

Mission Engagement as a Strategy for Mission Sustainability: Evidence from the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Catholic dioceses operate in increasingly complex social, economic, and pastoral environments characterized by resource constraints, changing community needs, limited external funding, and growing demands for effective mission delivery. Mission engagement provides dioceses with mechanisms for involving church members, local communities, government agencies, development partners, and other stakeholders in the planning and implementation of mission activities, thereby strengthening institutional resilience and long-term mission sustainability. This study examined the effect of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The study was guided by stakeholder Theory. A positivist research philosophy and explanatory cross-sectional research design were adopted. Quantitative data were collected from pastoral personnel in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit using structured questionnaires, while qualitative information was obtained through interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analysis. The findings indicated that respondents strongly agreed that church members actively participated in mission activities ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.89$), the Diocese collaborated with local communities ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.92$), and maintained networks with government and development partners ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.90$). The overall mean for mission engagement was 4.03 ($SD = 0.93$), indicating a high level of stakeholder engagement in mission activities. Regression results established that mission engagement had a positive and statistically significant effect on mission sustainability ($p < .001$). Mission engagement emerged as the strongest predictor of mission sustainability among the capacity-building dimensions examined in the broader study. The findings demonstrate that active stakeholder participation, community collaboration, strategic partnerships, and engagement with government and development partners can strengthen the Diocese's capacity to sustain its pastoral and development activities over time. The study concludes that effective mission engagement is an important strategy for enhancing mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. It recommends that the Diocese strengthen participatory approaches to mission planning and implementation, deepen partnerships with local communities and development actors, and establish mechanisms for sustained stakeholder involvement in mission programmes.

Keywords: Mission engagement, mission sustainability, stakeholder participation, Catholic Diocese, pastoral ministry, Marsabit, Kenya

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The contemporary environment in which Catholic dioceses operate has become increasingly complex, characterized by changing social and economic conditions, resource constraints, declining external funding, changing community needs, and increasing demands for effective pastoral and development services. Catholic dioceses play an important role in responding to spiritual, social, economic, and humanitarian needs through pastoral care, education, healthcare, peace-building, humanitarian assistance, and community development

programmes. These responsibilities require dioceses to work collaboratively with church members, local communities, government agencies, development partners, and other stakeholders. Caritas Internationalis (2021) and CAFOD (2023) emphasize that the continued effectiveness of faith-based organizations depends on their ability to maintain their mission while responding to changing social, economic, and institutional environments.

One important dimension of sustaining the mission of faith-based organizations is mission engagement. Mission engagement refers to the active involvement and participation of church members, local communities, development partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and support of mission activities. Effective mission engagement promotes ownership, trust, collaboration, resource mobilization, knowledge sharing, and collective responsibility. By involving stakeholders in mission activities, dioceses can strengthen their relationships with the communities they serve and increase the likelihood that pastoral and development programmes will remain relevant and responsive to local needs. Freeman et al. (2021) and Mwema and Adhiambo (2023) emphasize that stakeholder participation and collaboration can strengthen organizational capacity by promoting ownership, trust, resource mobilization, and collective responsibility.

Globally, Catholic dioceses and other faith-based organizations operate in environments where social needs are increasing while financial and institutional resources remain constrained. Faith based organizations provide education, healthcare, humanitarian assistance, community development, and other services, particularly in communities where government and private sector capacity may be limited. Their ability to sustain these activities increasingly depends on meaningful relationships with the communities and institutions surrounding them. Caritas Internationalis (2021) notes that strengthening organizational systems and stakeholder relationships is important for enabling faith-based organizations to remain responsive to community needs. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021) emphasizes the importance of institutional capacity and collaborative approaches in enabling organizations to achieve sustainable results.

In Europe and other developed contexts, faith-based and non-profit organizations have increasingly recognized stakeholder engagement as an important component of organizational sustainability. Collaboration with community organizations, public institutions, volunteers, and development partners enables organizations to access knowledge, skills, resources, and networks that may not be available internally. Such collaborative relationships can also strengthen organizational adaptability by enabling institutions to understand changing community expectations and adjust their programmes accordingly. Bocken (2019) and Silvestre and Yücesan (2021) demonstrate the importance of organizational learning, strategic planning, governance, and adaptation in supporting long-term sustainability. Similarly, King and Roberson (2023) found that collaboration between faith-based organizations, governments, community organizations, and development partners can improve access to resources and strengthen service delivery.

