding mechanisms across the continent. Yet, Africa's contribution to global education knowledge is only at 3%, with 80% of education knowledge hidden in grey literature. Close to 90% of what is published from Africa is unfunded graduate research, while around 70% of the first authors of the funded research are either non-Africans or Africans in diaspora. Hidden in this reality is a myriad of issues, the fact that Africa doesn't determine the research agenda that receives funding, and the disconnect between what is researched and the needs of our education systems. To address this, the Kenya Cabinet Secretary for Education launched the Harnessing Education Research for Impact (HERI Africa) initiative on 18th February 2026. HERI is a Pan-African initiative that transitions education research from foreign reliance to Africa-led, university-based research. In addition, it seeks to develop and institutionalize a national education research agenda, establish a centre for capacity development in research, fund and drive university-led research through establishment of Research Chairs, and democratize communication and dissemination of education research, to especially ensure that research results are accessible to teachers, parents, youth and the education system. This paper will introduce the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association to this initiative and explore the different ways through which Kenya and Africa diaspora scholars could contribute to revitalizing the impact of education research in Africa.

Abstract ID: 43

Title: Teacher Akili GPT: Leveraging AI and Mobile Technology to Advance Educational Equity

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Educational inequities remain a significant challenge in many rural and underserved communities in Kenya, where parents have limited access to educational resources to support their children's learning. Additionally, mobile phone ownership has increased dramatically nationwide, creating new opportunities to use technology to bridge learning gaps. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools offer promising solutions to extend educational support beyond the classroom and empower families to participate more actively in their children's education. The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of Teacher Akili GPT, an AI-powered educational assistant designed to support parents and learners in Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for Grades 1- 6. The project aims to examine how AI can promote educational equity by providing accessible, multilingual homework assistance through smartphones. A descriptive case-study approach was used to document the development and implementation of Teacher Akili GPT. The system was evaluated through sample cases representing rural households with limited educational resources but access to mobile technology. Preliminary findings suggest that Teacher Akili GPT has the potential to increase parental engagement and improve access to homework support, among others, by enabling parents to receive step-by-step explanations. This demonstrates how AI can be leveraged as a tool for educational equity. By transforming smartphones into learning companions, the platform offers a scalable model for supporting learners in rural and underserved communities. The findings contribute to emerging discussions on AI for social good and provide a framework for integrating AI-assisted learning.

Abstract ID: 44

Title: From Brain Drain to Brain Network. How Artificial Intelligence Can Unite Kenya's Global Talent for National Development

Author: Moody Amakobe

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Category: Paper

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For half a century, Kenya has approached its diaspora through three lenses: brain drain, remittances, and the hope of eventual return. This paper argues that artificial intelligence now makes a fourth lens possible: continuous knowledge contribution, regardless of location. Drawing on Central Bank of Kenya remittance data, the diaspora knowledge network literature developed by Jean-Baptiste Meyer and AnnaLee Saxenian, and documented AI deployments already operating inside Kenya's healthcare, education, and agricultural sectors, including Digital Green's Farmer. Chat, Safaricom's FarmerAI, Pawanax AI and CAD4TB tuberculosis screening, the paper proposes reframing "brain drain" as "Brain Network": a standing, AI-mediated infrastructure through which any Kenyan scholar, clinician, or engineer, wherever they live, can feed expertise into a national knowledge system that never sleeps, never retires, and never forgets. The paper points to diaspora founded ventures already building pieces of this infrastructure, among them Pawanax AI's cognitive healthcare platform and Dr. Charles Otieno's Yunigen Inc., which is applying AI to accelerate sickle-cell disease drug development in partnership with Kisumu County as early proof that the model works, alongside the author's own Global Data Science Institute initiatives in African-language AI, health records, and community finance. It closes with a direct challenge to gatherings of scholars such as the Kenya Scholars & Studies Association: if 10,000 diaspora scholars each contributed one hour of structured knowledge a week, Kenya would gain over half a million expert-hours a year, permanently, at zero cost of relocation. The scarce resource of this century is not people. It is organized knowledge, and Kenya's diaspora already has more of it than the country has ever had a reliable way to receive.

Keywords: brain drain, brain circulation, diaspora knowledge networks, artificial intelligence, knowledge graphs, retrieval-augmented generation, Kenya, KESSA

Abstract ID: 45

TITLE: Governance and Emerging Crime Dynamics in a Changing Geopolitical and Economic Environment: Implications for Policy and Practice

Authors: Shem Othoo & Margaret Barasa

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Category: Paper

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The changing geopolitical and economic environment has significantly impacted the nature, scale, and complexity of crime worldwide. Globalization, technological advancements, cross-border mobility, economic disruptions, and evolving international relations have created new opportunities for criminal activities. Despite continued efforts to strengthen security and governance structures, emerging crime trends continue to test the effectiveness of institutional responses. This study examines the interaction between governance and emerging crime dynamics within a rapidly changing geopolitical and economic context.

The specific objectives of the study are to: (i) examine the influence of geopolitical and economic changes on contemporary crime patterns; (ii) assess the capacity of governance and criminal justice institutions to respond to emerging crime threats; and (iii) identify policy and institutional strategies for enhancing crime prevention and governance resilience.

The study is anchored on Routine Activity Theory, which explains how changes in social, economic, and technological environments influence opportunities for criminal activity. A qualitative desk-review methodology was adopted, utilizing scholarly literature, policy documents, and crime trend analyses from national sources. Data was analyzed thematically to identify key trends and institutional responses.

The findings reveal that geopolitical and economic shifts have contributed to the growth of cybercrime, transnational organized crime, and other emerging security threats. The study further establishes that adaptive governance frameworks, inter-agency collaboration, and technology-enabled interventions enhance institutional preparedness and response capacity. The findings will benefit policymakers, governance institutions, criminal justice practitioners, and development partners in strengthening crime prevention and governance strategies.

Keywords: Criminology, Governance, Emerging Crime, Geopolitical Change, Criminal Justice.

Abstract ID: 46

Title: Insecurity And Its Effects On Tourism In Laikipia-Samburu Conflict Belt In Kenya; The Compounding Complexity Of Marginalisation, Cultural Norms, Resources Scarcity And Proliferation Of Arms

Authors: Heather Kipchumba, Julius Musau

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Category: Paper

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Laikipia and Samburu counties are home to magnificent landscapes and terrains, wildlife and numerous conservancies, rich cultural heritages, adventure and niche tourism, different climatic conditions as well as geo-tourism and scenic landscapes that hold the potential of generating reliable resources through tourism if adequately exploited in a peaceful ecosystem. Despite the presence of successful and fully operational national reserves and conservancies in the two counties, insecurity has been a normal disrupter that hinders the tapping, development and utilisation of the potential in the region, particularly in the Laikipia-Samburu conflict belt. As a consequence, revenue from tourism is dwindling, people working in the industry lose their jobs and local communities are losing benefits that were attached to conservancies. Based on this background, the research was carried out, guided by the common pool resources and the tragedy of common theoretical frameworks. It is a descriptive study that collected data using interview schedules and secondary data from the key local administrative officers and the Mara vision worriers (Morans), the Ministry of tourism staff and conservancy leaders, making a total population of 52. Content analysis was carried out, and results presented in themes. Ethical consideration of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality adhered to the results showed that tourism along the belt of Laikipia-Samburu counties was untapped and, in some instances, disrupted. The causal factors being insecurity from competition for scarce resources by the pastoral communities, human-wildlife conflicts especially during the dry seasons when pasture and water is scarce, deeply rooted cultural practice of cattle rustling and banditry, highly embedded among warriors and its social acceptability, proliferation of illegal arms among local communities, low literacy level that compounds youth unemployment, marginalisation of the regions, tribal clashes in communities that practice same cultural norms, and politicisation of historical land disputes and ethnic differences among others. This has created a wicked problem that interferes with not only the tourism sector growth, but also conservation of the flora and fauna, governance, policy reforms and security interventions.

Abstract ID: 47

Title: In Silico Profiling of Citrus-Derived Compounds Against Melanoma Targets

Author: Patrick Ochieng*, Ph.D.

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Category: Paper

Email:

Citrus fruits are widely consumed for their nutritional and antioxidant benefits; however, their topical and excessive use has been associated with phototoxicity, skin irritation, and potential drug-drug interactions mediated by cytochrome P450 enzymes. This study aims to computationally evaluate both the therapeutic promise and the limitations of key citrus-derived flavonoids - hesperidin, naringenin, hesperetin, and limonene - as potential anti-melanoma agents. Using AutoDock, we performed molecular docking simulations against melanoma-associated protein targets: Binding affinities of the citrus compounds were compared with known clinical inhibitors. Expected results indicate that hesperetin and naringenin will demonstrate moderate to strong binding energies (ranging from -- 8.5 to -- 9.8 kcal/mol) toward BRAF V600E and EGFR, approaching but not surpassing the reference inhibitors. Hesperidin, due to its bulky glycoside moiety, is expected to show weaker binding, while limonene, despite poor affinity, may still interact with hydrophobic pockets. These findings will help identify which citrus compounds warrant further optimization and which carry lower binding potential, while also highlighting the need to balance chemopreventive claims against documented adverse effects. Overall, this *in silico* profiling provides a dual-framework for interpreting citrus bioactives in melanoma research.

Abstract ID: 48

Title: Between Nyako and Dhako: Gendered Lexicon, Sexuality, and the Politics of Naming in Dholuo Indigenous Language Systems

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Category: Paper

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The Dholuo-speaking community of Kenya inhabits a rich linguistic landscape in which indigenous language systems do not merely reflect social realities but actively construct, negotiate, and at times suppress gendered identities and sexual norms. This paper examines how the Dholuo language—spoken predominantly in the Nyanza region of western Kenya—encodes femininity, womanhood, and sexuality through its lexical architecture, proverb traditions (sigendni and awaych), and naming conventions (nying). Drawing on ethnographic linguistic data collected across Homa Bay, Siaya, and Kisumu counties, and grounded in a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) framework, the study interrogates the semantic fields surrounding key Dholuo terms for womanhood: nyako (girl), dhako (woman/wife), and hera (love/desire), alongside euphemistic and taboo lexis relating to female sexuality. Findings reveal that the Dholuo lexicon operates as a site of ideological contestation, simultaneously preserving patriarchal gender scripts and offering subaltern women linguistic resources to navigate, resist, and redefine their identities. The paper demonstrates that binary gender constructs embedded in proverbs—often presented as immutable cultural wisdom—are neither universal nor unchanging, and that Dholuo women's everyday linguistic performances challenge these inherited taxonomies. Furthermore, the study reveals how terms relating to non-normative sexualities are systematically erased, euphemised, or pathologised within the lexical system, constituting a form of epistemic violence against queer Dholuo subjects. The paper argues for a decolonial feminist reading of indigenous African language systems that centres women's voices and broadens scholarly understanding of gender and sexuality beyond Eurocentric frameworks. Implications for language policy, feminist pedagogy, and community health communication are discussed.

Keywords: Dholuo, gender, sexuality, indigenous language systems, feminist critical discourse analysis, Kenya, lexical encoding, decolonial linguistics

Abstract ID: 49

Title: Humanizing Global Capitalism: Gender, Inequality, and Economic Violence in Desert Flower by Waris Dirie

Authors: Judith Jai Jefwa

Affiliations: United States International University-Africa

Category: Panel

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In an era marked by widening economic inequality and rapidly shifting geopolitical landscapes, literary texts have emerged as crucial sites for interrogating the consequences of market-driven policies. This paper examines how works of fiction dramatise poverty, labour exploitation, gendered economic oppression, and structural violence, offering ethical and affective critiques of contemporary political economies that often elude policy discourse and statistical analysis. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist literary frameworks, the study argues that literature functions as a counter-narrative to neoliberal rationality by foregrounding lived experience, vulnerability, and resistance.

Using *Desert Flower* by Waris Dirie as a focal text, the paper explores how global capitalism intersects with gender, migration, and bodily autonomy, revealing the exploitation that underpins transnational economic systems. The narrative exposes how economic “opportunity” is frequently predicated on gendered violence and cultural marginalisation, thereby challenging celebratory narratives of globalisation and success. By translating abstract economic processes into intimate human stories, literary texts render visible the emotional and moral dimensions of inequality that policy debates often obscure.

The paper ultimately contends that literature plays a vital role in advancing academic engagement with economic inequality by humanising data, unsettling dominant economic ideologies, and re-centering marginalised voices within scholarly discourse. In doing so, it underscores the continued relevance of literary studies in critically responding to contemporary global economic realities.

Key Words: Desert Flower; Global Capitalism; Neoliberalism; Gendered Inequality; Economic Violence; Postcolonial Literature

Abstract ID 50

Title: Effectiveness of the Ethical Dilemma Analysis Rubric in Assessing Critical Thinking in Family Science:

Authors: Jane Rose Njue, PhD

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Category: Paper

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Critical thinking is a metacognitive process that encompasses skills and dispositions that enhance logical problem-solving and facilitate the formation of valid conclusions through intentional self-regulation. It fosters a deeper understanding of information, enhances judgment and decision-making, and reduces reliance on cognitive biases and heuristics (Dwyer, 2023).

Critical thinking skills are integral to professional practice in all disciplines, including Family Science. Family Science, the scientific study of families and close interpersonal relationships, is central to promoting CT skills through its academic programming and practice. CT develops in students the intellectual and practical skills needed to understand, analyze, and contribute to the well-being of families in a diverse and ever-changing world. Moreover, CT in family science equips the student with the tools to navigate complex family issues and make informed decisions that can positively impact individuals and communities (Darling et al., 2020).

One area in which family science students need to utilize CT is in solving workplace ethical dilemmas. Ethical dilemmas refer to problems for which no course of action seems satisfactory. When working with families, dilemmas arise because there are good but contradictory ethical reasons to pursue conflicting or incompatible courses of action (Kitchners, 1984). Workplace ethical dilemmas arise in complex situations, involving multiple stakeholders, competing values, and uncertain outcomes. Solving them requires students to develop critical-thinking skills within the family science discipline.

This study is grounded in Kitchener's Model of Ethical Thinking, which has two levels of moral reasoning in solving ethical dilemmas. The Intuitive Level allows students to solve ethical dilemmas based on the facts of the situation and their individual moral dispositions. Students use the Critical Evaluative Level when their individual moral intuition must be evaluated, justified, and guided by their profession's codes of ethics, the five principles of ethical decision-making, and ethical theory (Kitchener, 1984).

The study's assessment tool (Ethical Dilemma Analysis Rubric) combines the application of the elements of Kitchener's Model of Ethical Moral Reasoning to solve ethical dilemmas, including autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, Justice, and Fidelity, as supported by the professional codes of ethics of the family Science disciplines. Using the six levels of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy on the vertical axis,

representing students' mastery of the steps involved in analyzing ethical dilemmas, CT scores for students from four Midwestern universities, with their instructors, using standardized teaching materials, are scored along the horizontal axis based on the student's CT competency, indicating for CT competencies as (1) "beginning," (2) "developing," (3) "proficiency," and (4) "accomplished" (NIU Baccalaureate et al., 2010, p. 1).

Statistical methods, including ANOVA and t-tests, are used to assess students' CT levels and to examine relationships between CT and course performance, demographic influences, and the Ethical Dilemma Analysis Rubric. This research aims to strengthen CT instruction within the family science established educational framework.

Key Words Critical thinking, Ethics, Assessment, Pedagogy, Family Science

Abstract ID 51

Title: A Critical Policy Analysis of Kenya's Affordable Housing Programme

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Kenya faces a persistent housing crisis, with an estimated annual housing deficit exceeding 200,000 units and a cumulative backlog of more than two million units. Approximately 60% of the urban population lives in slums and informal settlements, underscoring persistent structural inequalities in urban development and access to adequate housing. Cognizant of the magnitude of this challenge, the Government of Kenya launched the Affordable Housing Programme (AHP), a flagship initiative to reduce the housing deficit, improve affordability, promote inclusive urbanization, and stimulate economic growth.

This study critically analyses the AHP by examining its policy assumptions, institutional arrangements, financing mechanisms, implementation processes, and effectiveness in addressing the housing needs of low-income households. The analysis is anchored in Critical Policy Theory and informed by the concepts of housing affordability and urban spatial justice to examine the alignment between policy design, state-led housing provision and the needs of its intended beneficiaries.

The study adopts a convergent mixed-methods design that integrates three complementary approaches: (1) quantitative analysis of housing supply, pricing structures, and financing mechanisms; (2) demand-side analysis assessing eligibility constraints and the extent to which standardized housing designs accommodate variations in household composition, cultural preferences, and changing needs over the household life cycle; and (3) Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based spatial analysis to evaluate the location of housing projects relative to employment opportunities.

The findings indicate that while the AHP has expanded housing supply across several regions, much of this growth has not translated into adequate housing provision for low-income households. A substantial affordability gap persists despite innovative financing mechanisms, while many developments are located in peri-urban areas with weak connectivity to employment centres and essential services. Standardized housing designs also fail to accommodate diverse household needs and socio-cultural preferences, limiting demand from intended beneficiaries. Consequently, the programme risks reproducing rather than reducing existing housing inequalities.

The study contributes to scholarship on state-led housing interventions in the Global South by demonstrating how political economy, financing, spatial justice, and housing characteristics interact to shape policy outcomes. It recommends restructuring housing

supply and financing mechanisms to better target lower-income households, integrating housing with livelihood opportunities, adopting context-responsive design standards, strengthening participatory planning, and enhancing institutional coordination to promote more equitable and sustainable affordable housing provision.

Abstract ID 52

Title: Threads of Heritage: Preserving Culture and Advancing Artisan Enterprises in Kenya

Author: Caroline Kobia

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Category : Paper

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Artisan enterprises contribute significantly to Kenya's cultural preservation, creative economy, and community livelihoods. Through traditional crafts, artisans sustain indigenous knowledge, cultural identities, and creative practices passed down through generations. Yet artisans increasingly face challenges related to market access, product differentiation, competition from mass-produced goods, and the unauthorized replication of traditional designs and craft techniques.

Drawing on findings from a pilot study of market access among Kenyan artisan enterprises, this paper explores the opportunities and barriers artisans face as they seek to balance cultural preservation with enterprise growth. Preliminary findings show that while artisans view their work as a means of preserving culture and generating income, many struggle to access profitable markets, communicate the cultural value embedded in their products, and compete with lower-cost imitations. Participants also expressed concerns about the appropriation and commercialization of indigenous designs by external actors who often benefit disproportionately from cultural knowledge rooted in local communities.

The study further underscores the importance of storytelling, branding, retail partnerships, and consumer education in enhancing the visibility and value of artisan products. Findings indicate that artisan enterprises occupy a unique position as both cultural custodians and entrepreneurs, requiring support systems that strengthen market participation while safeguarding cultural authenticity and indigenous knowledge. The paper offers implications for educators, policymakers, development practitioners, and retail stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable artisan enterprises that contribute to cultural continuity and economic development in Kenya.

Creative Economy, Media & Cultural Studies

Abstract ID: 53

Title: MEDIA COVERAGE OF RAILA ODINGA OVER TIME: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Authors: James Oranga

Affiliations: University of Nairobi

Category: Paper

Email:

This study evaluates the representation of Raila Odinga by the Kenyan media. It particularly emphasizes the tone, framing, and priming of his persona, character, and political contribution to Kenya's democracy and the agenda that this representation ultimately set and built. It also explores how various moments of Raila's political experience, his agitation for multipartyism, his performance as a parliamentarian and a member of various political parties, his stewardship as a leader of two political parties and three political coalitions, his impact as a five time presidential candidate, his performance as a cabinet minister and a prime minister, his contribution to nationhood, national stability, and government service delivery, his failures and breakthroughs as a leader, a statesman and a Pan-Africanist have been captured and conveyed, critiqued and interpreted. And, the journalistic hits and misses with respect to professional media standards as prescribed by local, regional, and international regulations. The scope of coverage is the mainstream print media in Kenya. The study interrogates the standards employed by the media in covering prominent public figures and the establishment. It examines whether these standards are determined by professional principles and ethics, the socio-political dynamics prevailing at a given time, the ownership and editorial policies of media enterprises, or the political leanings of gatekeepers.

