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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CHARTERED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study determined the influence of stakeholder collaboration on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem: Chartered Private Universities in Kenya face persistent competitiveness challenges, including enrolment deficits, high staff attrition, limited research output, insufficient programme diversity, and financial instability. These challenges are rooted in weak stakeholder collaboration ecosystems, which manifest as limited industry partnerships, underdeveloped alumni engagement, and insufficiently formalised collaborative governance structures. Collectively, these weaknesses restrict institutional resources, reputation, and strategic opportunities.

Research Methodology: The study adopted a positivist philosophy and an explanatory research design, and a census of all 32 Chartered Private Universities in Kenya was undertaken. Structured questionnaires were administered to 224 management board members selected through stratified and judgement sampling, and 176 usable responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 78.6 percent. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple regression analysis in SPSS.

Findings: The study found that stakeholder collaboration had a positive and statistically significant effect on institutional competitiveness ($B = 0.622$, $\beta = 0.641$, $p < .05$). Stakeholder collaboration explained 41.1 percent of the variance in institutional competitiveness ($R^2 = .411$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, stakeholder collaboration has a statistically significant effect on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

Conclusion: The study concludes that stakeholder collaboration is the most influential individual driver of competitiveness among Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. Effective stakeholder collaboration requires the deliberate formalisation of engagement mechanisms and sustained investment in partnership development.

Recommendations: The study recommends that management boards should formalise industry partnerships, deepen alumni engagement, and institutionalise collaborative governance structures to strengthen competitive positioning. The Commission for University Education should incorporate stakeholder collaboration performance indicators into quality assurance frameworks. The Commission should also provide institutions with sufficient autonomy to innovate in stakeholder engagement approaches alongside quality compliance.

Keywords: *Stakeholder collaboration, competitiveness, chartered private universities, industry partnerships, collaborative governance, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

The competitive landscape of higher education has undergone a fundamental shift, driven by evolving student expectations, technological advancement, and economic pressures that compel private universities to reassess their operational practices in order to maintain competitive positioning globally (Kabisa & Wanyonyi, 2026; Carmo *et al.*, 2025). Contemporary trends reshaping the educational landscape include the growing influence of artificial intelligence, the emergence of micro-credentials for workforce alignment, and the adoption of interdisciplinary learning approaches that respond to industry demands (Kamp, 2023). These developments coincide with demographic shifts and financial pressures that force universities to reconsider traditional operational models, as rising costs, declining public trust, and heightened student expectations challenge conventional institutional frameworks (Alenezi, 2023). Within this context, stakeholder collaboration has emerged as a strategic imperative for universities seeking to strengthen institutional effectiveness, generate diversified resources,

and sustain competitive positioning through collaborative relationships with diverse internal and external constituencies (Filho *et al*., 2025).

Kenya's Chartered Private Universities operate within an increasingly competitive higher education environment, where their competitiveness is affected by financial constraints, limited government support, changing student preferences, and the need to improve academic programmes, administrative processes, and institutional innovation (Issack *et al*., 2025; National Treasury, 2025). Because these institutions operate largely through full-cost-recovery models, tuition fees remain their primary source of income. This places acute pressure on them to attract and retain students, establish strategic industry partnerships, strengthen alumni connections, and build community relationships that provide resources, reputation enhancement, and strategic opportunities (Filho *et al*., 2025). Despite constituting 34.2 percent of all universities, Chartered Private Universities offered only 889 accredited programmes in 2024, against 4,806 in public universities (CUE, 2024). These competitive deficits reflect, in part, weak stakeholder collaboration ecosystems that limit programme relevance, constrain revenue diversification, and reduce institutional responsiveness to market demands.

Stakeholder collaboration encompasses the strategic processes through which universities actively involve diverse stakeholders in decision-making, planning, and implementation activities to enhance institutional effectiveness and competitive positioning (Filho *et al*., 2025). Collaborative governance models involving faculty, students, and industry create participatory decision-making frameworks that enhance institutional responsiveness through the systematic integration of stakeholder perspectives into policy development, strategic planning, and operational improvement initiatives (Mbithe *et al*., 2024). Industry partnerships enhance educational relevance, research capabilities, and graduate employability through knowledge exchange mechanisms, internship programmes, and joint research projects that create mutual value for universities and industry partners (Marinho *et al*., 2020). Similarly, stakeholder collaboration forums provide structured communication platforms for ongoing dialogue, feedback collection, and collaborative problem-solving, which enable continuous institutional improvement based on stakeholder input and strengthen the institutional reputation that supports competitive market positioning (King'oo *et al*., 2020).