The importance of mission engagement is also evident in the global challenge of donor dependency. Many faith-based organizations have historically depended on external donors and development partners to finance pastoral, humanitarian, and community development programmes. Changes in donor priorities and funding levels can consequently threaten the continuity of programmes. The OECD (2023) notes that organizations heavily dependent on external funding may experience financial instability when donor support declines. In such circumstances, strong engagement with local communities and other stakeholders can provide alternative sources of support, promote local ownership, and strengthen organizational resilience. Mission engagement therefore extends beyond participation in individual programmes to encompass the development of enduring relationships and networks that can support the continuity of organizational activities.

Within Africa, faith-based organizations play a particularly important role in addressing poverty, humanitarian crises, healthcare needs, education, peacebuilding, and community development. Catholic dioceses and Caritas organizations operate in many communities where government services are constrained and where vulnerable populations depend on faith-based institutions for essential support. Caritas Africa (2022) emphasizes the importance of strengthening organizational capacity and community participation to ensure the continuity of church programmes. Mission engagement is particularly relevant in this context because many African

communities have strong social and cultural structures through which community ownership, participation, and collective responsibility can influence the success and sustainability of development and pastoral interventions.

In Nigeria, faith-based organizations have increasingly incorporated community participation and local cultural values into their programmes. Amaeshi (2022) observed that organizations that integrate local cultural values and community participation into programme implementation are more likely to achieve community ownership and long-term sustainability. Similarly, experiences in Uganda demonstrate the importance of community participation, accountability, and stakeholder collaboration in strengthening the sustainability of church-supported development programmes (Caritas Uganda, 2022). In Tanzania, Catholic dioceses have strengthened their service delivery through collaboration with communities and development partners while improving institutional and financial systems (Tanzania Episcopal Conference, 2021). In Ethiopia, Caritas Ethiopia and diocesan development offices have similarly engaged local communities and development actors in programmes aimed at strengthening community resilience and sustaining social development interventions (Caritas Ethiopia, 2023).

These African experiences demonstrate that mission sustainability is not determined solely by the availability of financial resources. Rather, the ability of faith-based organizations to sustain their programmes also depends on the extent to which communities and other stakeholders participate in, support, and take ownership of mission activities. Meaningful engagement can strengthen trust between the organization and its stakeholders, improve communication, facilitate resource mobilization, and ensure that programmes reflect the needs and priorities of beneficiaries. Consequently, mission engagement provides an important mechanism through which faith-based organizations can strengthen their capacity to maintain their mission in complex and resource-constrained environments.

In Kenya, the Catholic Church is an important provider of spiritual, social, humanitarian, educational, healthcare, peacebuilding, and community development services. Catholic dioceses complement government efforts by providing services to vulnerable populations, particularly in marginalized and Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) areas where access to public services may be limited (KNBS, 2023; Caritas Kenya, 2022). The sustainability of these interventions is influenced by the ability of dioceses to mobilize local support, maintain relationships with communities, collaborate with government institutions and development partners, and involve stakeholders in the implementation of mission activities.

The Catholic Diocese of Marsabit operates within a particularly challenging environment. Marsabit County is classified as an ASAL region and experiences recurrent droughts, food insecurity, poverty, limited infrastructure, geographic isolation, and inter-community conflicts. These conditions increase the demand for pastoral, humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development interventions while simultaneously constraining the human and financial resources available to sustain such activities (Caritas Marsabit, 2021; KNBS, 2023). The Diocese therefore operates in an environment where collaboration with local communities, government agencies, development partners, church members, and other stakeholders is particularly important.

Mission engagement is especially relevant to the Diocese of Marsabit because its programmes are implemented among diverse pastoralist communities with different cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. Active participation by parish members, community leaders, volunteers, local organizations, government agencies, and development partners can promote community ownership and strengthen the relevance of diocesan programmes. Collaboration can also facilitate access to local knowledge, human resources, financial support, and institutional networks required for effective mission implementation. Mwema and Adhiambo (2023) and Ndungu and Nyaboke (2022) emphasize the importance of community participation and stakeholder collaboration in strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives.

The Diocese of Marsabit has a long history of pastoral outreach and involvement in education, healthcare, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and community development. However, its ability to sustain these interventions is affected by its remote geographical setting, limited human resources, financial constraints, dependence on external support, and the complex socioeconomic conditions of the communities it serves. These circumstances make stakeholder relationships and active participation increasingly important for

maintaining mission activities over time. Strong engagement can enable the Diocese to develop trust with communities, strengthen partnerships, mobilize resources, and ensure that mission programmes remain responsive to changing needs.

Mission sustainability in this study refers to the ability of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit to consistently maintain its pastoral and development activities, achieve its mission objectives, adapt to changing circumstances, and continue serving communities despite financial, operational, and environmental challenges. The diocese therefore provides an important context for examining the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability. While previous studies have examined organizational capacity, leadership, institutional development, resource management, and community participation in faith-based organizations, relatively limited empirical attention has been given to the specific influence of mission engagement on the longterm sustainability of diocesan missions in marginalized ASAL contexts. The present study consequently examined the effect of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. Specifically, the study assessed whether active stakeholder participation, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, participation in programme planning and implementation, and networks with government and development partners contributed to the sustainability of the Diocese's mission.

