URBAN PLANNING AND REFUGEES INTEGRATION
A STUDY OF GULU CITY

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A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GULU UNIVERSITY.

OCTOBER, 2026

DECLARATION

I, Oneka Samuel, with registration number 16/U/2493/MPA, solemnly declare that the dissertation entitled "Urban Planning Strategies and Refugees Integration in Gulu City, Uganda" is entirely my own work and has not been published or presented in any other form.

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APPROVAL

The dissertation titled "Urban Planning Strategies and Refugees Integration in Gulu City, uganda" has been thoroughly reviewed and approved by us as university supervisors.

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MR. CANWAT VINCENT

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my beloved family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my guiding light. To my wife, Lakot Jackline, whose strength and understanding have inspired me every day. To my daughter, Lamaro Racheal Precious, whose joy brings warmth to my heart. And to my sons, Larem Bonaventure Cyrus, Lubangangeyo Elijah, and Lakwecwiny Gabriel, whose laughter and dreams motivate me to strive for a better future. Your love and belief in me have made this journey possible.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ..... **i**

APPROVAL ..... **ii**

DEDICATION ..... **iii**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iv**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **xii**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **xiii**

LIST OF ACRONYMS ..... **xiv**

ABSTRACT ..... **xv**

CHAPTER ONE **1**

INTRODUCTION **1**

1.0 Introduction 1

1.1 Background to the Study 1

1.1.1 Historical Background 1

1.1.2 Theoretical Background 3

1.1.3 Conceptual Background 4

1.1.4 Contextual Background 6

1.2 Statement of the Problem 7

1.3 Purpose of the Study 8

1.4. Specific Objectives 8

1.5 Research Questions 8

1.6 Research Hypotheses 8

1.7 Scope of the Study 9

1.7.1 Content Scope 9

1.7.2 Geographical Scope 9

1.7.3 Time Scope 9

1.8 Justification of the Study 10

1.9 Significance of the Study 10

1.10 Conceptual Framework 11

1.11 Operational Definitions 12

CHAPTER TWO 14

LITERATURE REVIEW 14

2.0 Introduction 14

2.1 Theoretical Framework 14

2.1.1 Incremental Planning Theory 15

2.1.2 Relevance of Incremental Planning Theory to the Study 16

2.2 Urban Planning Strategies 18

2.2.1 Capacity Building 19

2.2.2 Community Participation 20

2.2.3 Social Equity 22

2.3 Refugee Integration 23
2.3.1 Access to Housing 24
2.3.2 Access to Healthcare Services 25
2.3.3 Access to Education Services 26
2.3.4 Access to Economic Opportunities 28
2.4 Relationship between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration 29
2.5 Refugee Policies as a Moderating Factor 31
2.5.1 Refugee Protection and Inclusion Policies 32
2.5.2 Access to Services Policies 34
2.5.3 Economic Participation and Self-Reliance Policies 35
2.5.4 Policy Implementation and Coordination 36
2.6 Summary and Research Gap 38
CHAPTER THREE 39
METHODOLOGY 39
3.0 Introduction 39
3.1 Research Philosophy 39
3.2 Research Design 40
3.3 Research Site 40
3.4 Study Population 41
3.5 Sample Size Determination 41

3.6 Sampling Techniques 43

3.7 Data Collection Methods 44

3.7.1 Questionnaire Method 44

3.7.2 Interview Method 45

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion 45

3.8 Data Collection Instruments 46

3.8.1 Questionnaire 46

3.8.2 Interview Guide 47

3.8.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide 47

3.10 Quality Control 48

3.10.1 Validity of Instruments 49

3.10.2 Reliability of Instruments 50

3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation 51

3.12 Ethical Considerations 53

3.13 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study 54

CHAPTER FOUR 55

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION 55

4.0 Introduction 55

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents 55

4.2 Urban Planning Strategies Adopted by Gulu City 59

4.2.1 Capacity-Building Strategies 59

4.2.2 Participation of Refugees in Urban Planning 62

4.2.3 Social Equity Strategies 65

4.3 To Assess the Extent of Urban Refugees' Integration in Gulu City 68

4.3.1 Access to Housing 68

4.3.2 Access to Health Services 72

4.3.3 Access to Education Services 75

4.3.4 Access to Economic Opportunities 78

4.4 To Determine the Relationship between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration in Gulu City 81

4.5 Moderating Effect of Policies Governing Refugees' Integration on the Relationship Between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration 84

CHAPTER FIVE 92

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS 92

5.0 Introduction 92

5.1 Urban Planning Strategies Adopted by Gulu City 92

5.1.2 Participation 93

5.1.3 Social Equity 95

5.2.1 Housing Integration 96

5.2.2 Healthcare Access 97

5.2.3 Educational Opportunities 98

5.2.4 Economic Opportunities 99

5.2.5 Community Cohesion 100

5.3 Relationship Between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration 101

5.3.1 Social Equity and Refugee Integration 101

5.3.2 Capacity Building and Refugee Integration 102

5.3.3 Participation and Refugee Integration 103

5.4 Policies Governing Refugee Integration 104

5.4.1 Housing Policies and Refugee Integration 104

5.4.2 Health and Education Policies 105

5.4.3 Economic and Anti-Discrimination Policies 106

5.4.4 Policy Implementation and Stakeholder Collaboration 107

CHAPTER SIX 109

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 109

6.0 Introduction 109

6.1 Summary of Findings 109

6.1.1 Urban Planning Strategies 109

6.1.2 Extent of Urban Refugees' Integration 110

6.1.3 Policies Governing Refugee Integration 111

6.2 Conclusions 112

6.3 Recommendations 112

REFERENCES **114**

APPENDICES **124**

Appendix I: Public Questionnaire 124

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Key Informants 131

Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guide to host communities 134

Appendix VI: Yamane Table of Sample Size Determination (1967) 135

Appendix VII: Key Themes from Coded Respondents on Urban Planning and Refugees' Integration in Gulu City 136

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework 11

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sampling Frame 43
Table 2: Content Validity Index 49
Table 3 :Reliability of Instruments 50
Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents 56
Table 5: Capacity-Building Strategies Adopted 59
Table 6: Participation of Refugees in Urban Planning 62
Table 7: Social Equity Strategies in Gulu City Urban Planning 65
Table 8: Access to Housing among Urban Refugees in Gulu City 68
Table 9: Access to Health Services among Urban Refugees in Gulu City 72
Table 10: Access to Education Services among Urban Refugees in Gulu City 75
Table 11: Access to Economic Opportunities among Urban Refugees in Gulu City 78
Table 12: Correlations showing Relationship between urban planning and refugees' integration 81
Table 13: Model Summary for Hierarchical Regression 84
Table 14: ANOVA Results for Hierarchical Regression Models 85
Table 15: Regression Coefficients for Models Predicting Urban Refugee Integration 87

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBD:	Central Business District
GIS	Geographic information systems
NUSAF:	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund.
PRDP:	Peace recovery development programs
PDP:	Physical development Plan
PRELNOR:	Programs for restoration of livelihood in northern Uganda.
TOD:	Transit oriented development
USMID:	Uganda support for municipal infrastructure development.
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistic

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of urban planning on the integration of urban refugees in Gulu City, Uganda. The study was motivated by persistent challenges affecting refugees' access to housing, healthcare, education, employment and social inclusion despite Uganda's supportive refugee policy framework. It was guided by four objectives: to explore urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City, assess the extent of urban refugees' integration, determine the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration, and examine the policies governing refugee integration. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews. The study involved urban refugees, host-community members and key informants to obtain complementary perspectives on urban planning and refugee integration. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings identified capacity building, participation and social equity as the major urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City, with social equity emerging as the strongest area. Refugee integration was evident in housing, healthcare, education, economic activities and community interaction, although challenges related to affordability, discrimination, documentation, employment and social exclusion persisted. The study further established positive relationships between urban planning strategies and refugee integration, while policies governing refugee integration made an important contribution to integration outcomes. Qualitative findings showed that the effectiveness of these policies depends largely on implementation, institutional capacity, stakeholder coordination and community attitudes. The study concludes that inclusive urban planning provides an important foundation for refugee integration, but gaps in participation, capacity and policy implementation continue to limit its effectiveness. It recommends strengthening institutional capacity, meaningful refugee participation, affordable and non-discriminatory access to services, livelihood opportunities, policy monitoring, stakeholder collaboration and community sensitisation to promote sustainable refugee integration in Gulu City.

Keywords: Urban planning; Urban refugees; Refugee integration; Social equity; Participatory planning; Capacity building; Gulu City; Uganda.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study examines urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City, Uganda, with refugee policies as a moderating factor. The researcher was motivated by the growing movement of refugees into urban areas and concerns about their access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities. Studies by Earle (2024), Kihato and Landau (2024), Dombio and Namara (2024), and Agaba (2024) show that urban planning, local governance and refugee policies influence integration. However, limited research has examined these relationships in Gulu City. Chapter One presents the foundation of the study. It covers the historical, theoretical, conceptual and contextual background, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions and hypotheses. It also presents the scope, justification, significance, conceptual framework and operational definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

This section presents the historical, theoretical, conceptual and contextual background of the study. It provides the basis for understanding the relationship between urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies in Gulu City

1.1.1 Historical Background

The management of refugees has historically relied heavily on settlement-based approaches in which displaced populations are accommodated in designated locations and provided with humanitarian assistance. This approach was designed largely around protection, basic service provision and temporary or semi-permanent accommodation. However, prolonged displacement has increasingly challenged the assumption that refugees will remain in settlements. Earle (2024) shows that refugees often seek opportunities in cities because urban environments provide access to markets, services and social networks. Norman (2021) similarly demonstrates that urban governance arrangements influence refugees' social and economic participation. Muhumad and

Jaji (2023) found that refugees in East African cities frequently use informal initiatives to pursue local integration where formal systems are difficult to access. The limitation of this historical approach is that settlement-oriented refugee management has paid less attention to the urban planning systems required when refugees establish livelihoods and social relationships in cities.

The shift towards urban refugee populations has created new responsibilities for local authorities. Urban refugees interact directly with existing housing markets, schools, health facilities, transport systems, workplaces and community structures. Zisakou et al. (2024) demonstrate that integration occurs through everyday relationships between refugees and urban spaces. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that municipalities in secondary cities can incorporate displaced populations into development planning through data collection, service investment and inclusive strategies. Konduri and Lee (2023) similarly link refugee integration to urban spatial structures and city development. However, much of this scholarship examines urban integration from broad governance or social perspectives rather than identifying measurable planning strategies that can be assessed at city level.

Uganda has historically been recognised for a relatively progressive approach to refugee protection and self-reliance. Namuganga et al. (2024) trace the development of refugee integration within Uganda's national health system from the Self-Reliance Strategy onwards. Their analysis shows that refugee policy has gradually moved towards greater integration into public systems. Oliver et al. (2024) similarly examine Uganda's policy of promoting long-term settlement and self-sufficiency and find evidence of economic interaction between refugees and host communities. Dombio and Namara (2024), however, show that many refugees continue moving towards urban centres in search of better services and economic opportunities. The historical gap is that national refugee policy developments have been better documented than the corresponding development of local urban planning responses in secondary cities.

Gulu provides an important historical context because Northern Uganda has experienced conflict, displacement and subsequent processes of reconstruction and reintegration. Recent research by Tufa et al. (2025) found that social capital plays an important role in reintegration processes in Gulu, although strong group bonding can also contribute to separation and mistrust. The study by Adoch (2025) further indicates that refugees in Gulu use relationships with other refugees and host

communities to obtain livelihood opportunities. Dombio and Namara (2024) argue more broadly that refugees who move to urban centres outside Kampala require appropriate recognition and planning responses. Nevertheless, previous studies on Gulu have concentrated more on social capital, livelihoods and post-conflict reintegration than on the role of formal urban planning strategies. This leaves a historical and empirical gap that the present study seeks to address.

1.1.2 Theoretical Background

This study is guided by Incremental Planning Theory, particularly the work of Lindblom (1959), which views planning as a process of gradual adjustment rather than a single comprehensive attempt to address all urban problems. The theory recognises that planners and public institutions operate with limited information, resources and time. Consequently, planning decisions are often made through small changes to existing programmes and practices. Mäntysalo et al. (2021) argue that incremental planning remains useful in situations characterised by uncertainty and institutional constraints. Kihato and Landau (2024) similarly demonstrate that local governments responding to displacement often work within complex and resource-constrained environments. However, incremental planning can also preserve existing inequalities when gradual changes fail to challenge structural exclusion. The theoretical gap is that limited attention has been given to applying incremental planning theory to refugee integration in secondary African cities.

The theory is relevant to the present study because urban authorities may not be able to redesign the entire city to accommodate refugees at once. Instead, they may progressively improve institutional capacity, involve communities in decisions and promote fairer access to services. These processes correspond with the three dimensions of urban planning strategies examined in this study: capacity building, community participation and social equity. Kihato and Landau (2024) found that municipal collaboration and service investments can strengthen local responses to displacement. Zisakou et al. (2024) also demonstrate that participation and interaction with urban spaces contribute to refugees' sense of belonging. Earle (2024) shows that institutional and spatial arrangements determine the extent to which refugees can benefit from urban opportunities. However, existing theoretical applications rarely operationalise these planning processes as measurable predictors of refugee integration.

Incremental Planning Theory also helps explain the importance of local government capacity. Refugee integration requires coordination among city authorities, national institutions, service providers, civil society and host communities. Namuganga et al. (2024) demonstrate that policy implementation and institutional arrangements influence refugee access to national health services. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that local networks can help municipalities mobilise resources and incorporate displaced populations into development strategies. Tufa et al. (2025) further show that social networks influence reintegration outcomes in Gulu. However, these studies do not establish whether improvements in local planning capacity, participation and equity have a statistically significant relationship with refugee integration. This methodological gap supports the quantitative orientation of the present study.

The theory further provides a basis for understanding why refugee policies may influence the effectiveness of local planning strategies. Urban authorities operate within national legal and policy frameworks, meaning that local planning decisions may be strengthened or constrained by refugee policies. Agaba (2024) demonstrates that progressive refugee laws may face implementation challenges. Namuganga et al. (2024) similarly show that policy development, institutional actors and implementation processes shape refugee service integration. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate that relationships between local and national institutions influence local refugee governance. The theoretical gap is therefore not simply whether refugee policies affect integration directly, but whether they change the strength of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration. This supports treating refugee policies as a moderating variable rather than a mediating variable.

1.1.3 Conceptual Background

Urban planning strategies refer to deliberate actions and institutional practices through which authorities guide urban development, allocate resources and organise services and infrastructure. In this study, urban planning strategies are conceptualised through capacity building, community participation and social equity. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate the importance of municipal capacity, data and institutional collaboration in responding to refugees. Zisakou et al. (2024) emphasise participation and everyday interaction with urban spaces as important aspects of integration. Earle (2024) shows that spatial and institutional arrangements influence refugees'

ability to access urban opportunities. However, existing studies do not provide a consistent framework for measuring these planning dimensions together as an independent variable in relation to refugee integration in Gulu City.

Capacity building concerns the ability of urban institutions, planners and other stakeholders to identify needs, formulate appropriate plans and deliver services effectively. It includes human resources, technical skills, information, coordination mechanisms and institutional systems. Kihato and Landau (2024) found that municipal capacity and collaboration are important for incorporating displaced populations into local development strategies. Namuganga et al. (2024) similarly show that institutional capacity and coordination influence the implementation of refugee-inclusive services. Dombio and Namara (2024) indicate that increasing urban refugee mobility creates additional demands on urban services and planning. However, there is limited empirical evidence showing whether stronger municipal capacity is associated with better refugee integration outcomes in Gulu City.

Community participation refers to the involvement of affected populations and other stakeholders in planning, decision-making and implementation processes. Participation can improve the relevance of planning decisions because local residents contribute information about their needs and experiences. Zisakou et al. (2024) found that refugees construct belonging through everyday interaction with urban spaces and communities. Tufa et al. (2025) demonstrate that social relationships and networks influence reintegration in Gulu. Kihato and Landau (2024) further show that collaboration between municipalities and civil society can support inclusive responses to displacement. Nevertheless, these studies provide limited quantitative evidence on whether refugee participation in urban planning decisions contributes directly to improved access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities in Gulu City.

Social equity refers to fairness in access to urban resources, services and opportunities among different population groups. Refugees may face barriers associated with documentation, affordability, discrimination, information and institutional access. Agaba (2024) identifies challenges in the implementation of refugee rights and access to socioeconomic opportunities in Kampala. Earle (2024) shows that spatial arrangements can affect refugees' ability to benefit from urban life. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate that economic interactions between refugees and host

communities can create benefits but may also generate competition. The conceptual gap is that social equity has often been examined as a broad principle rather than measured alongside capacity building and community participation as a specific urban planning strategy affecting refugee integration.

1.1.4 Contextual Background

Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees and has developed policies intended to support protection, self-reliance and access to public services. Namuganga et al. (2024) show that Uganda has progressively sought to integrate refugees into national systems, particularly healthcare. Oliver et al. (2024) find evidence of economic interaction between refugees and host communities under Uganda's refugee policy framework. Dombio and Namara (2024), however, demonstrate that refugees increasingly move from settlements towards urban centres in search of employment, services and economic opportunities. This movement creates additional responsibilities for urban authorities because refugees interact directly with urban housing, education, healthcare and employment systems. The contextual gap is that national refugee policy evidence does not adequately explain how individual secondary cities respond to these emerging urban realities.

The urban context is particularly important because refugees who live in cities may not experience integration in the same way as refugees living in settlements. Urban refugees generally interact with a wider range of institutions and communities and must often navigate housing and labour markets independently. Earle (2024) demonstrates that the urban environment can provide opportunities but can also restrict refugees' access to services and resources. Zisakou et al. (2024) show that neighbourhoods and public spaces influence refugees' sense of belonging and participation. Norman (2021) further illustrates that informal urban governance can shape refugee integration. However, much of this evidence comes from cities outside Uganda, creating a contextual gap regarding how these processes operate in Gulu City.

Gulu City is an important context for this study because it is a major urban centre in Northern Uganda and has experienced extensive population displacement and post-conflict reconstruction. Tufa et al. (2025) found that social capital is important in managing uncertainty and supporting reintegration in Gulu, although social networks may also produce exclusion. Adoch (2025)

similarly found that refugees in Gulu use social relationships to access livelihoods and interact with host communities. Dombio and Namara (2024) provide evidence that refugees are increasingly moving into Ugandan urban centres beyond Kampala, creating demands for appropriate urban planning responses. Nevertheless, research specifically linking Gulu City's planning practices to measurable refugee integration outcomes remains limited.

The policy context is also important because local planning operates within national refugee laws, policies and institutional arrangements. Agaba (2024) demonstrates that Uganda's refugee laws may provide important protections while implementation remains uneven. Namuganga et al. (2024) show that refugee-inclusive service delivery depends on policy content, institutional actors, implementation processes and the wider context. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate that local governments can incorporate refugees into development planning through inclusive strategies, data and service investments.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The increasing movement of refugees towards urban areas creates planning challenges related to Ideally, urban planning should ensure inclusive and equitable access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities. In reality, refugees in urban areas often face barriers to formal services, livelihoods and participation. Dombio and Namara (2024) found that refugees move to Ugandan urban centres in search of better services and employment, while Adoch (2025) found that refugees in Gulu rely on social networks but still face barriers to formal opportunities. Tufa et al. (2025) further found that social networks can support reintegration but may also create separation and mistrust. These challenges may be caused by limited planning capacity, inadequate participation, unequal access to services and weak policy implementation. Agaba (2024) and Namuganga et al. (2024) show that policy implementation and institutional arrangements affect refugees' access to services and opportunities. Although interventions such as inclusive refugee policies, community participation and livelihood programmes have been introduced, their effectiveness at city level remains unclear. Therefore, limited research has established how urban planning strategies influence refugee integration in Gulu City or whether refugee policies moderate this relationship, creating a gap that this study seeks to address.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City, Uganda, with particular attention to the moderating role of refugee policies.

1.4. Specific Objectives

i. To assess the urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City in promoting refugee inclusion.
ii. To determine the extent of refugee integration in Gulu City in terms of access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities.
iii. To determine the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City.
iv. To determine the moderating effect of refugee policies on the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City.

1.5 Research Questions

i. What urban planning strategies have been adopted by Gulu City to promote refugee inclusion?
ii. What is the extent of refugee integration in Gulu City in terms of access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities?
iii. What is the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City?
iv. What is the moderating effect of refugee policies on the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City.

H02: Refugee policies do not have a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City.

1.7 Scope of the Study

1.7.1 Content Scope

The study focuses on three main variables: urban planning strategies as the independent variable, refugee integration as the dependent variable and refugee policies as the moderating variable. Urban planning strategies are assessed through capacity building, community participation and social equity. Refugee integration is assessed through access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities. Refugee policies are examined in terms of refugee protection and inclusion, access to services, economic participation, and policy implementation and coordination. The study does not include unrelated variables such as urban crime dynamics or youth involvement.

1.7.2 Geographical Scope

The study is conducted in Gulu City in Northern Uganda. The city is selected because of its importance as an urban centre in Northern Uganda and its history of displacement, population mobility and post-conflict recovery. The study focuses on areas within Gulu City where refugees and host communities interact and where urban services and planning activities can be examined.

1.7.3 Time Scope

The study focuses on the period from 2017 to 2024. This period provides an appropriate basis for examining developments in refugee management, urban planning and refugee integration. More recent scholarly literature is used where necessary to interpret developments and demonstrate the continuing relevance of the study problem.

1.8 Justification of the Study

The study is justified by the increasing movement of refugees into urban areas and the growing role of cities in addressing refugee needs. This trend creates demands for adequate housing, healthcare, education, employment and inclusive urban services.

Dombio and Namara (2024) found that refugees move towards urban centres in search of better social services, employment and livelihood opportunities. This suggests that urban authorities need planning strategies that respond to the changing needs of both refugees and host communities.

Kihato and Landau (2024) show that secondary cities require inclusive planning, adequate institutional capacity and effective governance to respond to displaced populations. Similarly, Namuganga et al. (2024) demonstrate that policy and institutional arrangements are important for improving refugees' access to public services.

However, limited research has established how urban planning strategies influence refugee integration in Gulu City or whether refugee policies moderate this relationship. The study is therefore justified because it will provide city-level evidence to guide inclusive urban planning, strengthen refugee governance and improve access to essential services and opportunities for refugees and host communities.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The study may benefit Gulu City authorities by providing evidence on the planning strategies that can support refugee inclusion. The findings may assist urban planners and administrators to strengthen institutional capacity, participation and equitable access to services.

The study may assist government institutions responsible for refugee management by showing how national refugee policies interact with local urban planning. The findings may contribute to improved coordination between national institutions and local governments.

Refugees and host communities may benefit from planning approaches that improve access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities. The findings may also support approaches that promote cooperation and reduce exclusion between refugees and host populations.