Despite the recognised importance of stakeholder collaboration in higher education, empirical evidence on how it influences the multidimensional competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya remains limited. King'oo *et al*. (2020) examined networking capability rather than comprehensive stakeholder collaboration encompassing collaborative governance

models, industry partnerships, and structured engagement forums. Mbithe *et al*. (2024) employed an exclusively qualitative approach without quantitative validation of engagement effectiveness, while Marinho *et al*. (2020) relied entirely on a synthesis of secondary literature. No existing study has comprehensively examined stakeholder collaboration as an integrated determinant of competitiveness, measured through student enrolment, staff retention, research output, programme diversity, and financial stability, across all Chartered Private Universities regulated by the Commission for University Education. This paper addresses that gap by presenting empirical findings on this influence, anchored on the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece *et al*., 1997).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In an ideal higher education environment, Chartered Private Universities should leverage robust stakeholder collaboration frameworks to achieve sustained competitiveness through enhanced programme relevance, diversified revenue streams, strengthened research partnerships, and improved graduate employability. Stakeholder collaboration should contribute to institutional sustainability, innovation, and market differentiation, with collaborative governance models drawing on faculty, student, and industry perspectives to inform strategic decisions, industry partnerships generating research funding and curriculum relevance, and stakeholder engagement forums supporting continuous institutional improvement (Filho *et al*., 2025). However, Chartered Private Universities in Kenya face critical competitiveness challenges, manifested through declining student enrolment, high staff attrition, limited research output, insufficient programme diversity, and financial instability, which collectively threaten institutional sustainability and market positioning (CUE, 2024; Kingoo *et al*., 2020). These challenges reflect weaknesses in the stakeholder collaboration mechanisms that limit industry partnerships, alumni connections, and community relationships providing resources, reputation enhancement, and strategic opportunities (Filho *et al*., 2025).

Chartered Private Universities enrolled only 144,236 students in 2024, representing 24.3 percent of total university enrolment, compared to 469,688 students in public universities. Enrolment was concentrated in traditional programmes such as business, with 30,073 students, and education, with 18,765 students, while competitive professional programmes in medicine, law, and engineering faced capacity constraints that limited growth in high-demand, premium-tuition fields essential for revenue diversification (CUE, 2024). Research productivity disparities were equally stark, with private universities producing only 1,452 research outputs

against 4,486 in public institutions, and recording merely 10 innovations and one patent across the entire private university sector, which demonstrates minimal industry-university collaboration and knowledge commercialisation (CUE, 2024). Staff retention was also constrained, with only 3,418 teaching staff against 10,092 in public institutions, while limited revenue diversification beyond tuition fees, weak alumni giving programmes, and insufficient endowment funds restricted strategic investment capacity (CUE, 2024; Kimathi & Irungu, 2024).

The existing literature reveals significant conceptual, contextual, and methodological gaps regarding the influence of stakeholder collaboration on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. King'oo *et al*. (2020) examined networking capability rather than comprehensive stakeholder collaboration encompassing collaborative governance models, industry partnerships, and structured engagement forums. Mbithe *et al*. (2024) employed an exclusively qualitative approach without quantitative validation of engagement effectiveness measures, while Marinho *et al*. (2020) relied entirely on a synthesis of secondary literature without primary empirical validation of partnership outcomes on competitiveness. Kenyan studies examining related constructs focused on public education policy implementation without addressing how stakeholder partnerships influence competitiveness within Chartered Private Universities (Kibigo, 2024; Komora *et al*., 2025). Therefore, no existing study has comprehensively examined stakeholder collaboration as an integrated determinant of multidimensional competitiveness across all Chartered Private Universities in Kenya, which justifies the current empirical investigation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of stakeholder collaboration on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H0: Stakeholder collaboration has no statistically significant effect on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory was developed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen in 1997, extending the Resource-Based View to address organisational adaptation in dynamic environments. The theory defines dynamic capabilities as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments (Teece *et al*., 1997). It suggests that organisations must continuously sense opportunities and threats, seize valuable opportunities, and reconfigure their resource base to maintain competitiveness over time (Teece, 2007). The theory further indicates that dynamic capabilities involve higher-order organisational processes that enable firms to alter their operational routines and resource configurations in response to change (Winter, 2003). This study adopts the Dynamic Capabilities Theory as its theoretical anchor because stakeholder collaboration operationalises the relational capability dimension of the theory, enabling Chartered Private Universities to sense stakeholder needs, seize partnership opportunities, and reconfigure institutional processes to enhance satisfaction, engagement, and competitive positioning.

The assumptions of the theory directly support the examination of stakeholder collaboration as a competitive mechanism in Chartered Private Universities. Competitiveness in dynamic environments derives not from static resource positions but from the organisational ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies in response to change (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Sensing capabilities enable organisations to scan opportunities and threats, seizing capabilities mobilise resources to capture value through decision-making, and transforming capabilities enable continuous renewal through the recombination and reconfiguration of assets (Teece, 2007). These assumptions support the view of stakeholder collaboration as a dynamic capability that enables universities to adapt through collaborative governance models involving faculty, students, and industry, industry partnerships that enhance educational relevance and graduate employability, and stakeholder engagement forums that generate continuous improvement input from diverse stakeholders (Filho *et al*., 2025; King'oo *et al*., 2020; Marinho *et al*., 2020; Mbithe *et al*., 2024).