The study was therefore intended to generate empirical evidence on the role of mission engagement in sustaining Catholic diocesan activities in a resource-constrained and socially complex environment. The findings are expected to assist the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit and other faith-based organizations operating in similar contexts to strengthen stakeholder participation, deepen community partnerships, improve collaboration with government and development actors, and develop more sustainable approaches to mission implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The Catholic Diocese of Marsabit plays an important role in providing pastoral care, education, healthcare, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and community development to populations living in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of northern Kenya. However, sustaining these mission activities has become increasingly challenging because of recurrent drought, poverty, insecurity, geographical isolation, inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and increasing dependence on external support. These challenges have placed considerable pressure on the Diocese to maintain continuity in pastoral and development programmes, achieve planned mission objectives, sustain service delivery, and implement programmes over the long term. The central problem is therefore how the Diocese can sustain its mission outcomes in an environment characterized by persistent operational constraints and growing community needs.

The challenge of mission sustainability is particularly important because the Diocese operates in a context where community needs frequently exceed available institutional and financial resources. Caritas Marsabit (2023) reported that the number of people requiring food assistance increased from approximately 252,000 in 2019 to more than 300,000 in 2023, representing an increase of about 19%. The growing humanitarian needs placed additional pressure on pastoral and development programmes implemented by the Diocese. The report further identified weaknesses in human-resource systems, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, staffing, and operational planning (Caritas Marsabit, 2023). Similarly, Diocese of Marsabit (2022) reported delays and cancellation of some programmes associated with coordination and management challenges, while Caritas Kenya (2023) identified gaps in operational planning and the availability of adequately trained personnel. These circumstances indicate that increasing community needs have not always been matched by the capacity to sustain mission activities and achieve intended outcomes.

One potential strategy for addressing this challenge is mission engagement. However, the existence of stakeholder participation does not necessarily guarantee mission sustainability because engagement may be affected by weak coordination, limited participation in decision-making, inadequate trust, resource constraints, and competing stakeholder interests. This problem can further be examined through the specific indicators of mission sustainability considered in this study. Mission sustainability was reflected in the ability of the

Diocese to consistently sustain mission activities, continue programmes despite reductions in external funding, achieve pastoral and development objectives, generate long-term benefits for communities, adapt mission activities to changing circumstances, and maintain its mission despite financial and operational challenges. Although institutional reports have documented programme delays, coordination difficulties, and increasing community needs, they have mainly described these challenges without statistically establishing whether and to what extent mission engagement contributes to the sustainability of diocesan programmes (Diocese of Marsabit, 2022; Caritas Kenya, 2023; Caritas Marsabit, 2023). Thus, the specific contribution of active participation, community collaboration, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, stakeholder involvement in programme planning and implementation, and networks with government and development partners remains insufficiently established.

Empirical studies have recognized stakeholder participation and community engagement as important factors in organizational and development sustainability. However, much of the existing literature has examined engagement within general nonprofit organizations, development projects, or community-based interventions, with limited attention to Catholic missionary dioceses operating in resource-constrained and geographically isolated environments. Moreover, existing studies have not sufficiently established whether mission engagement produces measurable improvements in specific mission sustainability outcomes such as programme continuity, achievement of mission objectives, sustained service delivery, and longterm implementation of pastoral and development programmes. Consequently, the empirical relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability remains inadequately established.

There is also an empirical and methodological gap concerning the measurement of mission engagement as a distinct strategic factor in sustaining diocesan missions. Previous research has often considered stakeholder participation and community engagement as components of broader organizational capacity, without isolating mission engagement and statistically testing its influence on mission sustainability. This limits understanding of whether stronger engagement among church members, communities, government agencies, development partners, and other stakeholders translates into more sustainable mission outcomes. The present study therefore examined the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability using quantitative evidence from the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, complemented by qualitative insights from pastoral personnel.

Contextually, the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit operates in a distinctive environment characterized by recurrent drought, insecurity, poverty, cultural diversity, limited infrastructure, geographical isolation, and resource constraints. These conditions make collaboration with communities and external stakeholders particularly important for the implementation and continuity of pastoral and development programmes. However, findings from studies conducted in other geographical and institutional settings may not adequately explain how mission engagement operates within the Diocese of Marsabit. There was therefore a need for context specific empirical evidence on whether and how mission engagement contributes to the sustainability of the Diocese's mission.