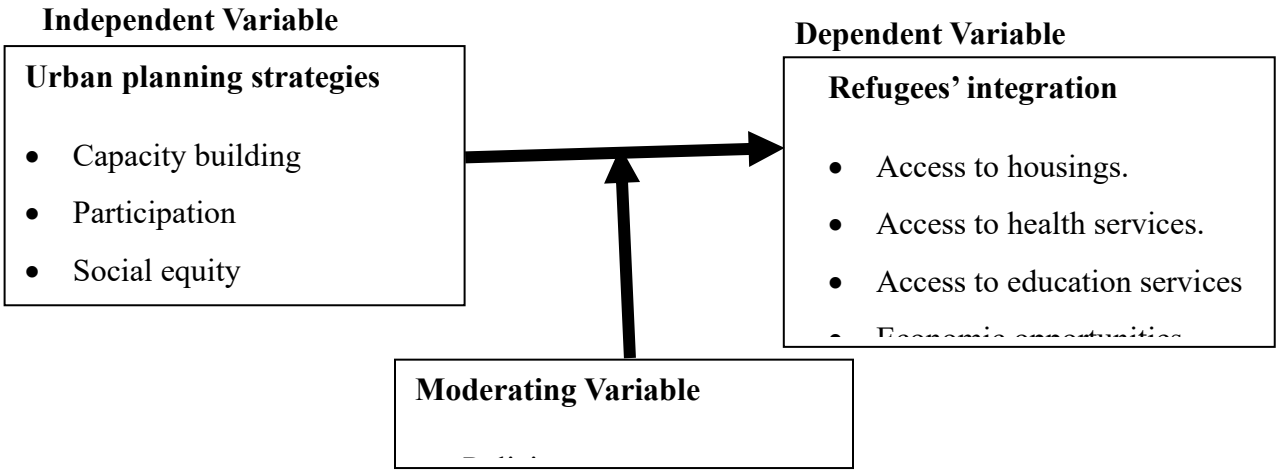
Development partners and non-governmental organisations may use the findings to improve programmes supporting refugee livelihoods, service access, participation and social inclusion. The study may help these organisations align interventions more closely with local government planning priorities.

Academically, the study contributes to literature on urban refugee integration by focusing on a secondary Ugandan city. It also provides an empirical basis for examining refugee policies as a moderating variable in the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the expected relationship between urban planning strategies, refugee policies and refugee integration.

Figure1: A Conceptual Frame Work Showing the Connection between the Independent and Dependent Variables



Source: Adopted From Jiménez Et Al. (2019) and Modified By the Researcher

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 above exhibits the connection between the independent and dependent variables, which are urban planning strategies and refugees' integration. According to the model, measurements of urban planning strategies were capacity building, participation, and social equity, while refugees' integration was measured by access to housing, healthcare services, education services, and economic opportunities. It was proposed that the link between urban planning strategies and

refugees' integration is mediated by policies, as shown above. It was assumed that policies can affect the link between urban planning strategies and refugees' integration, either adversely or positively. The framework therefore anticipated that, when urban planning is done in a participatory manner and refugees are given the chance to participate in the urban planning process using appropriate strategies, there may be improved access to housing, education services, healthcare facilities, and economic opportunities for them and the host communities, but this is only possible if there is a favorable policy for refugees' integration.

1.11 Operational Definitions

Urban planning: According to Ratcliffe, et al., (2021), urban planning is the process of designing and regulating the use of spaces within a city or metropolitan area to ensure orderly development and sustainable growth.

Refugee: According to Šorytė, (2018), a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself to the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it".

Urban refugees: According to Oesch, (2020), urban refugee are refugees who decided to settle in an urban area rather than in a refugee camp in the country or territory where the person fled to.

Migration: According to Oliver-Smith, & Hansen, (2019), migration is the movement of a person or group of people that is, due to some degree of deprivation or voluntary. The decision to move is complex and associated with multiple drivers, including shocks, conflict stresses and disasters.

Urban planning strategies: According to (Laurini, R. (2018), urban planning strategies are systematic approaches and methods used to guide the development and organization of urban areas.

Refugees' integration: According to Gillingham, (2018), refugees' integration is the process through which refugees become active, accepted, and self-sufficient members of their host communities.

City Council: According to Zale, (2018), city council is a local legislative body that governs a city, making decisions on local policies, ordinances, laws, and budgets.

This chapter covered the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance, conceptual framework as well as definition of key terms.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on urban planning strategies, refugee integration and the moderating role of refugee policies. The review focuses on evidence relevant to urban areas in Africa, with particular attention to Uganda and secondary cities. The chapter is organised around the study variables and their dimensions. Urban planning strategies are discussed in terms of capacity building, community participation and social equity, while refugee integration is examined through access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities.

The chapter begins with the theoretical framework and explains the relevance of Incremental Planning Theory to the study. It then examines empirical literature on urban planning strategies and refugee integration before discussing the relationship between the two variables. Refugee policies are subsequently examined as a moderating variable, focusing on protection and inclusion, access to services, economic participation and self-reliance, and policy implementation and coordination. Each section identifies limitations in existing knowledge and relates them to the research gap addressed by the present study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by Incremental Planning Theory, associated particularly with Lindblom's (1959) critique of comprehensive rational planning. The theory views public planning as a process of successive adjustments made within practical institutional, financial and political constraints. This perspective is appropriate for refugee integration because urban authorities frequently respond to changing populations through gradual modifications to services, infrastructure and administrative arrangements rather than through completely new systems. The theory therefore provides a useful foundation for examining how planning strategies develop in Gulu City.

2.1.1 Incremental Planning Theory

Incremental Planning Theory emerged from Lindblom's (1959) argument that public decision-makers rarely have sufficient information, time or resources to compare every possible policy alternative. Instead, they normally make limited comparisons and adjust existing arrangements. Howlett (2016) explains that incrementalism reflects practical decision-making in complex policy environments. Etzioni (1967) similarly recognised the usefulness of combining broad direction with limited adjustments. The gap is that these theoretical discussions were not developed specifically around refugee integration in African secondary cities, creating a need for contextual application in Gulu City.

A central feature of incremental planning is the modification of existing systems rather than their complete replacement. This is relevant where governments already have functioning institutions but face emerging population pressures. Healey (1997) associated planning with institutional interaction and negotiated change, while Forester (1989) emphasised the importance of communication and practical judgement in planning. Inglehart (1997) also demonstrated that institutional responses are shaped by changing social expectations. However, these perspectives provide limited empirical explanation of how incremental urban planning affects refugees' access to essential services in secondary Ugandan cities.

The theory also recognises that planning decisions are influenced by competing interests. Lindblom (1959) emphasised adjustment among decision-makers, while Flyvbjerg (1998) showed that planning is shaped by power relations. Healey (1997) further stressed negotiation among stakeholders. These ideas are important where refugees and host communities may have different priorities regarding land, services and employment. Nevertheless, much of the classic planning literature gives limited attention to displaced populations whose legal, economic and social circumstances may differ from those of established residents. This leaves a contextual gap that the current study seeks to address.

Incrementalism places considerable importance on learning from previous decisions. Planning interventions can be assessed, adjusted and improved as new information becomes available. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate that municipalities in secondary cities have experimented

with data collection, service investments and collaborative planning when responding to displacement. Komakech et al. (2025) similarly show how Uganda's refugee health policies have evolved through policy learning and implementation experience. Dombio and Namara (2024) identify increasing refugee movement towards urban areas in Uganda. Yet these studies do not explain whether such incremental planning produces measurable improvements in refugee integration in Gulu City.

Another strength of the theory is its recognition of resource limitations. Urban authorities may have to address refugee needs while simultaneously serving established populations with limited budgets and personnel. Zhou et al. (2023) found that inclusive refugee-hosting arrangements can generate improvements in local public goods. Oliver et al. (2024) found substantial economic interaction between refugees and host communities in Uganda. Kihato and Landau (2024) identified resource constraints as important to local refugee governance. However, existing research does not adequately establish how limited municipal resources influence the combined relationship between planning strategies and refugee integration, particularly in Gulu.

Incremental Planning Theory is therefore useful because it allows the study to examine planning as a practical, evolving process rather than as a fixed technical exercise. It helps explain why improvements in capacity, participation and equity may occur gradually and why policy implementation may alter their effects. Lindblom (1959) provides the original theoretical foundation, while Howlett (2016) explains its policy relevance and Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate its contemporary relevance to secondary-city refugee governance. The remaining gap is empirical: few studies have tested this theoretical relationship quantitatively in Gulu City, which is the specific contribution of the present research.

2.1.2 Relevance of Incremental Planning Theory to the Study

The theory is relevant to capacity building because institutional capability normally develops over time. Training, recruitment, data systems, budgeting and inter-agency coordination may be introduced gradually rather than simultaneously. Kihato and Landau (2024) show the importance of municipal capacity in responding to displacement. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of institutional arrangements in Uganda's health-system integration. Dombio and

Namara (2024) highlight the growing need for urban authorities to respond to refugee movement. However, these studies do not establish whether capacity-building efforts are statistically associated with refugee integration in Gulu.

Community participation also fits the incremental perspective because planning can be adjusted through feedback from affected communities. Stevenson and Sutton (2012) linked participatory planning with empowerment and place-making. Zisakou et al. (2024) showed that refugees' everyday engagement with urban spaces influences belonging. Riara (2026) similarly examines refugee and host participation in local decision-making in Kakuma. Yet much of this literature concerns camps or cities outside Uganda, leaving limited evidence about whether refugee participation changes planning outcomes in Gulu City.

The theory further supports the study's focus on social equity. Incremental changes can improve conditions, but they may also reproduce existing inequalities if planners do not consider who benefits from new investments. Zhou et al. (2023) found that inclusive refugee-hosting can generate wider public-good benefits. Earle (2024) demonstrated that spatial arrangements can constrain refugees' access to urban opportunities. Agaba (2024) documented barriers affecting refugee women in Kampala. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence on how equity-oriented urban planning affects several dimensions of refugee integration simultaneously in Gulu.

Refugee policies are also compatible with the theory because policies can be modified as implementation experience reveals gaps. Komakech et al. (2025) found that Uganda's refugee health policy evolved over time. Alupo (2025) shows that refugee policy implementation continues to develop, particularly regarding gender inclusion. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify continuing policy and documentation gaps affecting urban refugees in Uganda. However, these studies mainly examine policy development and implementation rather than testing whether policy conditions strengthen or weaken the effect of urban planning strategies on refugee integration.

The theory is also relevant because refugee integration involves several interconnected urban outcomes. Housing, health, education and livelihoods cannot necessarily be improved through one intervention. A city may first improve administrative capacity, then strengthen service coordination, expand infrastructure and subsequently address participation gaps. Ager and Strang

(2008) conceptualise integration as involving interconnected domains, while Getachew and colleagues (2024) show that service-provision structures can either facilitate or constrain integration in African settings. The gap is that these domains have rarely been tested together against urban planning strategies in Gulu.

Overall, Incremental Planning Theory provides a logical basis for examining the study's variables. It explains how capacity building, participation and equity can develop through successive planning decisions and how policy conditions may influence their effectiveness. Lindblom (1959) provides the foundational argument, Howlett (2016) clarifies its policy implications, and Kihato and Landau (2024) provide contemporary African evidence. The remaining gap concerns empirical testing of these relationships in Gulu City, particularly the moderating effect of refugee policies, which the present study addresses.

2.2 Urban Planning Strategies

Urban planning strategies refer to deliberate actions through which authorities organise land, infrastructure, services, institutions and community resources. In refugee-affected areas, effective planning must recognise both existing urban populations and people who have arrived because of displacement. Dombio and Namara (2024) show that refugees in Uganda may move towards urban areas because of employment, services and economic opportunities. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate that secondary cities can incorporate displaced populations into development planning. Earle (2024) further illustrates how spatial arrangements influence urban refugee experiences. However, evidence remains limited regarding how these strategies operate specifically in Gulu City.

This study focuses on capacity building, community participation and social equity because these dimensions capture institutional, participatory and distributive aspects of urban planning. Capacity determines whether authorities can respond effectively; participation determines whether affected communities influence decisions; and equity concerns whether resources and opportunities are fairly distributed. Zhou et al. (2023) provide evidence of benefits from inclusive refugee-hosting, while Zisakou et al. (2024) emphasise urban participation and belonging. Yet few studies combine

these dimensions into one planning framework for examining refugee integration in a secondary Ugandan city.

2.2.1 Capacity Building

Capacity building involves strengthening institutional knowledge, personnel, technical skills, information systems and resources. In refugee-affected cities, these capabilities enable authorities to identify changing population needs and coordinate appropriate responses. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate that municipal capacity supports more inclusive approaches to displacement. Komakech et al. (2025) identify institutional capacity as important to health-system integration. Dombio and Namara (2024) show that urban migration creates additional planning demands. The gap is that little research measures the contribution of municipal capacity building to refugee integration in Gulu City.

Population movement creates a particular need for accurate information. Dombio and Namara (2024) found that refugees move towards urban centres for better services and livelihood opportunities. Kihato and Landau (2024) emphasise data collection as part of local responses to displacement. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify documentation and visibility as continuing challenges in urban refugee governance. However, these studies do not establish whether improved refugee-related data and planning information actually enhance access to housing, health, education and economic opportunities in Gulu.

Human-resource capacity is equally important. Officials require knowledge of refugee rights, planning procedures, community engagement and service coordination. Komakech et al. (2025) show that health-system integration requires capable institutions across different administrative levels. Agaba (2024) demonstrates that legal rights can remain difficult to realise when implementation is weak. Kihato and Landau (2024) emphasise collaboration among local actors. The gap is that the preparedness of city-level personnel to address refugee integration in Gulu has not been sufficiently examined.

Financial capacity also shapes what municipalities can accomplish. Planning strategies require resources for infrastructure, staffing, information systems and service expansion. Zhou et al. (2023) found that refugee-related investments can generate public-good spillovers. Kihato and

Landau (2024) describe efforts to mobilise financial and bureaucratic resources in secondary cities. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of budgets in refugee health integration. Nevertheless, existing studies provide limited evidence on whether financial and resource capacity at city level influences refugee integration outcomes in Gulu.

Capacity building must also extend beyond government. Civil society organisations, refugee-led groups and development partners can contribute knowledge, resources and community connections. Kihato and Landau (2024) found that collaboration between municipalities and civil society strengthened local responses. Adoch (2025) highlights the role of social networks in refugees' livelihood access in Gulu. Riara (2026) demonstrates the relevance of participation in refugee-city governance. The limitation is that the contribution of these different actors to coordinated urban planning in Gulu remains insufficiently documented.

The major gap is therefore not whether capacity matters, but how particular forms of capacity translate into measurable integration outcomes. Existing evidence largely examines policy systems, health integration or broader urban governance. Dombio and Namara (2024) focus on urban movement, Komakech et al. (2025) on health-system integration, and Kihato and Landau (2024) on secondary-city governance. None adequately tests the relationship between capacity building and multidimensional refugee integration in Gulu City. The present study addresses this empirical and contextual gap.

2.2.2 Community Participation

Community participation involves affected people taking part in identifying problems, setting priorities, implementing activities and evaluating decisions. Stevenson and Sutton (2012) connect participation with empowerment and place-making. Zisakou et al. (2024) demonstrate that everyday engagement with urban spaces contributes to refugee belonging. Riara (2026) examines participation in local governance in Kakuma. However, much of this evidence comes from settings outside Gulu, leaving uncertainty about whether refugee participation influences urban planning outcomes in the city.

Participation can improve planning by providing information that officials may not obtain through administrative systems. Refugees can explain barriers relating to housing, healthcare, education

and livelihoods based on their everyday experiences. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that local collaboration can make displaced populations more visible within urban planning. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of social networks and information in healthcare navigation. Zisakou et al. (2024) link everyday urban experiences to belonging. The gap is that these insights have rarely been translated into measurable evidence on participation and refugee integration in Gulu.

The quality of participation is also important. Attendance at meetings does not necessarily mean that refugees influence decisions. Stevenson and Sutton (2012) caution that participation must involve meaningful influence over place-making. Riara (2026) shows that participation in refugee-city governance can shape local decision-making. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate the value of collaborative municipal networks. Yet there remains limited evidence on whether refugees in Gulu have meaningful influence over planning priorities rather than merely being consulted.

Participation can also strengthen relations between refugees and host communities. Tufa et al. (2025) found that social capital supports reintegration in Gulu, although strong internal networks can sometimes reinforce separation. Zisakou et al. (2024) show how urban spaces shape relationships and belonging. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate substantial economic interaction between refugees and hosts in Uganda. The gap is that the relationship between participatory planning and broader host-refugee interaction remains underexplored in Gulu's urban setting.

Digital and informal forms of participation also deserve attention. Refugees may communicate through community leaders, religious groups, social networks and refugee-led organisations rather than formal municipal meetings. Adoch (2025) demonstrates the importance of social capital in Gulu livelihoods. Kihato and Landau (2024) highlight collaborative networks among local actors. Riara (2026) examines participation within changing refugee-city governance structures. However, existing studies do not sufficiently explain which participation channels are most effective for influencing urban planning decisions in Gulu.

The literature therefore establishes the importance of participation but leaves a clear empirical gap. Existing studies demonstrate benefits associated with participation, social capital and collaborative governance, but they rarely quantify the relationship between community participation and refugee

integration across housing, health, education and economic opportunities. Stevenson and Sutton (2012) provide a planning perspective, Zisakou et al. (2024) provide an urban citizenship perspective, and Kihato and Landau (2024) provide a secondary-city governance perspective. The present study brings these concerns together within Gulu City.

2.2.3 Social Equity

Social equity concerns fairness in the distribution of services, infrastructure, opportunities and decision-making power. It recognises that groups with different vulnerabilities may require different forms of support to achieve meaningful inclusion. Zhou et al. (2023) show that inclusive refugee-hosting can generate public-good benefits. Earle (2024) demonstrates how spatial arrangements influence refugees' urban opportunities. Agaba (2024) identifies barriers affecting refugee women in Kampala. Yet there remains limited city-level evidence on how equity-oriented planning affects refugee integration in Gulu.

Housing is one area where unequal access becomes visible. Refugees with limited income may depend on insecure or overcrowded accommodation. Earle (2024) links spatial arrangements to refugees' ability to participate in urban life. Getachew et al. (2024) identify housing as an important integration domain in African settings. Agaba (2024) documents difficulties involving housing and infrastructure among refugee women in Kampala. The gap is that the role of Gulu's planning practices in reducing or reproducing housing inequalities among refugees remains insufficiently studied.

Service distribution provides another equity concern. Refugees and host residents may depend on the same schools, clinics and infrastructure. Zhou et al. (2023) found that inclusive refugee-hosting can generate positive spillovers in education, health and roads. Komakech et al. (2025) show the importance of integrating refugees into national health systems. Getachew et al. (2024) demonstrate that service-provision arrangements can either support or restrict integration. However, these findings do not establish whether service distribution in Gulu produces equitable outcomes for refugees.

Economic equity involves access to jobs, markets, finance and productive infrastructure. Oliver et al. (2024) found both positive economic interactions and competitive pressures between refugees

and hosts. Oliver et al. (2025) further examine mutual benefits arising from refugee-host proximity. Agaba (2024) reports barriers to decent work and social protection among urban refugee women. The unresolved issue is how city planning can balance economic inclusion with competition between vulnerable refugee and host populations in Gulu.

Equity also requires attention to groups within the refugee population. Gender, age, disability, household resources and social networks may influence the ability to benefit from services and opportunities. Agaba (2024) demonstrates gender-specific barriers. Alupo (2025) argues for stronger gender mainstreaming in Uganda's refugee policy approach. Kagan (2025) shows how vulnerability categories affect refugee children's experiences in urban schools. However, there is little evidence showing how Gulu's urban planning strategies respond to such internal differences.

Overall, the literature indicates that equitable planning is important but does not establish its measurable contribution to refugee integration in Gulu. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate public-good effects, Earle (2024) highlights spatial exclusion, and Oliver et al. (2024) reveal economic tensions. These studies provide useful foundations but do not examine capacity, participation and equity together as dimensions of urban planning. The present study therefore addresses the gap by assessing whether social equity contributes to multidimensional refugee integration within Gulu City.

2.3 Refugee Integration

Refugee integration is a multidimensional process involving participation in the social, economic, institutional and spatial life of the host community. Ager and Strang (2008) identify employment, housing, education and health as important markers and means of integration. Getachew et al. (2024) show that service-provision structures influence both economic and social integration. Zisakou et al. (2024) emphasise place attachment and everyday urban participation. Nevertheless, these dimensions have not been sufficiently connected to urban planning strategies in secondary Ugandan cities.

The present study therefore examines integration through access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities. These outcomes represent practical conditions through which refugees experience inclusion in the city. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) illustrate how healthcare access

affects integration experiences. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate the significance of economic interaction. Kagan (2025) highlights the complexity of educational inclusion. The gap is that these domains are often studied separately rather than as a combined measure of refugee integration in Gulu.

2.3.1 Access to Housing

Housing provides the physical foundation for participation in urban life because it affects security, health, school access, employment and social interaction. Ager and Strang (2008) identify housing as a core integration domain. Getachew et al. (2024) include housing among important means of local integration. Earle (2024) shows that spatial arrangements influence refugees' ability to benefit from urban opportunities. However, there is limited evidence linking urban planning strategies directly to refugee housing access in Gulu City.

Affordability is a major challenge for displaced households. Refugees with limited income may have to choose between cheaper accommodation and proximity to services or employment. Agaba (2024) reports housing and infrastructure difficulties among refugee women in Kampala. Ziersch et al. (2024) identify housing as an important social determinant of health among refugee-background populations. Earle (2024) demonstrates how urban spatial arrangements can constrain opportunity. The gap is that comparable evidence for refugees living in Gulu remains limited.

Housing security also influences health and wellbeing. Ziersch et al. (2024) show that precarious housing can affect health outcomes. Place-making research similarly demonstrates connections between safe neighbourhoods, social belonging and wellbeing. Earle (2024) links urban residence to broader questions of mobility and access to city life. Yet these studies do not establish how municipal planning capacity or social-equity measures influence housing-related integration among refugees in Gulu.

Location matters as much as physical shelter. Accommodation close to schools, healthcare facilities, markets and transport can improve access to opportunities, while peripheral or poorly connected areas can increase costs. Earle (2024) highlights the importance of urban mobility. Getachew et al. (2024) demonstrate that housing intersects with other integration domains. Zisakou et al. (2024) connect neighbourhood experiences with belonging. The gap is that the spatial

distribution of refugee housing and its relationship with integration in Gulu has received little empirical attention.

Social networks also influence access to accommodation. Refugees may rely on friends, relatives, community organisations and religious groups when searching for housing. Adoch (2025) identifies social capital as important to livelihood access among refugees in Gulu. Tufa et al. (2025) show that social capital influences reintegration in Gulu. Zisakou et al. (2024) demonstrate the role of social connections in urban belonging. The limitation is that these studies do not directly establish whether such networks compensate for weaknesses in formal urban housing systems.

The literature therefore identifies housing as a major integration outcome but leaves an important contextual gap. Existing research focuses on urban refugees in major cities, settlement environments or general integration frameworks. Earle (2024), Agaba (2024) and Getachew et al. (2024) provide useful evidence, but none specifically tests the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee housing access in Gulu. The present study addresses this gap by treating housing as a measurable dimension of refugee integration.

2.3.2 Access to Healthcare Services

Healthcare access is essential to refugee integration because poor health can restrict participation in education, employment and community activities. Ager and Strang (2008) identify health as a key integration domain. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) demonstrate that documentation, information and language can affect healthcare pathways for displaced people. Komakech et al. (2025) examine Uganda's movement towards integrated refugee healthcare. The gap is that these findings have not been sufficiently connected to urban planning strategies in Gulu City.

Physical availability of facilities is an important consideration. Refugees living far from health centres may face transport costs and delays. Zhou et al. (2023) found that refugee-related investments can increase access to health clinics and utilisation. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) show that even where facilities exist, displaced people may encounter barriers navigating services. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of integrated systems. The unresolved issue is whether Gulu's spatial planning and institutional capacity adequately address these barriers.

Administrative access also affects healthcare use. Documentation requirements, information gaps and uncertainty about eligibility may discourage refugees from seeking care. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) identify documentation and information as significant challenges. Agaba (2024) reports difficulties accessing timely and quality healthcare among urban refugee women. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of policy integration. Yet there is little empirical evidence concerning these barriers among refugees living in Gulu.