Abstract ID: 54

Title: Bypassing the Agent: M-Pesa, Platformisation, and Alternative Financial Ecosystems in the Global South Creative Economy

Authors: Kirui Amon

Affiliations: Kabarak University

Category: Paper

Despite the rapid macroeconomic growth of the global creative economy, cultural production in the Global South remains structurally undercapitalised. Traditional financial institutions systematically discriminate against creators by rationing credit because of the extreme information asymmetry in valuing intangible intellectual property (IP). In Kenya, this valuation friction is exacerbated by severe institutional voids and agency failure; the formal Collective Management Organizations (CMOs) mandated to collect royalties are paralysed by opacity, eroding creator trust. This paper investigates how Kenyan musicians navigate this systemic institutional collapse. Employing a triangulated qualitative digital research design, this study synthesises systematic document analysis of Kenyan IP regulations with netnography of creator communities on local and global digital networks. Grounded in a theoretical framework that bridges classical Agency Theory with critical Platform Capitalism, the findings reveal a profound market correction. Fleeing localised agency failure, Kenyan artists actively bypass formal financial institutions by leveraging mobile money infrastructures (M-Pesa) and algorithmic engagement metrics (via platforms like YouTube and TikTok) to construct alternative, decentralised financial ecosystems. The paper, however, argues that this migration does not address economic exploitation but rather, moves the site of extraction. Creators are trapped into the hegemony of platform capitalism, replacing local frictions and conflicts with globalised algorithmic surveillance. The study concludes with critical policy implications for regulating decentralised, platform-mediated cultural production in emerging markets.

Abstract ID: 55

Title: Social media, Youth culture, and Literacy Production.

Authors: Bridgid Nyanamba

Affiliations: Mt. Kenya University

Category: Paper

Email:

Social media has managed to reshape youth culture and transform literacy production by creating participatory and networked practices that extend beyond book- or print-based literacy. Social media has created a space for young people to utilize these platforms (TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram) to create and share content that combines text, images, and emojis. Through these digital spaces, youth can tell stories, express themselves, create awareness among their peers and others and build their own identities through likes, comments and followers. Youth culture has undergone a shift from traditional text-bound practices to modern forms of literacy production. These online spaces are highly dynamic, vibrant and creative, but it has a significant downfall, for instance, exposing the youth to superficial status-seeking behaviors, misinformation, psychological stress and not everyone gets to participate equally, whereby some voices are heard more than others. For the teachers, researchers and parents, it means finding new methods and ways to teach the youth literacy; it's about ensuring youth become conversant with digital tools i.e. Artificial Intelligence, critically engage with platforms and act ethically online. Policies should enable fair access and protection from exploitative practices. This shows that capturing the reality of modern youth literacy there has to be a shift from rigid curricula to adopting a sociocultural approach that embraces the multimodal competencies.

Abstract ID: 56

Title: Utilizing Art in Group Therapy

Authors: Sylvia Mukasa

Affiliations: Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Category: Paper

Email:

When analyzed from a multidimensional viewpoint, creative expression has the capability to unlock layers of insight, safety, healing, and connection that often words cannot achieve. This interactive presentation explores the transformative potential of integrating visual art into group therapy as a tool for emotional expression, identity exploration, interpersonal connection, and contextualizing information. Grounded in clinical practice and emerging research findings in neuroscience, counseling, and art fields, this session will inform how evidence-informed group-work principles can be combined with creative flow artwork in realizing emotional regulation, intercultural dialogue, and collective resilience and demonstrate how art-based intervention can foster safety, enhance self-awareness, and deepen group cohesion, especially among clients processing trauma, grief, or life transitions. After a concise overview of research demonstrating how bilateral, sensory-rich activities modulate the limbic system and stimulate interpersonal attunement, participants will be taught how to perform two sequential art exercises designed for in-person and hybrid delivery. Each exercise will be debriefed using core group-work competencies, emphasizing metaphor as a pathway for exploration, culturally responsive meaning-making, and inclusive dialogue among members. Implications for practice in community health, schools, counseling centers, and telehealth contexts will be discussed alongside ethical considerations for the use of art materials within professional scope. Positioned within the 2026 conference theme of scaling and leveraging academic prowess in a fast-changing geopolitical and economic environment, this presentation highlights how scholarship, clinical practice, and cross-border professional exchange in a U.S.-based convening can generate practical strategies with relevance for Kenya. By centering culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and community-oriented approaches, the session contributes to ongoing conversations on nation-building and sustainable development through mental health promotion, resilience, and inclusive care. Attendees will leave with adaptable tools, a resource list, and implementation strategies that can be translated across diverse populations, institutional settings, and transnational contexts, including applications that support communities in Kenya.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Group Counseling, Expressive Arts, Creative Interventions

Abstract ID: 57

Title: Motherhood, Memory, and Resistance: Nyambura wa Ngugi as Embodied Voice in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Life and Work

Authors: Twalha Abbas

Affiliations: Indiana University

Category: Paper

Email:

In this paper, I explore how motherhood works not just as a theme, but as a lived influence in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's literary and political world; one that carries memory, sustains resistance, and makes survival possible. I read *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (1977) alongside letters exchanged between Ngugi and his wife, Nyambura wa Ngugi, during his detention at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in 1977–78, now preserved in the Ngugi wa Thiong'o Archival Collection at the Lilly Library, Indiana University. Reading these materials together shifted how I understand both Ngugi's work and the archive itself. Rather than seeing Nyambura as absent or silent, I read her presence during Ngugi's detention as a form of embodied voice. Through her letters, financial responsibilities, and coordination of international networks of support, Nyambura was not simply "behind" Ngugi. She was actively carrying, translating, and sustaining his family and political world in practice. In this sense, her role reflects a broader Gikuyu understanding of women as custodians of continuity (voices of family and society, even when that voice does not appear as public speech). Bringing literary texts into conversation with these letters, I argue that motherhood here functions as a kind of counter-archive; one that holds together care, endurance, and resistance in ways that formal histories often overlook. Nyambura's labor, I suggest, was not secondary to Ngugi's work; it made that work possible.

Abstract ID: 58

Title: Kenya Chorale Music Percussion Instrumentation

Authors: Abraham Owino

Affiliations: Neo Utamaduni Music and Arts

Category: Paper

Email:

Kenyan chorale music is shaped by two major influences: Western art music and African traditional music. This interaction has led to the development of unique compositional and arrangement styles within contemporary Kenyan choral practice. While Western music has greatly influenced harmonic structures, traces of indigenous harmonic and rhythmic practices remain evident in many performances and compositions. African music is inherently rhythmic and deeply rooted in community traditions. Kenyan music, inspired by the diverse musical cultures of its communities, reflects rich polyrhythmic characteristics that continue to shape chorale composition and performance. These traditional influences have inspired authentic performance practices commonly showcased in festivals and concerts, where choirs present varied stylistic renditions drawn from indigenous musical traditions. This presentation explores percussion instrumentation in Kenyan chorale music, focusing on its role in both accompaniment and idiomatic expression. It further examines how traditional percussion instruments have evolved and been adapted within contemporary performance contexts while maintaining their cultural identity. The study analyses selected Kenyan chorale styles, including Isikuti, Ohangla, and Chakacha, highlighting their rhythmic foundations, performance approaches, and percussion accompaniment techniques. Through selected musical examples and performance analysis, the presentation demonstrates how traditional rhythmic idioms continue to influence contemporary Kenyan chorale music and contribute to the preservation and evolution of African musical aesthetics.

Abstract ID: 59

Title: Resources in the study and performance of African music in American Academies.

Authors: John Njenga, Prof. Jean Ngoya Kidula, Dr. Sylvester Makobi, Dr. Eric Koome and Kevin Kimtai

Affiliations: Ball State University, University of Georgia, Indiana University, University of Kansas, University of Florida

Category: Panel

Email:

Studies about and production of African music have been vibrant agents in ethnomusicological scholarship and performance in the global academy. While the anthropological turn, codified in the work of Alan Merriam, provided the gateway that emphasized functionalism and other utilitarian positions, the installment of drum traditions of West African took center stage in many institutions of higher learning in North American for most of the 20th century in part through Mantle Hood's advocacy regarding performance for tangible musical experiences. Meanwhile, music educators in their quest to broaden students' experiences at different learning levels introduced select repertoire and methods of teaching these resources using systematic endeavors through organizations such as the Smithsonian library and developments initiated by educators such as Patricia Campbell. Recent debates about music (mis)appropriation, culturally responsive teaching and the reductionist role of notation as well as phobias regarding copyright infringement has on one hand led to fear of performing musics of other cultures while at the same time amplified the need for guidelines for those seeking to explore different creative musical systems as part of global exchanges for good. This panel provides responses by culture bearers to expanding resources to mitigate both fear and adoption of African musical arts by drawing on examples from Kenyan repertoire for choral production, vocal music and popular song.

Abstract ID: 60

Title: Music as a Catalyst for Healing, Resilience, and Economic Empowerment in Conflict Zones

Authors: Everline Ogari

Affiliations: Andrews University

Category: Paper

Email:

This paper explores how music can serve as a powerful resource for healing, rebuilding lives, and creating economic opportunity in communities affected by conflict. When war and instability upend daily life, people lose not only physical safety but also their sense of identity, belonging, and hope. In these moments, music often steps in when words and institutions fall short, bringing people together, giving voice to grief, and sparking the will to carry on. The paper is organized around three central questions. First, how has music been used historically and in present-day contexts to help people process trauma and recover psychological well-being? Second, in what ways do music-based programs help communities rebuild trust, restore social bonds, and withstand the economic hardships that conflict brings? Third, how can music create meaningful livelihood and skill-building opportunities for people who have been left vulnerable by violence and displacement? To address these questions, the study draws on psychology, anthropology, musicology, and conflict studies, weaving together existing research, ethnographic accounts, and the lived experiences of those who have turned to music in the midst of crisis. Four interlocking themes emerge from this analysis. Music gives people a way to express what is otherwise inexpressible raw grief, fear, and longing and in doing so, opens a path toward psychological recovery. It brings fractured communities back together, creating shared experiences that rebuild a sense of who people are and where they belong. It restores a feeling of control and purpose to individuals whose agency has been stripped away, as learning and performing music becomes a means of reclaiming one's own story. And it acts as a living archive, preserving the cultural heritage that conflict tries to erase, while also engaging the brain's own healing mechanisms to ease the lasting effects of trauma. Taken together, these themes make a case for music not as a luxury or a pastime, but as a genuine tool for recovery and long-term human flourishing in post-conflict societies.

Key words: Resilience, Skill Development, Identity Formation, Social Cohesion, Neurological Responses, Post-Conflict Recovery, Cultural Heritage, Therapeutic Effects, Trauma, Emotional Distress, Music.

Abstract ID: 61

Title: Composing, Performing, and Interpreting African Sacred Texts: A Multi-Perspective Study of a Swahili Setting of the Lord's Prayer

Authors: Kevin Kimutai, Sylvester Makobi, John Musila

Affiliations: University of Florida & Indiana University

Category: Paper

Email:

This panel examines *Baba Yetu*, an original Swahili setting of the Lord's Prayer, as a site of musical, linguistic, and cultural negotiation within African diasporic artistic practice. Bringing together perspectives in composition, performance, and theory, the panel explores how African sacred texts are interpreted, embodied, and transmitted in contemporary art music contexts.

The composer situates the work within a diasporic framework, discussing the compositional process and the deliberate integration of Swahili prosody, harmonic language, and expressive pacing to preserve textual meaning while engaging Western art music idioms. Particular attention is given to how compositional choices reflect broader questions of identity, authenticity, and cultural mediation.

The performer examines the vocal interpretation of the piece, addressing issues of diction, phrasing, and expressive delivery in relation to the Swahili text. Drawing from performance practice and pedagogy, this segment highlights effective strategies for teaching the work to singers, emphasizing the importance of linguistic sensitivity and stylistic awareness in performance.

From a theoretical and pianistic perspective, the collaborative pianist analyzes the harmonic structure, accompaniment texture, and interpretive considerations that shape the musical dialogue between voice and piano. This analysis reveals how the accompaniment functions not merely as support, but as an active contributor to the work's expressive and structural coherence.

Together, the panel demonstrates how creative practice can serve as a critical lens for engaging African language, identity, and pedagogy in global music-making contexts.

Dr. Sylvester Makobi

This presentation examines the vocal performance of *Baba Yetu*, a Swahili setting of the Lord's Prayer, with particular attention to the relationship between language, musical expression, and pedagogy. As a performer, the interpretation of this work requires careful negotiation of Swahili diction, prosodic accuracy, and expressive phrasing in order to preserve both the linguistic integrity and spiritual depth of the text.

Drawing on performance practice and vocal pedagogy, this presentation explores strategies for approaching the piece in both solo and ensemble contexts. Emphasis is

placed on aligning melodic contour with the natural stress patterns of the Swahili language, shaping phrases to reflect textual meaning, and achieving clarity in articulation without compromising vocal tone. The discussion also considers the interpretive demands of conveying sacred text in performance, particularly within cross-cultural and diasporic contexts.

In addition, this presentation offers practical teaching approaches for introducing *Baba Yetu* to singers, including techniques for teaching pronunciation, fostering expressive engagement with unfamiliar languages, and guiding singers toward culturally informed performance. By foregrounding the performer's role as both interpreter and mediator, this paper highlights how vocal performance can serve as a site for deeper engagement with African languages and musical traditions in contemporary art music settings.

Kevin Kimtai

Composing Language and Identity: Setting the Lord's Prayer in Swahili within a Diasporic Context

This presentation examines the compositional process behind *Baba Yetu*, an original musical setting of the Lord's Prayer in Swahili, as a site for negotiating language, identity, and sacred expression within African diasporic practice. As a Kenyan composer working within a U.S. academic context, the work reflects an intentional engagement with questions of cultural authenticity, linguistic integrity, and the translation of African textual meaning into a Western art music framework.

The presentation focuses on the compositional choices that shaped the work, particularly the alignment of melodic contour with Swahili prosody, the use of harmonic language to support textual meaning, and the structuring of musical phrases to reflect the spiritual and rhetorical flow of the prayer. Attention is also given to how expressive pacing, repetition, and text painting are employed to enhance both intelligibility and affect.

Situating the piece within broader discussions of African music in global and institutional contexts, this presentation argues that composition functions as a form of cultural mediation, through which diasporic musicians negotiate authority, representation, and identity. By foregrounding the relationship between language and musical structure, the study contributes to ongoing conversations on decolonizing compositional practice and expanding approaches to African art music within contemporary performance and pedagogy.

John Musila

Harmonic Language and Accompaniment as Dialogue: A Pianist–Theorist's Perspective on a Swahili Sacred Setting

This presentation explores *Baba Yetu*, a Swahili setting of the Lord's Prayer, from the perspective of collaborative piano and music theory, with particular attention to the role of harmonic language and accompaniment in shaping musical meaning. While the vocal

line carries the textual narrative, the piano functions as an active partner, contributing to the work's expressive depth, structural coherence, and interpretive possibilities.

Through analytical and performance-based insights, this presentation examines how harmonic progressions, voicing, and textural variation support and interact with the Swahili text. The discussion highlights the ways in which the accompaniment reinforces prosodic alignment, underscores moments of textual emphasis, and contributes to the overall spiritual and affective trajectory of the piece. Particular attention is given to the balance between Western tonal idioms and the expressive demands of setting an African language, revealing how harmonic choices can both support and complicate cultural and musical interpretation.

From a pianist's perspective, the presentation also addresses practical considerations in collaborative performance, including ensemble balance, sensitivity to vocal phrasing, and the shaping of musical dialogue between voice and piano. By integrating theoretical analysis with performance practice, this study demonstrates how accompaniment can function as a critical site of interpretation, offering deeper insight into the interaction between language, harmony, and expressive intent in contemporary African diasporic composition.

Abstract ID: 62

Title: The Relational Communal Music Healing Model: Integrating Western Music Therapy and African Music Healing Concepts

Authors: Eric Koome Muriangi

Affiliations: University of Kansas

Category: Paper

Email:

Western music therapy and African music healing are distinct practices that differ in procedure and expected outcomes, yet both share a common purpose and have a foundation in the use of music as a transformational tool. Western music therapy is a clinical, evidence-based practice facilitated by professionally trained and credentialed music therapists who design individualized interventions within a therapeutic relationship. In contrast, African music healing is typically a communal, relational, and spiritual practice that relies on collective participation rather than formal documentation or clinical protocols. Music healing has been part of Kenyan culture for centuries, while music therapy is an emerging discipline in Kenya. Recognizing these differences, this paper argues for the development of a universally acceptable and culturally responsive framework for music-based healing that can serve clients in both African contexts and the Western (U.S.) music therapy system. To support this aim, the paper introduces the Relational Communal Music Healing Model, a theoretical approach designed to illuminate clients' cultural backgrounds and guide music therapists in selecting music experiences that align with their clients' cultural values and healing traditions. By integrating communal principles with therapeutic intentionality, this model provides a pathway for culturally grounded practice and promotes optimal therapeutic outcomes across diverse populations.

Keywords: Music therapy, Music healing, theoretical model.

Abstract ID: 63

Title: Harmony Kenya Foundation: A pillar of free, accessible music education in Kenyan public schools

Authors: Shaka Lwaki

Affiliations: Florida State University

Category: Paper / Panel / Poster

Email:

This is a presentation highlighting the Nairobi-based non profit-organization, Harmony Kenya Foundation that has been monumental in the propagation of music education to public secondary and primary schools over the past twelve years. Founded by Mr. Moses Watatua, the Harmony Kenya Foundation was established to provide quality music education and music resources to students in these institutions, who would otherwise be unable to afford the steep cost of taking up music. This presentation highlights the incredible journey of HKF from its humble beginnings in 2014 with the pilot project in Nairobi School, it has now spread to various schools across the city, and has yielded a number of successful students who through the program, were empowered to achieve greatness in the field of music and beyond.

Abstract ID: 64

Title: Language use patterns among immigrant Kenyan families living in the US and their contribution to maintenance of their heritage languages

Authors: Beverly Achieng

Affiliations: Egerton University

Category: Paper

Email:

This paper explores language use among immigrant families from Kenya who are living in the US. The study identified the language use patterns among both parents and children and sought to determine the factors influencing their choices and their implications on language maintenance. A sample of 10 Kenyan families living in the US were selected through convenience sampling techniques. The data collection was done through structured interviews and questionnaires designed for parents and children in the family who were above the age of 10. The study was guided by family language policy perspectives (FLP) as well as critical discourse analysis (CDA) since both language use patterns and discourses about language contribute to tendencies towards language maintenance or language shift. The findings reveal that some families have deliberate strategies in place for ensuring particular languages are learnt while others allow members to make their own choices. The study also reveals that there are significant differences in patterns of language use between children and their parents. Most of the immigrant parents speak their heritage languages frequently whereas few of their children speak these languages. Moreover, the study finds that most of the children of these immigrants speak English (dominant in the region) as their 'first' language and in some cases, an additional foreign language. This paper thus argues for emphasis on family level strategies that can help immigrant children learn and use their different languages. This will contribute to preservation of their cultural heritage of which language and identity are important parts.