Therefore, this study sought to determine the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. Specifically, the study examined whether active participation of church members, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, stakeholder participation in programme planning and implementation, and networks with government and development partners contribute to sustained mission activities and long-term mission outcomes. By addressing this empirical, methodological, and contextual gap, the study provides evidence on the role of mission engagement as a strategy for strengthening mission sustainability within a Catholic missionary diocese operating in a challenging ASAL environment.

Purpose and Objective of the Study

This study was derived from a broader study examining capacity-building strategies and mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya, focusing specifically on **mission engagement as a strategic factor influencing mission sustainability**.

The objective was to examine the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya.

Hypothesis

Ho: Mission engagement has no statistically significant influence on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya.

Significance of the Study

This article is significant because it provides focused empirical evidence on the role of mission engagement in the sustainability of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. Mission engagement is an important dimension of capacity-building because the sustainability of pastoral and development activities depends on the participation of church members, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, and engagement with government and development partners.

The findings will be useful to diocesan leaders, parish priests, and administrators by providing insights into whether mission engagement contributes to improved mission sustainability. The findings may also assist the Diocese in evaluating the effectiveness of stakeholder participation, community collaboration, partnerships, and shared involvement in mission activities, which were important indicators of mission engagement in the study.

The study is also relevant to faith-based organizations, development partners, and policymakers because evidence on the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability can inform strategies that promote meaningful stakeholder participation and collaboration. Such evidence may support the design of partnership and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the continuity of pastoral and community development programmes.

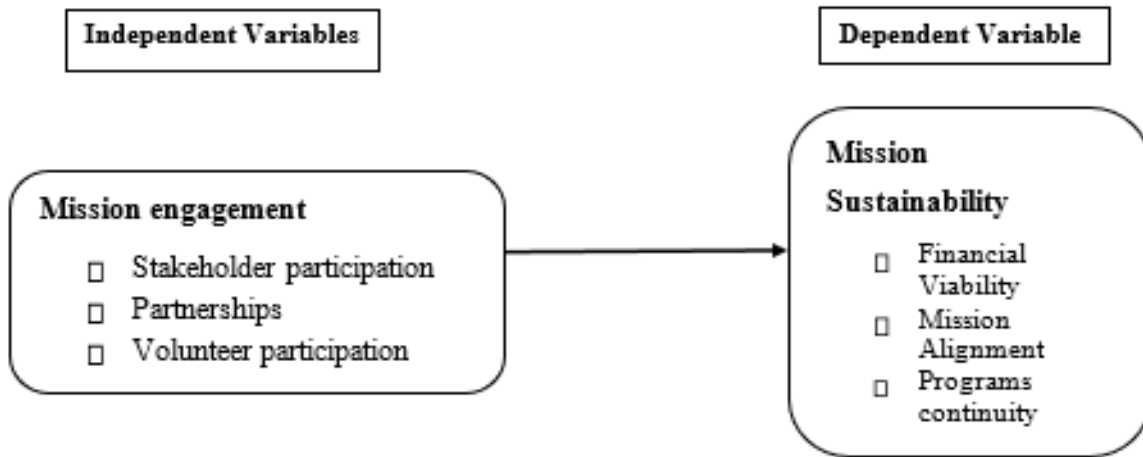
Finally, the study contributes to academic literature by isolating mission engagement from the broader capacity-building construct and examining it as an independent dimension of mission sustainability. This provides a more focused understanding of how stakeholder participation, community involvement, collaboration, and partnerships relate to the sustainability of missionary activities and offers a basis for further research on mission engagement and sustainability within Catholic dioceses and other faith-based organizations.

Theoretical Framework

The study was theoretically anchored on **Stakeholder Theory**, which proposes that organizational sustainability is influenced by the ability of an organization to identify, engage, and respond to the interests of its key stakeholders. In the context of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, mission activities involve different stakeholders, including pastoral personnel, parish communities, church members, development partners, government agencies, and other community actors. Effective engagement with these stakeholders can facilitate collaboration, mobilization of resources, participation in decision-making, and shared responsibility for mission activities. Consequently, stronger stakeholder engagement is expected to contribute to the sustainability of pastoral and community development activities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the proposed relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The framework is derived from the broader study, which conceptualized capacity-building strategies as comprising leadership training, institutional development, resource management, and mission engagement. In this article, the analysis is narrowed to **mission engagement** as the independent variable and **mission sustainability** as the dependent variable.



Mission engagement refers to the extent to which stakeholders participate in, collaborate on, and contribute to the implementation of mission activities. In the study, mission engagement was conceptualized in terms of stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility in mission

activities. These dimensions reflect the extent to which the Diocese works with church members, local communities, development partners, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to support and implement its mission activities.