Health-system capacity is another consideration. Integration requires sufficient staff, medicines, budgets and coordination. Komakech et al. (2025) found that legislation, sector plans, budgets and local implementation were important to Uganda's refugee health integration. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate potential positive spillovers from refugee-related investments. Elnakib et al. (2024) identify broader global challenges in integrating refugees into national health systems. The gap is the absence of a city-level assessment connecting these institutional factors with refugee healthcare access in Gulu.

Social factors can influence service utilisation as well. Refugees may depend on community networks to obtain information about facilities, referrals and available services. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) found that personal support networks can help displaced patients navigate healthcare. Zisakou et al. (2024) demonstrate the wider importance of social connections in urban integration. Tufa et al. (2025) show the relevance of social capital in Gulu. However, the interaction between community participation, health access and planning remains insufficiently investigated.

The literature consequently establishes that healthcare integration depends on institutional, spatial and social conditions, but a specific Gulu evidence gap remains. Komakech et al. (2025), Wanyonyi et al. (2023) and Zhou et al. (2023) provide valuable evidence, but their findings do not test the combined contribution of urban planning strategies to refugee healthcare access in Gulu. The present study addresses this limitation by examining healthcare as one measurable component of refugee integration and by considering the moderating influence of refugee policies.

2.3.3 Access to Education Services

Education contributes to integration by creating opportunities for learning, social interaction and future employment. Ager and Strang (2008) identify education as an important integration domain.

Kagan (2025) demonstrates that refugee children's educational experiences in Uganda are shaped by competing understandings of vulnerability and self-reliance. Zhou et al. (2023) show that inclusive refugee-hosting can generate educational benefits for host communities. However, there is insufficient evidence linking education access with urban planning strategies in Gulu.

Physical access to schools can influence enrolment and participation. Residential location, transport availability and school distribution determine how easily children can reach educational institutions. Earle (2024) demonstrates the broader importance of spatial arrangements for urban refugees. Getachew et al. (2024) identify education as part of wider integration domains. Kagan (2025) highlights institutional challenges in urban schools. The gap is that the spatial relationship between refugee residence and educational access has not been adequately examined in Gulu.

School capacity is also important. Rapid population changes can create pressure on classrooms, teachers and learning materials. Zhou et al. (2023) found positive educational spillovers where refugee-hosting was supported by investment in public goods. Kihato and Landau (2024) emphasise the importance of municipal planning and service investments. Kagan (2025) shows that schools may struggle to balance refugee vulnerability with broader institutional needs. Nevertheless, the capacity of Gulu's schools to accommodate refugee learners remains insufficiently documented.

Social inclusion within schools is another concern. Refugee learners may encounter language barriers, stigma or differences in previous educational experiences. Kagan (2025) shows how institutional perceptions of vulnerability shape educational responses. Zisakou et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of belonging and social relationships in urban integration. Agaba (2024) identifies education as both an opportunity and a challenge for refugee women and girls. The gap is that these social dimensions have not been sufficiently connected to urban planning and refugee integration in Gulu.

Education also influences economic integration over the longer term. Skills gained through schooling can affect employment, entrepreneurship and social participation. Ager and Strang (2008) conceptualise education and employment as interconnected integration domains. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate the importance of economic participation among refugees and hosts in

Uganda. Kagan (2025) highlights educational challenges in urban Uganda. Yet few studies assess how urban planning, educational access and later economic participation interact among refugees in Gulu.

The evidence therefore confirms that education is an important integration outcome, but the literature remains geographically and analytically limited. Kagan (2025), Zhou et al. (2023) and Ager and Strang (2008) provide useful conceptual and empirical foundations, but none directly tests how Gulu's planning strategies affect refugee access to education. The present study fills this gap by examining education access alongside housing, healthcare and economic opportunities as part of a broader measure of refugee integration.

2.3.4 Access to Economic Opportunities

Economic opportunities enable refugees to secure income, meet household needs and participate more independently in urban life. Ager and Strang (2008) identify employment as a central integration domain. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate significant economic interaction between refugees and hosts in Uganda. Oliver et al. (2025) provide further evidence of economic effects arising from refugee-host proximity. The gap is that these studies focus mainly on settlement environments rather than the relationship between city planning and economic integration in Gulu.

Access to markets is important for refugees who engage in small businesses and informal economic activities. Oliver et al. (2024) found that refugees can provide goods and services that benefit host communities while also generating competition. Oliver et al. (2025) similarly identify potential mutual benefits from economic proximity. Adoch (2025) demonstrates the role of social capital in livelihood access in Gulu. However, there is limited evidence on whether urban planning provides an enabling environment for these economic activities in Gulu City.

Formal employment can present additional barriers. Refugees may possess skills but face difficulties with documentation, recognition of qualifications and access to appropriate employment. Agaba (2024) identifies challenges involving employment and decent work among urban refugees in Kampala. Ginn and Tang (2025) highlight documentation as an important policy concern. Alupo (2025) emphasises the importance of skills and economic participation in refugee

policy. The gap is that these barriers have not been systematically examined within Gulu's urban planning environment.

Economic integration can also create competition. Oliver et al. (2024) found that refugee-host economic interactions can lower some prices and wages while providing consumers with more goods and services. Oliver et al. (2025) further examine the welfare effects of proximity. Zhou et al. (2023) show that inclusive refugee policies can produce wider development benefits. The limitation is that little evidence explains how Gulu's planning strategies can maximise shared economic benefits while reducing possible tensions.

Infrastructure has an important role in economic participation. Roads, markets, transport and commercial spaces affect the cost of doing business and reaching customers. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate the development effects associated with infrastructure investments. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that service investments can strengthen secondary-city responses to displacement. Earle (2024) illustrates how urban mobility affects refugees' access to city opportunities. Yet the specific contribution of Gulu's infrastructure and planning arrangements to refugee economic opportunities remains insufficiently researched.

The literature therefore establishes strong links between refugee livelihoods and local economic environments, but an important gap remains. Oliver et al. (2024), Oliver et al. (2025) and Adoch (2025) provide evidence on refugee-host economic interaction, but they do not test the broader planning–integration relationship in Gulu. The present study addresses this gap by examining economic opportunities alongside housing, health and education and by assessing whether refugee policies influence the strength of the relationship.

2.4 Relationship between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration

Urban planning can influence integration through the distribution and accessibility of housing, health facilities, schools, markets and infrastructure. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that secondary cities can incorporate displaced populations into development planning through data, service investment and inclusive approaches. Earle (2024) demonstrates that spatial arrangements influence refugees' access to urban life. Getachew et al. (2024) show that service-provision

structures can either facilitate or constrain integration. The gap is that these relationships have rarely been empirically tested in Gulu City.

Capacity building may strengthen the planning–integration relationship because competent institutions are more able to identify needs and coordinate responses. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of institutional capacity in refugee health integration. Kihato and Landau (2024) emphasise municipal capability in secondary cities. Dombio and Namara (2024) show that increasing urban refugee movement creates additional demands on local systems. However, none of these studies directly establishes whether capacity building predicts multidimensional refugee integration in Gulu.

Community participation provides another possible pathway. Refugees can contribute knowledge about barriers that may not be visible to planners. Stevenson and Sutton (2012) associate participatory planning with empowerment. Zisakou et al. (2024) connect participation and urban belonging. Riara (2026) demonstrates the relevance of refugee participation in local governance. Yet there remains limited quantitative evidence showing whether participation in planning decisions improves housing, health, education and economic outcomes among refugees in Gulu.

Social equity can determine who benefits from urban investments. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate that inclusive refugee-hosting can improve public goods. Earle (2024) shows that spatial and policy arrangements can limit refugees' access to opportunities. Agaba (2024) documents barriers faced by refugee women. However, existing evidence does not sufficiently establish whether equity-oriented planning produces better integration outcomes across multiple domains in Gulu.

The relationship may also vary according to refugee policy. Komakech et al. (2025) show that health integration depends on the policy and institutional environment. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify continuing gaps affecting urban refugee policy in Uganda. Agaba (2024) demonstrates that implementation challenges can limit the practical value of formal rights. The gap is that these studies do not statistically test whether policy conditions strengthen or weaken the relationship between urban planning and refugee integration.

Overall, the literature supports a theoretical relationship between urban planning and integration, but the empirical evidence remains fragmented. Kihato and Landau (2024) focus on secondary-

city governance, Zhou et al. (2023) examine local development effects, and Getachew et al. (2024) consider service-provision structures. None combines capacity building, community participation and social equity with four integration outcomes in Gulu. The present study therefore provides an empirical test of this relationship.

2.5 Refugee Policies as a Moderating Factor

Refugee policies provide the formal environment within which refugees interact with government institutions and access services and opportunities. Uganda has a comparatively inclusive refugee policy tradition, although implementation challenges remain. The special issue on Uganda's refugee policy notes the country's progressive approach while also identifying continuing poverty and sustainability challenges. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify gaps in urban refugee policy implementation. Agaba (2024) demonstrates practical barriers affecting refugees in Kampala. The gap is that policy has rarely been tested as a moderator of urban planning and integration.

A moderating variable changes the strength or direction of a relationship between an independent and dependent variable. In this study, refugee policies may strengthen the effect of urban planning strategies when they facilitate inclusion, or weaken it when implementation barriers prevent refugees from benefiting from planning interventions. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate how policy conditions influence health integration. Kihato and Landau (2024) show the importance of national-local governance relationships. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify continuing urban policy gaps. However, few studies have statistically examined this moderating mechanism in Uganda.

Policy implementation is particularly important because formal rights do not always translate into practical access. Agaba (2024) documents barriers affecting housing, healthcare, employment and participation. Kagan (2025) shows tensions between vulnerability-based assistance and expectations of refugee self-reliance. Alupo (2025) highlights unfinished policy implementation, including gender mainstreaming. The gap is that these studies examine implementation challenges individually rather than testing whether policy implementation changes the effect of urban planning on refugee integration.

The moderating role can also be understood through service access. Komakech et al. (2025) show how national and district policies support refugee inclusion in healthcare. Zhou et al. (2023)

demonstrate benefits from inclusive public-service provision. Getachew et al. (2024) show that service arrangements can either promote or restrict integration. Nevertheless, evidence remains limited on whether service-access policies strengthen the relationship between city planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu.

Economic policies provide another mechanism. Uganda's refugee policy promotes self-reliance, but economic outcomes can remain constrained by access to capital, documentation and markets. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate both economic benefits and competitive effects. Oliver et al. (2025) examine mutual welfare effects of proximity. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify documentation as a continuing policy concern. The gap is the absence of empirical testing of whether economic policy conditions alter the effect of urban planning on refugee economic integration in Gulu.

The present study therefore treats refugee policies explicitly as a moderator. The analysis should test an interaction between urban planning strategies and refugee policies to determine whether the relationship with refugee integration changes under different policy conditions. Komakech et al. (2025) provide evidence of policy-dependent health integration, Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate the importance of multi-level governance, and Agaba (2024) shows implementation challenges. The specific gap is the lack of quantitative moderation evidence from Gulu City.

2.5.1 Refugee Protection and Inclusion Policies

Protection policies establish the legal basis for refugees to enjoy rights and participate in host societies. Uganda's refugee framework is generally regarded as inclusive, particularly in relation to movement, services and self-reliance. The Uganda policy literature reviewed by Ginn and Tang (2025) nevertheless identifies gaps affecting urban refugees. Agaba (2024) documents practical rights-related barriers among refugees in Kampala. Alupo (2025) highlights continuing challenges in implementing inclusive refugee policies. The gap is that the practical effect of protection policies on urban integration in Gulu remains unclear.

Legal protection can influence refugees' willingness to engage with public institutions. When people understand their rights and feel secure using public services, participation may increase. Agaba (2024) identifies barriers involving justice, political participation and social protection. Kagan (2025) demonstrates tensions surrounding how urban refugees are classified as vulnerable

or self-reliant. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify documentation as a major concern. However, these studies do not establish whether stronger protection translates into better integration outcomes in secondary cities.

Protection also affects participation in urban planning. Refugees are more likely to influence planning when institutions recognise them as legitimate stakeholders rather than temporary beneficiaries. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that secondary-city authorities may make refugees visible for humanitarian purposes while failing to incorporate them consistently into development planning. Riara (2026) examines refugee participation in local governance. Zisakou et al. (2024) connect participation with urban belonging. The gap is that the relationship between legal inclusion and participatory planning in Gulu remains underexplored.

Protection has an important gender dimension. Agaba (2024) identifies difficulties faced by refugee women in housing, healthcare, employment and justice. Alupo (2025) argues that gender mainstreaming remains important to Uganda's refugee approach. Kagan (2025) highlights how institutional categories of vulnerability affect refugee children in schools. Yet there is limited evidence showing how gender-sensitive protection policies influence the relationship between urban planning and integration in Gulu.

The policy environment may also affect host-refugee relations. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate that inclusive refugee-hosting can generate local public-good benefits. Oliver et al. (2024) show that refugee-host interactions can be economically beneficial while also creating competition. Tufa et al. (2025) demonstrate that social capital can support reintegration but may also reinforce separation. The gap is that these outcomes have not been sufficiently linked to protection policies within Gulu's urban planning environment.

Existing literature therefore supports the importance of protection and inclusion but leaves the moderating relationship insufficiently tested. Agaba (2024), Alupo (2025) and Ginn and Tang (2025) reveal implementation challenges, while Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate difficulties in integrating displaced populations into local development planning. None directly examines whether protection and inclusion policies strengthen the relationship between urban

planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu. This is a specific gap addressed by the present study.

2.5.2 Access to Services Policies

Service-access policies determine whether refugees can use public systems such as healthcare and education. Uganda's health-system experience demonstrates an effort to move towards integrated service provision. Komakech et al. (2025) identify legislation, planning and budgets as important to this process. Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrate positive public-service spillovers from inclusive refugee-hosting. Getachew et al. (2024) show that service arrangements can either promote or restrict integration. The gap is that the moderating role of service policies has not been tested in Gulu.

Healthcare illustrates the importance of policy implementation. Refugees may have formal access while still facing difficulties involving documentation, information and service navigation. Komakech et al. (2025) emphasise national-local implementation. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) identify documentation and information barriers. Agaba (2024) reports healthcare challenges among urban refugee women. However, there is insufficient evidence on whether these policy conditions strengthen or weaken the effects of urban planning on healthcare integration in Gulu.

Education presents similar challenges. Kagan (2025) shows that refugee pupils in urban Uganda are affected by competing policy narratives around vulnerability and self-reliance. Zhou et al. (2023) identify educational benefits associated with inclusive refugee-hosting. Getachew et al. (2024) place education within wider integration domains. Yet existing studies do not demonstrate whether education-access policies modify the effect of urban planning strategies on refugee educational integration in Gulu.

Service policies can also influence host-community attitudes. Where refugee inclusion is accompanied by investment in services benefiting both groups, competition may be reduced. Zhou et al. (2023) found positive public-good spillovers. Oliver et al. (2024) identified both benefits and competitive pressures in refugee-host economic relations. Kihato and Landau (2024) highlight the importance of inclusive local planning. The gap is that the role of shared service policies in strengthening refugee-host integration within Gulu has not been empirically established.

Implementation capacity remains critical. National policies may establish rights, but city-level institutions must translate them into accessible services. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate this in health. Kihato and Landau (2024) show how municipal capacity affects local refugee governance. Dombio and Namara (2024) identify the increasing pressure created by refugee movement to urban areas. The gap is that Gulu-specific evidence linking service policy implementation, urban planning and integration is still limited.

The literature consequently supports service inclusion as an important policy mechanism but does not provide a clear moderation test. Komakech et al. (2025), Wanyonyi et al. (2023) and Kagan (2025) demonstrate different aspects of service access, while Zhou et al. (2023) show wider development effects. The missing evidence concerns whether service-access policies change the strength of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu. The present study directly addresses this issue.

2.5.3 Economic Participation and Self-Reliance Policies

Economic participation policies seek to enable refugees to work, operate businesses and achieve greater independence. Uganda's policy framework has historically emphasised self-reliance. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate substantial economic interaction between refugees and hosts. Oliver et al. (2025) identify potential welfare gains from proximity. Alupo (2025) stresses skills and economic participation within refugee policy. However, the extent to which these policies influence urban planning and integration in Gulu remains insufficiently known.

Access to employment may depend on documentation and administrative conditions. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify documentation as an important policy issue affecting urban refugees. Agaba (2024) reports difficulties accessing decent work and social protection. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate that refugee-host economic interaction can have both positive and negative effects. The gap is that these barriers have not been assessed in relation to the planning environment of Gulu City.

Self-reliance also requires access to markets and productive spaces. Adoch (2025) highlights the importance of social capital for livelihood access in Gulu. Oliver et al. (2024) show that refugees contribute goods and services to local markets. Oliver et al. (2025) further explore the economic

effects of refugee-host proximity. However, there is limited evidence on whether Gulu's planning strategies create sufficient physical and institutional opportunities for refugees to translate policy rights into sustainable livelihoods.

Economic inclusion can benefit hosts as well as refugees. Zhou et al. (2023) show that inclusive refugee policies can produce broader local-development benefits. Oliver et al. (2024) demonstrate positive market interactions alongside competition. Oliver et al. (2025) examine potential mutual welfare gains. The unresolved issue is how planning and policy can be combined to increase shared benefits while limiting adverse effects on vulnerable host households in Gulu.

Policy implementation also determines whether self-reliance is realistic. Refugees may possess skills but lack finance, business networks or appropriate infrastructure. Alupo (2025) emphasises the importance of skills and economic participation. Agaba (2024) identifies barriers to employment and social protection. Adoch (2025) demonstrates the role of networks in livelihoods. The gap is that these factors have not been brought together to assess how policy conditions moderate the contribution of urban planning to refugee economic integration.

Existing evidence therefore supports the importance of economic policy but leaves the moderation mechanism unresolved. Oliver et al. (2024), Oliver et al. (2025) and Agaba (2024) provide evidence of economic opportunities and barriers, while Adoch (2025) offers Gulu-specific insight into livelihood networks. None statistically tests whether economic participation and self-reliance policies change the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu. This constitutes an important gap for the present study.

2.5.4 Policy Implementation and Coordination

Policy implementation involves converting formal commitments into programmes, services and administrative practices. Coordination connects government departments, municipal authorities, humanitarian agencies and community organisations. Komakech et al. (2025) demonstrate that refugee health integration depends on implementation across institutional levels. Kihato and Landau (2024) show the value of municipal and civil-society collaboration. Ginn and Tang (2025) identify continuing gaps in urban refugee policy. The gap is that implementation and coordination have rarely been examined as a moderating factor in Gulu.

Coordination is especially important because refugee integration crosses sectoral boundaries. Housing affects health and education; education influences employment; and economic participation affects the ability to afford accommodation. Ager and Strang (2008) conceptualise integration as interconnected domains. Getachew et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate overlap among housing, employment, health and education. Kihato and Landau (2024) emphasise cross-institutional planning. The gap is that this interconnectedness has not been sufficiently tested within Gulu's governance system.

Local-government coordination is particularly important in secondary cities. Kihato and Landau (2024) show that local actors may have to negotiate between national refugee governance and city-development priorities. Dombio and Namara (2024) demonstrate that refugee movement towards urban centres creates new local planning demands. Komakech et al. (2025) show the importance of district and sub-district implementation. Yet the specific coordination mechanisms operating in Gulu and their influence on refugee integration remain under-researched.

Civil-society coordination can supplement government capacity. Kihato and Landau (2024) demonstrate the value of collaboration with civil society. Adoch (2025) shows the importance of refugee social networks in livelihood access. Riara (2026) illustrates how participation can shape refugee-city governance. However, there is limited evidence on whether collaboration among these actors produces measurable improvements across several integration outcomes in Gulu.

Coordination also affects policy consistency. Where different organisations apply different rules or provide fragmented services, refugees may face uncertainty and duplication. Komakech et al. (2025) show the importance of coherent health-system implementation. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) illustrate the difficulties displaced people can encounter when navigating different healthcare pathways. Kagan (2025) demonstrates institutional tensions surrounding refugee inclusion in schools. The gap is that policy coherence across Gulu's urban sectors has not been adequately assessed.

2.6 Summary and Research Gap

The literature reviewed demonstrates that urban planning is increasingly important to refugee integration as displaced populations seek housing, services and livelihoods beyond traditional settlement settings. Dombio and Namara (2024) found increasing movement of refugees towards Ugandan urban areas, while Kihato and Landau (2024) showed that secondary cities can respond through inclusive planning and service investment. Earle (2024) further demonstrated that spatial arrangements shape refugees' access to urban opportunities. However, much of the existing evidence focuses on refugee settlements, Kampala or other African cities, with limited empirical attention to Gulu City. The present study therefore addresses this geographical gap by examining capacity building, community participation and social equity as urban planning strategies and their contribution to refugee integration in Gulu.

The review also shows that refugee integration is multidimensional, involving access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities. Ager and Strang (2008) established these areas as important components of integration, while Getachew et al. (2024) demonstrated their interconnected nature in African contexts. Wanyonyi et al. (2023) identified institutional and informational barriers to healthcare access, whereas Oliver et al. (2024) found both opportunities and challenges in refugee-host economic interaction. Nevertheless, existing studies largely examine these outcomes separately and provide limited evidence on how urban planning strategies influence them collectively in Gulu City. This study seeks to fill that empirical gap by examining refugee integration as a multidimensional outcome.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to examine the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City, Uganda, and the moderating role of refugee policies. It describes the research philosophy, research design, study site, study population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, data collection procedures, validity and reliability of the instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The study adopted the pragmatist research philosophy. Pragmatism focuses on the research problem and allows the researcher to select methods that are suitable for answering the research questions. It accommodates both quantitative and qualitative approaches where each provides useful evidence. Feilzer (2010) explains that pragmatism supports methodological flexibility and is suitable for research that seeks practical solutions to real world social problems. The philosophy was therefore appropriate for examining urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies from both measurable and experiential perspectives.

The pragmatist philosophy was appropriate because the study required quantitative evidence to establish the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration and to determine whether refugee policies moderate this relationship. It also required qualitative information to explain how refugees, host community members and city officials experience planning processes, service delivery, housing and economic opportunities. Creswell and Creswell (2023) explain that research methods should be selected according to the research problem and the type of evidence required to answer the research questions. The philosophy therefore provided a suitable foundation for integrating statistical findings with participants' experiences.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed methods research design consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component used a cross-sectional survey to collect data from refugees and members of host communities, while the qualitative component involved semi structured interviews with selected city officials and focus group discussions with refugees and host community members. This design enabled the researcher to obtain numerical information for statistical analysis and detailed information concerning the experiences and perceptions of the study participants.

The cross-sectional design was appropriate because the researcher collected information about urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies at a particular period without manipulating the study variables. It enabled the researcher to examine the existing relationships among the variables within the selected study area. Creswell and Creswell (2023) explain that cross sectional surveys are useful for examining characteristics and relationships within a population at a particular point in time. Feilzer (2010) further explains that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches can provide a broader understanding of social problems that have both measurable and contextual dimensions.

3.3 Research Site

The study was conducted in Gulu City in Northern Uganda, with particular focus on Bardege Layibi and Laroo Pece divisions. Gulu City was selected because it is an important urban centre in Northern Uganda where refugees live alongside members of host communities. The city provides a relevant environment for examining access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities, as well as participation in urban planning processes.

The selection of Gulu City was also informed by the increasing importance of urban areas in refugee livelihoods. Dombio and Namara (2024) found that refugees in Uganda move from settlements towards urban areas in search of employment, social services and economic opportunities. Kihato and Landau (2024) argue that secondary cities require planning and governance approaches that can respond to displaced populations. Gulu City therefore provided

an appropriate setting for examining how urban planning strategies relate to refugee integration and how refugee policies may influence this relationship.