Abstract ID: 65

Title: THE "NIKO KADI" MOMENT: KISWAHILI AND THE NEW WAVE OF YOUTH POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN KENYA

Authors: Prisca Orori

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Category: Paper

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The 'Niko Kadi' Moment: Kiswahili and the New Wave of Youth Political Mobilization in Kenya Kiswahili has long been an important language in Kenya's social and political life. It has been used to unite people, share ideas, and mobilize citizens around national issues. Over time, its development—especially through youth varieties such as Sheng—has made it an effective tool for engaging young people in politics and democratic processes. This study will examine how Kiswahili continues to shape youth participation in contemporary Kenyan politics. Focusing on the 2024 Gen Z protests, the study shows how social media platforms became spaces for political expression, organization, and unity. Young people used widely shared slogans such as "Tumechoka," "Haki Yetu," "Sauti ya Vijana," and "Tokea Tuesday" to express their frustrations and demands. These short and creative expressions helped build a shared identity and encouraged political engagement among youths. Building on this, the study will explore how Kiswahili is currently being used in campaigns that encourage young people to register and vote, using slogans like "Niko Kadi," "Jisajili Upige Kura," and "Kura Yako, Sauti Yako," as Kenya approaches the 2027 General Election. Using qualitative analysis of digital content from platforms such as X (Twitter), TikTok, and Facebook, the study identifies language strategies that promote political awareness and participation. Guided by Social Movement Theory and Discourse Analysis, the study will show that Kiswahili helps create unity, shape shared identities, and support youth demands for accountability and inclusion. It will also explain how online activism can lead to real participation in elections. Overall, the study highlights Kiswahili as a key resource in strengthening youth participation and democracy in Kenya.

Abstract ID: 66

Title: Memes as Performative Digital Resistance in Kenya: Power, Performativity, and the Politics of Digital Subversion

Authors: Gladys Kinara

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Category: Paper

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This paper examines Kenyan political memes as performative acts of digital resistance, situating them within broader theoretical debates on power, discourse, and subjectivity. Drawing on Judith Butler's concept of performativity, Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, and Achille Mbembe's notion of postcolony and necropolitics, the study argues that memes do not merely reflect political dissent but actively constitute and circulate it within digital publics. In Kenya's contemporary socio-political landscape, memes emerge as dynamic discursive practices that challenge hegemonic narratives, expose state power, and reconfigure citizen subjectivity. Through an analysis of selected protest memes, the paper demonstrates how digital humour operates as both a site of resistance and a technology of political engagement. The paper further situates memes within African oral traditions of satire and performance, emphasizing their communal and iterative nature. It also interrogates the ambivalence of digital resistance by considering how power operates within these spaces through surveillance and the commodification of dissent. The paper argues that memes represent a form of micro-political resistance that destabilizes authority while simultaneously existing within structures of control. By foregrounding the performative and discursive dimensions of meme culture, the study redefines literature as an active, embodied, and participatory practice embedded in the politics of everyday life.

Keywords Performativity, digital resistance, memes, power, discourse, necropolitics, activism

Abstract ID: 67

Title: Carnavalesque Digital Satire in Kenyan Political Memes: Grotesque Realism, Laughter, and the Subversion of Power

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Category: Paper

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This article examines Kenyan political memes as contemporary manifestations of the carnivalesque, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of laughter, grotesque realism, and symbolic inversion. It argues that meme culture constitutes a digital public sphere where hierarchical political structures are dismantled through humour, parody, and exaggeration. Using selected Kenyan political memes, the paper demonstrates how memes desacralize political authority by rendering it absurd and accessible to critique. The analysis situates meme culture within African oral traditions of satire and ridicule, arguing that memes function as digital continuations of communal storytelling practices. By foregrounding grotesque exaggeration and hyperbolic imagery, memes expose contradictions in governance, especially around economic hardship and unfulfilled political promises. The participatory nature of meme production democratizes political discourse, allowing citizens, particularly youth, to engage in critique outside institutional frameworks. The article concludes that Kenyan political memes exemplify the persistence of the carnivalesque in digital culture, redefining literary expression and transforming humour into a potent form of socio-political resistance.

Abstract ID: 68

Title: Social Media & the Kenyan Diaspora: Driving Scholarly Impact and Nation-Building

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Category: Poster

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The Kenyan diaspora increasingly leverages social media as a dynamic platform to influence the country's social, economic, legal, and geopolitical development. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and emerging digital tools allow Kenyans abroad to shape national conversations, mobilize resources, advocate for reforms, and sustain transnational connections. By engaging online, diaspora communities amplify marginalized voices, coordinate collective action in real time, and contribute to public discourse from afar. Scholars and research communities have a critical role in harnessing these platforms to support nation-building. Through strategic social media use, scholars can disseminate evidence-based research, engage policymakers directly, promote civic awareness, facilitate entrepreneurial initiatives, and foster transnational collaborations. Best practices include curating accessible and audience-friendly content, leveraging multimedia for impact, participating in online policy debates, and partnering with local stakeholders to ensure research informs tangible outcomes. While social media provides opportunities for visibility, rapid mobilization, and global influence, challenges remain. These include the spread of misinformation, credibility gaps, unequal digital access, and the potential for superficial engagement. Addressing these issues requires careful content curation, verification of sources, and inclusive strategies that reach diverse audiences. Overall, digital engagement positions social media as a critical tool for connecting global Kenyan communities with national development priorities. By integrating research with online advocacy and collaboration, scholars can influence socio-political trajectories, promote evidence-based decision-making, and contribute meaningfully to Kenya's development from both local and international contexts.

Keywords: Kenyan diaspora, social media, scholarly engagement, nation-building, civic participation

Abstract ID: 69

Title: Circular Horizons: Entrepreneurship, Investment, and Financial Innovation as Drivers of Sustainable Economic Transformation in East Africa

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Category: Paper

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East Africa's rapid demographic growth, resource pressures, and structural economic challenges make the circular economy (CE) a compelling development strategy. This study examines entrepreneurship, business investment, and financial innovation as co-constitutive drivers of CE adoption and sustainable economic transformation across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Employing a concurrent mixed-methods design — combining survey data from 386 SMEs, expert interviews ($n = 42$), and panel data analysis (2015–2024) — the study applies OLS multiple regression, probit modelling, and fixed-effects panel estimation to identify key CE adoption determinants. Results show that investment access ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.001$), fintech adoption ($\beta = 0.391$, $p < 0.01$), entrepreneurship ecosystem quality ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.01$), and policy environment strength ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.05$) are significant predictors of CE adoption scores (Adj. $R^2 = 0.672$). Rwanda records the highest CE adoption rate (41.7%), reflecting its proactive green policy framework, while Ethiopia records the lowest (15.6%). Only 23.4% of CE enterprises accessed formal green financial products, exposing an estimated annual financing gap of USD 4.3 billion across the region. The paper introduces the Circular Horizons Analytical Framework (CHAF), integrating CE theory, the Resource-Based View, and Institutional Theory to model CE adoption pathways in East Africa. Twelve policy recommendations — spanning regulatory reform, financial product innovation, entrepreneurship ecosystem investment, digital enablement, and capacity building — are advanced for governments, development finance institutions, and investors. Under a transformative reform scenario, projected outcomes by 2035 include a 7.6% GDP gain, 760,000 new jobs, and USD 11.4 billion in additional green investment.

Keywords : *Circular Economy , East Africa , Entrepreneurship , Green Finance , Sustainable Investment , Financial Innovation , SMEs , Sub-Saharan Africa , OLS Regression , Panel Data Analysis, Blended Finance , Fintech ,Economic Transformation , Rwanda Green Economy , Kenya*

Abstract ID: 70

Title: When Laughter Carries the Load: Public Logotherapy in Kenyan Meme Culture

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Category: Paper

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The article examines the logotherapeutic aspects of selected Kenyan digital memes taking them as both satirical and subversive meaning making architecture in a climate of political stasis, an existential dimension of Kenyan digital memes that has hitherto not been addressed by extant studies which largely deal with social justice and equitable polity. The article is framed within the logotherapeutic concepts postulated by Viktor Frankl which include will to meaning, existential vacuum and tragic optimism. These concepts enable and illuminate the analysis of the selected memes as lived practices of existential coping as opposed to facile digital jokes. It seeks to demonstrate how the memes circulate collective Kenyan anxieties, reframing suffering to sustain a moral orientation in digital quotidian life. The paper is a qualitative cultural and textual analysis of purposely sampled 2022 Kenyan election campaign memes, X/Twitter and Instagram memes expressed in English, Kiswahili, vernacular and Sheng languages. These selected memes are read as responses to the existential vacuum engendered by post-election disillusionment. They are coached in humour to transform collective distress into communal resilience. The article proposes the concept of public logotherapy to describe how Kenyan cultural memes act as spaces where meaning is rehearsed, negotiated and reconstituted.

Keywords: Kenyan Digital Culture, Meme, Meaning-Making, Logotherapy, Existential Vacuum

Health, Biopharma & Scientific Innovation

Abstract ID: 71

Title: Meeting Africa's biopharmaceutical needs in the 21st Century

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Category: Panel

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Daktari Biotechnology Ltd. (DKTB), a Kenya-based subsidiary of the U.S.-based Daktari Biotechnology Corporation, is working to strengthen local biopharmaceutical manufacturing and innovation capacity to supply high-value medicines and vaccines across African markets. Founded in 2017 by scientists with expertise spanning drug discovery, translational research, and product development, DKTB addresses a critical gap in Africa's healthcare system: a persistent dependence on imported biopharmaceutical products.

Vision: Expand access to biopharmaceuticals and diagnostics across Africa.

Mission: Develop and manufacture medicines for Africa—initially focusing on East and Central Africa—through patient-centered innovation. DKTB is committed to closing major health gaps by developing therapies and solutions that improve outcomes and quality of life. In addition to scientific progress, the company prioritizes affordable access to advanced care, stronger healthcare resilience, and healthier communities.

DKTB leverages advanced biomanufacturing and platform technologies—including Baculo/BacMam expression systems and Laser Art Technology chemistry—to develop a diversified pipeline of biologics, biosimilars, long-acting therapeutics, and vaccines. Current and near-term programs target high-burden diseases affecting the region, including HIV, hepatitis, malaria, tuberculosis, diabetes, and cancer, with strategic expansion across both human and animal health applications. For investors, DKTB offers a compelling combination of commercial potential and measurable impact. Africa's biopharmaceutical and healthcare market is estimated at approximately USD 300 billion by 2030, with USD 70–100 billion attributed to biopharmaceuticals. By increasing the availability of affordable, high-quality medicines and vaccines, DKTB can improve regional health security, reduce reliance on imports, and stimulate industrial growth and skilled employment—creating thousands of jobs over time. DKTB is raising USD 100 million to build advanced manufacturing and R&D infrastructure, with projected revenues of USD 25–50 million within five years and up to USD 200 million within ten years. The company aims to provide investors with an opportunity to support long-term growth in African biomanufacturing and a more resilient healthcare supply chain. DKTB also plans to raise up to USD 60 million by the end of 2026 to support

construction of the Voi, Taita Taveta, facility and expansion of DKTB pharmacies, strengthening last-mile delivery and increasing access to locally developed therapies.

Abstract ID: 72

Title: Health Misinformation and Media Literacy in the Digital Age: Implications for Health Education

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Category: Paper

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Background: Rapid expansion of digital communication technologies and social media has transformed the accessibility and dissemination of health information. However, these advancements have also increased exposure to health misinformation, raising significant public health concerns. Although media literacy has emerged as a promising strategy for addressing misinformation, evidence regarding effective educational and pedagogical responses remains fragmented. This study synthesized original empirical evidence on health misinformation, media literacy, and pedagogical implications for health education in the digital age. This study utilized the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines. Original peer-reviewed studies published between 2016 and 2026 were identified from major databases. Eligible studies examined digital health misinformation, media literacy competencies, educational interventions, and pedagogical approaches related to health communication. Review articles, editorials, and non-empirical studies were excluded. Misinformation spreads rapidly through digital platforms, especially social media. It disproportionately affects populations with lower digital and health literacy. Misinformation centered on vaccination, politically polarized health issues, cultural beliefs, and informal information networks. Media literacy interventions (digital literacy training, fact-checking education, and critical information appraisal) are useful in identifying misinformation and credibility of sources. Utilization of responsive teaching strategies in health education is an effective strategy. Strengthening media literacy is vital for combating digital health misinformation. Health education programs should integrate culturally responsive digital media literacy competencies to enhance critical thinking, source evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making. Health Educators should adopt interactive and technology-enhanced teaching approaches. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and cross-national studies to identify sustainable educational strategies.

Abstract ID: 73

Title: Pawanax An AI Enabled Health Intelligence Platform for Strengthening Clinical Research and Health Systems in Africa

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Category: Paper

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African health systems continue to face persistent challenges in data quality, clinical research capacity, disease surveillance, and timely decision making. Fragmented data ecosystems, limited analytics infrastructure, and slow translation of research into practice hinder progress toward resilient, learning health systems. Pawanax is an AI enabled health intelligence platform designed to bridge these gaps by integrating clinical, laboratory, and population level data into a unified, actionable ecosystem. Pawanax employs a modular architecture combining AI driven data harmonization, automated analytics pipelines, and real time decision support tools. The platform ingests structured and unstructured data from electronic medical records, laboratory systems, field surveillance tools, and research databases. Using machine learning models, Pawanax performs anomaly detection, disease trend forecasting, workflow optimization, and quality control analytics. A built in research engine supports protocol development, cohort tracking, and reproducible data analysis for clinical and implementation research. Deployment of Pawanax in pilot research and health facility settings has demonstrated measurable improvements in data completeness, turnaround time for analytics, and accuracy of clinical and laboratory reporting. The platform's automated dashboards have enhanced visibility into patient outcomes, operational bottlenecks, and disease burden patterns. Pawanax was recognized as "Best Health System in Kenya" at the 2026 KEMRI Annual Scientific & Health (KASH) Conference, underscoring its relevance to national research and health system priorities. Pawanax illustrates the transformative potential of AI enabled platforms in strengthening African health systems and clinical research. By providing real time intelligence, harmonized data infrastructure, and scalable analytics, Pawanax supports evidence-based decision making for clinicians, researchers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Health, Clinical Research, Health Systems, Data Analytics, Africa, Pawanax

Abstract ID: 74

Title: R(e)-Merging Zoonotic Viral Disease Threats in East Africa: Climate Change, Spillover Risks, and One Health Preparedness

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Category: Paper

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East Africa is becoming increasingly vulnerable to emerging and re-emerging zoonotic viral diseases because of rapid environmental change, expanding human populations, intensified livestock production, and close interactions among wildlife, livestock, and humans. Arboviruses and rodent-borne viruses (roboviruses), continue to pose significant public health and economic threats across the region. Climate change is altering vector and reservoir ecology by influencing rainfall patterns, temperature, flooding, drought, and habitat distribution, thereby increasing the risk of viral amplification and spillover events. Additional drivers such as urbanization, deforestation, population movement, and transboundary livestock trade further enhance opportunities for pathogen emergence and transmission at the human–animal–environment interface. This presentation highlights the interconnected ecological and socio-economic factors contributing to zoonotic disease emergence in East Africa and emphasizes the importance of One Health approaches for surveillance, preparedness, and response. Integrated surveillance systems combining human, animal, wildlife, and environmental health data are essential for early detection and outbreak mitigation. Despite advances in surveillance and disease management systems, major challenges include limited laboratory infrastructure, fragmented surveillance systems, inadequate cross-sector collaboration, and insufficient outbreak preparedness capacity in many endemic regions. Strengthening interdisciplinary partnerships among public health professionals, veterinarians, ecologists, researchers, and policymakers will be critical for improving regional and global health security. A climate informed and collaborative One Health framework is essential to enhance preparedness, reduce spillover risk, and strengthen resilience against future zoonotic viral disease outbreaks in East Africa.

Abstract ID: 75

Title: Community and Health Worker Perspectives on Resource Availability and Service Accessibility for Visceral Leishmaniasis Management in Baringo County, Kenya

Authors: Emily Kiptui, Sabella J. Kiprono, Gladys J. Mengich. Vincent K. Langat, Daniel K. Chelal

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Visceral Leishmaniasis is a neglected tropical disease in Kenya especially in Baringo County where it is endemic. Timely diagnosis, availability of drugs, trained personnel, reliable commodities, and prevention are key components of effective management. This study evaluated community and health workers' perceptions of VL resources, accessibility to services and readiness of health facilities for diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control. Cross sectional study was carried out in 422 households in endemic communities and 32 health professionals in Kimalel and Chemolingot health facilities. Semi-structured questionnaires were used in data collection, descriptive statistics, and exploratory chi-square tests employed in data analysis. 73.7% of the household respondents knew someone that suffered from VL and that 68.5% of the infected were treated, More so 96.2% observed drug adherence. 70.1%, reported that there was not an organized VL control programme and 74.4% got to the nearest facility on foot. There was no statistical significance associated with VL awareness, treatment uptake, drug completion and access mode to the facility. 62.5% of health workers had been trained in VL-related issues. There were significant variations in training status by cadre, length of training, and training organization. Facility readiness indicators were significantly associated with the commodity source, stock-out status, availability of clinician, laboratory equipment, and VL drugs. Communities in Baringo know about VL and have high drug adherence. Outreach for prevention, access to services and drugs are lacking. Improvements in diagnostics, supplies, refresher training and community outreach are required for better VL management.

Keywords: Visceral leishmaniasis; accessibility; diagnosis.

Abstract ID: 76

Title: Causal Inference for Non-Gaussian Response with Varying Treatment Effect Size

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Category: Paper

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While the study of the causal effects of environmental exposures continues to grow in literature, confounder adjustments that arise from space and time variation remain underexplored. Understanding these effects is crucial for public health policy, yet challenging due to confounding by socioeconomic factors and other non-medical determinants of health. Existing methods rarely integrate Bayesian spatiotemporal models with explicit causal design through generalized propensity scores. In this paper, we investigate the phenomenon of weak-to-strong treatment effects in the presence of spatial confounders using generalized propensity score (GPS) methods. We compare the treatment estimates with varying treatment strengths and different specifications of the mean model. Through simulations and an application to county-level preterm birth data in Ohio, we show that a joint spatiotemporal specification more accurately recovers the dose–response function, yielding lower error and better-calibrated credible intervals than purely temporal or unadjusted alternatives. The results demonstrate that the methods perform best when the treatment strength is small and the mean model accounts for the spatial and temporal effects.

Abstract ID: 77

Title: Mental Health Services in Kenya: Bridging the Gap and Advancing Equitable Access

Authors: Grace Wambu, Jennifer Kibicho

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Category: Panel

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Kenya is experiencing a rapid increase in mental health conditions, including suicides, mental illnesses, substance use, and addictive disorders in alarming proportions (Kenya Mental Health Action Plan, 2021). There are insufficient data and information on the prevalence of mental health, neurological disorders, and substance abuse in Kenya. However, it is estimated that about 25% of all outpatients and 40% of inpatients in health facilities suffer from a mental health condition (KNCHR, 2011). While Kenya has made important policy progress through reforms such as the Mental Health Amendment Act (2022) and increasing integration of mental health into the national health agenda, the availability of services remains limited, particularly in rural regions. Most mental health professionals and specialized facilities are concentrated in major urban centers such as Nairobi, leaving rural communities with minimal access to trained providers. As a result, many individuals in rural areas rely primarily on primary care workers, community health volunteers, traditional healers, and religious leaders for mental health support. Structural barriers, including workforce shortages, stigma, transportation challenges, and limited funding, contribute to a substantial treatment gap, with many people who need care unable to access professional services. This proposed round table discussion examines the current landscape of mental health services in Kenya, highlighting systemic disparities between urban and rural regions. Emphasis will be placed on practical approaches for strengthening mental health infrastructure and promoting equitable access for underserved rural populations. The role of the diaspora scholars and professionals will also be highlighted.

Abstract ID: 78

Title: The Silent Killer Among Us: The Mental Health Situation in Kenya's Construction Sites

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Category: Paper

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Abstract

The mental health of construction workers in Kenya is an aspect of occupational well-being that not much attention has been given. This paper is aimed at exploring the mental health situation in Kenya's construction sites, with an in-depth analysis on key challenges and potential interventions. Factors such as long working hours, job insecurity, financial events, and lack of access to mental health support contribute to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among construction workers. Moreover, cultural stigmatization of mental health issues further exacerbates the problem, leading to underreporting and inadequate treatment. Addressing mental health concerns in Kenya's construction industry requires a multifaceted approach, including awareness campaigns, workplace interventions, and policy reforms. By promoting mental health literacy, implementing psychosocial support programs, and integrating mental health services into occupational health programs, stakeholders can create safer and more supportive work environments for construction workers in Kenya.