Mission sustainability constitutes the dependent variable and refers to the ability of the Diocese to maintain its pastoral, evangelization, and community development activities over time. Sustainability is reflected in the continuity of mission programmes, effective delivery of pastoral activities, continued community support, and the ability of the Diocese to sustain its mission despite contextual challenges.

The framework is theoretically anchored in **Stakeholder Theory**, which suggests that organizations are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes when they effectively engage stakeholders and address their interests. In the context of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, meaningful stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, effective communication, and shared responsibility are therefore expected to strengthen support for mission activities, improve resource mobilization and coordination, and consequently enhance mission sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section reviews literature on mission engagement and mission sustainability in faith-based organizations, with particular focus on the relationship between stakeholder engagement and the sustainability of mission activities. Mission engagement is viewed as the participation and collaboration of stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and support of pastoral and community development activities. In the context of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, mission engagement may include stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility in mission activities.

The review is organized into three main areas. First, it examines Stakeholder Theory, which provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the importance of stakeholder participation and collaboration in organizational sustainability. Second, it reviews empirical studies examining the relationship between mission engagement and organizational or mission sustainability. Finally, the review identifies knowledge gaps arising from existing studies and establishes the basis for examining the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya.

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, associated with Freeman (1984), explains how organizations can achieve sustainable outcomes by identifying, engaging, and responding to the interests of individuals and groups that affect or are affected by organizational activities. The theory proposes that organizations should not focus solely on their internal interests but should develop relationships with stakeholders whose participation, support, and resources contribute to organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

In the context of faith-based organizations, stakeholder engagement can take different forms, including participation of church members, collaboration with local communities, partnerships with development organizations, engagement with government agencies, and communication with other mission-supporting actors. Such engagement can facilitate resource mobilization, improve coordination of activities, strengthen community ownership, and enhance the capacity of organizations to sustain their programmes.

The relevance of Stakeholder Theory to this article lies in its explanation of how meaningful engagement with stakeholders can contribute to mission sustainability. The parent study operationalized mission engagement through stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility in mission activities. These mechanisms represent practical ways through which the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit can involve stakeholders in supporting and implementing pastoral and community development activities.

However, the theory has limitations. It provides broad guidance on the importance of stakeholder relationships but gives less attention to situations where stakeholders have conflicting interests, unequal levels of power, or different expectations regarding organizational activities. In addition, effective stakeholder engagement may require considerable time, resources, and coordination, particularly in geographically isolated and resource-constrained environments. These challenges may limit the extent to which stakeholder participation translates into sustainable organizational outcomes.

Despite these limitations, Stakeholder Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for this article because it directly explains the expected relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability. By promoting stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, effective communication, and shared responsibility, faith-based organizations may strengthen community support, improve coordination of mission activities, mobilize resources, and consequently enhance the sustainability of their mission.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies generally suggest that stakeholder engagement can contribute positively to organizational sustainability by strengthening participation, collaboration, resource mobilization, and ownership of organizational activities. However, the strength of this relationship varies according to the nature of stakeholder relationships, organizational context, and the institutional environment in which organizations operate.

Studies on faith-based organizations have indicated that meaningful stakeholder participation can strengthen the implementation and continuity of mission activities. Engagement with local communities enables organizations to identify community needs, develop responsive programmes, and promote ownership of interventions. Similarly, partnerships with development organizations and government institutions can provide access to financial, technical, and institutional resources that support the continuity of pastoral and community development programmes.

Other empirical studies have demonstrated that collaboration and communication between organizations and their stakeholders can improve programme effectiveness and organizational resilience. Where stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making and implementation, organizations may benefit from greater commitment, shared responsibility, improved accountability, and stronger support for organizational programmes. These outcomes are particularly relevant to faith-based organizations operating in environments

characterized by limited resources and complex social and economic challenges.

The empirical literature therefore indicates that mission engagement has the potential to contribute positively to mission sustainability. However, existing studies have largely examined stakeholder engagement in general organizational, development, and community settings, with limited empirical attention to mission engagement as a distinct capacity-building strategy within Catholic dioceses. Furthermore, limited evidence exists on how stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility relate specifically to mission sustainability in the context of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. This gap provides a basis for examining the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Diocese.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature reveals several gaps. Conceptually, previous studies have largely examined stakeholder engagement as a broad organizational or community-development practice rather than considering mission engagement as a distinct capacity-building strategy comprising stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility. Contextually, much of the existing literature has focused on mainstream organizations, development programmes, and faith-based organizations in settings different from the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, with limited attention to the unique geographical, socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional conditions within the Diocese. Methodologically, existing studies have also relied substantially on general organizational outcomes, limiting the understanding of how specific dimensions of mission engagement relate to the sustainability of pastoral and community development activities.