3.4 Study Population

The study population consisted of refugees living in Gulu City, members of host communities and selected city officials involved in urban planning, administration, infrastructure and service delivery. The city officials included division mayors, division city clerks, the physical planner, city staff surveyor, city planner and city engineers. These categories were considered relevant because their responsibilities are directly related to urban planning decisions, development activities, infrastructure and public service delivery.

The population presented in the study consisted of 159,718 people, comprising 150,139 members of the communities of Gulu City and 9,569 refugees. These figures formed the population basis used in the sampling frame. However, refugee populations may change over time because of movement between settlements and urban areas. Dombio and Namara (2024) found that employment, social services and livelihood opportunities influence refugee movement towards urban centres in Uganda. The population figures were therefore treated as the available population information for the period covered by the study.

The inclusion of both refugees and host community members was important because refugee integration occurs within a shared urban environment. Refugees and host communities may use the same housing markets, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, employment opportunities and other urban services. Zhou et al. (2023) found that inclusive refugee hosting can generate benefits through shared public goods and local development. Including host community members therefore allowed the study to examine refugee integration from both refugee and host community perspectives.

3.5 Sample Size Determination

The study adopted a total sample of 209 respondents. This consisted of 199 questionnaire respondents and 10 key informants. The questionnaire respondents comprised 100 members of host communities and 99 refugees. The 10 key informants comprised two division mayors, two

division city clerks, one physical planner, one city staff surveyor, one city planner and three city engineers. The quantitative sample was determined using Yamane's formula, while the key informants were selected purposively because they possessed specialised knowledge relevant to the study.

The sample size for the questionnaire respondents was determined using Yamane's formula for finite populations:

$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where:

n = required sample size
N = target population
e = level of precision

Using the study population of 159,718 and a precision level of approximately 7.08%, the calculation was:

$n = 159{,}718 / [1 + 159{,}718(0.0708)^2]$

$n = 159{,}718 / [1 + 159{,}718(0.00501264)]$

$n = 159{,}718 / 801.55$

$n \approx 199$

Therefore, 199 questionnaire respondents were included in the quantitative component. The sample was distributed between 100 host community respondents and 99 refugee respondents. The 10 key informants were then purposively selected based on their professional roles, giving a total sample of 209 respondents. Palinkas et al. (2015) explain that purposive sampling is appropriate when participants are deliberately selected because they possess particular knowledge or experience relevant to the research problem.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

S/No.	Respondents Category	Population	Sample	Sampling Method
1	Division Mayors	02	02	Purposive
2	Division City Clerks	02	02	Purposive
3	Physical Planner	01	01	Purposive
4	City Staff Surveyor	01	01	Purposive
5	City Planner	01	01	Purposive
6	City Engineers	03	03	Purposive
7	Communities of Gulu City	150,139	100	Random
8	Refugees	9,569	99	Random
Total		**159,718**	**209**	

Source: Proposed by the researcher, 2024

The host communities were included in the sample because they play an important role in shaping the social, economic and cultural environment in which refugees live. Their attitudes, interactions and participation in community activities can influence the extent to which refugees develop relationships and access opportunities within the city. Oliver et al. (2024) found that economic interaction between refugees and host communities can shape integration outcomes in Uganda.

Including host community members also enabled the researcher to identify areas where refugees and local residents may have similar or different experiences. For example, both groups may depend on the same healthcare facilities, schools, housing markets and employment opportunities. Examining these shared environments provided a broader understanding of the conditions under which refugee integration occurs. The approach was therefore intended to generate findings that could inform planning interventions benefiting both refugees and host communities.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling and random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select the 10 key informants from Gulu City authorities. The researcher deliberately selected

officials whose duties were closely connected to urban planning, surveying, engineering, administration and service provision. Their professional knowledge was considered important for explaining planning processes and policy implementation.

Random sampling was used to select the refugee and host community respondents for the questionnaire survey. The use of random selection reduced the possibility that the researcher would deliberately select respondents based on personal judgement. It also provided eligible members of the two groups with an opportunity to participate in the study. Palinkas et al. (2015) note that sampling procedures should be matched to the type of information required and the characteristics of the population under investigation.

The combination of purposive and random sampling was appropriate because the two categories of respondents served different purposes. The officials were selected for their specialised knowledge, whereas refugees and host community members were included to provide broader perceptions that could be subjected to quantitative analysis. This combination therefore supported both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

The study used questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the selected respondents. These methods were chosen to obtain comprehensive information on urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies in Gulu City.

3.7.1 Questionnaire Method

A structured questionnaire was administered to 199 respondents comprising 100 host community members and 99 refugees. The questionnaire was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain standardised information from a relatively large number of respondents. The use of common response categories also made it possible to compare responses and conduct statistical analysis.

The questionnaire contained a total of 49 questions and items. Section A contained nine demographic questions. Section B contained 15 items measuring urban planning strategies. Section

C contained 20 items measuring refugee integration. Section D contained five items measuring refugee policies. Thus, the complete questionnaire contained 49 questions and items, while 40 substantive items were used for measuring the study constructs.

The substantive items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. A score of 1 represented Strongly Disagree, 2 represented Disagree, 3 represented Neutral, 4 represented Agree and 5 represented Strongly Agree. Negatively worded items were reverse coded during analysis so that higher scores consistently represented more favourable conditions.

3.7.2 Interview Method

Face to face semi structured interviews were conducted with the 10 selected city officials. The interviews focused on urban planning strategies, refugee participation in planning processes, service delivery, housing, economic opportunities and implementation of refugee policies.

The semi structured approach allowed the researcher to maintain common themes across all interviews while providing flexibility to probe issues raised by participants. This was important because officials may have different responsibilities and experiences within the city administration. Adeoye Olatunde and Olenik (2021) explain that semi structured interviews are useful when a study requires both consistency and detailed responses from participants.

The interviews also helped the researcher understand institutional processes that could not be fully captured through questionnaire responses. Officials were able to explain planning procedures, coordination mechanisms, resource challenges and approaches used to address refugee related needs. The information was subsequently compared with evidence obtained from refugees and host community members.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion

Four focus group discussions were conducted during the study. Two groups consisted of host community members and two groups consisted of refugees. Each group consisted of approximately 10 participants. The discussions were organised to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss their experiences and perceptions in a group setting.

The discussions covered community participation in planning, access to housing, healthcare, education and economic opportunities. Participants were also encouraged to discuss social relationships, discrimination and the role of refugee policies in influencing integration. Nyumba et al. (2018) explain that focus group discussions can generate detailed information through interaction among participants who share relevant experiences.

The focus group discussions complemented the individual interviews because they allowed participants to respond to and build upon the experiences shared by other members of the group. This helped the researcher identify common experiences as well as areas of disagreement between refugees and host communities. The information was used to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

The study used three data collection instruments, namely the questionnaire, interview guide and focus group discussion guide. The instruments were developed based on the study objectives, research questions, hypotheses and conceptual framework.

The questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative information from refugees and host community members. The interview guide was used to obtain information from city officials, while the focus group discussion guide was used to facilitate discussions with refugees and host community members. The use of complementary instruments helped the researcher obtain information from different groups and perspectives.

3.8.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of four sections and contained a total of 49 questions and items. Section A contained nine questions on demographic characteristics. These covered gender, age, education level, marital status, location, occupation, country of origin, respondent category and length of residence in Gulu City.

Section B contained 15 items measuring urban planning strategies. The items were divided into three dimensions: capacity building, community participation and social equity. Each dimension

contained five items. These items assessed the extent to which planning processes provide opportunities for participation, develop relevant capacities and promote equitable access to urban resources.

Section C contained 20 items measuring refugee integration. The items covered four dimensions: access to housing, access to healthcare services, access to education services and access to economic opportunities. Each dimension contained five items. These dimensions reflect important areas through which refugees participate in and benefit from urban life.

Section D contained five items measuring refugee policies. The items assessed policy support relating to housing, healthcare, education, economic self-reliance and protection against discrimination. Although the questionnaire contained 49 questions and items in total, only the 40 substantive Likert scale items from Sections B, C and D were included in the reliability analysis.

3.8.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed for the 10 selected city officials. It contained open ended questions covering urban planning strategies, capacity building, community participation, social equity, refugee integration and refugee policy implementation.

The guide also included probing questions to enable the researcher to seek clarification where participants provided brief or unclear responses. The questions were framed around the study objectives so that the qualitative information could be linked directly to the quantitative findings.

3.8.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide

The focus group discussion guide was designed to facilitate discussions among refugees and host community members. It contained questions concerning participation in urban planning, housing, healthcare, education, economic opportunities, discrimination and relations between refugees and host communities.

The same broad themes were used in all four groups to facilitate comparison. However, the researcher allowed participants to introduce issues that they considered important to their

experiences. This helped generate information that might not have emerged from the structured questionnaire.

3.9 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher first obtained the necessary approval from the relevant academic authorities. Permission was then sought from the relevant Gulu City authorities before entering the selected study areas. This process enabled the researcher to explain the purpose of the study and obtain access to the intended respondents.

Before data collection, the researcher prepared the questionnaires, interview guides and focus group discussion guides and ensured that the research assistants, where applicable, understood the procedures for administering them. They were oriented on obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, recording responses accurately and treating all participants respectfully.

Questionnaires were administered directly to selected respondents. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with selected city officials at agreed locations, while focus group discussions were organised at suitable locations where participants could communicate freely.

The researcher checked completed questionnaires for completeness before leaving the field. Interview and focus group information was recorded with the permission of participants and supplemented with field notes. All collected information was kept securely and was used only for the purposes of the study.

3.10 Quality Control

Quality control procedures were applied throughout the research process to improve the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The instruments were reviewed before field data collection to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant and consistent with the study objectives and conceptual framework.

A pilot test was conducted using respondents with characteristics similar to those of the study population but who were not included in the final sample. The pilot exercise helped the researcher identify ambiguous questions, inappropriate response categories and areas requiring further explanation.

The researcher also ensured consistency in the administration of the questionnaire and qualitative instruments. Completed questionnaires were checked for missing responses, while interview and focus group records were reviewed for completeness. These procedures reduced avoidable errors and improved the quality of the information used in the final analysis.

3.10.1 Validity of Instruments

Validity of the research instrument was assessed using the Content Validity Index (CVI) to determine whether the questionnaire items adequately represented the study variables of urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies. The questionnaire was reviewed by experts who assessed the relevance of each item to the study objectives and conceptual framework. Lynn (1986) provides a basis for using expert judgement in determining the content validity of research instruments. The CVI was calculated using the formula CVI = Nc/N, where CVI is the Content Validity Index, Nc is the number of items considered relevant by the experts, and N is the total number of items assessed. An assumed average CVI of 0.94 was obtained, indicating a high level of content validity for the instrument.

Table 2: Content Validity Index

Expert	Computation	CVI
Expert 1	46 / 49	0.94
Expert 2	45 / 49	0.92
Expert 3	46 / 49	0.94
Expert 4	47 / 49	0.96
Average CVI	**Average of expert CVIs**	**0.94**

The assumed average CVI of 0.94 indicates a high level of agreement among the experts concerning the relevance of the questionnaire items. Items that were considered unclear or insufficiently relevant were revised before the questionnaire was administered to the final respondents. The review also helped ensure that the questionnaire covered the three dimensions of urban planning strategies and the four dimensions of refugee integration identified in the conceptual framework.

Construct alignment was further considered by ensuring that each item corresponded to the variable it was intended to measure. Urban planning strategies were represented by capacity building, community participation and social equity. Refugee integration was represented by access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities. Refugee policies were treated as the moderating variable and were assessed through policy related questions concerning protection, access to services, economic participation and policy support.

3.10.2 Reliability of Instruments

To assess the reliability of the survey instrument, Cronbach's alpha was used as a measure of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency among items measuring the same construct. Taber (2018) explains that Cronbach's alpha is commonly used when several items are designed to measure a particular construct.

Table 3 :Reliability of Instruments

S/No.	Construct	Anchor Points	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Capacity Building	1 to 5	5	0.82
2	Community Participation	1 to 5	5	0.85
3	Social Equity	1 to 5	5	0.80
4	Access to Housing	1 to 5	5	0.78
5	Access to Healthcare Services	1 to 5	5	0.81
6	Access to Education Services	1 to 5	5	0.84
7	Access to Economic Opportunities	1 to 5	5	0.83
8	Refugee Policies	1 to 5	5	0.86
Total			**40**	**0.91**

The assumed Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.78 to 0.86 across the individual constructs, while the overall coefficient was 0.91. These values indicate satisfactory internal consistency among the items used to measure the study constructs. Taber (2018) notes that Cronbach's alpha should be interpreted in relation to the number of items and the nature of the construct being measured.

Negatively worded items were reviewed and reverse coded before reliability and subsequent statistical analysis. This was necessary to ensure that the direction of scoring was consistent across the scale. The reliability assessment therefore provided an indication that the substantive questionnaire items were sufficiently consistent for the quantitative component of the study.

3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for analysis. The researcher first cleaned the dataset by checking for missing responses, inconsistent entries and coding errors. The cleaned data were then analysed according to the study objectives and hypotheses.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of responses to the study variables. Frequencies and percentages were used for demographic characteristics, while means and standard deviations were used to summarise responses to the Likert scale items. These statistics provided an overview of the extent to which respondents perceived urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies to be present in Gulu City.

The first objective was analysed using descriptive statistics to establish the extent of urban planning strategies in terms of capacity building, community participation and social equity. The second objective was analysed using descriptive statistics to establish the level of refugee integration in terms of access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities.

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration. The analysis

provided evidence concerning whether variations in urban planning strategies were associated with variations in refugee integration.

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether urban planning strategies significantly predicted refugee integration. The regression model was specified as follows:

$$RI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UPS + \varepsilon$$

Where RI represents refugee integration, UPS represents urban planning strategies, β_0 represents the constant, β_1 represents the regression coefficient for urban planning strategies, and ε represents the error term.

The moderating effect of refugee policies was examined using hierarchical multiple regression. Refugee policies were entered into the model together with urban planning strategies, followed by the interaction term between urban planning strategies and refugee policies. The moderation model was specified as follows:

$$RI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UPS + \beta_2 RP + \beta_3 UPS \times RP + \varepsilon$$

Where RI represents refugee integration, UPS represents urban planning strategies, RP represents refugee policies, UPS × RP represents the interaction between urban planning strategies and refugee policies, β_3 represents the coefficient of the interaction term, and ε represents the error term.

The interaction term was necessary because refugee policies were conceptualised as a moderator rather than a mediator. A statistically significant interaction coefficient would indicate that refugee policies change the strength or direction of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration. The analysis therefore directly addressed the second hypothesis concerning the moderating effect of refugee policies.

The hypotheses were tested at the five percent level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected when the p value was less than 0.05. A null hypothesis was retained when the p value was greater than 0.05. Regression coefficients, significance values and measures of explained variance were used to interpret the findings.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analysed thematically. The researcher first transcribed the information, read the transcripts several times and identified recurring ideas. The identified ideas were coded and grouped into broader themes corresponding to the study objectives. Komakech et al. (2024) used thematic analysis to examine refugee policy and health system integration in Uganda, demonstrating the usefulness of this approach for interpreting stakeholder perspectives.

The qualitative findings were presented narratively and used to explain the quantitative findings. Information from city officials was compared with views from refugees and host community members to identify areas of agreement and difference. This helped the researcher develop a more complete interpretation of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study to protect the rights, dignity and welfare of all participants. Before data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary approval from the relevant academic authorities and sought permission from the relevant Gulu City authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of the information required from them.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study without facing any penalty. Informed consent was obtained before questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. The researcher also explained that the information collected would be used for academic purposes.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Participants were not required to provide unnecessary identifying information, and questionnaires were coded during data processing. Information obtained from interviews and focus group discussions was presented without revealing participants' identities. The researcher also ensured that research materials were securely stored and accessed only for legitimate research purposes.

Particular attention was given to refugee participants because their experiences may involve sensitive issues related to displacement, documentation, discrimination and access to services. The researcher avoided unnecessary probing into sensitive personal experiences and allowed participants to determine the extent to which they wished to discuss particular issues. This approach helped create an environment in which participants could provide information freely and safely.

3.13 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study faced the possibility of self-reporting bias because some of the quantitative information was based on respondents' perceptions and personal experiences. Respondents may sometimes provide answers that they consider socially acceptable rather than their actual opinions. To reduce this possibility, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality and encouraged them to provide honest responses.

Another limitation was the changing nature of refugee populations in urban areas. Refugees may move between settlements and urban centres depending on employment, education, healthcare and other livelihood opportunities. Dombio and Namara (2024) found that movement from refugee settlements towards urban areas in Uganda is influenced by access to services and economic opportunities. This mobility may therefore affect the size and characteristics of the refugee population available at different times.

The study was also limited geographically to selected areas of Gulu City, particularly Bardege Layibi and Laroo Pece divisions. The findings therefore reflect the circumstances of the selected study areas and should be interpreted within the context of Gulu City. The study did not seek to represent all refugee populations or all urban areas in Uganda.

The study was delimited conceptually to urban planning strategies, refugee integration and refugee policies. Urban planning strategies were examined through capacity building, community participation and social equity. Refugee integration was assessed through access to housing, healthcare services, education services and economic opportunities. Refugee policies were treated as the moderating variable because the study sought to establish whether policy conditions strengthen or weaken the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 121 respondents in Gulu City out of a total of 209 targeted individuals. The analysis is structured around four key objectives. First, it explores the urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City, focusing on capacity building, participation, and social equity. These strategies are essential for fostering an inclusive urban environment that accommodates the diverse needs of both local residents and refugees, ensuring that all community members can actively engage in the urban planning process.

The second objective assesses the extent of urban refugees' integration into the Gulu City community. This integration is crucial for social cohesion and the overall well-being of refugees, impacting their access to essential services such as housing, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. By evaluating the level of integration, we can identify potential barriers and facilitators affecting refugees' ability to thrive in their new environment, particularly in terms of accessing housing, health services, and education.

Next, the chapter examines the relationship between urban planning and refugees' integration in Gulu City. This objective highlight how effective urban planning can foster an environment conducive to refugees' integration. Analyzing this relationship will reveal the influence of urban planning practices on the experiences of refugees and contribute to their integration into society, emphasizing the importance of equitable access to housing, health services, and economic opportunities.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents reveal important insights into the composition of the surveyed population.

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender of Respondents		
Male	75	62.0
Female	46	38.0
Total	121	100.0
Age Range		
18–29	40	33.1
30–39	46	38.0
40–49	18	14.9
50–59	12	9.9
60 and above	5	4.1
Total	121	100.0
Educational Level		
Primary	13	10.7
Secondary	26	21.5
Vocational Training	32	26.4
Bachelor Degree	43	35.5
Master Degree or Higher	7	5.8
Total	121	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	49	40.5
Married	65	53.7
Divorced	4	3.3
Widowed	3	2.5
Total	121	100.0
Division		
Bardege-Layibi Division	83	68.6
Pece-Laroo Division	38	31.4
Total	121	100.0
Occupation		
Student	36	29.8
Self-Employed	40	33.1
Unemployed	18	14.9
Retired	2	1.7
Civil Servant	25	20.7
Total	121	100.0
Country of Origin		
Uganda	77	63.6

South Sudan	32	26.4
Sudan	10	8.3
Ethiopia	2	1.7
Total	121	100.0
Legal Status		
Refugee	95	78.5
Expatriates	11	9.1
Trade Trip	9	7.4
Tourist	6	5.0
Total	121	100.0
Length of Residence		
Less than 5 months	15	12.4
5 months to 1 year	21	17.4
1 to 2 years	30	24.8
More than 2 years	55	45.5
Total	121	100.0

Primary data 2024

The study on Urban Planning and Refugee Integration in Gulu City involved 121 respondents and revealed a relatively diverse participant profile. Male respondents constituted 62%, while females accounted for 38%, indicating a slightly male-dominated sample. In terms of age, the largest proportion (38%) was aged 30–39 years, followed by 33.1% aged 18–29 years. Respondents aged 40–49 years represented 14.9%, while those aged 50–59 and 60 years and above accounted for 9.9% and 4.1%, respectively. The predominance of respondents within the economically active age groups provides useful perspectives on urban services, employment and integration experiences.

The educational profile showed considerable variation among respondents. Those with bachelor's degrees constituted the largest group at 35.5%, followed by respondents with vocational training at 26.4%. Secondary education accounted for 21.5%, while 10.7% had completed primary education. Only 5.8% had attained a master's degree or higher. This variation suggests that respondents possessed different levels of educational exposure, which may influence their awareness of urban planning processes, access to services and ability to participate in city development initiatives. Marital status also varied, with 53.7% married and 40.5% single, while

3.3% were divorced and 2.5% widowed. These differences are relevant because household structures may shape housing requirements, access to services and patterns of social interaction.

The respondents were distributed across the two divisions of Gulu City, although the majority (68.6%) lived in Bardege-Layibi Division, compared with 31.4% in Pece-Laroo Division. This uneven distribution may reflect differences in settlement patterns, employment opportunities and access to urban services. Regarding occupation, self-employed respondents formed the largest group at 33.1%, followed by students at 29.8%. Civil servants represented 20.7%, while 14.9% were unemployed and only 1.7% were retired. The relatively high level of self-employment highlights the importance of informal economic activities in supporting livelihoods and suggests that urban planning should consider markets, business spaces and other facilities that support small-scale enterprises.

The study also demonstrated considerable diversity in respondents' countries of origin. Ugandan nationals constituted 63.6%, while South Sudanese accounted for 26.4%, Sudanese 8.3% and Ethiopians 1.7%. In terms of legal status, refugees represented the largest proportion at 78.5%, followed by expatriates at 9.1%, persons on trade trips at 7.4% and tourists at 5.0%. The presence of respondents from different national and legal backgrounds reinforces the need for urban planning approaches that recognise population diversity and promote equitable access to services. In particular, the sizeable refugee population demonstrates the importance of considering refugee needs within broader city development planning rather than treating refugee integration as a separate concern.

Finally, the length of residence indicated varying levels of attachment to Gulu City. Nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) had lived in the city for more than two years, while 24.8% had stayed for one to two years. Those who had lived in Gulu for five months to one year constituted 17.4%, while 12.4% had stayed for less than five months. The relatively large proportion of long-term residents suggests that many respondents had sufficient experience of the city's housing, healthcare, education, employment and social environments to provide meaningful views on refugee integration and urban planning.

4.2 Urban Planning Strategies Adopted by Gulu City

The first objective of the study was to explore the urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City. The objective focused on three dimensions of urban planning strategies, namely capacity building, participation, and social equity, particularly in relation to the integration of refugees into the urban environment. Quantitative findings are presented first for each dimension using descriptive statistics, followed by qualitative findings from key informants. The qualitative evidence is used to explain and deepen the interpretation of the quantitative results rather than repeating them.

4.2.1 Capacity-Building Strategies

The first dimension examined under urban planning strategies was capacity building. Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which Gulu City provides sensitization opportunities, promotes knowledge sharing, supports capacity-building partnerships, provides funding, and encourages continuous learning among refugees involved in urban planning. The results are presented in Table

Table 5: Capacity-Building Strategies Adopted

Capacity-building strategy	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Adequate sensitization opportunities for refugees	10.7	18.2	28.9	42.1	24.8	4.1	28.9	2.93	1.014
Knowledge sharing among refugees	7.4	15.7	23.1	43.0	27.3	6.6	33.9	3.10	0.995
Funding for refugees' capacity-building initiatives	8.3	18.2	26.4	52.1	19.0	2.5	21.5	2.89	0.893
Partnerships supporting refugee capacity building	7.4	3.3	10.7	53.7	27.3	8.3	35.5	3.26	0.936
Continuous learning in capacity-building programmes	6.6	9.9	16.5	45.5	30.6	7.4	38.0	3.22	0.962
Overall	**8.08**	**13.06**	**21.12**	**47.28**	**25.80**	**5.78**	**31.56**	**3.08**	**0.96**

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings in Table 5 indicate that capacity-building strategies adopted by Gulu City were generally moderate, as shown by the overall mean of 3.08. Among the individual indicators,

collaborative partnerships supporting refugee capacity building recorded the highest mean (M = 3.26, SD = 0.936), followed by continuous learning (M = 3.22, SD = 0.962) and knowledge sharing (M = 3.10, SD = 0.995). This suggests that collaboration among organisations and continued learning are relatively stronger components of the city's capacity-building approach.