Key Words: Mental health, Construction sites, Kenya

Abstract ID: 79

Title: Global Justice Counseling: Mental Health in Kenya – Current Status and Challenges

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Category: Panel/workshop

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This workshop investigates the status of mental health in Kenya, focusing on achievements, opportunities, and challenges in the Kenyan mental health system. Through facilitated structured open questions and case-study based activities, participants will explore factors shaping access to mental health services, stigma, prejudice, and discrimination against people with mental illness, and legislation and policy development. The workshop will present practical ways of enhancing mental health awareness and mental health services in culturally different populations. By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to recognize growth and development in counseling, major gaps in mental health services provision, and suggest culturally sensitive counseling intervention strategies. This workshop is intended for counselors-in-training, counselor educators and supervisors, counselors, related professionals, and stakeholders.

Abstract ID: 80

Title: Water, hygiene, and gut health: The role of SIBO in Maasai children's growth outcomes in Narok South, Kenya

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Category: Paper

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Gut health is an under-addressed component of child health in low-resource settings, with small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) representing a potential pathway linking environmental exposures to poor growth outcomes. This study, conducted among the Maasai in Narok South, Kenya, investigates associations between household water practices, hygiene behaviors, SIBO, and child nutritional status. A total of 103 children aged 4–12 years participated, with a SIBO prevalence of 31.0%. Undernutrition was also substantial, with 15.5% stunted, 22.3% underweight, and 31.1% wasted. At the household level, 65% were water insecure, although 79.9% reported treating drinking water. Hygiene practices remained limited, with only 30.6% reporting handwashing before eating, 27.6% before food preparation, and 23% after livestock handling. Logistic regression models controlling for age and sex demonstrate that children from households that treated drinking water had lower odds of SIBO ($B = -1.14$, $p = 0.024$). Handwashing before eating was also associated with reduced odds of SIBO ($B = -1.27$, $p = 0.005$). Water insecurity was not statistically significant ($B = 0.63$, $p = 0.138$). Linear and logistic regression analyses indicated that SIBO was associated with lower weight-for-age z-scores ($B = -0.58$, $p = 0.046$) and higher odds of underweight ($B = 1.20$, $p = 0.048$), with no significant associations observed for height-for-age, stunting, body mass index-for-age, or wasting. These findings highlight gut health as a critical intersection between WASH and child nutrition. Integrating gut health into public health and sustainable development interventions may strengthen efforts to reduce undernutrition and improve child health outcomes in vulnerable populations.

Abstract ID: 81

Title: DOPING: How doping (voluntary or involuntary) affects sports persons' careers and their after lives

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Category: Paper

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Doping continues to threaten Kenyan sport, affecting both athletes' careers and their lives beyond competition. While some athletes deliberately use banned substances, cases of involuntary doping—often linked to guidance from coaches or support personnel—are increasingly recognized. Coaches play a critical role in shaping training, nutrition, and recovery practices. However, inadequate knowledge, negligence, or deliberate misconduct can lead athletes to consume contaminated supplements or medications containing prohibited substances. In such instances, athletes bear the consequences, including suspensions, stripped titles, and loss of sponsorship, even when they lack full awareness of the violation. The impact extends far beyond active competition. Sanctioned athletes frequently face financial hardship due to forfeited earnings and limited employment opportunities in coaching or sports administration. Social stigma and psychological distress, including loss of identity and self-esteem, further complicate their transition to post-sport life. These challenges highlight the need for greater accountability and education among coaches and support teams to prevent unintentional doping. To reduce reliance on risky pharmaceutical products, some athletes turn to natural and herbal alternatives for recovery and health maintenance. Remedies such as ginger, turmeric, garlic, and Stinging nettle are commonly used for their anti-inflammatory and nutritional benefits. While these options may lower the risk of ingesting banned substances, they must still be used cautiously, as contamination or misidentification can occur. Guidance from qualified nutritionists remains essential. Organizations like Athletics Kenya and the World Anti-Doping Agency continue to emphasize education, strict regulation, and shared responsibility. Ultimately, doping—whether intentional or accidental—undermines careers and leaves lasting social, economic, and psychological consequences for Kenyan athletes.

Abstract ID: 82

Title: Linda Mama and Health System Capacity: Neonatal Outcomes

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Category: Paper

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This paper examines the relationship between Kenya's Linda Mama program and maternal and newborn health outcomes. Linda Mama expanded the country's earlier free maternity policy by moving program management to the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) and broadening access to maternity services beyond the original 2013 public-facility fee removal. Using pooled Kenya Demographic and Health Survey birth histories and county-level measures of baseline facility readiness from the 2010 Kenya Service Provision Assessment, the study asks whether births occurring after the Linda Mama transition experienced better neonatal outcomes and whether any gains were larger in counties with stronger childbirth-care capacity. Rather than assuming that expanded financial access automatically improves outcomes, the paper emphasizes the role of local health-system readiness in shaping whether increased service coverage translates into better newborn survival. The analysis contributes to the broader literature on maternal health financing by highlighting that the effects of free maternity programs may depend not only on removing user fees, but also on the ability of local facilities to absorb additional demand and deliver effective care.

Abstract ID: 83

Title: AI-enabled modeling of climatic factors and ecological determinants of tick population dynamics and pathogen transmission risks in Pennsylvania

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Category: Paper

Vector-borne diseases remain a major global health concern, with an expanding host and vector range associated with climate change drivers. The disease transmission dynamics creates new hotspots and burdens the existing control strategies. In this study we deployed AI/ML approaches to investigate the ecological determinants of tick distribution and their pathogen infection in Pennsylvania populations across a span of 5yrs. We used tick surveillance data from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), which includes species distribution, collection methods, and environmental parameters. These datasets were overlaid with climatic data and geographic information from national datasets NLCD and USGS. Using Random Forrest as our optimized AI model, we determined that adult male and female ticks had significantly higher pathogen levels than larvae and nymph stages, underscoring the need for age structure determination in targeted tick control programs. Type of vegetation cover and season were strong determinants of tick occurrence and strongly correlated with pathogen occurrence. Geospatial modeling and pathogen prevalence data identified transmission hotspots in PA and seasonal peaks for tick pathogens. The use of AI models to uncover disease risk patterns is an important advancement over traditional statistical methods, allowing for more nuanced and scalable insights. A detailed rendering of methodological and statistical approaches will be presented. Our findings facilitate targeted public health interventions guided by the seasonality of tick populations and pathogen transmission hotspots.

Abstract ID: 84

Title: Substituent and Scaffold Effects on the Antibacterial Activity of Ru(II) Pyridine-Imine Schiff Base Complexes

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Category: Paper

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The escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) necessitates the development of novel antibacterial agents with alternative mechanisms of action. This study reports the synthesis and biological evaluation of ruthenium (II) complexes derived from pyridine-imine Schiff base ligands featuring systematic aromatic substitutions (–H, –Br, –OH) and two distinct coordination architectures: simple Ru (II) and half-sandwich Ru (II)-p-cymene. The ligands and their corresponding Ru (II) complexes were synthesized in high yields (85–92%) and characterized by melting point, FT-IR, UV-Vis, and ¹H NMR spectroscopy. Spectroscopic data confirmed complexes, evidenced by shifts in C=N stretches (1625–1632 → 1600–1620 cm⁻¹), downfield movement of the imine proton (δ 7.63–7.66 → 7.43–7.55 ppm), and new metal-to-ligand charge transfer (MLCT) bands (363–575 nm). All complexes exhibited enhanced thermal stability (m.p. 175–235 °C) relative to free ligands (70–180 °C). In vitro antibacterial screening against *Staphylococcus aureus* (Gram-positive) and *Escherichia coli* (Gram-negative) via disc diffusion revealed Ru (II) complexes consistently outperformed their parent ligands, with bromo- and hydroxy-substituted p-cymene derivatives (L-C2 and L₁-C2) showing highest activity, zones of inhibition up to 14–15 mm at 1000 µg/mL. Statistical analysis (two-way ANOVA, *p* ≤ 0.05), following verification of normality (Shapiro-Wilk) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test), confirmed significant effects of both substituent type and scaffold architecture on bioactivity. Although none surpassed gentamycin (17–21 mm), the results validate Tweedy's chelation theory and highlight Ru (II) Schiff base complexes as promising scaffolds for antimicrobial development targeting multidrug-resistant pathogens.

Abstract ID: 85

Title: Assessment of the physicochemical quality assurance parameters in some commercial soap available in the Kenyan market

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Category: Paper

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Commercial bar soaps are widely used in Kenya for personal and household hygiene, but variations in their physicochemical properties can affect skin safety and compliance with Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) requirements. This study aimed to: (1) determine the strength and direction of linear relationships among moisture content, total alkalinity, free caustic alkalinity and pH (2) develop a multiple linear regression model describing the effect of moisture content, total alkalinity and free caustic alkalinity on pH and (3) evaluate the statistical significance and relative contribution of these three predictors to pH. Nine soap samples from Kilifi were analyzed using standard methods, with pH measured in 10% and 20% aqueous solutions. Pearson correlation revealed strong positive associations between moisture content and pH ($r = 0.882$, $p = 0.002$ for 10% solution; $r = 0.897$, $p = 0.001$ for 20% solution), while total alkalinity and free caustic alkalinity showed weak non-significant correlations. Regression analysis showed that moisture content was the only significant predictor ($B = 0.223$, $\beta = 0.876$, $p = 0.005$; 95% CI: 0.102–0.345), indicating a 1% increase in moisture raises pH by approximately 0.223 units. Total alkalinity ($B = 0.415$, $p = 0.223$) and free caustic alkalinity ($B = 4.463$, $p = 0.509$) made non-significant contributions. This establishes that moisture content is the primary driver of pH variation, likely due to enhanced alkali hydrolysis in higher-moisture formulations. Findings align with Kenyan commercial soap profiles (pH 10–11.7, moisture 10–25%, free caustic alkali <0.2% per KEBS standards).

Abstract ID: 86

Title: Decolonising Community Health: Why Language Matters

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Category: Paper

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In a rapidly changing geopolitical and economic environment, community health interventions often yield uneven outcomes despite sustained biomedical investments. This study addresses the policy-relevant issue of linguistic marginalization, where dominant health discourses exclude indigenous languages and community knowledge, resulting in low health literacy, weakened institutional trust, and limited community participation. Three questions guide this research: How does language influence community health knowledge? How do health policies marginalize local knowledge? And how can language-centered approaches lead to more inclusive health interventions? The study incorporates Critical Discourse Theory, Epistemic Justice Theory, and the Health Belief Model to explore the links between language, power, knowledge, and health behaviour. A qualitative, multidisciplinary design was used in south-western Kenya, focusing on community health volunteers, local practitioners, and community members. A purposive sample of 40 participants was selected, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and analysis of health communication materials and policies, using thematic and critical discourse analysis. Findings show that exclusive health policies hinder community engagement and intervention effectiveness. In contrast, incorporating indigenous languages and local knowledge enhances understanding, trust, and participation in health initiatives. The study concludes that adopting language-sensitive frameworks in community health policy can improve outcomes, promote epistemic justice, and bolster community resilience.

Keywords: Decolonisation; Community Health Policy; Language and Health Communication; Epistemic Justice; Health Behaviour

Abstract ID: 87

Title: Prevalence of postpartum contraception uptake among younger versus older women in Kenya

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Globally, approximately 40% of all pregnancies each year, around 99 million, are unintended. In Kenya, 96% of postpartum women desire at least 2 years between births, but only 60% use family planning (FP) within a year postpartum. Adolescent girls and young women have a higher unmet need for contraception, but more data is needed on how age is associated with postpartum contraception uptake. This analysis aims to evaluate the patterns between age and six-month postpartum contraception uptake among women in Kenya. We analyzed data from a clinical trial at five clinics in Western Kenya (NCT04472884) that enrolled 600 pregnant women who were HIV-negative, ≥ 18 years, between 24-32 weeks gestation, and newly initiating HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Family planning use and type were ascertained at all postpartum study visits (six weeks, 14 weeks, six months, and nine months post-delivery). We used Generalized Estimating Equations (GEE) to evaluate the patterns between age (≤ 24 vs > 24 years) and contraceptive use. In a study of 575 women at the six-month postpartum visit, 272 (47%) were aged ≤ 24 years, with 65% using a family planning (FP) method (67% for ≤ 24 years, 64% for > 24 years). Implants were the most utilized method (41%), followed by injectables (16%) and oral contraception (7%). GEE analysis indicated that younger women had 32% lower odds of using any FP at baseline (OR = 0.68, $p = 0.049$). Each postpartum week increased the odds of FP use by 3% for older women (OR = 1.03, $p < 0.001$), with a stronger effect observed in younger women (interaction OR = 1.02, $p = 0.024$). LARC use grew weekly by 4% ($p < 0.001$), particularly among younger women. The study demonstrated that the prevalence of postpartum contraception uptake at six months was similar across age groups. However, younger women had a greater preference for the implant. Additionally, the likelihood of LARC use increased significantly over time among AGYW. Age-specific preferences highlight the need for tailored access strategies for postpartum FP.

Abstract ID: 88

Title: Role of Culture and Stigma in Substance Use and Treatment: Case Study for Kenya

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Category: Paper

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The reality of drugs, including their use and treatment, is constructed by the socio-cultural environment. People around the world have used psychoactive substances medicinally, spiritually, and socially since ancient times. They have often used these substances to achieve certain mental and physical states, whether it was having a glass of mead during a social occasion or using peyote for a spiritual ceremony. Of note, the drug experience is mediated by social meanings, contexts, and relationships people attach to drugs. The current study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating a qualitative needs assessment and focus group methodology. A total of 157 participants completed the survey, while 94 participated in focus groups. Participants included students, faculty, community stakeholders, such as representatives from government agencies, rehabilitation professionals, and individuals with lived experience of substance use. Substance abuse in Kenya is profoundly influenced by cultural and societal norms that have evolved over time. The proposed presentation will highlight some of the themes uncovered including (a) the role of traditional practices, economic hardship, and shifting communal attitudes in the normalization of substance use and misuse. (b) Substance use starts with behaviors observed and normalized in homes and schools. (c) The quandary between the economic values of drugs and lack of opportunities. (d) Gaps in Policy, Professional Training, and Rehabilitation Infrastructure. A discussion of the role of culture in the treatment of substance use and the intersection with current “modern” treatment modalities will be highlighted.

Abstract ID: 89

Title: Digital Virtual Twin Platform for Synthetic Patient Drug Simulation: Advancing Health Security through AI-Driven Insights

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Category: Paper

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Advancing health security requires innovative solutions that can accelerate research while minimizing risks to human subjects. This project presents a Digital Virtual Twin platform designed to simulate synthetic patients with diverse demographic and health profiles, enabling the evaluation of drug interventions across multiple diseases including influenza, malaria, dengue, and COVID-19. The platform integrates AI-driven predictive modeling, disease progression simulation, and multi-drug effect analysis, providing actionable insights on optimal treatment strategies. Using synthetic data, the platform generates virtual patients with attributes such as age, sex, comorbidities, immune status, and environmental factors. Diseases are modeled with dynamic progression curves, incorporating viral or parasitic load, symptom severity, and organ-specific health indicators. Drugs are simulated with pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic parameters, allowing assessment of efficacy, side-effects, and optimal dosing. An integrated AI assistant ranks treatment strategies based on predicted outcomes, offering explainable recommendations that highlight key patient factors influencing drug response. Interactive dashboards provide visualizations including time-series symptom progression, multi-drug comparisons, and 3D patient health twins, enabling stakeholders to explore intervention scenarios safely and intuitively. This approach demonstrates how digital innovation and AI can advance health security, enabling rapid testing of interventions for diseases with limited treatment options while adhering to ethical standards. The platform offers a scalable, modular, and reproducible framework, promoting equity by allowing simulations across diverse patient profiles. The Digital Virtual Twin for Drug Simulation represents a novel, safe, and interactive solution for advancing scientific research and strengthening health security in Kenya and globally.

Abstract ID: 90

Title: AN INVESTIGATION INTO ETIOLOGY NUTRITIONAL PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES AND AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN OF A KNEE BRACE FOR KNEE LIGAMENT INJURIES AMONG WOMEN AGED 45 AND ABOVE PRESENTING WITH KNEE PAIN IN KENYA

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Knee pain among postmenopausal women in Kenya is misattributed to osteoarthritis, causing mismanagement. Study investigates biomechanical-hormonal etiology of MCL injuries in women, emphasizing estrogen deficiency and angular misalignment as causative factors. Descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted involving 32 female participants. Measurement (Q-angle, Neurofascial-Strain angle, and Femoral-Neck-Shaft angle) analysis alongside histories, hormonal profiles and nutrition. Radiological and biomechanical screening complemented clinical assessments. Statistics assessed via chi-square analysis. Association ($\chi^2 = 13.01$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$) between irregular Q-angles and increased MCL tension in subjects, confirming biomechanical predisposition. Analysis of NFS angles showed age-dependent angular widening matching increased ligament strain. In females, FNS angle is smaller compared to males hence female patients are at higher risk of medial deviation of the femur in relation to the tibia causing MCL stress and predisposition to microtears and injury to MCL causing chronic pain. Increase in NFS angle in old women and depletion of estrogen causing increased MCL tension. Outliers are mainly from high-intake of fruits supporting the hypothesis that vitamin-C is useful in mitigating MCL tension. Study introduces NFS angle as diagnostic and screening tool for assessing medial knee strain and proposes custom-designed MCL-supporting knee-brace tailored to pelvic-femoral morphologies. Vitamin-C supplementation is advocated as a safer alternative to hormone replacement, offering antioxidant protection and enhanced collagen synthesis without oncogenic risks. Irregular biomechanical alignment and hormonal decline in subjects synergistically predispose the MCL to microtears and chronic pain. Integration of angular metrics with targeted nutritional and orthopedic interventions presents a shift from conventional osteoarthritis-centric management.

Agriculture, Climate & Environmental Science

Abstract ID: 91

Title: Machine Learning Estimation of Maize Chlorophyll and Nitrogen Using EnMAP and PRISMA

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Accurate estimation of canopy chlorophyll content (CCC) and canopy nitrogen content (CNC) is essential for precision agriculture and sustainable nutrient management. Recent spaceborne hyperspectral missions, including EnMAP and PRISMA, provide new opportunities for field-scale monitoring of crop biochemical properties; however, differences in sensor characteristics may influence retrieval accuracy. This study evaluates the performance of EnMAP, native PRISMA, and pan-sharpened PRISMA imagery for estimating maize CCC and CNC using machine learning approaches at the Kellogg Biological Station, Michigan, USA. Field measurements collected across 24 maize plots representing four contrasting management treatments were integrated with hyperspectral imagery acquired during the peak growing season. A PanNet-style convolutional neural network was used to enhance PRISMA spatial resolution through pan-sharpening while preserving spectral fidelity. Feature selection was performed using permutation-based and SHAP-based approaches, and multiple machine learning regression algorithms were evaluated to identify optimal workflows for biochemical estimation. The pan-sharpening approach demonstrated high spectral fidelity, supporting its suitability for quantitative crop monitoring applications. For chlorophyll estimation, pan-sharpened PRISMA consistently outperformed both native PRISMA and EnMAP, achieving coefficients of determination (R^2) of up to 0.94 and normalized RMSE values of approximately 9–10%. For nitrogen estimation, pan-sharpened PRISMA substantially improved upon native PRISMA and achieved performance comparable to EnMAP (R^2 up to 0.85), although EnMAP remained the most stable sensor due to its superior spectral quality. These findings demonstrate that spatial enhancement can improve PRISMA performance for chlorophyll retrieval, while nitrogen estimation remains more dependent on spectral fidelity. The study highlights the complementary strengths of EnMAP and PRISMA for operational monitoring of maize biochemical traits.