The present article addresses this gap by focusing specifically on **mission engagement** as a capacity-building strategy and examining its influence on **mission sustainability** in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. Mission engagement is measured through stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, communication, and shared responsibility, while mission sustainability is assessed in terms of the continuity and effectiveness of pastoral and community development activities. This focused approach provides a basis for establishing whether mission engagement significantly contributes to mission sustainability within the context of a Catholic diocese operating in a resource-constrained and geographically challenging environment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

The study adopted a pragmatist research philosophy, which recognizes that research questions can be addressed using methods that best generate appropriate evidence for the problem under investigation. Pragmatism was appropriate because the study integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine mission engagement and mission sustainability. The quantitative component provided measurable evidence on stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, and their relationship with mission sustainability, while the qualitative component provided contextual insights into how stakeholder involvement, trust, partnerships, and shared responsibility contributed to the sustainability of diocesan programmes. The philosophy therefore supported the use of complementary methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability.

Research Design

The study employed an explanatory cross-sectional mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component was used to examine the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability, while the qualitative component provided deeper explanations of respondents' experiences regarding stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, and community involvement in diocesan mission activities.

The cross-sectional design involved collecting data at one point in time from pastoral personnel within the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. The Diocese comprises 18 parishes, and the study targeted pastoral personnel

involved in pastoral leadership, administration, coordination, institutional development, resource management, and mission implementation. The design was appropriate because it enabled the study to assess existing mission engagement practices and their relationship with mission sustainability without requiring longitudinal follow-up.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population comprised 144 pastoral personnel drawn from the 18 parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. A sample of 106 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. The respondents included parish priests, moderators of Parish Pastoral Councils, assistant parish priests and priests working at the Diocesan Secretariat, religious brothers and sisters, and catechists.

A total of 106 questionnaires were administered, of which 78 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of 73.6%. The 78 valid responses formed the basis for the quantitative analysis.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a key informant interview guide. The questionnaire contained Likert-scale items designed to measure the study constructs, while the interview guide was used to obtain qualitative information regarding the implementation and contribution of capacity-building strategies to mission sustainability.

For this journal article, particular attention was given to the **mission engagement** construct. Mission engagement was measured using six indicators: active participation of church members in mission activities, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust between the Diocese and community members, stakeholder participation in planning and implementation of mission programmes, and networks with government and development partners.

Reliability and Validity

The research instrument was subjected to validity and reliability assessment before the main data collection. The questionnaire was reviewed by university supervisors and experts in strategic management and research methodology. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was 0.89, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate content validity.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The mission engagement construct comprised six Likert-scale items and achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of **0.826**, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. This indicated satisfactory internal consistency among the items used to measure mission engagement.

Measurement of Variables

For this journal article, **mission engagement constituted the independent variable**, while **mission sustainability constituted the dependent variable**.

Mission engagement was operationalized through stakeholder participation, collaboration with local communities, partnerships, mutual trust, participation in mission planning and implementation, and networks with government and development partners. These indicators measured the extent to which stakeholders actively participated in and supported the implementation of the Diocese's mission activities.

Mission sustainability was measured using outcome-oriented indicators relating to continuity of mission programmes, achievement of mission objectives, financial viability, institutional continuity, continued service delivery, and resilience to operational challenges.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 30. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the characteristics of the

respondents and their perceptions of mission engagement and mission sustainability.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis was used to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability. Multiple linear regression analysis was subsequently used to determine the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability while controlling for leadership training, institutional development, and resource management. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Qualitative data obtained through key informant interviews were analyzed thematically. The interview responses were transcribed, coded, categorized into emerging themes, and presented narratively to complement and explain the quantitative findings.

Diagnostic tests were also conducted to assess the assumptions underlying multiple regression analysis, including normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and homoscedasticity. The diagnostic results confirmed that the assumptions required for regression analysis were satisfied.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to appropriate ethical requirements during data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the Graduate School of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, while a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the relevant authorities of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit.

Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Respondents' information was used strictly for academic purposes, and participants were free to withdraw from the study without penalty.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the findings on the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The results are presented using response rate, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and qualitative findings. The presentation and interpretation of the findings are guided by the objective of the study, which sought to investigate the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability.

Response Rate

A total of 106 questionnaires were administered to the sampled respondents, of which 78 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of **73.6%**. The response rate was considered adequate for statistical analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to examine respondents' perceptions of mission engagement as a capacity-building strategy in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The responses were summarized using frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The mean indicates the average level of respondents' agreement with each statement, while the standard deviation indicates the degree of variation in respondents' perceptions.