However, funding for refugee capacity-building initiatives recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.89, SD = 0.893), followed by sensitization opportunities (M = 2.93, SD = 1.014). Only 21.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that adequate funding was available for refugee capacity-building initiatives, while 52.1% remained neutral. The high neutral response may indicate uncertainty among respondents regarding the availability, adequacy or visibility of funding. Similarly, the moderate rating for sensitization suggests that opportunities for refugees to acquire information about urban planning may not be sufficiently regular or accessible.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed level of capacity building by illustrating how city authorities and planning actors support refugees to acquire knowledge, skills and information required for participation in urban planning. The respondents generally acknowledged that Gulu City had undertaken efforts to strengthen refugee capacity through sensitization, knowledge sharing, partnerships, infrastructure-related initiatives and continuous engagement. Nevertheless, they also emphasized that inadequate resources, language differences, varying educational levels and logistical challenges continued to affect the effectiveness and reach of these initiatives.

Respondent 1 explained, *"The city has introduced different activities to help refugees understand urban planning issues. We provide information during community meetings and sensitization activities so that refugees can understand what is taking place in their communities."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This response indicates that sensitization is part of Gulu City's capacity-building approach. However, the quantitative findings showed that sensitization opportunities received a relatively low mean of 2.93. This suggests that although such activities exist, they may not be sufficiently regular, extensive or accessible to all refugees.

Respondent 2 noted, *"We have conducted community consultations and information-sharing meetings that specifically include refugees. These engagements help us understand their*

needs and also allow them to receive information about programmes affecting their communities." (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). The response demonstrates that knowledge sharing is incorporated into the city's planning activities. This finding is consistent with the quantitative result for knowledge sharing, which recorded a mean of 3.10. The moderate score suggests that information-sharing mechanisms are present but may still require greater consistency and wider coverage.

Respondent 3 observed, *"Different organisations work together to support activities for refugees. Through these partnerships, we are able to mobilise expertise and other forms of support that the city may not be able to provide on its own."* (Physical Planner, Code C, 2024). This statement highlights the contribution of collaborative partnerships to refugee capacity building. It supports the quantitative finding that partnerships recorded the highest mean among the capacity-building indicators at 3.26. The evidence suggests that collaboration among the city authorities, development actors and other organisations is an important strength in supporting refugee engagement.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"One of the challenges we face is that some activities require financial resources, yet the available funding is not always enough to reach everyone. This can affect the frequency of training, sensitization and other capacity-building activities."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This response provides an explanation for the relatively low mean of 2.89 recorded for funding. The finding suggests that resource limitations may constrain the scale and sustainability of capacity-building interventions even where there is institutional willingness to support refugee participation.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Language differences and differences in education sometimes make it difficult for refugees to understand technical planning information. We therefore have to find ways of communicating the information in forms that different groups can understand."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response demonstrates that capacity building is not simply a matter of providing information but also depends on whether refugees can understand and use that information. The finding helps explain the moderate ratings for sensitization and knowledge sharing and points to the importance of translation, simplified communication and context-specific training.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"We have made efforts to ensure that refugees are aware of the services and opportunities available to them. This includes providing information about healthcare and other services that can support their integration into the city."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response indicates that continuous information provision is considered part of supporting refugee integration. It complements the quantitative finding that continuous learning received a relatively high mean of 3.22. The evidence suggests that ongoing information and learning opportunities can strengthen refugees' understanding of urban services and planning processes.

4.2.2 Participation of Refugees in Urban Planning

The second dimension examined under Objective One was the participation of refugees in urban planning. Participation was assessed in terms of early consultation, feedback mechanisms, transparent communication, representation of marginalized populations, and feedback on how refugees' contributions influenced final planning decisions.

Table 6: Participation of Refugees in Urban Planning

Participation strategy	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Early consultation of refugees	6.6	9.9	16.5	53.7	25.6	4.1	29.8	3.11	0.883
Existence of feedback mechanisms	7.4	11.6	19.0	47.9	24.0	9.1	33.1	3.16	1.000
Transparent communication channels	4.1	10.7	14.9	46.3	26.4	12.4	38.8	3.32	0.968
Representation of marginalized populations	7.4	9.1	16.5	38.0	31.4	13.2	44.6	**3.34***	**1.06***
Feedback on how contributions influenced final plans	5.8	14.0	19.8	43.0	29.8	7.4	37.2	3.19	0.969
Overall	**6.26**	**11.06**	**17.32**	**45.78**	**27.44**	**9.24**	**36.68**	**3.22**	**0.97**

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings indicate that refugee participation in urban planning was moderate, with an overall mean of 3.22. Transparent communication channels recorded a relatively high mean of 3.32 (SD = 0.968), while representation of marginalized populations recorded the highest estimated mean

of 3.34 (SD = 1.06). These findings suggest that Gulu City has established communication and representation mechanisms through which refugees and other marginalized groups can engage in urban planning processes.

However, early consultation recorded the lowest mean of 3.11 (SD = 0.883). More than half of respondents (53.7%) were neutral about whether refugees were consulted at the early stages of urban planning. This finding suggests that although consultations occur, their timing, visibility or consistency may not always be clear to stakeholders. Early participation is important because affected communities have greater opportunity to influence planning decisions when they are engaged before major decisions are finalised.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed level of refugee participation by illustrating how refugees are involved in consultations, communication, representation and feedback processes. The respondents generally acknowledged that Gulu City had created opportunities for refugees to provide views on planning and integration issues. However, they also emphasized that meaningful participation was affected by language barriers, differences in educational background, logistical constraints and limitations in communicating how community contributions were incorporated into final decisions.

Respondent 1 explained, *"We conducted community consultations that specifically included refugees to gather their input on what they need for better integration. Their views are important because they help us understand the challenges they experience in the city."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response confirms that refugee consultation is incorporated into Gulu City's urban planning approach. However, the quantitative finding for early consultation recorded a mean of 3.11, suggesting that although consultations occur, their timing and consistency may not always be perceived as adequate by all respondents.

Respondent 2 noted, *"We try to involve refugees from the beginning of activities so that they can explain their needs before decisions are made. However, it is not always easy to reach every group, especially when activities are taking place in different communities."* (Physical Planner, Code C, 2024). This response demonstrates the importance of early involvement while also highlighting practical challenges in achieving comprehensive participation. It helps explain

the moderate rating for early consultation and suggests that geographical and logistical limitations may prevent some refugees from participating consistently.

Respondent 3 observed, *"There are communication channels through which information about planning activities is shared with communities. We use meetings and other forms of communication to make people aware of developments that may affect them."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This statement supports the quantitative finding that transparent communication channels received a relatively high mean of 3.32. The finding indicates that communication is one of the comparatively stronger components of refugee participation, although continued efforts are required to ensure that information reaches all groups.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"Some refugees find it difficult to participate fully because of language differences and different levels of education. Even when they attend meetings, they may not always understand the technical issues being discussed."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This response provides an important explanation for the moderate participation results. It indicates that attendance at consultation meetings should not automatically be interpreted as meaningful participation. The ability to understand planning information and express informed views is essential for participation to influence planning decisions.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"We make efforts to ensure that marginalised groups are represented during community consultations. Their views are considered when discussing issues concerning housing, services and other urban development matters."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response supports the quantitative finding that representation of marginalized populations was among the strongest participation indicators, with an estimated mean of 3.34. It suggests that Gulu City recognises the importance of ensuring that vulnerable groups are not completely excluded from planning discussions.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"Refugees are given opportunities to express their concerns, but sometimes they do not receive clear information about what happened after their views were presented. There is a need to strengthen feedback so that people can know whether their suggestions were considered."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response provides a useful explanation for the moderate ratings of feedback mechanisms and feedback on

contributions. Although mechanisms for collecting views exist, effective participation also requires demonstrating how those views influence subsequent decisions.

4.2.3 Social Equity Strategies

The third dimension examined under Objective One was social equity. Respondents assessed whether urban planning strategies promote equitable access to housing, economic opportunities, education and healthcare for refugees and other residents.

Table 7: Social Equity Strategies in Gulu City Urban Planning

Social equity strategy	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Policies address disparities in housing access	5.8	8.3	14.0	18.2	52.9	14.9	67.8	3.63	1.026
Equitable economic opportunities	3.3	5.0	8.3	19.8	49.6	22.3	71.9	3.83	0.946
Equal access to education	0.8	5.0	5.8	16.5	35.5	41.3	76.9	**4.13***	**0.92***
Equitable healthcare facility distribution	6.6	9.9	16.5	24.0	31.4	28.1	59.5	3.64	1.182
Housing options for all income levels	4.1	12.4	16.5	19.0	35.5	28.9	64.5	3.73	1.133
Overall	**4.12**	**8.12**	**12.22**	**19.50**	**40.98**	**27.10**	**68.12**	**3.79**	**1.08**

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings in Table 7 indicate that social equity was the strongest dimension of the urban planning strategies examined, with an overall mean of 3.79. Equal access to education recorded the highest level of agreement, with 76.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing and an estimated mean of 4.13. This was followed by equitable economic opportunities, which recorded a mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.946). Housing options for different income levels recorded a mean of 3.73 (SD = 1.133), while equitable healthcare distribution recorded a mean of 3.64 (SD = 1.182).

The findings suggest that respondents generally perceived Gulu City's urban planning approach as promoting equitable access to important services and opportunities. The relatively high ratings for education and economic opportunities indicate that refugee integration is being addressed within broader urban development initiatives rather than through refugee-specific interventions alone.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed level of social equity by illustrating how city authorities address access to housing, education, healthcare and economic opportunities for refugees and local residents. The respondents generally acknowledged that Gulu City's planning policies and programmes aim to promote non-discriminatory access to essential services and opportunities. Nevertheless, they also emphasized that challenges remain in ensuring that these services and opportunities are distributed equitably across different neighbourhoods and socioeconomic groups.

Respondent 1 explained, *"Our policies aim to ensure that refugees can access housing, education, and health services without discrimination. This is vital for their successful integration."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response indicates that social equity is incorporated into Gulu City's policy approach to refugee integration. It supports the quantitative findings, which showed relatively high levels of agreement concerning access to housing, education and healthcare. The evidence suggests that non-discrimination is regarded as an important principle guiding the city's planning interventions.

Respondent 2 noted, *"We have made efforts to ensure that refugees are aware of healthcare services available to them, including mental health support. Information is important because some people may not know where to obtain the services they need."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response demonstrates that healthcare inclusion involves not only the availability of facilities but also awareness of available services. It complements the quantitative finding that equitable healthcare facility distribution recorded a mean of 3.64, although the relatively high standard deviation indicates differences in respondents' perceptions of healthcare access.

Respondent 3 observed, *"The city is working to improve access to markets and other economic spaces so that both refugees and local residents can participate in economic activities. The intention is to create opportunities that benefit different groups within the city."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This statement supports the quantitative finding that equitable economic opportunities recorded a relatively high mean of 3.83. It indicates that economic integration is being addressed through urban planning interventions that provide spaces for commercial activities and interaction between refugees and host communities.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"Our planning decisions are heavily influenced by national policies on refugee integration and local development strategies that prioritize inclusivity."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This response shows that social equity in Gulu City is influenced by both national policy frameworks and local development priorities. It helps explain the relatively strong quantitative results by demonstrating that inclusive planning is supported institutionally rather than being limited to isolated projects.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Housing remains important because refugees need safe and affordable places to live. We try to ensure that housing and other services are accessible without discrimination, but affordability and availability can still be challenges."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response provides a deeper explanation for the quantitative findings on housing. Although 67.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that policies addressed housing disparities, the mean of 3.63 was lower than the ratings for education and economic opportunities. This suggests that housing equity has improved but remains more challenging to achieve consistently.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"Education is one of the areas where access has improved because both refugees and local residents can use the available education services. Education helps young people to integrate and participate more effectively in the community."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response supports the quantitative finding that equal access to education was the strongest social equity indicator, with 76.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing and an estimated mean of approximately 4.13. The evidence suggests that education represents a particularly strong area of perceived inclusion within the city.

4.3 To Assess the Extent of Urban Refugees' Integration in Gulu City

The second objective of the study was to assess the extent of urban refugees' integration in Gulu City. The assessment focused on four major dimensions, namely access to housing, access to health services, access to education services, and access to economic opportunities. These dimensions were selected because successful urban integration involves more than physical settlement; it also requires access to essential services, opportunities for self-reliance, social acceptance, security and freedom from discriminatory treatment.

4.3.1 Access to Housing

The first dimension used to assess the extent of urban refugees' integration was access to housing. The assessment considered the availability of housing, security of refugees' current accommodation, affordability, experiences of discrimination and the extent to which housing contributes to refugees' integration within the local community.

Table 8: Access to Housing among Urban Refugees in Gulu City

Statement on Access to Housing	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Housing options are available to all residents in Gulu City	6.6	13.2	19.8	12.4	42.1	25.6	67.8	3.67	1.186
Refugees are safe and secure in their current housing situation	5.8	5.8	11.7	16.7	33.3	37.5	70.8	3.91*	1.10*
Refugees face challenges in finding affordable housing	15.0	19.2	34.2	22.5	32.5	10.8	43.3	3.05	1.249
Refugees experienced discrimination when accessing housing	15.0	15.8	30.8	28.3	31.7	9.2	40.8	3.04	1.205
Refugees are integrated into the local community through housing	2.5	14.2	16.7	18.3	44.2	20.0	64.2	3.66*	1.00*
Overall	**8.98**	**13.64**	**22.64**	**19.64**	**36.76**	**20.62**	**57.38**	**3.47***	**1.15***

Source: Primary data, 2024.

Note. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. The affordability and discrimination statements are negatively worded, meaning that agreement

indicates a challenge rather than a positive integration outcome. The starred statistics should be verified against the raw dataset before final submission because the original output contained impossible maximum values for a five-point Likert scale.

The findings in Table 8 indicate that access to housing among urban refugees in Gulu City was moderately favourable, although the experience was not uniform across all households. Housing availability received a mean of 3.67, with 67.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that housing options were available to residents. Similarly, 70.8% agreed or strongly agreed that refugees were safe and secure in their current housing situation. These results indicate that a substantial proportion of refugees have been able to establish relatively secure accommodation, which provides an important foundation for settlement and participation in urban life.

The results concerning housing affordability present a more complex picture. Although 43.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees faced challenges in finding affordable housing, 34.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 22.5% remained neutral. This variation suggests that housing affordability is influenced by differences in household income, employment status, location and household size. Consequently, the availability of housing should not be interpreted as evidence that all refugees can obtain accommodation that is affordable and appropriate to their circumstances.

Experiences of discrimination also indicate that access to housing extends beyond physical availability. About 40.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees experienced discrimination when accessing housing, while 30.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.04 demonstrates a mixed experience among respondents. This suggests that although housing policies and market opportunities may provide accommodation, social attitudes and perceptions surrounding refugee status can still influence the ability of some refugees to secure housing on equal terms with other residents.

The finding that 64.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees were integrated into the local community through housing further demonstrates the social importance of accommodation. Housing provides more than shelter because residential stability enables refugees to interact with neighbours, access local services and participate in community activities. Overall,

the quantitative evidence indicates that housing contributes positively to refugee settlement in Gulu City, but affordability and discrimination remain important constraints that prevent the experience from being uniformly positive.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed levels of housing access by illustrating refugees' experiences with accommodation, security, affordability and relationships with landlords and host communities. The respondents generally acknowledged that housing options existed and that city policies sought to promote safe accommodation for refugees and other residents. However, they also identified affordability, discrimination, location and differences in household income as factors that influence the quality of refugees' housing experiences. These accounts help explain why the quantitative findings indicate moderate rather than complete integration through housing.

Respondent 1 explained, *"Housing policies in Gulu prioritize the safety and security of all residents, including refugees. We want to ensure that they have a place to call home."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This response demonstrates the importance attached to housing security within the city's approach to refugee integration. It supports the relatively favourable finding that 70.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees were safe and secure in their current housing situations. The response suggests that policy attention to security has contributed to the positive perception of residential stability.

Respondent 2 noted, *"There are still barriers to accessing housing, particularly for refugees. Discrimination in the housing market remains a challenge."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response provides a direct explanation for the finding that 40.8% of respondents reported experiences of housing discrimination. It demonstrates that the existence of accommodation does not necessarily guarantee equal treatment. Refugees may therefore encounter social barriers even where physical housing options are available, making discrimination an important issue for further policy attention.

Respondent 3 observed, *"Some refugees are able to find suitable accommodation, especially those who have stable sources of income, but those with limited income often struggle to find houses that they can afford."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This statement helps

explain the mixed quantitative results concerning affordability. It indicates that economic resources strongly influence housing choices and that refugees with unstable incomes may be pushed towards less suitable or less secure accommodation. The finding therefore demonstrates the connection between housing and the wider economic circumstances of refugee households.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"The location of housing is also important because refugees prefer areas where they can access markets, schools, health facilities and transport. When accommodation is far from these services, integration becomes more difficult."* (Physical Planner, Code C, 2024). This response highlights the spatial dimension of housing integration. Suitable accommodation should not only be available but should also be located within reasonable reach of essential services and economic opportunities. This finding suggests that urban planning and housing policies need to consider accessibility and connectivity alongside the number of housing units available.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Some refugees have developed good relationships with their landlords and neighbours, while others experience misunderstandings because of their refugee status. These differences affect how comfortable they feel in the community."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response illustrates the role of social relationships in housing-based integration. Positive relationships with neighbours and landlords can strengthen refugees' sense of belonging, while negative perceptions can create social isolation even when accommodation is physically secure.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"Refugees who have lived in the city for some time are increasingly becoming part of the communities where they stay. They interact with neighbours, participate in local activities and use the same services as other residents."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This statement provides further explanation for the relatively high proportion of respondents who perceived housing as contributing to local community integration. It suggests that residential stability creates opportunities for repeated social interaction and gradual development of relationships between refugees and host communities.

4.3.2 Access to Health Services

The second dimension examined was access to health services. The assessment considered awareness of mental health support, physical access to healthcare, information about healthcare rights, experiences of discrimination by healthcare providers and satisfaction with health services. These indicators were intended to establish whether refugees can obtain appropriate healthcare and whether they experience the health system on an equitable basis.

Table 9: Access to Health Services among Urban Refugees in Gulu City

Health-service indicator	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Refugees are aware of mental health support services	0.0	2.5	2.5	15.0	56.7	25.0	81.7	4.05*	0.82*
Refugees have easy access to healthcare services	2.5	0.0	2.5	15.0	50.8	30.8	81.7	4.08*	0.84*
Refugees receive adequate information on healthcare rights	2.5	7.4	9.9	23.1	41.3	25.6	66.9	3.80	0.988
Refugees experienced discrimination in healthcare	19.8	17.4	37.2	23.1	27.3	12.4	39.7	2.95	1.322
Refugees feel satisfied with healthcare services	1.7	5.8	7.4	23.1	44.6	24.8	69.4	3.85	0.919
Overall	**5.30**	**6.62**	**11.90**	**19.86**	**44.14**	**23.72**	**67.88**	**3.75***	**0.98***

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings in Table 9 indicate that access to health services among urban refugees was relatively favourable. Awareness of mental health support recorded 81.7% agreement or strong agreement, while the same proportion reported agreement or strong agreement that refugees had easy access to healthcare services. These findings suggest that refugees are generally able to identify and utilise health facilities within Gulu City and that awareness of specialised support has also improved.

Information concerning healthcare rights recorded a somewhat lower but still positive level of agreement, with 66.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This indicates that many refugees receive information about their rights and available services, although a considerable proportion either remained neutral or disagreed. The finding is important because awareness of

healthcare rights can influence whether refugees seek treatment, understand their entitlements and respond appropriately when they experience difficulties within the health system.

Satisfaction with healthcare services was also positive, with 69.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, 39.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees experienced discrimination in healthcare. Because this is a negatively worded item, the result indicates that a significant minority continues to experience unequal treatment. Thus, the relatively positive assessment of healthcare availability should not be interpreted as complete equality in service experiences.

Taken together, the findings indicate that healthcare is one of the more favourable areas of refugee integration in Gulu City. Physical access, awareness and satisfaction are relatively strong, but discrimination and information gaps remain. The results therefore point to a distinction between access to healthcare and quality of inclusion within healthcare services. Ensuring that refugees can reach health facilities is necessary, but equitable treatment and awareness of rights are equally important for meaningful integration.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed levels of healthcare access by illustrating refugees' experiences with health facilities, mental health support, healthcare information and treatment by service providers. The respondents generally acknowledged that awareness and access had improved, partly through targeted information and collaboration among relevant actors. Nevertheless, they also identified discrimination, communication difficulties and social stigma as factors that may discourage some refugees from fully utilising available services.

Respondent 1 explained, *"We have conducted awareness campaigns about healthcare services, including mental health support, specifically targeting the refugee population."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response supports the high quantitative rating for awareness of mental health services. It suggests that targeted awareness activities have helped refugees identify available forms of healthcare support and may have reduced information barriers.

Respondent 2 noted, *"Refugees can access health facilities in the city, and many of them use the same services as other residents. The main concern is ensuring that everyone knows where to obtain the services they need."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response reinforces

the strong finding concerning physical access to healthcare. It also highlights that service availability must be accompanied by clear information so that refugees can identify appropriate facilities and services.

Respondent 3 observed, *"Some refugees still report feeling unwelcome or treated differently when seeking medical assistance, which can discourage them from accessing necessary services."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response helps explain why discrimination remains a concern despite the generally favourable healthcare results. Negative treatment can reduce trust in service providers and may discourage refugees from seeking care when they need it.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"Healthcare information is sometimes difficult for refugees to understand, particularly where technical terms are used. Communication in a way that people can easily understand is therefore important."* (Physical Planner, Code C, 2024). This statement highlights the importance of communication in achieving effective healthcare access. It suggests that information should be provided in forms that account for language and educational differences among refugees.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Mental health support is increasingly recognised, but not all refugees are comfortable discussing mental health problems because of stigma and other social concerns."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response provides an additional explanation for the high awareness of mental health services. Awareness may be increasing, but social attitudes can still affect whether refugees actually seek assistance.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"The city has worked with different organisations to improve information about healthcare services. These partnerships have helped refugees know where to go when they need medical assistance."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This finding helps explain the positive results concerning healthcare awareness and accessibility. It demonstrates that collaboration can improve communication and reduce informational barriers to service utilisation.

4.3.3 Access to Education Services

The third dimension examined was access to education services. The assessment considered refugees' awareness of vocational training programmes, access to education for children, experiences of discrimination, satisfaction with educational services and perceptions concerning the importance of education for future prospects.