Abstract ID: 92

Title: Global distribution and multidimensional diversity of Chamaeleonidae: Spatiotemporal dynamics and conservation implications

Authors: Winnie Mambo, Khalifah Najjankosi, Samya Walker, Michael Chukwudi, & Micah Nneji

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Category: Paper

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Accurate estimation of canopy chlorophyll content (CCC) and canopy nitrogen content (CNC) is essential for precision agriculture and sustainable nutrient management. Recent spaceborne hyperspectral missions, including EnMAP and PRISMA, provide new opportunities for field-scale monitoring of crop biochemical properties; however, differences in sensor characteristics may influence retrieval accuracy. This study evaluates the performance of EnMAP, native PRISMA, and pan-sharpened PRISMA imagery for estimating maize CCC and CNC using machine learning approaches at the Kellogg Biological Station, Michigan, USA. Field measurements collected across 24 maize plots representing four contrasting management treatments were integrated with hyperspectral imagery acquired during the peak growing season. A PanNet-style convolutional neural network was used to enhance PRISMA spatial resolution through pan-sharpening while preserving spectral fidelity. Feature selection was performed using permutation-based and SHAP-based approaches, and multiple machine learning regression algorithms were evaluated to identify optimal workflows for biochemical estimation. The pan-sharpening approach demonstrated high spectral fidelity, supporting its suitability for quantitative crop monitoring applications. For chlorophyll estimation, pan-sharpened PRISMA consistently outperformed both native PRISMA and EnMAP, achieving coefficients of determination (R^2) of up to 0.94 and normalized RMSE values of approximately 9–10%. For nitrogen estimation, pan-sharpened PRISMA substantially improved upon native PRISMA and achieved performance comparable to EnMAP (R^2 up to 0.85), although EnMAP remained the most stable sensor due to its superior spectral quality. These findings demonstrate that spatial enhancement can improve PRISMA performance for chlorophyll retrieval, while nitrogen estimation remains more dependent on spectral fidelity. The study highlights the complementary strengths of EnMAP and PRISMA for operational monitoring of maize biochemical traits.

Abstract ID: 93

Title: Fintech-Integrated Input Credit: A Platform Using Mobile Money History and Farm Satellite Data to Provide Input-Only Credit for Seeds and Tools

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Category: Paper

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Smallholder farmers in Kenya face a persistent constraint: Farmers have limited access to credit facilities for agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, chemicals, fertilizer and essential tools. Traditional lending models are ill-suited to agriculture due to high transaction costs, lack of formal collateral, and the risk of loan diversion to non-productive uses. Commercial banks perceive smallholders as high-risk due to volatile yields, lack of title deeds, and weak credit histories. This paper presents an innovative Fintech-integrated input credit platform designed specifically for Kenya's context. The platform uniquely combines mobile money transaction histories (e.g., M-PESA and, BANKS) with high-resolution farm satellite data (vegetation indices, field boundaries, and seasonal land use) to generate dynamic credit scores for unbanked farmers. Unlike conventional cash loans, the platform does not disburse money. Instead, eligible farmers receive digital vouchers redeemable exclusively for approved seeds, fertilizer, chemicals and tools at registered local agro-veterinary outlets (Agrovets). This input-only credit model ensures that borrowed funds directly enhance farm productivity rather than being diverted to household consumption or other non-agricultural expenses. The proposed platform addresses three critical failures in Kenya's agricultural finance landscape: moral hazard (farmers using cash loans for unintended purposes), adverse selection (lenders unable to distinguish productive farmers from risky borrowers), and high collateral requirements. By leveraging mobile money history which reflects regular income flows, savings behavior, and repayment discipline the platform builds a behavioral credit profile. Satellite data complements this by objectively verifying active farming activity, field size, crop health trends, and historical yield potential. A machine learning algorithm integrates both datasets to assign a credit limit, which is then converted into digital voucher value. The vouchers are time-bound, crop-specific, and geo-fenced to the farmer's registered location, preventing leakage or resale. A pilot simulation using anonymized data from 2,500 smallholders in Uasin Gishu and Kakamega counties demonstrated that 78% of farmers without formal bank accounts had sufficient mobile money and satellite indicators to qualify for seed and tool vouchers averaging KES 8,500 per season. Repayment is structured as a post-harvest deduction from crop proceeds through a linked mobile money savings account or a harvest guarantee agreement with local cooperatives. Preliminary findings indicate that input-only credit reduces loan diversion to near zero (from an estimated 40% diversion rate under cash loans) and increases adoption of improved seeds by 63% compared to control groups. The platform also creates a

transparent audit trail for lenders and development partners. Discussion centers on implementation challenges, including data privacy concerns, interoperability between mobile network operators and satellite data providers, and the need for regulatory approval from the Central Bank of Kenya and the Agricultural Finance Corporation. However, the model holds transformative potential: it transforms mobile money from a payment tool into a credit-scoring asset, converts satellite imagery into collateral-equivalent risk information, and aligns borrower incentives with productivity gains. Conclusion: Fintech-integrated input credit via digital vouchers offers a scalable, low-leakage pathway to finance Kenya's agricultural transformation. Policy recommendations include establishing a shared data trust framework and subsidizing last-mile Agrovet onboarding.

Keywords: Fintech, input credit, mobile money, satellite data, digital vouchers, smallholder farmers, Kenya

Abstract ID: 94

Title: Population dynamics of Cyprinidae along a salinity gradient in the Lake Naivasha-Oloiden , Kenya

Authors: Guto Kerubo Carolyne, Njiru Murithi James, Getabu Albert, Gichana Moraa Zipporah

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Category: Paper

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The study assessed the population status of Cyprinidae along a salinity gradient in the Lakes Naivasha and Oloiden for one year. Fish were caught and sampled (weight and length were measured) monthly using monofilament and multifilament gill nets at seven sites along the salinity gradient. *Cyprinus carpio*'s b value was $b < 3$ in Lake Naivasha and $b = 3$ in Lake Oloiden. Similarly, *Cyprinus carpio specularis* also had a $b < 3$ for fish in both lakes. The largest total length of *Cyprinus carpio specularis*, *Cyprinus carpio coiaeus* and *Enteromius paludinosus* were lower than asymptotic length of *C. carpio*. Condition factor was as follows: *C. carpio*'s was 1.3 (Lake Naivasha) and 1.35 (Lake Oloiden); *Cyprinus carpio specularis* had 1.27 (Lake Naivasha) and 1.08 (Lake Oloiden); *Cyprinus carpio coiaeus*'s was 1.38 while *Enteromius paludinosus*'s was 1.35. The dominant length class for *C. carpio* was 31-40 cm. Its growth parameter estimates were: $t_0 = 1.03$, $K = 1.5 \text{ year}^{-1}$, $L_\infty = 57.23 \text{ cm}$ and $\phi' = 3.50$. Mortality estimates were: $Z = 3.12 \text{ year}^{-1}$, $F = 1.3 \text{ year}^{-1}$ and $M = 1.82 \text{ year}^{-1}$. Its exploitation level was 0.42, indicating moderate exploitation. There were two seasonal recruitment peaks for *C. carpio*. It exhibited a stable population dynamics and considerable resilience to varying conditions along Lake Naivasha-Oloiden gradient. The condition factor indicated that the Cyprinidae species present in both lakes were in good condition despite the merging of two distinct ecosystems. The length-frequency distribution for *Cyprinus carpio* was consistent with previous studies with fewer older fish. Other Cyprinidae fish numbers were low to support a fishery.

Abstract ID: 95

Title: Evaluating the Impact of Digital Extension Services on Climate-Smart Agriculture Adoption among Smallholder Farmers

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Category: Paper

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Sub-Saharan smallholder agricultural systems are increasingly vulnerable to climate volatility, necessitating a rapid shift toward Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA). While traditional, top-down agricultural extension models face logistical and financial constraints that limit their reach, mobile-based digital extension (e-extension) platforms have emerged as a scalable alternative. However, empirical evidence regarding their efficacy in driving long-term behavioral change and technology adoption remains fragmented. This study evaluates the impact of a mobile advisory platform on the adoption of three CSA practices: conservation tillage, rainwater harvesting, and drought-resistant crop varieties. Utilizing a randomized control trial (RCT) design, data was collected from 400 smallholder farmers over two consecutive cropping seasons. The treatment group received weekly localized weather forecasts, market price alerts, and agronomic advisories via SMS/USSD, while the control group relied on conventional public services. A binary logistic regression model determined the factors influencing adoption. Empirical results indicate a statistically significant 18% increase in the overall adoption rate of CSA practices among digitally enabled farmers compared to the control group. The highest acceleration occurred in drought-resistant seed utilization (24%), driven by real-time weather alerts. However, a persistent digital divide was revealed; older farmers and female-headed households exhibited lower adoption intensities due to limited mobile literacy and restricted resource access. These findings demonstrate that while digital extension is a powerful vehicle for rapid technology dissemination, a pluralistic approach is essential. Digital interventions must be integrated with hands-on, participatory frameworks to ensure inclusivity and equitable resource distribution among marginalized rural demographics.

Abstract ID: 96

Title: MULTI-SENSOR SAR-OPTICAL FUSION FOR CROP SPECIES AND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION: A SINGLE-DATE SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF FINE-SCALE AGRICULTURAL PARCELS

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Synthetic aperture radar (SAR) vegetation indices (VI) and SAR-optical data fusion have both been studied extensively in agricultural monitoring; however, many prior works have relied on multi-temporal datasets, large spatial extents, or exhaustive ground calibration. Using a single acquisition during the peak crop growing season to assess SAR-optical fusion on small plots presents a constrained environment which still provides a beneficial benchmarking opportunity for sensor complementarity. The study investigates SAR-optical fusion performance in two contexts: (1) direct fusion of machine-learning-selected features from SAR and optical sensors, and (2) fusion using surrogate vegetation indices (SARVI) reconstructed from EnMAP and SAR predictors. Each strategy was applied towards two classification goals: classification among crop species, and classification of management treatments within corn class.

The study utilized a single-date dataset acquired on August 3, 2023, incorporating Sentinel-1 SAR, Sentinel-2 multispectral, and EnMAP hyperspectral data across 42 agricultural plots (around 1 ha each) at the Kellogg Biological Station (Michigan, USA). All classifications were performed using the Random Forest (RF) algorithm. Single SAR-sensor models exhibited the lowest overall performance for both tasks (crop species, Overall Accuracy (OA) = 0.689; treatment classification, OA = 0.394). Amongst single-sensor datasets, Sentinel-2 achieved the highest crop-species classification accuracy (OA = 0.955), while treatment-level discrimination was best achieved using EnMAP hyperspectral imagery (OA = 0.859).

Data fusion approaches demonstrated the strongest performance overall. Fusion of Sentinel-1 SAR with Sentinel-2 yielded the highest accuracy for crop-species classification (OA = 0.986), while Sentinel-1 - EnMAP hyperspectral fusion outperformed other fusion approaches for treatment classification (OA = 0.865), suggesting a benefit of hyperspectral data for detecting intraspecies biochemical variability. The fusion of SARVI and SAR outperformed SAR-only models (OA = 0.885 for crop species; OA = 0.768 for treatments) but was inferior to direct SAR-EnMAP fusion. Because the study was intentionally designed as a single-date, fine-scale assessment, the results isolate the capabilities of different sensor modalities without the influence of seasonal variability. Overall, the findings demonstrate that multi-sensor fusion substantially improves agricultural classification performance, with optimal sensor

configurations depending on the classification objective and the type of variability being detected.

Keywords: SAR, hyperspectral imagery, multispectral imagery, crop classification, management treatment detection, vegetation indices, multi-sensor data fusion.

Abstract ID: 97

Title: Resilient Underground Infrastructure in Kenya: Strategies for Sustainable Development

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Category: Paper

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Underground infrastructure forms a critical foundation of modern civilization and must be developed and maintained in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. In Kenya, much of this infrastructure remains underdeveloped, posing challenges to service delivery, urban growth, and resilience. Strengthening Kenya's underground systems is essential to meeting the evolving needs of communities, particularly in the face of rapid urbanization and climate-related risks. This paper explores the opportunities for advancing Kenya's underground infrastructure to meet the demands of the 21st century and beyond. It examines deficiencies in systems such as water supply, sanitation, energy distribution, and telecommunications, and highlights the importance of integrating resilience into infrastructure planning and design. The study emphasizes the role of strategic investments, modern technologies, and data-driven approaches in improving efficiency, durability, and adaptability. Furthermore, the paper discusses the need for coordinated policy frameworks, capacity building, and public-private partnerships to support sustainable infrastructure development. By prioritizing resilience and innovation, Kenya can enhance service reliability, reduce long-term costs, and promote inclusive economic growth. Ultimately, the paper provides insights into how targeted interventions can transform underground infrastructure into a robust backbone for national development.

Abstract ID: 98

Title: Access to Agricultural Mechanization and Conservation Agriculture among Smallholder Farmers: Evidence from Selected Counties in Kenya

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Category: Paper

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Agricultural mechanization and conservation agriculture are increasingly recognized as critical drivers of productivity, resilience, and inclusive growth among smallholder farmers. This study examines patterns of access to mechanized services, adoption of conservation agriculture practices, and key barriers faced by farmers across selected counties in Kenya. Using primary survey data from 83 respondents, the descriptive statistics are used to explore demographic characteristics, modes of accessing farm machinery, challenges to mechanization, and the role of youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in mechanized farming. Results show that a majority of respondents (78%) use some form of farm machinery, primarily through hiring from private service providers or neighbors, while ownership of machinery remains limited. High costs, fragmented landholdings, poor infrastructure, and limited access to credit were identified as the main constraints to mechanization. Despite these challenges, interest in collective solutions is strong, with 90% of respondents expressing willingness to participate in Youth Mechanization Brigades or Common Facility Centers. Awareness of conservation agriculture is relatively high (82%), and farmers reported adopting practices such as crop rotation, minimum tillage, mulching, and cover cropping. Most respondents reported positive productivity effects, with over 85% indicating that conservation agriculture increased yields either significantly or slightly. However, adoption remains constrained by high equipment costs, limited training, and lack of demonstrations. The study also highlights persistent inclusion gaps, particularly related to capital access, training opportunities, and cultural norms affecting youth and women.

Abstract ID: 99

Title: EMPOWERING THE GRASSROOTS: OPTIMIZING FLLoCA FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN KENYA

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Category: Paper

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There is a growing awareness of the necessity of locally driven climate action initiatives to lessen the effects of climate change at the local level as they continue to show up on a global scale. The Financing Locally-Led Climate Action Programme (FLLoCA), which aims to empower local communities to confront climate change impacts, has become an important project in Kenya, where communities are particularly exposed to climate-related difficulties. Though it has great potential, FLLoCA in Kenya is hampered in its efficacy and scalability by large funding gaps. The goal of this paper is to identify current gaps and explore potential areas for development as it examines the strategies and interventions required to boost financing for FLLoCA in Kenya. The study primarily utilized an extensive analysis of extant literature, policy papers, and empirical data, and triangulated using data from key informant interviews to verify and bolster the discussions and findings. The research scrutinizes the present state of FLLoCA finance, accentuating crucial obstacles such restricted financial availability, insufficient institutional backing, and disjointed governance frameworks. The study addresses the difficulties Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) in Kenya faces and offers ways to overcome them, including strengthening financial systems, encouraging collaboration amongst several stakeholders, engaging the youth, women and incorporating climate finance into development strategies. It also emphasizes the necessity of concrete suggestions to enhance FLLoCA funding and optimize its influence on regional efforts to adapt to climate change and become more resilient to it. Boost the flow of climate funds to low-income communities by supporting policies that provide sufficient, stable, and dependable funding sources. Encourage funding source diversification and lessen reliance on outside climate funds by enhancing cooperation and coordination amongst the government, civil society organizations, and other relevant parties. The FLLoCA national conference in 2023 emphasized the importance of implementing a comprehensive work plan and engagement framework to effectively carry out climate change projects at both national and local levels. This framework aims to promote equal partnerships and build capacity among CSOs, FLLoCA programs, and implementing Partner Groups. It is also imperative to activate the representative joint steering committee or secretariat that was established to supervise the implementation of the engagement framework and programme activities.

The research paper adds to the current discourse on localized climate action and climate finance.

Abstract ID: 100

Title: From land to rivers: How trace metals move across different components in a tropical river.

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Category: Paper

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Understanding the distribution and accumulation of trace metals across aquatic compartments is critical for assessing ecosystem health in tropical river systems. This study examined spatial patterns of trace metals in water, sediment, macroinvertebrates, and fish along the Mara River. We sampled nine sites (M1-M9) along the Mara River in the Kenyan section and five sites in Tanzania (M10-M14). Our data reveal that trace metal concentrations in water were generally low, although several elements (As, Mn, Sr, and V) increased downstream, indicating cumulative inputs along the river continuum. In contrast, sediment trace metals exhibited high variability but limited spatial structuring, suggesting localized controls on deposition and retention. Mercury (Hg) exhibited contrasting patterns across regions and matrices, with relatively low, variable concentrations in Kenyan sites but pronounced downstream increases at Tanzanian sites. Sediment Hg concentrations declined downstream along the Mara River, with elevated levels at the upstream Mau Forest site in Kenya, suggesting localized upstream inputs and downstream attenuation through transport and depositional processes. We also found that biological compartments showed taxon-specific but variable patterns of metal accumulation. In macroinvertebrates, metal concentrations varied among families, with Baetidae and Corduliidae generally exhibiting higher concentrations of Cu, Zn, As, Cd, and Se, whereas Libellulidae and Naucoridae tended to have lower concentrations across most metals. Perlidae exhibited the highest Hg concentrations across the different taxa. In fish, metal accumulation patterns differed among genera, with Cd concentrations generally higher in *Zaireichthys* and Zn concentrations highest in *Enteromius* and *Zaireichthys*, while other genera, such as *Labeo*, showed moderate concentrations. In contrast, concentrations of As, Cu, Pb, and Se did not differ significantly among genera. Overall, these results demonstrate that trace metal dynamics in the Mara River are shaped by a combination of longitudinal gradients, localized environmental conditions, and biological traits. This study highlights the importance of integrating multiple ecosystem compartments to better understand contaminant distribution and ecological risk in tropical river systems.

Abstract ID: 101

Title: Investing in Kenya's Greatest Asset: Youth Empowerment as a Driver of Sustainable Development

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Category: Paper

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Kenya, with approximately 75 percent of its population aged under 35, faces both an extraordinary developmental opportunity and a formidable governance challenge. This demographic reality, the youth bulge, positions Kenya's young population as the most consequential determinant of the nation's sustainable development trajectory. However, Kenyan youth continue to grapple with systemic barriers, including chronic unemployment, inadequate education, limited financial inclusion, and restricted civic participation that collectively suppress their productive potential and threaten long-term national progress. The paper examines youth empowerment as an indispensable catalyst for Kenya's sustainable development, arguing that strategic investment in young people is not merely a social obligation but an economic imperative with far-reaching implications for national prosperity and intergenerational equity. Relying on Kenya's policy frameworks, mainly the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, the National Youth Policy, and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 16, the paper critically analyses whether existing institutional mechanisms effectively harness the potential of Kenya's youthful demographic. It identifies structural impediments marginalising youth from economic and civic participation, and advances a framework encompassing investments in quality education, technical training, digital skills, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement platforms that amplify youth voices in national development discourse. It argues that empowered, skilled, and civically engaged young people are not merely beneficiaries of development, but its most powerful and transformative architects.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Human Capital, Youth Unemployment, Entrepreneurship, Demographic Dividend, Inclusive Growth, Civic Engagement

Abstract ID: 102

Title: Adsorption Isotherms and Kinetics Studies on Adsorption of Copper onto Modified and Unmodified Biomass Tea Waste from Wastewater in Kisii County, Kenya

Authors: Pmwancha Priscillah, Prof. Jackson Kiptoo, Prof. Ali Mohammed Salim. Dr. Anam Onditi

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Among the most hazardous environmental issues nowadays is heavy metal pollution. One efficient technique for eliminating wastewater that contains heavy metals is adsorption. In order to assess an adsorbent's effectiveness and construct an adsorption system, the maximal adsorption capacity, the adsorption process and the movement of mass phases can all be determined in kinetics models and adsorption isotherms. This study examined tea waste treated with sulfuric acid as an inexpensive alternative adsorbent for the removal of Cu (II) ions from aqueous solution. 1M H₂SO₄ was added to the tea waste, and it was heated to 150°C for 24 hours. Tea waste and tea factory wastewater was taken from Nyamache tea Factory. The adsorption kinetics and isotherms of heavy metals by both modified and unmodified biomass tea waste were compiled and thoroughly examined in this paper. biomass quantity (0.1 to 1.0 g), pH levels (2.0 to 10.0), all had an impact on the biosorption procedure. The findings from the study show the optimum pH of the modified tea waste as 6 and for unmodified tea waste as 5.9. The optimum adsorbent dosage for modified tea waste was 0.7 grams and for the unmodified tea waste as 0.8 grams. The adsorption capacities of modified and unmodified tea waste were 14.144 and 12.706 respectively, the adsorption capacity for modified tea waste were comparatively greater than those of unmodified tea waste. For both modified and unmodified tea waste, the adsorption data fit the Langmuir isotherm model better than the Freundlich model, with correlation coefficients of 0.9477 and 0.9402, even though the adsorption kinetics matched pseudo-second-order kinetics (R=0.9999). The findings show that copper (II) ions can be removed from household wastewater by using modified tea waste and unmodified tea waste.