Table 4: Mission Engagement

Mission Engagement Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
Church members actively participate in mission activities.	4.11	0.89

The Diocese collaborates effectively with local communities.	4.05	0.92
The Diocese has established strong partnerships with stakeholders.	3.98	0.96
There is mutual trust between the Diocese and community members.	4.02	0.91
Stakeholders actively participate in planning and implementing mission programmes.	3.95	0.98
The Diocese maintains effective networks with government and development partners.	4.08	0.90
Overall	4.03	0.93

Source: Researcher (2026)

The statement “Church members actively participate in mission activities” recorded the highest mean score of 4.11 (SD = 0.89), indicating strong agreement that active participation contributes to the implementation and sustainability of the Diocese’s pastoral and development programmes. The relatively low standard deviation shows that respondents held fairly consistent views. The second-highest mean was recorded for “The Diocese maintains effective networks with government and development partners” at 4.08 (SD = 0.90), suggesting that external networks support collaboration, resource mobilization, and programme implementation.

Similarly, respondents agreed that “The Diocese collaborates effectively with local communities” (M = 4.05, SD = 0.92) and that “There is mutual trust between the Diocese and community members” (M = 4.02, SD = 0.91). These findings indicate that community collaboration and mutual trust are important in promoting shared responsibility, cooperation, participation, and community ownership of diocesan initiatives. The statement “The Diocese has established strong partnerships with stakeholders” also received a positive rating (M = 3.98, SD = 0.96), demonstrating that stakeholder partnerships provide opportunities for collaboration and support in implementing mission activities.

The lowest mean score was recorded for “Stakeholders actively participate in planning and implementing mission programmes” at 3.95 (SD = 0.98). Although this still indicates general agreement, the relatively higher standard deviation suggests greater variation in respondents’ perceptions and points to an opportunity for strengthening stakeholder involvement. Overall, the findings demonstrate that mission engagement is supported by church-member participation, community collaboration, mutual trust, stakeholder partnerships, and networks with government and development partners. These practices enhance programme ownership, collaboration, resource mobilization, and support for sustainable mission activities in the Diocese.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish the nature and direction of the relationship between mission engagement and the performance of the Diocese. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Mission Engagement and Performance of the Diocese

	Performance of the Diocese	Mission Engagement
Performance of the Diocese	1	Positive and significant
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	<.001
N	78	78
Mission Engagement	Positive and significant	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	—
N	78	78

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between mission engagement and the performance of the Diocese. The

analysis established a positive and statistically significant relationship between mission engagement and the performance of the Diocese ($p < .001$). This finding indicates that increased mission engagement is associated with improved performance of the Diocese. The positive relationship suggests that active participation of church members, collaboration with local communities, strong stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, stakeholder involvement in mission programmes, and effective networks with government and development partners may contribute to improved organizational performance. The parent study similarly established that mission engagement had a positive and statistically significant relationship with organizational performance.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of mission engagement on mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. The parent study specified a regression model for mission engagement and mission sustainability as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y represents mission sustainability, X_4 represents mission engagement, β_0 represents the constant, β_4 represents the regression coefficient, and ε represents the error term.

Table 4: Regression Coefficient for Mission Engagement

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Mission Engagement	0.317	0.071	0.351	4.463	<0.001

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The results in Table 4 indicate that mission engagement had a positive and statistically significant influence on mission sustainability ($\beta = 0.351$, $t = 4.463$, $p < 0.001$). The positive standardized coefficient indicates that higher levels of mission engagement were associated with higher levels of mission sustainability. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.317$) indicates that a one-unit increase in mission engagement was associated with a predicted increase of 0.317 units in mission sustainability, holding the other variables in the model constant.

The regression model was expressed as:

$$\text{Mission Sustainability} = 0.563 + 0.186X_1 + 0.223X_2 + 0.248X_3 + 0.317X_4$$

where X_1 represents leadership training, X_2 institutional development, X_3 resource management, and X_4 mission engagement. Mission engagement therefore made the strongest relative contribution to mission sustainability.

The findings demonstrate that mission engagement made a significant contribution to mission sustainability. Active participation by church members, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, stakeholder involvement in mission programmes, and effective networks with government and development partners contribute to programme ownership, collaboration, resource mobilization, and the effective implementation of pastoral and development programmes. The parent study similarly established that mission engagement had a positive and statistically significant influence on mission sustainability and emerged as the strongest predictor among the strategic capacity-building dimensions.

The findings therefore demonstrate that mission engagement was particularly important in improving mission sustainability within the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. By strengthening stakeholder participation, community collaboration, partnerships, and shared responsibility, the Diocese can enhance programme implementation, mobilize resources, strengthen stakeholder commitment, and support the long-term sustainability of its pastoral and development mission.