Table 10: Access to Education Services among Urban Refugees in Gulu City

Education indicator	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Refugees are aware of vocational training	2.5	5.8	8.3	16.5	49.6	24.8	74.4	3.89*	0.95*
Refugees have access to education for children	4.1	3.3	7.4	19.8	28.1	44.6	72.7	4.06	1.075
Refugees encountered discrimination in education	23.1	14.0	37.2	20.7	25.6	16.5	42.1	2.98	1.414
Refugees are satisfied with education services	4.1	4.1	8.3	19.8	40.5	31.4	71.9	3.91	1.025
Education is essential for refugees' future	0.0	5.0	5.0	22.3	38.0	33.9	71.9	4.02*	0.89*
Overall	**6.76**	**6.44**	**13.24**	**19.82**	**36.36**	**30.24**	**66.60**	**3.77***	**1.07***

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings in Table 10 indicate that access to education services among urban refugees was generally favourable. Awareness of vocational training programmes was relatively high, with 74.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Similarly, 72.7% agreed or strongly agreed that refugee children had access to education. These results suggest that education services are accessible to a substantial proportion of refugee households and that vocational training is increasingly recognised as an avenue for developing skills.

Satisfaction with education services was also positive, with 71.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. A similar proportion considered education essential for refugees' future prospects. This finding indicates that education is viewed not only as a basic service but also as an important mechanism for improving future livelihoods, social mobility and participation in the wider community.

Despite these positive findings, 42.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees encountered discrimination in educational settings. Because the statement is negatively worded, the result identifies a significant challenge. Refugee children may therefore have access to schools while still experiencing social exclusion, bullying or unequal treatment. This distinction is important because physical access to education alone does not guarantee an inclusive educational experience.

Overall, the results suggest that education represents a relatively strong component of refugee integration in Gulu City, but the benefits are not experienced equally by all refugees. Access, awareness and satisfaction are relatively high, whereas discrimination remains a concern. The findings therefore imply that educational integration requires attention to both availability of educational opportunities and the social environment in which refugees learn.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed levels of educational access by illustrating the availability of schooling, vocational training and the experiences of refugee children within educational institutions. The respondents generally recognised education as an important pathway towards long-term integration and self-reliance. However, they also identified discrimination, affordability and social acceptance as issues that may affect the extent to which refugee learners benefit fully from available educational opportunities.

Respondent 1 explained, *"We strive to ensure that refugee children have access to quality education, as it is key to their future."* (City Staff Surveyor, Code F, 2024). This response supports the relatively high quantitative rating for access to education and demonstrates the importance attached to educational inclusion. It also reinforces the finding that education is considered central to refugees' long-term prospects.

Respondent 2 noted, *"Many refugee children are able to attend schools together with children from the host community. This interaction helps them learn and develop relationships beyond their immediate refugee communities."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response illustrates the social value of education. Schools provide opportunities for refugee and host-community children to interact, thereby extending integration beyond the classroom and contributing to social cohesion.

Respondent 3 observed, *"Some refugee children face bullying or exclusion in schools, which can hinder their educational experience."* (Physical Planner, Code C, 2024). This statement provides a direct explanation for the 42.1% of respondents who reported discrimination in educational settings. It demonstrates that access to a school place does not necessarily guarantee acceptance or equal treatment within the school environment.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"Vocational training is also important because not every refugee will follow the academic education route. Skills training gives young people and adults opportunities to acquire skills that can help them earn a living."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This response explains the relatively high awareness of vocational training programmes. It also links education with economic participation by showing how skills development can improve refugees' ability to pursue livelihoods.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Education helps refugees become more independent because it gives them knowledge and skills that can be used to access employment and participate in the community."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response provides an explanation for the strong perception that education is important for refugees' future prospects. Education can contribute to integration by improving individual capabilities and expanding opportunities for participation in society.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"There are still challenges for some refugee families, particularly those who have limited financial resources. Even when schools are available, the costs associated with education can affect whether children remain in school."* (Division Mayor, Code D, 2024). This statement introduces the financial dimension of educational access. It indicates that formal availability of schools does not completely eliminate household-level barriers to sustained participation.

4.3.4 Access to Economic Opportunities

The fourth dimension used to assess the extent of refugee integration was access to economic opportunities. The assessment examined stable income-generating activities, barriers to formal employment, experiences of unfair workplace treatment, financial empowerment and the perceived importance of economic opportunities for integration.

Table 11: Access to Economic Opportunities among Urban Refugees in Gulu City

Economic opportunity indicator	SD (%)	D (%)	SD+D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	A+SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Refugees have stable income-generating activities	4.1	11.6	15.7	30.6	33.9	19.0	52.9	3.53*	1.09*
Refugees face barriers to formal employment	9.1	9.9	19.0	23.1	38.0	19.0	57.0	3.50*	1.19*
Refugees experienced unfair workplace treatment	20.7	16.5	37.2	28.1	22.3	11.6	33.9	2.88*	1.31*
Refugees are financially empowered	3.3	3.3	6.6	34.7	43.0	14.9	57.9	3.61*	0.94*
Economic opportunity is crucial for integration	4.1	2.5	6.6	19.8	39.7	33.1	72.7	3.99*	0.98*
Overall	**8.26**	**8.76**	**17.02**	**27.26**	**35.38**	**19.52**	**54.88**	**3.50***	**1.10***

Source: Primary data, 2024.

The findings in Table 11 indicate that economic integration among urban refugees was **moderate** and comparatively more constrained than their access to healthcare and education. Only 52.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees had stable income-generating activities, while 57.9% agreed or strongly agreed that refugees were financially empowered. These results suggest that refugees participate in economic activities but that stable and sustainable livelihoods remain difficult for a considerable proportion of households.

The importance of economic participation was strongly recognised, with 72.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing that economic opportunities are crucial for integration. This finding indicates that respondents associate employment, business activity and income generation with the ability to meet household needs and participate independently in urban life. Economic participation

therefore appears to be understood as an important bridge between access to basic services and longer-term self-reliance.

At the same time, 57.0% agreed or strongly agreed that refugees faced barriers to formal employment. This represents a substantial constraint because formal employment can provide more predictable income and greater economic security. Although only 33.9% agreed or strongly agreed that refugees experienced unfair treatment in workplaces, this remains significant because discriminatory experiences can discourage refugees from seeking or retaining employment.

Overall, the findings indicate that economic opportunities represent an important but relatively less secure dimension of refugee integration. Refugees are participating in income-generating activities and recognise the importance of economic self-reliance, but formal employment barriers and limited financial capacity constrain progress. The evidence therefore suggests that improving access to employment, entrepreneurship finance and fair workplace practices would strengthen refugees' ability to achieve more sustainable integration.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the observed levels of economic integration by illustrating refugees' involvement in businesses, markets and employment, together with the barriers that affect their ability to secure stable livelihoods. The respondents generally recognised economic participation as essential to self-reliance and community integration. However, they also identified documentation requirements, work permits, limited access to capital and workplace discrimination as factors that restrict refugees' economic opportunities.

Respondent 1 explained, *"Economic empowerment is essential for refugees. We aim to create markets and job opportunities that are accessible to them."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This response supports the strong quantitative recognition of economic opportunities as an important component of integration. It also demonstrates the role of urban planning in creating physical spaces where refugees can engage in commercial activities and interact economically with host communities.

Respondent 2 noted, *"Many refugees are unable to secure formal jobs because of documentation requirements and work permits. As a result, some depend on small businesses and informal activities to support their families."* (Division City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This response

provides a clear explanation for the relatively high proportion of respondents reporting barriers to formal employment. It suggests that refugees may participate actively in the economy without necessarily having access to stable formal employment.

Respondent 3 observed, *"Many refugees are starting to establish businesses and contribute to the local economy, which is a positive sign of integration."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This response supports the quantitative finding that 52.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that refugees had stable income-generating activities. It illustrates the role of entrepreneurship as an alternative pathway through which refugees can generate income and contribute to the local economy.

Respondent 4 remarked, *"Small businesses are important for refugees because they provide income even when formal employment is difficult to obtain. However, access to capital remains a challenge for many people who want to expand their businesses."* (Population Officer, Code B, 2024). This response provides an explanation for the moderate rating of financial empowerment. Refugees may have entrepreneurial capacity and engage in small businesses, but insufficient capital can limit the scale, stability and profitability of those activities.

Respondent 5 highlighted, *"Some refugees experience difficulties when looking for work because employers may prefer local workers or may not understand the documents held by refugees."* (City Clerk, Code E, 2024). This statement illustrates the institutional and social barriers that can restrict refugees' access to employment. It complements the quantitative finding that barriers to formal employment remain one of the major constraints on economic integration.

Respondent 6 pointed out, *"Markets provide an opportunity for refugees and local residents to interact economically. When refugees are able to operate businesses alongside local people, it improves their self-reliance and also contributes to the local economy."* (City Engineer, Code A, 2024). This response demonstrates that economic participation has broader social effects beyond income generation. Shared commercial spaces can increase interaction, strengthen relationships and reduce economic separation between refugees and host communities.

4.4 To Determine the Relationship between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration in Gulu City

The third objective of the study was to determine the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City. The analysis focused on three dimensions of urban planning strategies, namely capacity building, participation, and social equity, and examined their association with the overall level of urban refugee integration. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to establish the direction and strength of the relationships. The results are presented in Table 4.8, followed by qualitative findings that provide explanations for the statistical relationships.

Table 12: Correlations showing Relationship between urban planning and refugees' integration

Correlations showing Relationship between urban planning and refugees' integration		(1)	(2)	(3)	Urban Refugees' Integration
1. Capacity Building	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	132			
2. Participation	Pearson Correlation	.256*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049			
	N	132	132		
3. Social Equity	Pearson Correlation	.429**	.455**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	132	132	132	
Urban Refugees' Integration	Pearson Correlation	.778**	.581**	.890**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.099	
	N	132	132	132	132

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

The correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between social equity and urban refugees' integration, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.890$, $p < 0.01$) **. This significant finding indicates that higher levels of social equity are associated with greater integration of urban

refugees. It suggests that when social policies and practices prioritize equity, urban refugees experience a more inclusive environment, facilitating their ability to integrate successfully into the local community.

Furthermore, the correlation between capacity building and urban refugees' integration was also substantial, with a coefficient of ($r = 0.778$, $p < 0.01$) **. This result highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives in enhancing urban refugees' integration. When resources and support systems are established to develop the skills and capabilities of refugees, it significantly contributes to their overall integration within urban settings.

Additionally, participation demonstrated a moderate yet significant correlation with urban refugees' integration, evidenced by ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.01$) **. This finding underscores the value of involving urban refugees in participatory processes, as increased participation can lead to better integration outcomes. Engaging refugees in decision-making and planning processes not only empowers them but also helps build stronger connections within the community, ultimately enhancing their integration experience.

The qualitative findings provided further explanation of the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City. Participants generally indicated that planning approaches influence integration through participation, housing provision, access to services, transportation, economic opportunities, and community interaction. Their responses suggest that integration is stronger where refugees are considered within planning processes and where urban facilities are designed to serve both refugees and host communities. At the same time, respondents identified gaps in representation, affordability, accessibility, documentation, and social relations that can weaken the effectiveness of planning interventions.

Respondent 1 explained that *"planning must consider all stakeholders, including refugees, because their experiences and needs should guide decisions"* (Respondent 1, 2024). This view demonstrates that participation is not merely an administrative procedure but a means of ensuring that planning decisions respond to the realities of different population groups. It complements the quantitative finding showing a positive relationship between participation and refugee integration. When refugees are given opportunities to express their needs and contribute to planning

discussions, urban interventions are more likely to address issues affecting their daily lives and consequently strengthen their connection to the wider community.

Respondent 2 observed that some urban initiatives incorporate refugee perspectives, although representation in planning meetings remains limited. The respondent noted that *"when refugees are not adequately represented in planning meetings, decisions may not fully address their needs"* (Respondent 2, 2024). This finding provides an important qualification to the positive quantitative relationship between participation and integration. Although consultation mechanisms may exist, their effectiveness depends on whether refugee voices are meaningfully incorporated into decision-making. Limited representation can result in plans that appear inclusive at policy level but fail to respond adequately to practical concerns such as settlement locations, transportation, employment spaces, and access to public facilities.

Respondent 3 explained that urban development initiatives increasingly consider housing needs for both local residents and refugees, including the development of mixed communities. The respondent stated that *"the location of housing is important because it determines access to markets, schools, health facilities and transport"* (Respondent 3, 2024). This perspective illustrates how the spatial dimension of planning contributes to integration. Housing can facilitate social interaction and access to opportunities when it is appropriately located, but poorly planned settlements can isolate refugees from essential services and economic activities. The qualitative evidence therefore helps explain the strong association between social equity and refugee integration reported quantitatively.

Respondent 4 raised concerns about discrimination in housing allocation, noting that *"discrimination in housing allocation can still affect refugees when they are looking for accommodation"* (Respondent 4, 2024). This observation indicates that the availability of housing alone does not guarantee meaningful integration. Refugees may have access to accommodation while continuing to experience social exclusion or unequal treatment. The finding adds depth to the quantitative results by showing that social equity involves not only physical access to urban resources but also fairness in how those resources are distributed and experienced by different groups within the city.

Respondent 5 highlighted the importance of accessible public services, explaining that *"essential services are accessible to everyone, including refugees"* (Respondent 5, 2024). Respondent 6, however, cautioned that some refugee communities remain located far from important services, making access difficult. The respondent explained that *"some refugee communities are far from services, and this makes it difficult for them to access what they need"* (Respondent 6, 2024). Together, these accounts show that the effectiveness of urban planning depends on the geographical distribution of infrastructure and services. They support the quantitative evidence of a positive association between planning strategies and integration while demonstrating that proximity, affordability, and physical accessibility determine whether planned services actually benefit refugees.

4.5 Moderating Effect of Policies Governing Refugees' Integration on the Relationship Between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration

This section presents findings on the role of policies governing refugees' integration in influencing the relationship between urban planning strategies and refugee integration in Gulu City. The analysis was undertaken using hierarchical regression, in which capacity building, participation, and social equity were entered in the first model, followed by policies governing refugees' integration in the second model.

Table 13: Model Summary for Hierarchical Regression

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate	R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.177	.031	.006	16.24729	.031	1.257	3	116	.293
2	.490	.240	.214	14.45545	.208	31.540	1	115	<.001

Note. Dependent variable = Urban Refugees' Integration. Model 1 predictors = Capacity Building, Participation, and Social Equity. Model 2 predictors = Capacity Building, Participation, Social Equity, and Policies Governing Refugees' Integration. $N = 120$.

The model summary indicates that Model 1 had a weak explanatory capacity. The three urban planning variables jointly produced an R of .177 and an R^2 of .031, meaning that they explained approximately 3.1% of the variation in urban refugee integration. The adjusted R^2 was only .006,

while the change in R^2 was .031 and was not statistically significant, $p = .293$. This suggests that the initial combination of planning variables provided limited explanatory power when considered simultaneously.

A substantial improvement occurred after policies governing refugees' integration were added in Model 2. The multiple correlation coefficient increased from $R = .177$ to $R = .490$, while R^2 increased from .031 to .240. Thus, the final model explained approximately 24.0% of the variance in urban refugee integration. The adjusted R^2 of .214 indicates that approximately 21.4% of the variance remained explained after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the model.

Most importantly, the addition of policies governing refugee integration produced an R^2 change of .208, indicating that the policy variable contributed an additional 20.8 percentage points of explained variance. The corresponding F change was 31.540 with one numerator degree of freedom and 115 denominator degrees of freedom, and the change was statistically significant, $p < .001$. This provides strong evidence that policies governing refugee integration make a significant additional contribution to explaining refugee integration beyond the three urban planning dimensions.

The findings imply that the policy environment is an important institutional condition for achieving meaningful refugee integration. Urban planning interventions such as housing development, participatory planning, service provision, and creation of economic spaces may produce stronger outcomes when supported by policies that explicitly recognize refugee rights and needs. Nevertheless, because the analysis does not include an interaction term, the result should be described as a significant incremental contribution rather than definitive statistical moderation.

Table 14: ANOVA Results for Hierarchical Regression Models

Model	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	995.325	3	331.775	1.257	.293
	Residual	30,621.042	116	263.974		
	Total	31,616.367	119			
2	Regression	7,585.978	4	1,896.494	9.076	<.001
	Residual	24,030.389	115	208.960		
	Total	31,616.367	119			

Note. Dependent variable = Urban Refugees' Integration. Model 1 predictors = Capacity Building, Participation, and Social Equity. Model 2 predictors = Capacity Building, Participation, Social Equity, and Policies Governing Refugees' Integration. $N = 120$.

The ANOVA results show a clear difference between the two regression models. Model 1, comprising capacity building, participation, and social equity, was not statistically significant, $F(3, 116) = 1.257$, $p = .293$. This indicates that the three urban planning dimensions, when entered together in the initial model, did not provide sufficient evidence of a statistically significant prediction of refugee integration. The relatively large residual sum of squares also indicates that substantial variation in refugee integration remained unexplained by these variables in Model 1.

The addition of policies governing refugees' integration in Model 2 substantially improved the overall regression model. The model was statistically significant, $F(4, 115) = 9.076$, $p < .001$. The regression sum of squares increased from 995.325 in Model 1 to 7,585.978 in Model 2, while the residual sum of squares declined from 30,621.042 to 24,030.389. This indicates that the inclusion of policies governing refugee integration considerably increased the amount of variation accounted for by the model.

The results therefore suggest that policies governing refugees' integration provide important additional explanatory information beyond capacity building, participation, and social equity. In practical terms, urban planning strategies may have greater relevance for refugee integration where they operate within a supportive policy environment. Policies can provide the institutional direction through which housing, health, education, employment, participation, and social protection interventions are translated into practical benefits for refugees.

However, the ANOVA results should not be interpreted as proof of moderation by themselves. A statistical moderation effect requires an interaction term between the urban planning variable(s) and the policy variable. The supplied analysis is a hierarchical regression showing the incremental contribution of policies governing refugee integration, rather than a formal interaction-based moderation test.

Table 15: Regression Coefficients for Models Predicting Urban Refugee Integration

Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
1	Constant	62.871	8.087	—	7.775	<.001
	Capacity Building	.150	.441	.034	.340	.734
	Participation	.252	.263	.096	.958	.340
	Social Equity	.358	.261	.126	1.368	.174
2	Constant	46.023	7.795	—	5.904	<.001
	Capacity Building	-.073	.394	-.017	-.186	.853
	Participation	.270	.234	.103	1.152	.252
	Social Equity	.226	.234	.079	.965	.336
	Policies Governing Refugees' Integration	1.098	.195	.462	5.616	<.001

Note. Dependent variable = Urban Refugees' Integration. $N = 120$.

The coefficient results for Model 1 show that none of the three urban planning variables independently predicted refugee integration at the conventional 5% significance level. Capacity building had a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient, $B = .150$, $\beta = .034$, $p = .734$. Participation also had a positive coefficient, $B = .252$, $\beta = .096$, but the relationship was not statistically significant, $p = .340$. Similarly, social equity recorded $B = .358$, $\beta = .126$, with $p = .174$. These results indicate that, when the three planning dimensions were considered simultaneously, none made a statistically significant unique contribution to refugee integration in the first model.

The results changed considerably after policies governing refugees' integration were introduced in Model 2. The policy variable had a positive and statistically significant coefficient, $B = 1.098$, $\beta = .462$, $t = 5.616$, $p < .001$. This means that, holding the other predictors constant, a one-unit increase in the policy measure was associated with an estimated 1.098-unit increase in the predicted refugee-integration score. The standardized coefficient of .462 indicates that policies governing refugee integration made the strongest unique contribution among the predictors included in the final model.

Interestingly, the coefficients for the original planning variables became statistically insignificant after the policy variable was introduced. Capacity building had $B = -.073$, $\beta = -.017$, $p = .853$; participation had $B = .270$, $\beta = .103$, $p = .252$; and social equity had $B = .226$, $\beta = .079$, $p = .336$. These results should not be interpreted to mean that capacity building, participation, or social

equity are unimportant to refugee integration. Rather, they indicate that their unique statistical contribution was not significant after accounting for the policy variable in this particular regression model.

Overall, the quantitative evidence demonstrates that policies governing refugee integration substantially improve the explanatory performance of the regression model. The increase in R^2 from .031 to .240 and the significant R^2 change of .208 indicate that the policy variable adds considerable explanatory value. The positive and significant coefficient for policies further suggests that a stronger policy environment is associated with better refugee-integration outcomes. These findings support the argument that urban planning cannot be considered independently from the institutional and policy environment within which planning decisions are implemented.

The interpretation should, however, recognize the limitations of the analysis. Hierarchical regression assumes appropriate linear relationships, independence of observations, absence of problematic influential outliers, and acceptable levels of multicollinearity and normally distributed residuals. These diagnostic assumptions should be verified from the raw dataset and statistical output before the final dissertation is submitted. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the data means that the regression results demonstrate statistical association rather than definitive causation. Most importantly, a formal test of moderation requires creation and testing of an interaction term, such as Urban Planning Strategies × Policies Governing Refugees' Integration. The current tables establish the significant additional contribution of the policy variable but do not, on their own, establish an interaction-based moderation effect.

The qualitative findings provided additional insight into how policies governing refugees' integration shape the effectiveness of urban planning interventions in Gulu City. Respondents described policies as an important institutional framework for addressing housing, healthcare, education, employment, protection, and participation. However, the interviews also revealed differences between policy intentions and practical implementation. The findings indicate that the contribution of urban planning to refugee integration is strengthened when policies are clearly communicated, adequately implemented, monitored, and supported by cooperation among government institutions, communities, refugee representatives, and development partners.

Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of inclusive housing policies in creating secure living conditions for refugees. The respondent stated, *"Our housing policies are designed to create safe environments for everyone. We are working to ensure that refugees feel secure in their homes"* (Respondent 1, 2024). This response indicates that policy provisions can provide an institutional basis for inclusive urban development by requiring attention to the safety and welfare of different population groups. Nevertheless, the existence of such provisions needs to be accompanied by effective implementation at community level. The finding helps explain why the policy variable contributed substantially to the statistical model, since clear policy direction can influence how urban planning interventions are translated into actual living conditions.

Respondent 2 identified weaknesses in the implementation of housing policies, particularly in relation to discrimination. The respondent observed, *"There are instances where refugees face discrimination in the housing market, which contradicts our policies"* (Respondent 2, 2024). This observation demonstrates that formal policy commitments may have limited impact when enforcement mechanisms are weak. Refugees may therefore remain vulnerable to exclusion even when policies formally promote equal treatment. The finding suggests that the contribution of policies to integration depends not simply on their existence but also on monitoring, accountability, and mechanisms through which affected individuals can report and address discriminatory practices.

Respondent 3 highlighted the contribution of health policies to inclusive access to urban services. The respondent explained, *"Our health policies aim to provide all residents, regardless of their origin, with access to essential health services"* (Respondent 3, 2024). This perspective demonstrates how policy can connect urban planning with service accessibility by establishing a principle of equal entitlement to essential facilities. However, the respondent also acknowledged that some refugees experience discriminatory treatment within healthcare settings. This suggests that physical availability of facilities must be complemented by institutional practices that promote respectful and equitable treatment. Consequently, policy implementation becomes an important mechanism through which urban infrastructure can translate into meaningful integration outcomes.

Respondent 4 discussed the educational dimension of refugee integration and observed that policy implementation can vary between institutions. The respondent stated, *"While we have*

policies in place, the reality in schools can vary. Some refugee children still face bullying or exclusion" (Respondent 4, 2024). This finding indicates that policy effectiveness is influenced by the behaviour of institutions and individuals responsible for implementation. Access to education alone may not produce integration if refugee learners experience social exclusion within schools. The evidence therefore points to the need for complementary interventions such as teacher sensitization, learner awareness, protection mechanisms, and community engagement so that inclusive education policies produce the intended outcomes.