Abstract ID: 103

Title: Mycotoxin Awareness and Contamination Levels in Rice and Rice Bran from Major and Minor Production Regions in Kenya

Authors: Roxton Chirchir, Roxton, John, Irene & Ouna

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Category: Paper

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Mycotoxin contamination in food is a significant public health concern due to its carcinogenic risks. Because most mycotoxins withstand common processing methods, awareness and preventive practices remain the most effective control strategies. This study assessed mycotoxin awareness among rice farmers and millers in Ahero and Mwea, Kenya's main rice-growing regions, and analyzed rice and rice bran from Ahero, Mwea, and Lungalunga for aflatoxins (AFB1, AFB2, AFG1, AFG2) and Fumonisin (FB1, FB2) using LC–MS/MS. Awareness was higher in Mwea (64.1% of farmers; 66.7% of millers) than in Ahero (29.5% and 15.8%, respectively). Only two rice bran samples from Lungalunga contained AFB1 (7.15 ppb and 2.99 ppb). All aflatoxin and Fumonisin levels were within Codex limits, with Jengo rice showing the highest Fumonisin level (173.2 ppb). The regional disparity in awareness highlights the need for targeted education, while acceptable toxin levels support the safe utilization of rice and rice bran as human food.

Keywords; Mycotoxins; Aflatoxins; Fumonisin; Rice Bran; Awareness; LC–MS/MS; Kenya

Research Systems & Higher Education

Abstract ID: 104

Title:Beyond University Density: What Matters Most in Research and Development Productivity

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Category: Paper

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Persistent disparities in research productivity between the Global North and the Global South continue to challenge policymakers, governments, and higher education leaders. Although the expansion of higher education systems is frequently promoted as a strategy for enhancing national research output, the relative contributions of university density, research investment, and research human capital remain insufficiently understood. This study examines the determinants of national research productivity using cross-national data from approximately 200 countries and territories worldwide. Research productivity was measured as publications per million inhabitants, while the explanatory variables included universities per million population, research and development (R&D) expenditure per capita, researcher density, and Global North status. The global regression model, based on 130 countries and territories, demonstrated strong explanatory power, accounting for 79.2% of the variation in research productivity ($R^2 = 0.792$, $F = 119.062$, $p < 0.001$). The results revealed that university density ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.001$), researcher density ($\beta = 0.858$, $p < 0.001$), and Global North status ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$) were significant positive predictors of research productivity, with researcher density emerging as the most influential factor. In contrast, R&D expenditure exhibited a significant negative association with research output ($\beta = -0.500$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting potential inefficiencies in resource allocation or temporal lags between investment and measurable outcomes. A separate model restricted to Global South countries also demonstrated substantial explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.684$, $F = 68.620$, $p < 0.001$). These findings underscore the central role of research human capital and robust university ecosystems in enhancing national research performance and narrowing global knowledge production disparities.

Keywords: Research and Development, Research Productivity, Global North, Global South, Research Funding, Higher Education, University Density

Abstract ID: 105

Title: Scaling Educational Excellence in the Face of Geopolitical Change

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Category: Paper

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Global geopolitical shifts continue to reshape higher education systems, research collaboration, knowledge production, and access to quality learning opportunities across developing and developed economies. This abstract examines how educational institutions can scale academic excellence while responding to emerging geopolitical realities characterized by technological disruption, economic uncertainty, migration, policy realignment, and changing international partnerships. Anchored within the KESSA conference themes of innovation, sustainability, research advancement, and transformative education, the paper explores strategic approaches for strengthening institutional resilience, digital learning ecosystems, interdisciplinary research, and global academic competitiveness. The study highlights the importance of adaptive leadership, equitable access to education, international collaboration, and technology driven learning models in preparing institutions and learners for an increasingly interconnected world. It further emphasizes the role of universities and academic stakeholders in fostering critical thinking, policy engagement, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development through inclusive and future oriented educational frameworks. Using evidence from contemporary educational trends and regional academic experiences, the paper proposes practical recommendations for scaling educational excellence through curriculum innovation, research partnerships, capacity building, and investment in digital infrastructure. Ultimately, the abstract argues that resilient and innovative education systems remain central to socioeconomic transformation, global relevance, and sustainable development in an evolving geopolitical landscape. By encouraging cross sector collaboration among governments, academia, industry, and civil society, institutions can create responsive learning environments that address global challenges while empowering students with competencies, ethical leadership skills, and innovative capacities necessary for long term national development and international academic competitiveness.

Abstract ID: 106

Title: Exploration of Exchange Programs Beyond CADFP

Authors: Penina Kamina

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Category: Panel Round table

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The Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP) is one of the programs among others like Digital Identification and Finance Initiative in Africa (DigiFI Africa) and World Bank Group Africa Fellowship Program that supports scholarship agendas for African-born faculty. CADFP funds African-born scholars in North America to collaborate with a select sub-Saharan African University on research, co-curricular development and mentoring activities since 2013- 2025

(<https://www.iie.org/programs/carnegie-african-diaspora-fellowship-program/>).

The Institute of International Education (IIE) manages the administration of CADFP and of the various programs such as Fulbright grant opportunities of which this presentation will focus on. IIE notes that, “when education transcends borders, it opens minds, enabling people to go beyond building connections to solving problems together” <https://www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Our-Vision>. This presentation seeks to highlight opportunities that Fulbright offers that can be tapped to continue CADFP established relationships and scholarship as a continuation of bringing scholars together and students’ engagement. The presentation will provide an overview of Fulbright opportunities for students, scholars, educators, and professionals. Additionally, personal experiences with the Fulbright US Scholar award, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence, and Fulbright Outreach Lecturing Fund awards will be shared as ways to continue the CADFP alumni scholar-host network beyond CADFP.

Abstract ID: 107

Title: Whither Kenya's Global Geopolitics?

Authors: Kefa Otiso, Shadrack Nasong'o and David Monda

Affiliations: Bowling Green State University, Rhodes College, Memphis, City University of New York

Category: Panel

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Geopolitics is the study of how geography, climate, demography, and natural resources influence international relations and state power. It provides a framework for understanding how countries compete for territory, economic dominance, and global influence. Modern Kenya's geopolitics has evolved since independence in response to changing domestic and global contexts including the Cold War (1947-1991), Non-Aligned Movement (since 1961), the OAU (1963-2002), African Union (since 2002), East Africa Community (1967-1977 and since 2000), and the rise of the Kenyan Diaspora as a major domestic and international actor. The purpose of this session is to evaluate Kenya's geopolitical stance and how it is likely to shape the country's future. In particular, the session explores the philosophical underpinnings of Kenya's geopolitics, its highs and lows, its execution, and how it can be improved to better serve the country.

Keywords: geopolitics, politics, international Relations, state power

Abstract ID: 108

Title: Governing Research Integrity in Africa: Institutional Fragmentation and Regional Disparities Across National Science Systems

Authors: Moses Ogutu

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Category: Paper

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How are research misconduct and responsible research practices governed across African science systems, and what do existing institutional gaps reveal about inequalities in global knowledge governance? This paper maps the landscape of research-integrity structures across African countries, examining the existence, level, and function of national and institutional offices, policies, and mechanisms for governing misconduct and promoting responsible research practice. Drawing on a structured desk review of national legislation, research-council mandates, and institutional documents, the paper categorises countries according to the presence, scope, and capacity of their integrity infrastructure. The findings reveal a fragmented and uneven institutional environment. Few countries operate formal national research-integrity offices, while many maintain ethics frameworks without designated mechanisms for investigating misconduct. Regional disparities are pronounced, and provisions for retractions, whistleblower protection, and investigative authority remain limited. The paper argues that one of Africa's most significant structural gaps is the absence of continental coordination mechanisms comparable to those emerging in Europe and Latin America, limiting the continent's capacity to participate equitably in global research-integrity governance. It concludes with evidence-based recommendations for national, regional, and international stakeholders.

Abstract ID: 109

Title: Roundtable: Who Gets to Move? Visa Systems, Mobility Inequality, and the Politics of Access

Authors: Moses Ogutu

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Category: Panel /Round Table

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Who is permitted to move across borders, at what cost, and on whose terms? This roundtable opens a broader conversation on contemporary visa systems as instruments of mobility governance that increasingly shape access to education, research collaboration, professional opportunity, and transnational movement. Focusing particularly on the experiences of African students, scholars, professionals, and diaspora communities navigating U.S. and other Global North visa regimes, the discussion examines how visa systems produce unequal access to mobility through practices of refusal, delay, administrative scrutiny, and differentiated treatment across nationalities. The roundtable will bring together perspectives on student and exchange visas, scholarly mobility, migration governance, and the political economy of border control, including emerging data and policy trends related to U.S. visa systems. Participants will reflect on the lived realities of navigating restrictive mobility regimes, the institutional and geopolitical logics that sustain them, and the broader implications for global inequality, academic exchange, and international cooperation. Rather than formal paper presentations, the session will feature short framing interventions followed by an open and interactive discussion with the audience. The roundtable asks how unequal access to movement is produced and reproduced, where possibilities for agency and reform exist, and what universities, policymakers, and international institutions can do to support more equitable systems of global mobility.

Abstract ID: 110

Title: Constructing Hierarchy in International Mobility: Visa Refusal Rates and the Stratification of Global Movement

Authors: Moses Ogutu

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Category: Paper

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Who is permitted to cross a border, and who is turned away at the visa counter long before they reach the checkpoint? Contemporary mobility governance increasingly operates through visa systems that filter travelers at the point of application. This paper treats short-term visa refusal as a patterned structure of exclusion rather than a sum of individual administrative decisions, and asks what that structure reveals about the governance of global mobility. Drawing on an original panel dataset of refusal rates across the United States, the Schengen Area, and the United Kingdom, covering 155 nationalities between 2010 and 2024, the paper documents a systematic gradient in which applicants from lower-income and African states are refused at significantly higher rates than those from wealthier countries. These patterns closely track income, regional location, and mobility position in ways that individual-level circumstances cannot fully explain. What emerges is a durable architecture of stratification embedded within the world's hegemonic visa regimes, one that sorts would-be travelers along lines of wealth, race, and geopolitical power, assigning suspicion to some and legitimacy to others. Situating these findings within a structural-power account of the global visa economy, the paper argues that mobility hierarchy is not a bureaucratic accident but a constitutive feature of the contemporary international order. It concludes by considering what a panel-data approach to refusal reveals that case-based analyses often miss, and what these patterns imply for how scholars and policymakers understand and contest unequal access to movement.

Abstract ID: 111

Title: Change Point Detection On Financial Stock Prices During Market Disruptions Under Skew-t Model Through Modified Energy Distance Approach

Authors: Joseph Njuki, Ryan Avallone

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Category: Paper

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In our work, we investigate a modified two-sample-based procedure to detect distributional changes in financial returns using energy statistics, see for example, Njuki and Ning [2025]. The method compares two adjacent segments of a time-dependent observation to assess whether or not they originate from the same underlying distribution. Its modification enhances the ability to detect changes near the beginning and end of the time dependent data. The finite sample properties of the energy-based change-point detection method are conducted to compare its performance and consistency with other existing methods such as information-based criteria. Since the energy-based tests are sensitive to differences in location, scale, skewness, and tail behavior, the proposed approach provides a flexible, nonparametric framework for identifying potential change-points (shifts) in financial return data. Illustrative examples are provided using stock price data from the U.S. and Kenyan stock markets.

Abstract ID: 112

Title: An Emerging Conceptual Framework for Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship: Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Incubator

Authors: Edward Manyibe Dr. Corey L. Moore, Dr. Andre L. Washington, Dr. Atashia Muhammad, Mr. James Nyamao

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Category: Paper

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This presentation introduces the Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Small Business Incubator (M2-PWDI), an emerging conceptual model designed to train and peer-mentor entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWD) in launching small businesses, creating self-employment opportunities, closing wealth gaps, and contributing to local and national economic growth through business creation and job development. The presentation begins with a brief review of the business incubator literature and a discussion of the structural and social factors driving the need for incubators designed for multiple marginalized people with disabilities. It then presents two guiding theoretical perspectives, Critical Disability Theory and Structural Empowerment Theory, that inform the M2-PWDI conceptual framework. Next, the model and its application are described. Preliminary findings indicating that both hybrid and virtual M2-PWDI modalities are feasible and serve distinct functions in supporting entrepreneurial development will also be shared. The hybrid format appears to strengthen relational engagement and collaborative learning, while the virtual-only format expands accessibility and flexibility for participants. The presentation concludes with policy and practice recommendations for federal agencies, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, minority-serving institutions, and researchers interested in collaborative implementation and scaling efforts. Overall, this presentation advances current understanding of disability-focused business incubation and offers a model for strengthening entrepreneurship among EWD, while supporting broader efforts to expand access to business ownership and economic participation.

Abstract ID: 113

Title: Open by Design, Digital by Default: The Open University of Kenya as a Global Solutions Provider in the Architecture of Inclusive Knowledge Systems

Authors: Elijah Omwenga, Daniel Mulinge

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Category: Paper

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We stand at a rare convergence: the obligations encoded in international, continental, and regional development frameworks have never been more aligned; and the technology to fulfil them has never been more accessible. Yet Sub-Saharan Africa continues to suffer from a higher education human capital that is both a moral failure and an economic emergency. This keynote argues that the Open University of Kenya (OUK) — Africa's first fully open, distance, and e-learning institution — is not merely a local response to a local problem. It is a globally replicable model for closing the tertiary education gap where conventional universities cannot address. We present the institutional evidence, the regulatory mandate, and the numbers that make that case difficult to dismiss.

Key words: Open University of Kenya, Digital-first higher education, ODeL, SDG 4, AU Agenda 2063, EAC Vision 2050, BETA 2028, Sub-Saharan Africa, African knowledge economy, Diaspora scholarship, Competency-based education, EdTech equity

Abstract ID: 114

Title: Staying Engaged in Academic Life Beyond Tenure: Barriers, Strategies, and Benefits

Authors: Francis Koti, Charles Manyara, Shadrack Nasongo, Rachel Ndonye, Elimelda Moige Onger, Kefa Otiso

Affiliations- Middle Tennessee State University, Radford University, Rhodes College, Montgomery College, North Carolina A&T State University, Bowling Green State University, Indiana University

Category: Panel

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For most academics, the battle to get started with academic careers is won with the award of tenure and promotion. While promotion is a formal advancement in academic rank, granting of tenure is a more critical action as it represents a long-term commitment by the University to the individual. Put differently, academic tenure represents an indefinite teaching appointment that can be terminated only for cause or a few other extraordinary circumstances. For many, however, the award of tenure is followed by added service and leadership responsibilities and also personal obligations which often act as distractions to scholarship. With the job secured, the pressure to publish and pursue grant funding associated with early career years diminishes for some. As a result, many mid and advanced career faculty members find themselves less engaged in scholarship – significantly undermining their professional development. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon to find faculty members who become inactive in scholarship after tenure and eventually retire at the rank of associate professor. In this panel, seasoned scholars will discuss common barriers in staying engaged in scholarship after tenure and identify effective strategies that mid and advanced career faculty can employ to stay actively engaged in academic practice beyond the award of tenure. Panelists will also reflect on their personal academic journeys to highlight some key benefits of staying engaged in academic practice beyond the award of tenure. It is expected that the discussions will generate enthusiasm especially among mid-career and advanced-career faculty members.

Abstract ID: 115

Title: KENYA'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LOW-INCOME URBAN HOUSEHOLDS - A CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Authors: Margaret Gachuru

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Category: Panel /Workshop

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Persistent housing deficits in Kenya, estimated at over 200,000 units annually with a cumulative backlog exceeding 2 million, reflect deep structural inequalities in urban development and access to shelter. In response, the government launched the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) in 2022 as a flagship intervention to expand homeownership and increase the supply of low-cost housing. While framed as a pro-poor policy, questions remain regarding its capacity to equitably serve low-income populations. This study critically examines the extent to which the AHP addresses the housing needs of low-income households, drawing on housing affordability and urban spatial justice framework. Conceptually, the study interrogates the alignment between state-led housing provision, income structures, and spatial accessibility, foregrounding the tension between policy intent and lived realities of marginalized urban populations. Employing a convergent mixed-methods design, the study integrates: (1) quantitative analysis of housing supply, pricing structures, and financing mechanism; (2) demand-side analysis using administrative data from the Boma Yangu housing portal to assess uptake patterns and eligibility constraints; and (3) geospatial analysis (GIS-based) to evaluate the locational distribution of projects relative to employment centers, infrastructure, and low-income settlements. Findings indicate that although the AHP has expanded housing supply geographically, its impact on low-income accessibility remains limited. An affordability gap persists, while spatial analysis reveals that many developments are in peri-urban areas with weak connectivity to employment hubs. Design standardization further constrains cultural and household suitability, undermining uptake among intended beneficiaries. Collectively, these findings suggest that the AHP, in its current form, risks reproducing rather than alleviating housing inequalities. The study contributes to scholarship on state-led housing interventions in the Global South by demonstrating how affordability, spatiality, and design intersect to shape policy outcomes.

Keywords: Affordable housing; Urban spatial justice; Housing policy; Low-income households; Mixed-methods analysis.

Abstract ID: 116

Title: Church Governance in Kenya: Accountability, Legitimacy, and Public Trust in a Changing Political Economy

Author: Steven Lombo,

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Category: Paper

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This paper examines how governance practices within Kenyan churches shape institutional credibility and their capacity to contribute to national accountability amid a fast-changing geopolitical and economic environment. Building on church–state scholarship in Kenya and constitutional debates on state–religion relations (especially the 2010 Constitution’s framing of state and religion and the broader separation question), the study asks: (1) What governance arrangements (polity, financial controls, disciplinary processes, and safeguarding) are most associated with congregational trust? (2) How do these internal arrangements influence churches’ public theology and engagement with policy and electoral cycles? Using a qualitative design, the paper integrates document analysis of selected denominational constitutions and governance manuals, key-informant interviews with clergy and lay leaders across multiple counties, and thematic analysis of public statements issued by major church umbrella bodies between 2013–2026. The argument advanced is that weak internal accountability mechanisms—opaque finance, personalized leadership, and ad hoc dispute resolution—reduce moral authority and increase vulnerability to political co-option; conversely, transparent budgeting, independent oversight, and participatory decision-making strengthen legitimacy and enable more consistent civic engagement. The paper contributes a governance framework for faith-based organizations that aligns ecclesial integrity with public responsibility, and proposes reform priorities that Kenyan churches can adopt to scale their social impact while protecting institutional trust.