The regression model was expressed as:

Mission Sustainability = $0.563 + 0.186X_1 + 0.223X_2 + 0.248X_3 + 0.317X_4$ where X_1 represents leadership training, X_2 institutional development, X_3 resource management, and X_4 mission engagement. Mission engagement therefore made the strongest relative contribution to mission sustainability.

Qualitative Findings on Mission Engagement and Mission Sustainability

The qualitative findings obtained from 78 key informant interviews provided additional explanations regarding the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability. Participants reported that mission engagement strengthened programme ownership, stakeholder collaboration, partnerships, and support for diocesan activities. Involving communities and other stakeholders encouraged shared responsibility and improved programme implementation.

The respondents particularly emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement in planning, partnerships, and community collaboration. For example, KII-18 reported that stakeholder involvement in planning strengthened programme ownership, while KII-47 indicated that partnerships enabled the Diocese to access additional skills and resources. KII-74 reported that collaboration with communities strengthened trust and facilitated programme implementation. The qualitative findings therefore complemented the quantitative results by demonstrating that stakeholder participation, partnerships, trust, and shared responsibility contributed to mission sustainability. The evidence further supported the quantitative finding that mission engagement was the strongest predictor of mission sustainability, recording the highest correlation ($r = .534$) and standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .351$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrated that mission engagement significantly and positively influenced mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit. The high overall mean of 4.03 indicated that respondents generally perceived stakeholder participation and collaboration as important contributors to sustainable mission activities. The significant correlation ($r = .534$, $p < .001$) and regression coefficient ($\beta = .351$, $p < .001$) further provided statistical evidence that mission engagement was an important determinant of mission sustainability.

The finding is consistent with Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes that organizations can strengthen sustainable performance through participation, communication, collaboration, and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. The qualitative findings similarly showed that stakeholder participation strengthened ownership, trust, collaboration, and access to additional resources. The findings also agree with Freeman (2010), who emphasized the importance of stakeholder collaboration in organizational effectiveness, and Owino et al. (2024), who found that community participation and strategic partnerships enhanced programme sustainability through increased ownership and resource mobilization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, mission engagement significantly influences mission sustainability in the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The findings established that mission engagement was highly practiced within the Diocese, particularly through active participation by church members, collaboration with local communities, stakeholder partnerships, mutual trust, and engagement with government and development partners. Mission engagement was found to strengthen programme ownership, stakeholder collaboration, resource mobilization, trust, and effective implementation of diocesan programmes. The regression results further established that mission engagement was the strongest predictor of mission sustainability ($\beta = .351$, $t = 4.463$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the findings demonstrate that effective mission engagement provides the Diocese with a stronger foundation for sustaining pastoral and development programmes through increased stakeholder participation, community collaboration, partnerships, and shared responsibility. The findings are consistent with Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the importance of stakeholder involvement, collaboration, and mutual accountability in achieving organizational effectiveness and sustainability. At the same time, the findings highlight the need for

the Diocese to strengthen and formalize stakeholder engagement mechanisms to ensure that the benefits of participation and partnerships are sustained over the long term.

Contribution of the Study

The study contributes to theoretical knowledge by supporting Stakeholder Theory in explaining the relationship between mission engagement and mission sustainability within a faith-based organization. The findings demonstrate that stakeholder participation, community collaboration, partnerships, mutual trust, and shared responsibility are important mechanisms through which organizations can strengthen sustainability.

Practically, the findings provide leaders and managers of the Catholic Diocese of Marsabit with evidence to strengthen stakeholder participation, community engagement, strategic partnerships, and collaboration with government and development partners. The study demonstrates that effective mission engagement can enhance programme ownership, resource mobilization, trust, and implementation of pastoral and development activities.

Overall, the study adds to the literature on mission sustainability in faith-based organizations by examining mission engagement alongside leadership training, institutional development, and resource management within one integrated capacity-building framework. The four dimensions jointly explained 71.4% of the variation in mission sustainability, demonstrating the importance of strategic capacity-building in sustaining the Diocese's mission programmes.

RECOMMENDATION

The Catholic Diocese of Marsabit should strengthen mission engagement mechanisms by incorporating active and meaningful stakeholder participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of mission programmes. The Diocese should develop stronger partnerships with local communities, church members, government institutions, development partners, and other relevant stakeholders to improve access to additional skills, expertise, resources, and technical support.

In addition, the Diocese should establish regular stakeholder consultation forums and participatory planning mechanisms to strengthen communication, mutual trust, accountability, and ownership of mission programmes. Community members and other stakeholders should be given greater opportunities to participate in decisions affecting mission activities within their local areas. Since mission engagement emerged as the strongest predictor of mission sustainability ($\beta = .351$, $p < .001$), strengthening stakeholder participation, collaboration, partnerships, and community engagement would contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Diocese's pastoral and development programmes.

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