Respondent 5 emphasized the economic dimension of policy support, stating, *"Our economic policies aim to provide refugees with the necessary support to establish businesses and integrate into the local economy"* (Respondent 5, 2024). The respondent nevertheless identified challenges associated with obtaining work permits and participating in formal employment. This demonstrates that economic policies can create opportunities for self-reliance while administrative procedures may simultaneously restrict access to those opportunities. The finding is particularly important for urban planning because markets, trading spaces, transport infrastructure, and business areas constitute physical platforms through which economic policies can be implemented. Where these institutional and spatial systems operate together, refugees may participate more effectively in the local economy.

Respondent 6 emphasized that policy implementation must also address negative attitudes and discrimination within host communities. The respondent noted, *"Despite the policies aimed at combating discrimination, some locals still hold prejudiced views about refugees"* (Respondent 6, 2024). This finding indicates that legal and administrative measures alone may not eliminate social barriers to integration. Community sensitization and dialogue are necessary to complement formal policy provisions and promote acceptance between refugees and host populations.

The findings indicate that policies governing refugees' integration significantly improve the explanatory power of the model predicting refugee integration in Gulu City. The initial model containing capacity building, participation, and social equity explained only 3.1% of the variance and was not statistically significant. After policies governing refugee integration were introduced, the explained variance increased to 24.0%, with a statistically significant R^2 change of 20.8

percentage points, $p < .001$. Policies also emerged as the only statistically significant individual predictor in the final model, with $\beta = .462$, $p < .001$.

The qualitative findings reinforce this statistical evidence by demonstrating that policies influence practical integration through housing, health, education, economic participation, anti-discrimination measures, and stakeholder coordination. However, the evidence also reveals implementation gaps that may limit policy effectiveness. Therefore, the findings support the conclusion that a strong and effectively implemented policy environment is important for translating urban planning strategies into meaningful refugee-integration outcomes. For methodological accuracy, the current analysis should be reported as hierarchical regression/incremental explanatory effect unless an interaction term is subsequently tested to establish formal moderation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on urban planning strategies and the integration of urban refugees in Gulu City, Uganda. The discussion follows the study objectives and focuses on what the findings mean within the context of Gulu City. The results are interpreted in relation to previous studies, relevant theories and the realities experienced by refugees and host communities.

The discussion moves beyond reporting statistical results by explaining why particular patterns may have emerged. It also compares the findings with previous studies, identifying areas of agreement and disagreement. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how capacity building, participation, social equity and refugee-related policies shape integration in an urban environment.

5.1 Urban Planning Strategies Adopted by Gulu City

5.1.1 Capacity Building

The findings showed that capacity building was moderate among the urban planning strategies adopted by Gulu City. This suggests that the city has some institutional and technical ability to respond to the needs of a growing and diverse urban population, but important gaps remain. Effective urban planning depends on competent institutions, adequate information and the ability of local authorities to respond to changing population needs. Alibašić (2018) argues that institutional capacity is essential for sustainable and resilient local planning, while Kavuma et al. (2020) identify local government capacity as an important foundation for development in Uganda. However, Büscher et al. (2020) observed that urban development in Gulu operates within a complex environment involving local authorities, humanitarian organisations and other actors, which can make coordinated planning difficult.

The moderate result may partly reflect the increasing responsibilities placed on Gulu City following its transition into city status. The city has to plan for infrastructure, housing, health,

education and economic activities while also responding to the needs of refugees and other vulnerable residents. Keith Mark (2021) emphasizes the importance of local governments in implementing Uganda's refugee response framework, while Laurini (2018) stresses the value of reliable information and cooperative planning systems. In contrast, Oesch (2020) argues that refugee populations can remain poorly visible within formal urban planning processes even where planning institutions are already established.

The finding also indicates that capacity building should extend beyond training individual city officials. It should include refugee-sensitive planning procedures, reliable population data, stronger coordination and the ability to engage communities effectively. Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of professional competencies in promoting refugee inclusion, while Rebernik et al. (2019) argue that inclusive planning requires institutions to recognise the different needs of urban populations. However, Capici (2021) found that refugees in Arua also rely on their own assets and community networks when institutional support is insufficient. This suggests that strengthening city capacity should complement, rather than replace, refugees' existing capacities.

The result is therefore important because effective integration cannot depend only on the existence of refugee policies. Local institutions must have the practical ability to translate those policies into urban programmes. Alibašić (2018) associates strong local capacity with resilient governance, while Kavuma et al. (2020) link institutional capacity with local development performance. Nevertheless, Büscher et al. (2020) demonstrate that the interaction between humanitarian structures and urban authorities can create coordination challenges. Gulu City therefore needs continuous institutional strengthening if planning is to respond effectively to both refugees and the wider urban population.

5.1.2 Participation

The findings indicated a moderate level of participation in urban planning. This means that refugees and other residents appear to have opportunities to express their views, although their involvement may not always extend to influencing final planning decisions. Participation is important because communities possess knowledge about local problems that may not be visible through technical planning processes. Crow et al. (2019) found that stakeholder participation can

improve policy processes, while Broto et al. (2022) demonstrate that citizen involvement can contribute to more equitable urban outcomes. However, Allen and Slotterback (2021) found that conventional urban planning practices often provide limited opportunities for refugees to participate meaningfully.

The moderate level of participation may be influenced by language, education, confidence and refugees' familiarity with local government procedures. Refugees may be willing to participate but unable to express their views effectively in formal planning meetings. Gonzalez Benson and Pimentel Walker (2021) emphasize the importance of grassroots refugee organisations in creating channels for participation, while Hanley et al. (2018) demonstrate how social networks can help refugees access resources and opportunities. In contrast, Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) show that language differences can create unequal communication and power relationships, which may limit meaningful participation.

The findings further suggest that consultation should not be confused with participation. Inviting refugees to meetings does not necessarily mean that their views influence decisions. Krist et al. (2017) argue that meaningful engagement requires people to have a role in decision-making, while Pedersen et al. (2022) emphasize early and continuous community involvement in service planning. However, Allen and Slotterback (2021) found that municipal planning structures may remain difficult for refugee communities to influence, particularly when planning procedures are not adapted to their circumstances.

For Gulu City, strengthening participation would therefore require mechanisms that enable refugees to contribute during problem identification, priority setting, project design and monitoring. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017) associate meaningful community participation with greater ownership of development activities, while Broto et al. (2022) support collaborative approaches to urban change. Nevertheless, Randolph and Frey (2018) caution that participation can reproduce existing power inequalities if some groups have greater influence than others. Refugee participation should therefore be designed to provide genuine influence rather than simply fulfilling a consultation requirement.

5.1.3 Social Equity

Social equity recorded the strongest result among the urban planning strategies. This indicates that Gulu City's planning approach places considerable emphasis on fair access to services and opportunities. Such an approach is particularly important in a city where refugees and host communities often depend on the same schools, health facilities, markets, roads and public spaces. Uitermark and Nicholls (2017) argue that social justice should be central to urban planning, while Turok and Scheba (2019) connect equitable access to housing and urban resources with the broader right to the city. However, Ozkazanc (2021) shows that spatial segregation and poverty can continue to produce exclusion even when policies formally promote equality.

The relatively strong social equity result may also reflect Uganda's broader refugee policy orientation towards inclusion. Refugees are increasingly considered within national and local service systems rather than being treated entirely as separate populations. Hynie (2018) identifies access to housing, employment, education, health and social relationships as important components of integration, while Androff (2022) links refugee integration with human rights and sustainable development. In contrast, Gidron and Hovil (2018) point out that progressive refugee policies can still experience gaps between formal commitments and actual implementation.

The finding is particularly relevant because equitable planning benefits both refugees and host communities. If refugees are provided with access to services while host communities remain underserved, tensions may emerge. Kosmicki (2019) emphasizes equal access as a foundation of social equity, while Mazumdar et al. (2018) demonstrate that the built environment influences social relationships and access to community resources. However, Baffoe and Roy (2023) show that historical planning practices can continue to reproduce inequality despite contemporary commitments to inclusive planning.

Social equity can therefore be considered an important strength of Gulu City's planning approach, but it should not be regarded as an achieved condition. Continued attention is required to ensure that formal equality is experienced in everyday life. Broto et al. (2022) demonstrate the value of co-produced approaches for advancing urban equality, while Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the role of professional practice in promoting refugee inclusion. Conversely, Ozkazanc (2021) shows that

spatial and socioeconomic inequalities can remain powerful barriers. Gulu City therefore needs to connect equity-oriented policies with consistent implementation at neighbourhood level.

5.2 Extent of Urban Refugees' Integration in Gulu City

5.2.1 Housing Integration

The findings indicate that housing contributes positively to refugee integration in Gulu City, although affordability and discrimination remain important concerns. Housing provides refugees with physical security and creates opportunities for interaction with host communities. Ager and Strang's integration framework places housing among the core domains of refugee integration, while Sobantu et al. (2019) emphasize that adequate housing is a basic human right. However, Phillips (2006) found that refugees can continue to experience poor housing, restricted choice and discrimination despite formal recognition of their housing rights.

The relatively positive housing situation may partly result from the fact that urban refugees live within ordinary city neighbourhoods rather than being completely separated from host communities. Such arrangements can provide opportunities for everyday interaction and access to urban services. Siatitsa et al. (2020) associate access to housing with social inclusion, while Mazumdar et al. (2018) show that the built environment can contribute to social capital. Nevertheless, Thurber et al. (2018) found that physical proximity between different groups does not automatically produce meaningful social integration.

Affordability remains a major issue because refugees compete for accommodation within the same housing market as low-income host residents. Aduwo et al. (2017) identify affordability and limited financing as major challenges in low-income housing provision, while Turok and Scheba (2019) emphasize the relationship between housing and inclusive urban development. In contrast, Power (2021) demonstrates that public and state-supported housing systems can improve housing security for disadvantaged populations where market mechanisms alone are inadequate.

Housing integration in Gulu City should therefore be strengthened through affordable housing initiatives, protection against discrimination and better neighbourhood planning. Ratcliffe et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of connecting urban planning with practical development, while

Sobantu et al. (2019) support approaches that treat housing as a fundamental right. However, Aigner (2018) shows that refugees can still encounter structural barriers when accessing competitive urban housing markets. The challenge for Gulu City is therefore to ensure that housing integration is both physically possible and socially sustainable.

5.2.2 Healthcare Access

The findings suggest that refugees generally experience reasonable access to healthcare services in Gulu City. Health is a critical dimension of integration because poor health can reduce people's ability to work, study and participate in community life. Hynie (2018) identifies healthcare as an important component of refugee integration, while Tzenios (2019) explains that healthcare access depends on individual, structural and institutional conditions. However, Wang et al. (2018) demonstrate that geographical accessibility can create inequalities even where health facilities are formally available.

The relatively positive result may partly reflect Uganda's approach of integrating refugees into national and local service systems. This allows refugees to access mainstream health services rather than depending entirely on separate humanitarian structures. Khashoggi and Murad (2020) emphasize the importance of planning and spatial analysis in healthcare provision, while Yudono et al. (2023) demonstrate that the geographical distribution of health facilities affects access. In contrast, Hynie (2018) notes that formal service access does not necessarily remove the social and structural barriers experienced by refugees.

The qualitative findings also indicate that some refugees feel unwelcome in health facilities and may experience communication difficulties. This demonstrates that integration involves more than physically reaching a health centre. Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of professional knowledge and competencies for refugee inclusion, while Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) show that language differences can influence communication and power relations. However, Pedersen et al. (2022) demonstrate that community involvement in health-service planning can improve responsiveness to local needs.

Healthcare integration in Gulu City should therefore combine physical accessibility with respectful and culturally responsive service delivery. Orsetti et al. (2022) link healthy urban environments

with resilient public spaces, while Pedersen et al. (2022) support community involvement in health planning. Nevertheless, Tzenios (2019) shows that wider structural barriers may continue to influence access. The city should therefore strengthen outreach, health awareness and communication while also addressing practical barriers to service utilisation.

5.2.3 Educational Opportunities

Education emerged as an important pathway for refugee integration in Gulu City. Refugee children who attend school gain access to knowledge, skills and social relationships with members of the host community. Cerna (2019) identifies education as an important mechanism for refugee integration, while Bryan et al. (2020) emphasize the value of school-family-community partnerships in promoting educational resilience. However, Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) demonstrate that inclusive education can be weakened by physical and environmental barriers within schools.

The positive education outcome may reflect the availability of schools within the urban environment and the general importance attached to education in Uganda. Attending mainstream schools can enable refugee children to develop relationships beyond their immediate refugee communities. Sakti et al. (2021) demonstrate the importance of school accessibility for equal educational opportunities, while Costa et al. (2021) emphasize professional practices that promote social inclusion. In contrast, Cerna (2019) notes that refugee learners can face language, financial and administrative barriers that affect their educational experience.

The reported experiences of bullying and exclusion are particularly important because school attendance does not necessarily mean social integration. Refugee children may be physically present in classrooms while still feeling socially excluded. Bryan et al. (2020) emphasize supportive relationships among schools, families and communities, while Crawford et al. (2023) show that exclusion can continue through everyday institutional and social practices. However, Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) demonstrate that inclusive school environments can reduce barriers when both physical and social conditions are addressed.

The findings therefore suggest that Gulu City's education planning should focus on the quality of inclusion rather than enrolment alone. Schools need stronger measures to prevent bullying, address

language difficulties and support children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Cerna (2019) supports refugee-sensitive education approaches, while Sakti et al. (2021) emphasize equitable access to educational facilities. In contrast, Bryan et al. (2020) indicate that sustainable educational inclusion also depends on family and community involvement. This makes education a shared responsibility between schools, families, communities and city authorities.

5.2.4 Economic Opportunities

Economic integration was moderate, indicating that refugees participate in economic activities but continue to experience barriers to formal employment. Economic participation is important because it improves self-reliance, household welfare and interaction with the wider urban economy. Toivonen (2023) shows that institutional conditions influence refugee employment and entrepreneurship, while Phillimore et al. (2021) demonstrate that economic self-reliance can strengthen broader integration. However, Gauffin and Lyytinen (2017) show that administrative and labour-market restrictions can limit refugees' access to formal employment.

Vocational training and small-scale businesses appear to provide important opportunities for refugees in Gulu City. These activities can be more accessible than formal employment, particularly where refugees face documentation or work-permit challenges. Capici (2021) found that urban refugees in Arua use their assets and community networks to develop self-reliance strategies, while Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) highlights the importance of socioeconomic relationships between refugees and host communities in Uganda. In contrast, Carciotto (2021) demonstrates how restrictive policy environments can increase refugee economic vulnerability.

Participation in markets also provides opportunities for interaction between refugees and host residents. Economic spaces can therefore serve both livelihood and social functions. Hanley et al. (2018) demonstrate the importance of social networks in accessing employment and housing, while Mazumdar et al. (2018) connect supportive built environments with social capital. However, Toivonen (2023) cautions that institutional arrangements determine whether refugees can transform motivation and skills into sustainable economic opportunities.

The moderate economic result therefore reflects both refugee resilience and continuing structural barriers. Gulu City can improve economic integration by supporting vocational training, refugee-

owned enterprises, market access and pathways into legitimate employment. Phillimore et al. (2021) support approaches that combine economic and social dimensions of integration, while Capici (2021) highlights the value of community-based assets. Nevertheless, Gauffin and Lyytinen (2017) show that administrative barriers can continue to restrict refugee employment unless they are addressed directly.

5.2.5 Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is an important part of refugee integration because refugees and host residents share neighbourhoods, markets, schools and public spaces. These everyday encounters can create opportunities for friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding. Mazumdar et al. (2018) demonstrate the relationship between the built environment and social capital, while Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) emphasizes socioeconomic interaction between refugees and host communities. However, Crawford et al. (2023) show that social exclusion can persist even where different groups live within the same communities.

In Gulu City, markets, public spaces and other shared environments create opportunities for refugees and host residents to interact. These spaces can help refugees develop social networks beyond their immediate communities. Doomernik and Ardon (2018) argue that cities can actively facilitate refugee integration, while Muggah and Abdenur (2018) identify cities as increasingly important spaces for responding to displacement. In contrast, Ozkazanc (2021) demonstrates that poverty and spatial segregation can weaken social interaction.

Negative perceptions towards refugees remain a concern because attitudes within host communities influence the quality of integration. Esses et al. (2017) show that public attitudes can either facilitate or obstruct refugee integration, while Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of inclusive professional and community practices. However, Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) demonstrates that sustained socioeconomic interaction can create opportunities for cooperation between refugees and host communities.

Community cohesion in Gulu City should therefore be deliberately supported rather than assumed to occur automatically. Inclusive public spaces, community dialogue and joint activities can create more opportunities for interaction. Broto et al. (2022) demonstrate the value of collaborative

approaches to urban change, while Mazumdar et al. (2018) show how the built environment can support social capital. Nevertheless, Esses et al. (2017) remind us that negative attitudes may persist despite progressive policies. Long-term cohesion therefore requires continuous social engagement.

5.3 Relationship Between Urban Planning Strategies and Refugee Integration

5.3.1 Social Equity and Refugee Integration

The results showed a very strong positive relationship between social equity and refugee integration, with a reported correlation coefficient of approximately r = .890. This indicates that higher levels of social equity were strongly associated with higher levels of refugee integration. The statistical output should, however, be rechecked because the p-value reported alongside this coefficient in the original table is inconsistent with a correlation of this magnitude and the stated sample size. Substantively, the finding agrees with Uitermark and Nicholls (2017), who place social justice at the centre of planning, and Turok and Scheba (2019), who connect equitable access to housing and urban resources with inclusion. However, Ozkazanc (2021) demonstrates that spatial inequalities can persist despite formal commitments to inclusion.

The strong relationship may be explained by refugees' dependence on urban services and opportunities that are distributed through planning systems. Where housing, education, health facilities, roads and economic spaces are accessible, refugees have greater opportunities to participate in city life. Hynie (2018) identifies access to social and institutional resources as central to integration, while Ager and Strang's framework places housing, employment, education and health among the key domains of integration. In contrast, Siatitsa et al. (2020) demonstrate that access to housing alone does not eliminate wider forms of social exclusion.

The result also supports the view that refugee integration should be considered part of urban development rather than only a humanitarian issue. Local planning decisions influence the physical and social conditions under which refugees live. Doomernik and Ardon (2018) describe cities as active agents of refugee integration, while Muggah and Abdenur (2018) emphasize the growing importance of urban authorities in responding to displacement. However, Gidron and Hovil (2018)

demonstrate that Uganda's progressive refugee policy framework can still face implementation challenges.

The strong correlation should not be interpreted as proof that social equity causes refugee integration. Correlation demonstrates association, not causation. Nardi (2018) emphasizes careful interpretation of quantitative relationships, while Rydin (2021) notes that urban planning processes are shaped by multiple interacting factors. The finding therefore provides strong evidence of a relationship, but longitudinal or experimental evidence would be required to establish causal effects.

5.3.2 Capacity Building and Refugee Integration

Capacity building was also positively associated with refugee integration, with a correlation of approximately r = .778. This suggests that stronger institutional and technical capacity tends to occur alongside better integration outcomes. Alibašić (2018) emphasizes the importance of local institutional capacity for resilient planning, while Keith Mark (2021) highlights the role of local governments in implementing refugee policies. However, Büscher et al. (2020) show that Gulu's urban governance environment involves multiple actors whose responsibilities may overlap.

One explanation for this relationship is that refugee integration requires coordinated action across several city functions. Officials need information and skills to plan housing, infrastructure, education, healthcare and economic programmes that respond to diverse populations. Laurini (2018) emphasizes information and cooperation in urban planning, while Kavuma et al. (2020) identify institutional capacity as a foundation for local economic development. In contrast, Capici (2021) demonstrates that refugees can also develop self-reliance strategies independently of formal institutional structures.

The finding suggests that capacity strengthening could improve the city's responsiveness to refugee needs. Training in refugee-sensitive planning, data management and community engagement could help city officials make more informed decisions. Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of professional competencies for refugee inclusion, while Rebernik et al. (2019) advocate planning approaches that respond to diverse populations. Nevertheless, Oesch (2020)

warns that refugees can remain poorly represented within formal planning systems even where institutional structures exist.

The relationship should also be understood within Gulu City's rapidly changing urban context. The city is managing wider demands for infrastructure and services while responding to population mobility. Büscher et al. (2020) highlight the interaction between humanitarian activity and urbanisation in Gulu, while Nuwagaba (2022) identifies institutional and development pressures associated with Uganda's new cities. However, Alibašić (2018) argues that stronger local capacity can help institutions respond to complex and changing urban conditions.

5.3.3 Participation and Refugee Integration

Participation had a positive relationship with refugee integration, with a correlation of approximately r = .581. This represents a moderate-to-strong positive association and suggests that greater participation is generally accompanied by stronger integration. Allen and Slotterback (2021) emphasize the importance of adapting planning practices to allow refugees to participate, while Gonzalez Benson and Pimentel Walker (2021) demonstrate the role of grassroots refugee organisations in participatory urban governance. However, Randolph and Frey (2018) caution that participation can reproduce power inequalities if certain groups dominate decision-making.

Participation can strengthen integration because it allows refugees to communicate their experiences and needs directly to planners and other authorities. Their involvement can improve the relevance of decisions concerning housing, infrastructure, education and public spaces. Crow et al. (2019) associate stakeholder participation with stronger policy processes, while Pedersen et al. (2022) emphasize the value of involving communities in service planning. In contrast, Allen and Slotterback (2021) found that conventional municipal planning structures may not adequately accommodate refugee participation.

The qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation because respondents described community consultation and interaction between refugees and host communities. Such processes can increase trust and provide opportunities for refugees to contribute to decisions affecting their lives. Broto et al. (2022) demonstrate that co-production can contribute to more equitable urban outcomes, while Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017) associate participation with stronger ownership of development

initiatives. However, Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) show that language differences can create unequal opportunities to participate.

The finding therefore supports a shift from simple consultation towards meaningful involvement. Refugees should be included when priorities are identified, projects are designed and outcomes are monitored. Gonzalez Benson and Pimentel Walker (2021) support grassroots participation, while Rebernik et al. (2019) emphasize inclusive urban planning and design. Nevertheless, Randolph and Frey (2018) remind planners that participation must address power relations if it is to generate genuine inclusion.

5.4 Policies Governing Refugee Integration

5.4.1 Housing Policies and Refugee Integration

The findings indicate that housing policies provide an important foundation for refugee integration in Gulu City. Policies that promote safe and accessible housing enable refugees to establish stable lives and interact with host communities. Ager and Strang identify housing as a central domain of integration, while Turok and Scheba (2019) connect housing with the broader right to participate in city life. However, Phillips (2006) demonstrates that formal housing policies may not eliminate discrimination or insecurity.

Housing policies may also promote integration when refugees are able to live within ordinary urban neighbourhoods. This can improve access to schools, health facilities, markets and social networks. Siatitsa et al. (2020) link housing access with social inclusion, while Mazumdar et al. (2018) demonstrate the relationship between neighbourhood environments and social capital. In contrast, Thurber et al. (2018) found that physical integration does not automatically result in social integration.

The Gulu findings also show that policy implementation remains a concern because some refugees experience housing discrimination and affordability challenges. Sobantu et al. (2019) emphasize housing as a basic human right, while Aduwo et al. (2017) identify affordability as a major challenge in low-income housing. Conversely, Aigner (2018) demonstrates that refugees can face structural barriers in competitive urban housing markets.

Housing policy should therefore be accompanied by practical mechanisms for affordability, protection and enforcement. Ratcliffe et al. (2021) emphasize the connection between planning policy and development practice, while Power (2021) demonstrates the potential contribution of public housing interventions to improving access. However, Phillips (2006) cautions that formal housing provision may still leave refugees exposed to discrimination and poor living conditions.

5.4.2 Health and Education Policies

Health and education policies generally appear to support refugee integration because they create pathways into mainstream urban services. Hynie (2018) identifies both health and education as important integration domains, while Cerna (2019) regards education as an important instrument for refugee inclusion. However, Tzenios (2019) points out that formal access to healthcare does not automatically produce equal use of services.