Keywords. church governance; accountability; church–state relations; Kenya; public theology; institutional legitimacy

Abstract ID: 117

Career Progression On Gen Z Retention In Kenyan Commercial Banks

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Category: Paper

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This study examined the factors influencing the retention of Generation Z employees in Kenyan commercial banks, with a focus on career development opportunities. Drawing on the Generational Cohort Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the research adopted a quantitative, descriptive design. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 120 respondents across commercial banks in Nairobi Kenya. However, the valid questionnaires were from 93 respondents which was a good representation for the study. The responses were summarised with the help of descriptive statistics, and multiple regression analysis helped to determine how the independent variables impacted employee retention. The results showed that career development was found to be positively associated with retention due to its strong and significant positive result, which demonstrates it is one of the key factors in motivating and retaining Gen Z employees. These findings indicate that clarity of professional development is a definite work priority to early-career Gen Z workers. The study concludes that the retention strategies in commercial banks need to emphasise on structured career advancement and mentorship and skills enhancement. This strategy has the capacity to meet the generational demands, enhance the interaction, and minimise turnover, which in the long run enhances organisational performance and competitiveness.

Abstract ID: 118

Title: Raila Amolo Odinga in Memoriam: The People's President that Never Was

Author: Shadrack Nasong'o

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Category: Paper

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Following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1991 and the holding of the first multiparty elections in 1992, Raila Amolo Odinga contested for the presidency in five elections. These include the 1997, 2007, 2013, 2017, and 2022 presidential elections. Whereas electoral malpractice has characterized most of the multiparty elections, according to available evidence, the most egregious electoral shenanigans were perpetrated in the 2007 presidential election. This is the presidential election that Raila Odinga clearly won but his victory was stolen from him at the eleventh hour. The brazen manner of this electoral theft ignited postelection violence the magnitude of whose proportions was unprecedented in the country's political history. This paper sets out to analyze the contested 2007 presidential election with particular focus on the electoral shenanigans that denied Raila Odinga an obvious electoral victory. The main thesis of the paper is that Kenyan political leaders may have accepted the idea of democracy and electoral competition, but they are not converts to the democratic ethos of free, fair, and credible elections in which the will of the electorate is honored and upheld. They view politics as a zero-sum game that must be won at all costs, hence the prevalence of electoral shenanigans in the Kenyan electoral processes.

Key words: democratic ethos, electoral malpractice, Kenya, multiparty elections, postelection violence, presidential election.

Abstract ID: 119

Title: A Critical Policy Analysis of Kenya's Affordable Housing Program and Its Implications for Low-Income Urban Households

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Category: Paper

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Persistent housing deficits in Kenya, estimated at over 200,000 units annually with a cumulative backlog exceeding 2 million, reflect deep structural inequalities in urban development and access to shelter. In response, the government launched the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) in 2022 as a flagship intervention to expand homeownership and increase the supply of low-cost housing. While framed as a pro-poor policy, questions remain regarding its capacity to equitably serve low-income populations. This study critically examines the extent to which the AHP addresses the housing needs of low-income households, drawing on housing affordability and urban spatial justice framework. Conceptually, the study interrogates the alignment between state-led housing provision, income structures, and spatial accessibility, foregrounding the tension between policy intent and lived realities of marginalized urban populations. Employing a convergent mixed-methods design, the study integrates: (1) quantitative analysis of housing supply, pricing structures, and financing mechanisms across AHP projects; (2) demand-side analysis using administrative data from the Boma Yangu housing portal to assess uptake patterns and eligibility constraints; and (3) geospatial analysis (GIS-based) to evaluate the locational distribution of projects relative to employment centers, infrastructure, and low-income settlements. Complementary qualitative insights from policy documents and stakeholder perspectives are used to contextualize implementation dynamics and institutional constraints.

Findings indicate that although the AHP has expanded housing supply geographically, its impact on low-income accessibility remains limited. A significant affordability gap persists, with unit pricing and financing terms misaligned with the income profiles of target beneficiaries. Additionally, spatial analysis reveals that many developments are in peri-urban areas with weak connectivity to employment hubs, thereby exacerbating cost-of-living burdens. Design standardization further constrains cultural and household suitability, undermining uptake among intended beneficiaries. Collectively, these findings suggest that the AHP, in its current form, risks reproducing rather than alleviating housing inequalities. The study contributes to scholarship on state-led housing interventions in the Global South by demonstrating how affordability, spatiality, and design intersect to shape policy outcomes. It advances a more nuanced understanding of housing as a socio-spatial right rather than a purely market-driven commodity. Policy recommendations include the restructuring of subsidy regimes to target income thresholds more effectively, integration of housing with livelihood ecosystems, adoption

of context-responsive design standards, and institutionalization of participatory planning processes. These measures are critical to reorienting the AHP toward equitable and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Affordable housing; Urban spatial justice; Housing policy; Low-income households; Mixed-methods analysis; Kenya

Abstract ID: 120

Title: An Emerging Conceptual Framework for Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship: Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Incubator

Author: Cunningham-Pullen Nyree, Dr. Edward O. Manyibe, Dr. Corey L. Moore, Dr. Kacie R. Dentleegrand, Bernard M. Manyibe, and Fanee Webster

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Category: Paper

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This presentation presents a Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities Small Business Incubator (M2-PWDI), an emerging conceptual model designed to train and peer-mentor entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWD) to birth small businesses, create self-employment, close wealth gaps, and help to accelerate United States (U.S.) and local economic growth by fostering new companies and creating job opportunities. A combination of Critical Disability Theory and Structural Empowerment Theory provided a useful framework to contextualize and support the model's design and intent. A set of policy and practice recommendations that could be considered by U.S. federal agencies (e.g., Small Business Administration [SBA], Rehabilitation Services Administration [RSA], Department of Commerce, Office of Disability Employment Policy [ODEP], National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research [NIDILRR]), National Institutes of Health [NIH], National Science Foundation [NSF]), state vocational rehabilitation agencies, minority-serving institutions, and researchers for collaborative implementation, evaluation, and scaling of the M2-PWDI to advance the science on business incubators and entrepreneurship among multiply marginalized EWD are presented.

Abstract ID: 121

Title: Integrating African Languages Across Disciplines: A Case Study Of Usiu – Africa’s Community Collaboration Initiatives

Author: Kennedy Wanyama Shikuku

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Category: Paper

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The strategic integration of African languages into academic and professional contexts is increasingly recognized as critical for advancing linguistic equity, institutional sustainability, and community-driven innovation. This study examines the role of African languages – with particular focus on Swahili – in facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration and deepening community engagement at the United States International University – Africa (USIU – Africa).

The study is theoretically grounded in Garcia and Wei’s (2014) Trans-language Theory, which reconceptualizes multilingualism not as the parallel use of discrete language systems, but as the deployment of a unified linguistic repertoire to construct meaning across social and disciplinary contexts. This framework is augmented by Haugen’s (1972) Language Ecology Model, which foregrounds the dynamic relationship between languages and the institutional environments in which they function. Together, these frameworks position Africa languages as epistemic resources capable of reshaping disciplinary knowledge production. Methodologically, the study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were gathered through structured surveys administered to 120 purposively sampled participants – comprising students, faculty, and community partners – across five community-based initiatives affiliated with USIU-Africa. Qualitative data were generated through six semi-structured focus group discussions and systematic ethnographic observation conducted over twelve weeks. Quantitative findings were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis guided by the trans-language framework, enabling methodological triangulation and interpretive depth. Findings demonstrate that Swahili integration significantly enhances the efficacy of professional communication.

The study recommends developing evidence-based multilingual policies, restructuring organizational systems, and implementing targeted professional development programs.

Keywords: African Languages; Swahili; Trans-language; Community Collaboration; Interdisciplinary; Linguistic Equity; Higher Education.

Abstract ID: 122

Title: Strategic Communication Approaches For Enhancing Organizational Performance At Kisii University, Kenya: A Systematic Review.

Authors: Josephine Ondari, Elijah Maronga, and Eunicares Lumumba

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Category: Paper

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This systematic review synthesizes fragmented evidence to develop an integrated framework of strategic communication approaches specifically tailored for Kisii University, identifying critical interdependencies between cultural sensitivity, digital adaptation, resource management, and resilience. This framework offers novel insights into how these elements collectively drive performance in a complex African higher education context. A comprehensive search of academic databases and institutional repositories identified peer-reviewed and grey literature published between 2018 and 2025. The review identified four interrelated determinants of performance: (i) context-tailored digital communication (including the potential benefits of integrated collaboration platforms and AI-enabled personalization, tempered by authenticity, privacy, and user-resistance concerns), (ii) culturally sensitive, inclusive stakeholder engagement grounded in stakeholder theory, (iii) adaptive, two-way communication and continuous feedback to support organizational learning, and (iv) flexible frameworks capable of functioning within resource limitations and regulatory delays. This review's primary contribution lies in delineating a context-specific model for strategic communication at Kisii University, demonstrating how the synergistic integration of culturally resonant communication, locally adapted digital platforms, and participatory evaluation can transform institutional engagement, decision-making, and resilience, thereby establishing strategic communication as a core institutional capability.

Keywords: Strategic communication, Organizational performance, Digital communication, Stakeholder engagement, Cultural sensitivity, Organizational resilience, Resource constraints

Abstract ID: 123

Title: Factors Influencing Growth Of Social Enterprises In Kenya: A Factor Analysis Approach

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Category: Paper

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Kenya's social enterprises are yet to demonstrate vibrancy and growth. It is in this light that this research sought to establish the factors influencing growth (or lack of it) of social enterprises in Kenya. The study adopted an explanatory research approach. The target population was the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are categorized as social enterprises. The population was drawn from the directory of East Africa Social Enterprise Network (EASEN) and Kenya Social Investment eXchange (KSiX). The two directories provided a population of approximately 200 social enterprises with a sample size of 131 drawn from the population. A simple random sampling technique was used to generate the sample. The study employed a self-administered questionnaire. The findings show that leadership style, partnership networks, community engagement and product acceptability influence growth of social enterprises as indicated in their combined coefficient of determination (R^2) at 0.7338. Using factor analysis, the following variables influence growth of social enterprises in order of magnitude; product acceptability, community engagement, leadership style and partnership network. The research makes recommendations in line with the findings proposing that more weight be attached to the product acceptability and community engagement to enhance growth of social enterprises.

Abstract ID: 124

Title; Service Sector Employers' Perspectives On University-Industry Collaboration In Kenya

Author: Charles Nyandusi

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Category: Paper

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The 'fit' or 'match' between university curricula and industry expectations is often gauged through the existing relationships between universities and industry. As such, there is heightened research interest globally on university-industry collaborations (UIC). The purpose of this study was to interrogate the status of UIC in Kenya from the perspective of employers. The study targeted the service sector, which is the highest employer of university graduates in Kenya. The study adopted a mixed methods approach which utilized a concurrent triangulation research design. Data were generated through a questionnaire administered to 369 respondents, an interview guide administered on three (3) key informant interviewees, and a document analysis guide administered on 20 documents. The findings of this study reveal that the uptake of UIC is still low in Kenya. Further, it was revealed that where UIC is existing, the most preferred relationship is where industry offers university students opportunities for industrial/field attachment, while the least preferred is where industry collaborates with and/or funds university research and innovation activities. On the basis of these findings, this study recommends that, one, universities should develop and progressively update their conceptualizations of employability to include defined UIC requirements; and two, government and relevant regulatory agencies should both promote and enforce the existence and vibrancy of UIC for every course in every university.

Key words: Curriculum, Employability, University, Industry, Collaboration

Abstract ID: 125

Title: Bridging The Diaspora Housing Gap: A Strategic Framework For The Bomayangu Affordable Housing Program

Author: Joan Wanjiku

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Category: Paper

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As Kenya's urban population grows at an unprecedented rate, the demand for affordable, high-quality housing remains a critical economic challenge. This presentation explores the Boma Yangu Affordable Housing Program as a transformative tool for the Kenyan diaspora in the USA. While remittances traditionally serve immediate consumption needs, there is a shifting trend toward 'remittance-led investment' in domestic infrastructure. This educational session will deconstruct the Boma Yangu Diaspora Portal, providing a step-by-step framework for navigating government-backed homeownership. Key topics include the Tenant Purchase Scheme (TPS)—a unique negotiated interest model—and the 'One Kenyan, One Home' policy designed to prevent speculative market inflation. Furthermore, the presentation will address common diaspora concerns regarding investment security and fraud, highlighting how the digitized eCitizen and Boma Yangu platforms offer a transparent, auditable trail for offshore investors. By bridging the information gap between Kenyan policy and diaspora capital, this session aims to empower attendees to participate meaningfully in Kenya's economic 'Big Four' agenda while securing long-term wealth."

Abstract ID: 126

Title: The Influence Of Organizational Culture On The Implementation And Effectiveness Of Quality Management Systems (Qms) In Uganda's Aviation Industry: A Case Study Of Approved Training Organizations (Ato)

Author: Robert Kiplimo Bett

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Category: Paper

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This research proposal investigates the influence of organizational culture on the implementation and effectiveness of Quality Management Systems (QMS) within Uganda's aviation industry, with particular focus on Approved Training Organizations (ATOs). The study seeks to examine how key cultural dimensions such as leadership styles, employee engagement, shared values, communication patterns and organizational norms affect the successful adoption, compliance and sustained performance of QMS frameworks. In Uganda's highly regulated aviation environment, effective quality management is essential for safety, operational efficiency and regulatory compliance. The study is anchored in Edgar Schein's Organizational Culture Theory, which explains how shared assumptions shape organizational behavior; Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes inspirational and supportive leadership in driving change and Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory, which highlights continuous improvement, employee involvement, and customer focus as pillars of quality performance. A cross-sectional survey design will be employed using a mixed-method approach. Data will be collected from approximately 80 respondents, including management, instructors, and administrative staff from selected ATOs. Structured questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews will be utilized. Quantitative data will be analyzed using correlation and regression analysis, while qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis to enrich interpretation. The study hypothesizes a significant positive relationship between organizational culture and QMS effectiveness. It anticipates that supportive leadership, strong shared values, collaborative practices and active employee engagement will enhance QMS implementation and compliance. The findings are expected to inform policymakers and aviation training institutions and make recommendations on promotion of safety.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Quality Management Systems (QMS), Aviation Industry, Leadership Styles, Employee Engagement etc

Abstract ID: 127

Title: Interrogating Transborder Crime and Insecurity: A Study of the Kenya–Somalia Borderlands

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Category: Round Table

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Border security remains a major challenge for many African states, particularly where state capacity is weak in terms of security with frequent movements that are not regulated at the borders. The Kenya–Somalia border presents a classic case of borderlands characterized by insecurity, porous boundaries, smuggling, and socio-economic marginalization, which often precipitate transnational crime. The Kenya–Somalia frontier has in recent time become a hub for illegal trade, terrorist activities, arms (Small Arms and Light Weapons) and human trafficking. Moreover, the heavy dependence of the locals on unstructured cross-border business engagements further complicates border laws enforcement, making it difficult to distinguish between legitimate traders and criminals. This study interrogates the dynamics of border security and transnational criminal activities along Kenya-Somalia borders. The study seeks to appraise how weak state capacity and socio-economic conditions have precipitated insecurity and criminal activities around that corridor. The study is qualitative in nature, and as such will source secondary sources of data. These include previous empirical studies, policy documents, journal articles, newspapers, and other relevant materials to interrogate the relationship between weak state capacity and border vulnerability. Findings from existing literature indicate that the porous nature of the border, weak surveillance facilities, fragile security architecture, and bribery among security personnel have created a fertile ground for criminal and terrorist groups, particularly Al-Shabaab, to operate with relative ease. Similarly, the reliance of border residents on informal cross-border business makes border control uneasy, as the locals might be affected while dealing with the criminals. The study shows that the results of terrorist activities and other crimes at the Kenya –Somalia borders has created broader regional unrest. These unrest include: strained diplomatic relations between Kenya and Somalia, refugee creation, among others. Therefore, mere kinetic actions are not enough to douse the tension. Rather, a comprehensive approach like community involvement, intelligent gathering policing among others might suffice. There is a need for strong bilateral relations and dealing with underlying security issues between the two states.

Keywords: Security, Border, crimes, Kenya-Somalia

Abstract ID: 128

Title: Alumni Engagement in Higher Education Institutions in Africa: Prospects and Challenges

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Category: Paper

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Alumni are critical stakeholders in higher education institutions. As individuals who have developed deep institutional knowledge through sustained interaction with leadership, faculty, fellow students, and the broader campus community, alumni are uniquely positioned to serve as ambassadors, mentors, advocates, donors, collaborators, internship hosts, and strategic partners who contribute time, expertise, networks, and financial and material resources to institutional advancement. In many Western higher education systems, alumni engagement occupies a central and intentional role. Alumni culture is cultivated early, embedded in students' day-to-day experiences, and supported by well-established engagement structures. In contrast, alumni engagement within African higher education institutions has generally not received comparable attention. Engagement frameworks are often weak or nonexistent, and the culture of meaningful alumni involvement remains underdeveloped. The objective of this paper is to assess the current state of alumni engagement in African higher education institutions by examining existing engagement structures, institutional cultures, outcomes, and key challenges. The study draws on a sample of ten African universities that are members of the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP), a consortium of Michigan State University (MSU), ten African universities, and a network for African research institutes collaborating to strengthen institutional capacity and impact. Additionally, the paper draws on lessons learned from nearly a decade of African alumni engagement initiatives led by the African Studies Center at Michigan State University. Through comparative analysis, the study identifies progress made, persistent gaps, and offers evidence-based recommendations for strengthening alumni engagement as a strategic tool to support institutional goals and sustainable development in African higher education.

Abstract ID: 129

Title: Industry-Academia Partnership in Preparing Industrial Engineers for the 21st Century Workforce

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Category: Paper

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Technological advancements, including the proliferation of cyber-physical systems, artificial intelligence, automation, and the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), have transformed the skills required of today's engineering workforce. These rapid changes necessitate that academia continuously rethink and modernize curricula to better align educational outcomes with evolving industry needs. This research presentation introduces a new multidisciplinary Master of Science program in Connected Systems Engineering that was established through a successful industry-academia partnership designed to address emerging workforce demands.

The presentation will discuss the collaborative process used to identify critical competencies, define program learning outcomes, and develop an integrated curriculum that combines systems engineering, data analytics, cybersecurity, connectivity technologies, and advanced manufacturing concepts. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of industry stakeholders in shaping the curriculum and ensuring its relevance to current and future technological trends.

We present the framework within which this new MS program was developed, highlighting the iterative curriculum design process and the implementation of a novel pilot course that served as a foundation for the broader program. Assessment data collected from student surveys and course evaluations are analyzed to examine student perceptions of interdisciplinary learning, industry relevance, and preparedness for careers in connected systems environments. Preliminary findings indicate strong student engagement and positive responses regarding the practical applicability of course content and the value of industry-informed instruction.

Abstract ID: 130

Title: EFFECTS OF LAND SUBDIVISION/FRAGMENTATION IN KENYA AND WAY FORWARD

Author: Gatuhi Mwangi Muchiri

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Category: Paper

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The study, conducted in seven sites representing the former provinces of Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, North Eastern and Coast, established that land subdivision and fragmentation is the primary cause of declining agricultural productivity in Kenya. The fragmentation of land into uneconomic units has undermined mechanization, economies of scale and sustainable land use, rendering agriculture incapable of supplying raw materials for industry and absorbing labour along the value chain, thus contributing to unemployment and slow economic growth.

This persistent problem exposes a fundamental gap in Vision 2030 and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA). While both recognize agriculture as an engine of growth, they focus on subsidies and market interventions without addressing the structural constraint of sub-economic land holdings, thereby perpetuating subsistence farming.

The study proposes a shift to economic consolidation of approximately 1000 hectares as a minimum operational unit, managed collectively through producer groups/cooperatives, without necessarily altering ownership titles, complemented by delineation of agricultural land per the Land Control Act of 1967 and settlement of communities in cluster villages. This should be anchored on product specialization based on agro-ecological advantage and driven by binding production targets and contracts, with implementation tracked through Key Performance Indicators on the supply side such as yield and cost of production, and on the demand side such as industrial off-take, jobs created and wealth generated.

Keywords: Economic land consolidation, 1000ha production blocks, product specialization, production targets and contracts, KPIs, cluster villages, Vision 2030, BETA.

Abstract ID: 131

Title: From Donor Dependence to System Resilience: Lessons from a Decade of ADRA-Led Education Interventions in Somalia

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Category: Paper

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Since 2013, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Somalia has implemented a multi-phase portfolio of education programs designed to expand access, enhance quality, promote equity, and strengthen system resilience in one of the world's most fragile contexts. Supported by multiple international donors, these interventions have spanned primary, secondary, non-formal, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sub-sectors, while simultaneously contributing to national and state-level education governance. This paper synthesizes evidence from evaluations conducted over a 12-year engagement, focusing on three cross-cutting themes critical to long-term impact: sustainability, gender and inclusion, and coherence and coordination.

Across the portfolio, ADRA-implemented projects expanded educational access for more than 150,000 learners in conflict- and climate-affected regions, consistently surpassing enrolment targets. Infrastructure investments resulted in the construction and rehabilitation of hundreds of classrooms, the establishment of model schools equipped with solar power and ICT laboratories, and the development of TVET centers in underserved areas. Quality improvements were supported through the training of over 1,500 teachers, leading to documented gains in pedagogical practice and learner outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In the TVET sub-sector, thousands of young people, many of them women, acquired market-relevant skills, with tracer studies indicating positive but uneven employment outcomes.

Beyond service delivery, the portfolio played a strategic role in system strengthening through support for national education policies, the institutionalization of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), and the deployment of embedded technical advisors within federal and state ministries. Nevertheless, critical vulnerabilities remain. Heavy reliance on donor-funded teacher incentives threatens sustainability, adolescent girls' retention in secondary education remains low, and inclusion challenges persist for displaced, minority, and disabled learners. While coordination has improved through alignment with national plans, donor overlaps continue.

The paper concludes that predictable, long-term financing, phased government absorption of recurrent costs, transformative gender-responsive strategies, and stronger

donor harmonization are essential to transitioning Somalia's education system from donor dependence toward resilient, nationally owned provision.

Abstract ID : 132

Title: Predicting Gene Expression from Chromatin Accessibility Using Ridge Regression in Single-Cell Multi-ome Data

Authors: Fredrick Onyango & Geethanjali Karuturi

Affiliation: Indiana University

Category: Paper

Understanding how chromatin accessibility influences gene expression is a major challenge in regulatory genomics. This study used ridge regression to model the relationship between chromatin accessibility and transcriptional activity using paired ATAC-seq and RNA-seq single-cell multi-ome data from peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs). The 10x Genomics Chromium X PBMC Multiome dataset containing approximately 10,000 cells was analyzed following quality control filtering and pseudobulk aggregation into Leiden clusters. For each of 1,000 genes, ATAC peaks located within ± 100 kilobases of the transcription start site were used as predictive features. Model performance was evaluated using 5-fold cross-validation and permutation testing. The median coefficient of determination (R^2) across modeled genes was 0.607, and 84.3% of genes exceeded the permutation-based null distribution. RNF13 emerged as a high-performing example with strong predictive accuracy. These findings demonstrate that local chromatin accessibility contains substantial predictive information regarding transcriptional activity and highlight the utility of ridge regression for integrating high-dimensional single-cell multi-ome datasets.

Keywords: ATAC-seq, RNA-seq, ridge regression, chromatin accessibility, gene expression, PBMC, single-cell multiome, cis-regulatory elements

Abstract ID : 133

Title: Understanding Kenyan Immigration Matters

Author: Violet Akure

Affiliation: Directorate of Immigration Services of Kenya

Category: Paper

In an era characterized by rapid geopolitical shifts, economic transformations, and increasing global mobility, the study of immigration has become increasingly important for both policy formulation and academic discourse. Aligned with the KESSA 2026 theme, "Scaling Academic Prowess in a Fast-Changing Geopolitical and Economic Environment," this paper examines immigration matters in Kenya and their significance in promoting national security, socio-economic development, and effective governance. Immigration encompasses the policies, laws, procedures, and practices that regulate the movement, entry, residence, and departure of individuals across international borders. The paper explores the legal framework underpinning immigration administration in Kenya, including the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act, 2011, and the Kenya Citizens and Foreign Nationals Management Service Act, 2011.

The study highlights the mandate, vision, and mission of the Directorate of Immigration Services and examines its key functional areas, namely passport issuance, foreign national management, electronic travel authorization, permits and passes, permanent residence, citizenship, consular affairs, border management, and enforcement and compliance. It further underscores the importance of inter-agency collaboration, technological innovation, and capacity building in responding to emerging migration trends and global challenges.

In the context of a fast-changing geopolitical and economic environment, the paper demonstrates how strengthening academic knowledge and professional competence in immigration matters enhances evidence-based decision-making, effective border governance, lawful migration management, and the protection of migrants' rights. The study also emphasizes the Directorate's core values of professionalism, integrity, accountability, patriotism, teamwork, fairness, transparency, respect for human rights and dignity, and commitment to national security. Ultimately, the paper argues that scaling academic prowess in immigration studies is essential for developing adaptive policies, fostering institutional resilience, and advancing Kenya's national interests within an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

Keywords: Immigration Matters, Kenya, Academic Prowess, Geopolitics, Economic Transformation, Migration Management, Border Security, National Development, Citizenship, Governance.

Abstract ID: 134

Title: Towards the Teaching of Indigenous Languages in Kenyan Schools

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Affiliation: University of Embu

Category: Paper

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Despite Kenya's rich linguistic diversity, the teaching and use of indigenous languages in formal education remain severely marginalized. In practice, most indigenous languages are relegated to private domains, particularly the home, while English and Kiswahili dominate public, institutional, and educational spaces. Consequently, the responsibility for intergenerational transmission is largely left to parents and caregivers, many of whom, under contemporary socio-economic pressures and dominant language ideologies, perceive limited value in passing indigenous languages to their children. This has resulted in declining proficiency among younger generations, accelerated language shift, and, in extreme cases, the threat of language endangerment and eventual extinction.

This paper argues that relying on informal family-based transmission is no longer sufficient for sustaining indigenous languages in Kenya. Drawing on insights from language policy and revitalization scholarship, the study contends that preservation and revitalization efforts must be deliberate, systematic, and institutionally supported. In particular, it advocates for the integration of indigenous languages into the school curriculum, teacher training, and educational policy frameworks as a critical strategy for reversing language loss. The paper positions schools as key sites for linguistic intervention and emphasizes that meaningful revitalization requires not only policy recognition but also practical implementation, ideological reorientation, and sustained state commitment. Ultimately, the study frames indigenous language education as both a cultural imperative and a decolonial project aimed at restoring linguistic equity and intergenerational continuity in Kenya.

Abstract ID: 135

Title: AI-Enabled UAV-Based Maize Crop Monitoring and Precision Spraying: Assessing Effectiveness and Adoption Potential in Kenya.

Authors: Patrick Wamalwa, Daniel Uyeh, Paul Kimurto and Sheila Matwek

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Category: Paper

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The agricultural sector is undergoing rapid transformation driven by technological advancements, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are particularly innovative for precision agriculture. Traditionally, monitoring vast farmlands, assessing crop health, and precisely applying inputs has been labor-intensive, time-consuming, and often imprecise, leading to inefficiencies, increased costs, and suboptimal yields. UAVs equipped with various sensors and imaging capabilities, offer revolutionary solutions by providing high resolutions, real time and aerial data that enables targeted interventions. Also, the use of agricultural drones for herbicides, pesticide and fertilizer application is increasing globally. However, adoption and access to these technologies is low in Kenya, with an estimate of about 60 licensed agricultural drones available to serve 6.63 million hectares of arable land. This has been caused by registration bureaucracy, strict operation regulations, limited licensed agricultural drone operators and scanty scientific data for validating the effectiveness of UAVs in agricultural applications. Therefore, the aim of this study will be to monitor maize crop canopy at different growth stages and assess the effectiveness of agricultural drones spraying for coverage. Selected maize fields will be mapped using a multi rotor drone equipped with RGB camera, multispectral sensor, or LiDAR. Geotagged images will be captured and data quality verified. Vegetation indices will then be analyzed based on normalized Vegetation Indices and Normalized Difference Red Edge index (NDRE) to measure plant health, density, and chlorophyll content. The study will further utilize DJI Agras T50 with a payload of 50 liters, 10 m spray width, precision of 10 cm with RTK and flow rate of 4-12L/min for spray application. Field experiments will be conducted on two-acre land. The factor levels will be three for each of the drone flight speed, height above the crop canopy and droplet size via nozzle type. Filter papers will be positioned at the top, middle and bottom of the canopy to investigate spray deposition and penetration. In addition, spray drift will be assessed using a tracer-based qualitative method combining dye, petri-dishes, and water sensitive papers to capture off-target spray droplets. The expected output of this study will generate data that will be useful by Agricultural drone pilots for field operation and validation experiments for agricultural drone spraying applications.

Abstract ID : 136

Title: Aid, Development, and Diplomatic Relations between Kenya and the United States.

Author: Alex Arzuaga

Affiliation: University of Florida

Over the past year, the United States has undergone a major restructuring in foreign aid programs and soft power diplomacy efforts. In particular, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had a substantial share of projects cut and restructured, with remaining initiatives rolled over to the Department of State. Once the world's largest foreign aid agency and a champion of American soft power diplomacy, changes to USAID and other foreign aid programs are expected to have significant impacts on the world stage, especially on recipient nation economies. In the aftermath of these events, little analysis has been done exploring the short-term economic and diplomatic impact on Kenya, youth employment, and the extent to which other nations or private institutions have sought to fill the gap left by the U.S. exit. Kenya holds a young and fast-growing population, along with a geographically vital role for U.S. security interests. Scholarly analysis of these adjustments is crucial to understanding the trajectory of Kenyan development and the forces that will shape the region's future. To evaluate these impacts, I will employ quantitative approaches using surviving USAID data to understand the scope and reach of U.S.-backed projects in Kenya, identify a focused subset of suspended projects to further investigate, map these projects and perform targeted case studies to explore the ripple effects in selected sectors of the Kenyan economy. Qualitative data will be collected from experts through stakeholder engagement across tech, agriculture, and education to gather insights on youth employment, investment, development indices, and other relevant economic indicators.

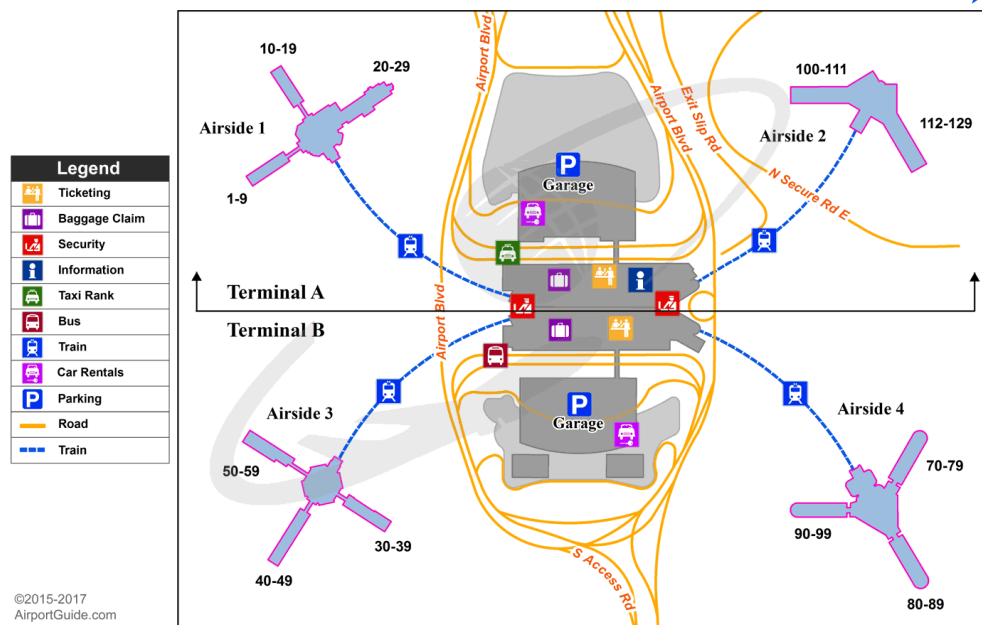


Embassy Suites by Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista Resort

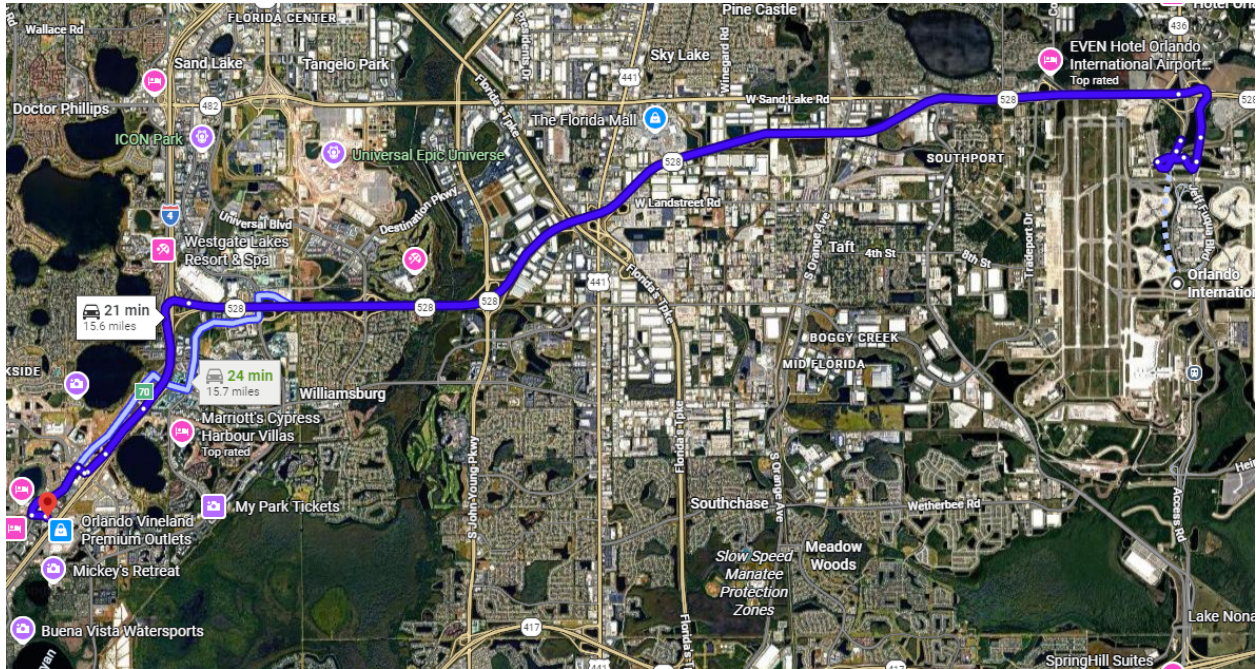
8100 Lake Street, Orlando, Florida, 32836, USA



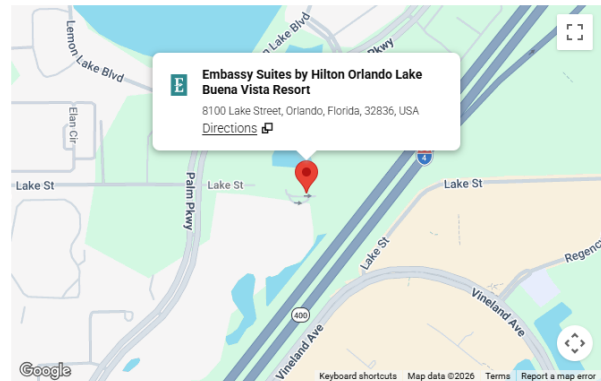
Orlando International Airport (MCO) - Overview



Conference Location is 21 minutes from Orlando International Airport



What's nearby		Airports
	Disney Springs	2 miles
	SeaWorld® Orlando	3.30 miles
	Epic Universe	6.80 miles
	Walt Disney World®	7.10 miles
	Universal Islands of Adventure	8.80 miles
	Universal Studios	8.80 miles



Institution Source of the Abstracts with Kenyan Scholars

Alabama State University

Alupe University

Andrews University

African Institute for Capacity Development

Austin Peay State University

Ball State University

Baylor University

Bowling Green State University

Chrisland University

Coastal Carolina University

College of William & Mary

Daktari Biotechnology Corporation

Daystar University

Eastern Connecticut State University

Egerton University

Florida State University

Garissa University

Georgia State University

Grand Canyon Christian University

Howard University

Indiana University

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Institute of Certified Secretaries, Nairobi

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST)

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

Kabarak University

KCA University

Kenyatta National Hospital

Kenyatta University

Kibabii University

Kisii University

Koitaleel Samoei University College (Constituent College of the University of Nairobi)

Langston University

Louisiana State University Health Shreveport

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Michigan State University

Minnesota State ARCC

Missouri State University

Moi University

Mt. Kenya University

Multimedia University of Kenya

Murang'a University of Technology

Neo Utamaduni Music and Arts

New Jersey City University

Northeastern University

Northern Illinois University

Ohio University

Olive Limited

Open University of Kenya

Pawanax AI Solutions

Penn State Harrisburg

Purdue University Fort Wayne

Pwani University

Rhodes College

St. Monica Comprehensive Girls Primary School, Lodwar

SUNY Oneonta

Syracuse University

Technical University of Mombasa

Texas Tech University

Tharaka University

Turkana University College

United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa)

University of Alabama

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

University of Florida

University of Georgia

University of Kansas

University of Massachusetts Lowell

University of Nairobi

University of New England

University of Texas at Austin

University of Washington, Seattle

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Vanderbilt University

Western Michigan University

Nyanchwa Girls Senior School

KESSA Regional Classification

Kenya Region

- Alupe University
- Daystar University
- Egerton University
- Garissa University
- Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)
- Kabarak University
- KCA University
- Kenyatta University
- Kenyatta National Hospital
- Kibabii University
- Kisii University
- Koitaleel Samoei University College
- Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
- Moi University
- Mount Kenya University
- Multimedia University of Kenya
- Murang'a University of Technology
- Open University of Kenya
- Pwani University
- Technical University of Mombasa
- Tharaka University
- Turkana University College
- United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa)
- University of Nairobi
- Nyanchwa Girls Senior School
- St. Monica Comprehensive Girls Primary School
- Institute of Certified Secretaries (Kenya)

Total: 27

Midwest Region (USA)

- Ball State University
- Bowling Green State University
- Indiana University
- Michigan State University
- Missouri State University
- Ohio University
- Purdue University Fort Wayne
- University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- Western Michigan University
- Andrews University

Total: 11

Northeast Region (USA)

- Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- New Jersey City University
- Northeastern University
- Penn State Harrisburg
- SUNY Oneonta
- Syracuse University
- University of Massachusetts Lowell

Total: 7

Southeast Region (USA)

- Alabama State University
- Coastal Carolina University
- Florida State University
- Georgia State University
- Howard University
- Rhodes College
- University of Alabama
- University of Florida
- Vanderbilt University

Total: 9

Southwest Region (USA)

- Baylor University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- University of Texas at Austin

Total: 4

West Region (USA)

- University of Washington, Seattle

Other Organizations / Non-University Affiliations

- African Institute for Capacity Development
- Daktari Biotechnology Corporation
- Independent Researcher
- Neo Utamaduni Music and Arts
- Olive Limited
- Pawanax AI Solutions
- Hope International Rescue
- My EB2-NIW LLC
- KEON Transportation Services
- Diaspora University Town
- DiasporaScholarsTV

Regional Summary

KESSA Region	Number of Institutions
Kenya	27
Midwest	11
Southeast	9
Northeast	7
Southwest	4
West	1
Canada	1
Other Organizations	7

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