In Gulu City, health policies appear to facilitate access and awareness, including awareness of mental-health services. Costa et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of professional competencies in refugee-inclusive service delivery, while Hynie (2018) stresses the social conditions that influence refugee well-being. In contrast, Wang et al. (2018) demonstrate that geographical and spatial barriers can continue to influence access to healthcare.

Education policies similarly provide opportunities for refugee children to enter mainstream schools, but the experience may vary. Bryan et al. (2020) emphasize school-family-community partnerships, while Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) highlight the importance of inclusive school environments. Conversely, Crawford et al. (2023) show that social exclusion may continue within institutions despite formal inclusion policies.

The findings therefore suggest that health and education policies should address both access and quality of experience. Services should be affordable, physically accessible and socially welcoming. Pedersen et al. (2022) support community involvement in service planning, while Sakti et al. (2021) emphasize equal accessibility to educational facilities. However, Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) show that communication barriers can undermine inclusion, indicating the need for culturally and linguistically responsive services.

5.4.3 Economic and Anti-Discrimination Policies

Economic policies appear to support refugee self-reliance through markets, business opportunities and vocational training. These opportunities are important because sustainable integration requires refugees to develop independent livelihoods. Toivonen (2023) emphasizes the role of institutional conditions in refugee employment and entrepreneurship, while Phillimore et al. (2021) show that economic self-reliance can support wider integration. However, Gauffin and Lyytinen (2017) demonstrate that administrative and labour-market restrictions can limit refugee employment.

Gulu City's markets and business spaces provide opportunities for refugees to participate in the local economy alongside host residents. Such spaces can create both economic and social benefits. Capici (2021) demonstrates how urban refugees use assets and community networks to support self-reliance, while Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) highlights socioeconomic interaction between refugees and host communities. In contrast, Carciotto (2021) demonstrates that restrictive policies can increase refugee economic vulnerability.

Anti-discrimination policies are equally important because economic opportunities may have limited value if refugees continue to experience prejudice. Esses et al. (2017) show that public attitudes strongly influence refugee integration, while Costa et al. (2021) emphasize inclusive professional practices. However, Crawford et al. (2023) demonstrate that exclusion can persist through everyday social and institutional practices even when anti-discrimination principles formally exist.

Economic and anti-discrimination policies should therefore operate together. Refugees require opportunities to work, trade and operate businesses while being protected from discriminatory practices. Phillimore et al. (2021) support approaches that combine economic and social integration, while Toivonen (2023) highlights the importance of supportive institutional arrangements. Nevertheless, Gauffin and Lyytinen (2017) show that formal policy commitments may have limited impact where practical barriers to employment remain.

5.4.4 Policy Implementation and Stakeholder Collaboration

The findings demonstrate that implementation is as important as the existence of refugee policies. Policies may establish rights and responsibilities, but their benefits depend on how consistently they are applied. Ménard et al. (2020) identify implementation gaps as a major governance challenge, while Keith Mark (2021) emphasizes the role of local governments in translating refugee policies into local action. However, Gidron and Hovil (2018) show that Uganda's progressive refugee policy framework can still encounter implementation difficulties.

Respondent 1 explained that housing policies promote safety and security and that everyone should have access to a home. The respondent also emphasized cooperation among stakeholders. This position agrees with Doomernik and Ardon (2018), who regard cities as important actors in refugee integration, and Broto et al. (2022), who emphasize collaboration in urban development. However, Phillips (2006) shows that policy commitments alone may not remove housing inequality and discrimination.

Respondent 2 highlighted housing discrimination, work-permit requirements, documentation problems and difficulties in accessing formal employment. These concerns show how administrative systems can influence the practical experience of integration. Toivonen (2023) similarly demonstrates the influence of institutions on refugee employment and entrepreneurship, while Phillimore et al. (2021) link institutional support to economic self-reliance. In contrast, Capici (2021) shows that refugees can sometimes overcome formal limitations through social networks and community resources.

Respondent 3 emphasized equitable healthcare access and awareness campaigns, including mental-health awareness, but also noted that some refugees feel unwelcome. This supports Hynie (2018), who identifies health and social conditions as important dimensions of integration, and Costa et al. (2021), who emphasize inclusive professional practices. However, Tzenios (2019) demonstrates that healthcare access is also shaped by structural and systemic conditions that awareness campaigns alone cannot resolve.

Respondent 4 highlighted bullying and exclusion in schools, suggesting that education policies may be stronger at the formal level than in everyday practice. Bryan et al. (2020) emphasize

supportive relationships between schools, families and communities, while Crawford et al. (2023) identify continuing forms of exclusion among migrant and refugee populations. In contrast, Cerna (2019) demonstrates that appropriately designed education models can improve refugee inclusion when adequate support is available.

Respondent 5 similarly observed that education policies facilitate access but that refugee children can still experience exclusion. This distinction between access and meaningful inclusion is important. Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) demonstrate that inclusive education requires attention to both physical and social environments, while Sakti et al. (2021) emphasize equitable access to educational facilities. However, Cerna (2019) indicates that education systems can produce stronger integration when access is accompanied by appropriate support.

Respondent 6 explained that economic policies support businesses and self-reliance and that refugees contribute to local markets and business spaces. This agrees with Capici (2021), who highlights refugee self-reliance, and Toivonen (2023), who demonstrates the importance of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. However, Gauffin and Lyytinen (2017) show that administrative and labour-market barriers can prevent refugees from fully benefiting from such opportunities.

Respondent 7 identified negative perceptions and prejudice among some members of the host community despite the existence of anti-discrimination policies. This demonstrates the difference between formal policy and social reality. Esses et al. (2017) show that public attitudes influence refugee integration, while Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) demonstrates the importance of positive socioeconomic relationships between refugees and host communities. In contrast, Broto et al. (2022) show that sustained collaboration and community involvement can help create more equitable urban relationships.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations arising from the study on urban planning strategies and the integration of urban refugees in Gulu City. The chapter brings together the major findings in relation to the study objectives and highlights their implications for urban planning, refugee integration and policy implementation.

The chapter is organised into four main sections. The first section summarises the major findings, the second presents conclusions drawn from the empirical evidence, the third provides recommendations for policy and practice, and the final section identifies areas that require further research.

6.1 Summary of Findings

6.1.1 Urban Planning Strategies

The study found that Gulu City employs three major urban planning strategies relevant to refugee integration: capacity building, participation and social equity. Capacity building was assessed at a moderate level, suggesting that the city has developed some institutional and technical capacity but still faces challenges related to resources, knowledge, coordination and implementation. Although stakeholder collaboration was viewed positively, inadequate funding and uneven institutional support may limit the sustainability of capacity-building initiatives.

Participation was also moderate. The findings indicate that refugees and other community members have some opportunities to participate in urban planning through consultation and communication. However, participation is not yet consistently strong enough to demonstrate that refugees have substantial influence over planning decisions. Language barriers, limited feedback mechanisms and uncertainty about how community views are incorporated into final decisions remain important challenges.

Social equity recorded the strongest performance among the three planning strategies. Respondents generally recognised efforts to promote equitable access to education, housing, healthcare and economic opportunities. The qualitative findings further indicated that Gulu City's planning processes seek to address the needs of different population groups. Nevertheless, the existence of equity-oriented policies does not always guarantee equal experiences because discrimination, affordability challenges and uneven implementation continue to affect some refugees.

Overall, the findings suggest that Gulu City has established a foundation for inclusive urban planning, particularly through its emphasis on social equity. However, this foundation requires stronger institutional capacity and more meaningful participation. The city would benefit from planning approaches that combine equitable service provision with systematic refugee involvement in decision-making and stronger institutional support.

6.1.2 Extent of Urban Refugees' Integration

The study found that urban refugee integration in Gulu City is generally progressing but remains uneven across the major dimensions examined. Housing integration was relatively positive, particularly in relation to access to accommodation and the possibility of living within urban communities. However, affordability and discrimination remain significant barriers. Some refugees may therefore have access to housing while still experiencing insecurity or difficulty obtaining accommodation that meets their needs.

Healthcare integration was also generally favourable. Refugees demonstrated awareness of available health services and reported reasonable access to healthcare. However, some experienced feelings of being unwelcome, communication difficulties and stigma. These challenges indicate that physical access to healthcare does not necessarily mean that refugees experience services in an equally inclusive manner.

Education provided another important pathway for integration. Refugee children generally have opportunities to attend schools and benefit from education within the city. However, bullying, exclusion and financial constraints affect some learners. Economic integration was similarly moderate, with refugees participating in vocational training, markets and small businesses.

Nevertheless, work-permit requirements, documentation challenges, limited formal employment opportunities and workplace discrimination continue to restrict fuller economic participation.

Community cohesion emerged as an important but complex dimension of integration. Refugees and host residents interact through neighbourhoods, schools, markets and other shared spaces, creating opportunities for social relationships. At the same time, negative perceptions and prejudice towards refugees remain evident in some communities. The overall conclusion is therefore that integration in Gulu City is occurring, but it is a gradual and uneven process requiring continued attention to social, economic and institutional barriers.

6.1.3 Policies Governing Refugee Integration

The study found generally positive perceptions of policies governing refugee integration in Gulu City. Health and education policies were particularly viewed as supportive of refugee access to essential services. Policies relating to economic self-reliance and anti-discrimination also provide an important framework for supporting refugees' participation in urban life.

Despite this positive policy environment, the findings identified a clear difference between policy intentions and practical implementation. Refugees may have formal rights and opportunities, but their actual experiences can be affected by administrative procedures, discrimination, affordability and inconsistent application of policies. This was particularly evident in housing, healthcare, education and employment.

The qualitative findings further demonstrated that implementation depends on cooperation among local authorities, national institutions, refugee organisations, service providers and host communities. Where stakeholders work together, refugees are more likely to receive information and access available services. However, fragmented responsibilities and weak coordination can reduce the effectiveness of otherwise supportive policies.

The study therefore concludes that Gulu City's refugee integration policy environment provides a useful foundation, but policy effectiveness depends on implementation. Stronger monitoring, accountability, community feedback and inter-agency coordination are required to ensure that policies produce tangible improvements in refugees' everyday lives.

6.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that Gulu City has adopted a multidimensional approach to urban planning based on capacity building, participation and social equity. Although social equity performed strongly, capacity building and participation remained moderate, indicating gaps in resources, communication, coordination and meaningful refugee involvement. Strengthening these areas is therefore essential for more inclusive and responsive urban planning.

The study further concludes that refugee integration in Gulu City is progressing but remains uneven across housing, healthcare, education, economic opportunities and community cohesion. Despite generally supportive policies, challenges such as discrimination, affordability, employment barriers and negative perceptions persist. Sustainable integration therefore requires effective policy implementation, stronger stakeholder collaboration, refugee participation and continued community sensitisation.

6.3 Recommendations

Gulu City should invest more in institutional capacity and inclusive participation. The moderate level of capacity building indicates the need for continuous staff training, adequate financial resources, reliable planning information and improved coordination. Refugees should be involved from priority identification to project monitoring so that their experiences directly inform decisions affecting their communities.

Housing, healthcare, education and livelihoods require targeted interventions to address the barriers identified by the study. Affordable housing should be promoted and discriminatory practices discouraged, while health facilities and schools should provide more refugee-responsive services. Vocational training and enterprise support should also be linked to realistic employment and market opportunities to improve refugees' self-reliance.

The city and relevant authorities should improve policy implementation and accountability. Although existing policies were generally viewed positively, gaps remain between policy provisions and actual experiences. Regular monitoring, accessible complaint mechanisms and

direct feedback from refugee communities should be strengthened to identify weaknesses in service delivery and ensure that policy commitments produce practical benefits.

Greater stakeholder collaboration and community sensitisation should be promoted to strengthen social cohesion. Gulu City should work closely with national institutions, refugee organisations, development partners, service providers and host communities. Public awareness activities should address prejudice and misinformation while promoting peaceful interaction, enabling refugees and host residents to contribute jointly to the city's social and economic development.

6.4 Areas for Further Research

i. Future studies should examine the long-term effects of urban planning strategies on refugee integration in Gulu City. Particular attention could be given to how capacity building, participation and social equity influence refugees' access to services, livelihoods and community life over time.
ii. Further research should investigate host-community attitudes and perceptions towards refugees. This would help explain how prejudice, competition for resources, cultural interaction and community relationships either facilitate or hinder peaceful coexistence and social integration.
iii. Researchers should also examine the implementation of refugee integration policies at the local level. Studies could assess specific policies relating to housing, healthcare, education, employment and anti-discrimination to determine whether policy intentions are being translated into practical outcomes.
iv. Finally, comparative studies could examine urban refugee integration across different Ugandan cities, such as Gulu, Kampala, Arua and Mbarara. Such research would provide evidence on how differences in urban planning, institutional capacity and local conditions influence refugee integration outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Public Questionnaire

I am Oneka Samuel a student of Gulu University pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration and Management. I am conducting a research study on *" Urban Planning and Refugees Integration: A Case Study of Gulu City"* I kindly request for your participation in this study by responding to questions in this questionnaire. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be purely used for academic purposes.

Thank you for your participation in this research study in advance.

Respondent Consent

Tick appropriate option/answer to you		√
1	I agree to participate in this exercise	
2	I disagree to participate in this exercise	

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

1. Gender

Tick appropriate option/answer to you		√
1	Male	
2	Female	

2. **Age Range**

Tick appropriate option/answer to you					
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and above
√					

3. **Educational Level**

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Primary	
2	Secondary	
3	Vocational training	

4	Bachelor degree	
5	Master degree or higher	

4. **Marital Status**

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Single	
2	Married	
3	Divorced	
4	Widowed	

5. **Which division do you live in?**

Fill the name of your place in below order				
1	Division	:		
2	Ward	:		
3	Cell	:		
4	GPS coordinates		Easting	Northing

6. **Occupation**

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Student	
2	Self employed	
3	Unemployed	
4	Retired	
5	Civil servant	

7. **Country of origin**

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Uganda	
2	South Sudan	
3	Sudan	
4	Ethiopia	

5	Other specify. …….	

8. Legal status

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Refugee	
2	Expatriates	
3	Trade trip	
4	Tourist	
5	Other specify. ……..	

9. **Length of Residence in Gulu City**

Tick appropriate options/answer(s) to you		√
1	Less than 5 months	
2	5 months to 1 year	
3	1 to 2 years	
4	More than 2 years	

Section B Urban Planning Strategies.A

You can fill out the corresponding cells with "Strongly Disagree =1", "Disagree = 2," "Neutral =3," "Agree= 4," and "Strongly Agree = 5,"

	Statement on urban planning strategies	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Capacity Building		**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Gulu City Council provides adequate training opportunities for refugees to participate in the urban planning process.					
2	Gulu City Council promotes knowledge sharing among refugees involved in urban planning.					
3	Gulu City Council allocates adequate funding for refugees' capacity-building initiatives in the urban planning process.					

4	Collaborative partnerships between different organizations support refugees' capacity-building efforts towards urban planning.					
5	Continuous learning is emphasized in Gulu City's refugees' capacity-building programs.					
Participation		**SDA**	**DA**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Refugees are consulted at the early stages of urban planning projects.					
2	Feedback mechanisms exist for refugees to provide their input throughout the planning process.					
3	Transparent communication channels exist to inform refugees about any urban planning initiatives.					
4	Efforts are made to ensure that marginalized populations are represented in the urban planning process.					
5	Refugees receive feedback on how their contributions influenced the final plans.					

Social Equity		**SDA**	**DA**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Policies address disparities in housing access across socioeconomic backgrounds.					
2	Opportunities for economic growth are distributed equitably across the neighbourhoods for all residents, regardless of place of origin.					
3	Access to education is provided to all residents, regardless of their place of origin.					
4	Healthcare facilities are distributed equitably across the neighbourhoods to serve everybody, regardless of their origin.					
5	Housing options are available for all households' income levels.					

Section C Urban Refugees' Integration.

You can fill out the corresponding cells with "Strongly Disagree =1", "Disagree = 2," "Neutral =3," "Agree= 4," and "Strongly Agree = 5,".

	Statement on Refugees' Integration	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Access to housing:		**SD**	**DA**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Housing options are available to all residents in Gulu City.					
2	Refugees are safe and secure in their current housing situation as urban refugees in Gulu City.					
3	Refugees face challenges in finding affordable housing in Gulu City.					
4	Refugees experienced discrimination when accessing housing in Gulu City.					
5	Refugees are integrated into the local community through housing arrangements.					

Access to health services:		**SDA**	**DA**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Refugees are aware of how to access mental health support services available in Gulu City.					
2	Refugees have easy access to healthcare services, including primary care, in Gulu City.					
3	Refugees receive adequate information regarding their healthcare rights.					
4	Refugees experienced discrimination from healthcare providers due to their refugee status.					
5	Refugees feel satisfied with the quality of healthcare services provided in Gulu City.					

	Access to education services:	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
1	Refugees are aware of vocational training programs available in Gulu City.					
2	Refugees have access to educational opportunities for their children in Gulu City.					
3	Refugees encountered discrimination within educational settings because of their refugee status.					
4	Refugees are satisfied by the healthcare services provided in Gulu City.					
5	Education is essential for refugees' future prospects in Gulu City.					

	Economic opportunities:	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
1	Gulu city refugees have stable income-generating activities that meet their financial needs.					
2	Refugees face barriers, such as a lack of work permits, in accessing formal employment opportunities in Gulu City.					
3	Refugees experienced unfair treatment in workplaces due to their refugee status.					
4	Refugees in Gulu City are financially empowered.					
5	Access to economic opportunities is crucial for refugee integration and self-reliance.					

Section D Policies Governing Refugees' Integration.

You can fill out the corresponding cells with "Strongly Disagree =1", "Disagree = 2," "Neutral =3," "Agree= 4," and "Strongly Agree = 5,".

	Refugees' Environment	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Policies		**SDA**	**DA**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Housing policies prioritize the safety of the occupants.					
2	Health policies ensure equitable access to healthcare services for everybody, regardless of place of origin.					
3	Education policies aim to remove barriers to refugee children's schooling.					
4	Economic policies promote refugee self-reliance.					
5	Policy frameworks aim to combat refugees' discrimination.					

Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Introduction

I am Oneka Samuel a student of Gulu University pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration and Management. I am conducting a research study on " Urban Planning and Refugees Integration: A Case Study of Gulu City" I kindly request for your participation in this study by responding to questions in this interview guide. Your inputs will be very valuable for this research. The purpose of this interview is to gather information on urban planning, refugee integration, and policies governing refugees' integration. Your responses will contribute to a better understanding and findings of this study.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

1. Can you describe any recent urban planning projects undertaken by Gulu City Council to address evolving needs?

   ……...……

2. Were the refugees involved in the planning process?

   ……...……

3. What policies did the city council base its decisions on when planning for refugees to integrate into Gulu City?

   ……...……

4. Do you think the community members are aware of the policies governing refugees' integration within Gulu City?

   ……...……

5. In your experience, how do these policies impact the relationships between refugee and host communities in Gulu City?

   ……...……

6. What urban planning strategies are being used by Gulu City Council to integrate urban refugees into the planning process?

……..……..…

7. How do you think the city council can attract the participation of urban refugees in the urban planning process of Gulu City so that their interests and aspirations are captured in the development plan?

……...……

8. How does the city council ensure social equity between the refugees and the host communities in the planning process?

……...……

9. Are there any considerations for integrating urban refugees into the urban planning process of Gulu City?

……...……

10. From a planning perspective, how do you assess the level of urban refugees' integration within the host communities of Gulu City?

…….

11. How does the spatial layout of Gulu City contribute to the social and economic integration of refugee populations?

……...…..……..

12. In your role, what challenges have you observed regarding the spatial distribution of social services for urban refugees in Gulu City?

……...……

13. How do you think urban refugees in Gulu City can be best integrated within the host communities?

……...……

14. How does demographic data inform urban planning decisions to support the integration of refugee populations in Gulu City?

……..…….……

15. In what ways does your office collaborate with urban planners to ensure that the needs of refugee populations are considered in city development plans?

    ……..……..……

16. Are there any capacity-building programs for the refugees to enable them to participate in the urban planning process of Gulu City?

    ……...

17. What are the biggest challenges to having access to adequate housing for urban refugees in Gulu City?

    ……

18. Do you believe that the influx of urban refugees has affected the availability of housing in Gulu City?

    ……

19. How do you think the housing challenges in Gulu City can be effectively addressed?

    ……..…

Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guide to host communities

1. Are there any capacity building programs for the refugees to enable them to participate in the urban planning process of Gulu city.
2. How do you think refugees' participation in urban development of Gulu city can be increase?
3. Does the city council involve the refugees in its urban planning process?
4. What urban planning strategies do you think Gulu city council should adopt to attract refugees' participation in the urban planning process of Gulu City?
5. Do you think there is social equity in the urban planning of Gulu city?
6. What measure have been put in place by the city council to prevent marginalisation of urban refugees in planning process Gulu city?
7. Have you faced any difficulties in finding affordable housing in Gulu City?
8. How do you think access to housing can be increase to accommodate the increasing number of urban refugees in Gulu city?
9. Do you have access to healthcare services in Gulu city
10. How do you think access to healthcare services can be made better for the refugees and the host communities
11. Do you think the education facilities availability are enough for the host communities and the refugees?
12. How do you think access to education services can be made better for the refugees and the host communities
13. Do you think there is needs to facilitate access to socio economic opportunities to urban refugees within the cities? (if yes how?)
14. How do you think access to economic opportunities can be increase for urban refugees in Gulu city?
15. Are you aware of any government policies addressing the housing needs of urban refugees in Gulu City?
16. Do you think there are needs to localize the national policies through bylaws to improve responses to the needs of urban refugees?

Appendix VI: Yamane Table of Sample Size Determination (1967)

Size of population, N	Sample size, n for precision (e) of:		
	± 3%	± 5%	± 10%
500	*	222	83
600	*	240	86
700	*	255	88
800	*	267	89
900	*	277	90
1000	*	286	91
2000	714	333	95
3000	811	353	97
4000	870	364	98
5000	909	370	98
6000	938	375	98
7000	959	378	99
8000	976	381	99
9000	989	383	99
10000	1000	385	99
15000	1034	390	99
20000	1053	392	100
25000	1064	394	100
50000	1087	397	100
100000	1099	398	100
>100000	1111	400	100

Source: Yamane Table 1967

Appendix VII: Key Themes from Coded Respondents on Urban Planning and Refugees' Integration in Gulu City

Code	Respondent Role	Key Themes
A	City Engineer	Urban Infrastructure Development, Accessibility, Inclusivity
B	Population Officer	Service Accessibility, Community Integration, Stakeholder Engagement
C	Physical Planner	Housing Strategies, Mixed Communities, Planning for Diversity
D	Division Mayor	Stakeholder Inclusion, Refugee Needs Assessment, Collaborative Decision-Making
E	Division City Clerk	Location of Services, Barriers to Access, Urban Disparities
F	City Staff Surveyor	Representation in Planning, Consultation Gaps, Addressing Needs
G	Communities of Gulu City	Community Dynamics, Understanding, Social Cohesion
H	Community Leader	Barriers to Housing, Community Support, Refugee Integration Challenges

Appendix VIII: introductory letter

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OFFICE OF THE DEAN FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Date: 01st July 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: ONEKA SAMUEL **REG. NO. 16/U/2493/MPA**

The above-named person is a final year student pursuing Master of Public Administration and Management (MPA) Degree of Gulu University.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the master's degree, he is carrying out research on the topic: **Urban Planning and Refugees Integration: A Case Study of Gulu City.**

Due consideration accorded to him shall be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

GULU UNIVERSITY
01 JUL 2024
DEAN
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Dr. Kitambo Enos - Research Coordinator (Ph.D.)
Faculty of Business and Development Studies