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory directly explains how Chartered Private Universities maintain competitiveness through stakeholder collaboration by developing relational capabilities that enable them to sense stakeholder needs and reconfigure processes to enhance engagement. When universities establish industry partnerships, they demonstrate seizing

capabilities that capture value from identified opportunities through knowledge exchange mechanisms, internship programmes, and joint research projects that improve student career outcomes (Marinho *et al*., 2020). Collaborative governance models operationalise sensing capabilities by integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives into policy development and strategic planning, thereby enabling universities to identify competitive threats through systematic stakeholder involvement (Mbithe *et al*., 2024). Stakeholder engagement forums, in turn, operationalise transforming capabilities through structured communication platforms that enable continuous institutional reconfiguration based on stakeholder input, thereby strengthening institutional reputation and competitive market positioning (King'oo *et al*., 2020).

Despite its valuable contributions, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory has inherent weaknesses that limit its theoretical precision. The theory suffers from conceptual ambiguity and lacks clear operational definitions, which makes it difficult to measure and empirically test dynamic capabilities (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009). The theory also exhibits tautological tendencies, since successful adaptation is attributed to dynamic capabilities, while dynamic capabilities are identified through successful adaptation outcomes (Helfat & Peteraf, 2009). Brock and Hitt (2024) further note that divergent definitions hinder comparison and generalisation, leaving critical questions unanswered about how firms build and deploy such capabilities to achieve evolutionary fitness. This study addresses these limitations by operationalising dynamic capabilities through specific and measurable stakeholder collaboration dimensions, namely collaborative governance models, industry partnerships, and stakeholder engagement forums, which provide concrete empirical proxies for relational sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities among Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

Empirical Review

Globally, Shin *et al*. (2026) examined university-community collaboration through an interdisciplinary sustainability initiative at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, United States. The study employed a participatory action research approach in which faculty, students, alumni, and community stakeholders collaboratively designed and implemented a sustainable consumption campaign and established a community sustainability coalition. Data were collected through community meetings, social media updates, and student reflections, and were analysed to assess stakeholder engagement, coalition formation, and learning outcomes. The findings demonstrated that structured stakeholder collaboration enhanced community

participation, strengthened social capital, and developed the teamwork, advocacy, and civic engagement capabilities of students.

Similarly, Filho *et al*. (2025) examined stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development in higher education through an analysis of 29 global case studies, including several Asian institutions. Their methodology combined qualitative case study analysis with thematic synthesis to identify effective stakeholder collaboration practices across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. The findings emphasised the critical roles of universities in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals through interdisciplinary education, transformative learning, and community-industry collaboration. The research further demonstrated that inclusivity, leadership commitment, and strategic policies drive effective sustainability outcomes through systematic stakeholder involvement.

Marinho *et al*. (2020) conducted a systematic review examining university-industry partnership failures and value creation strategies across European higher education institutions. Their methodology involved a comprehensive literature synthesis that analysed the collaboration factors, communication channels, and control mechanisms that determine partnership sustainability. The study revealed that, while knowledge transfer between universities and enterprises enhances productivity, quality, and economic value, weak communication channels and inadequate control mechanisms frequently undermine the longevity and effectiveness of partnerships. The research also identified critical success factors for maintaining long-term collaborative relationships that generate mutual benefits and institutional competitiveness.

In Africa, Kisaka and Oino (2024) examined the effect of stakeholder involvement on institutional productivity in selected public universities in Uganda, motivated by the growing demand for public institutions to demonstrate value for money. Anchored on the Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), the study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample of 285 respondents, including governing council members, vice-chancellors, academic registrars, teaching staff, guild presidents, and community leaders, was selected from 1,107 stakeholders using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that 83 percent of respondents acknowledged that stakeholder involvement significantly influences institutional productivity, although excessive involvement can create conflicts of interest if not well managed.

Similarly, Tindyebwa *et al*. (2025) examined the influence of stakeholder participation on education service quality at Makerere University in Uganda. Using a quantitative correlational design, the researchers collected data from 300 academic staff, administrative staff, guild leaders, and university council members, and analysed the data using partial least squares structural equation modelling. The findings showed that stakeholder consultation, participative decision-making, and stakeholder role participation each had a positive and statistically significant influence on education service delivery. The study concluded that inclusive consultation and participatory decision-making improve institutional responsiveness and service quality by strengthening communication, shared responsibility, and stakeholder involvement in university programmes.

In South Africa, Bidandi *et al*. (2022) examined collaboration and partnerships between the University of the Western Cape and its stakeholders. Using a qualitative case study design, the researchers analysed documentary evidence and conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 key participants drawn from the stakeholder groups of the university. The findings indicated that collaboration with government, students, staff, communities, and corporate organisations supports institutional development, societal responsiveness, and the sustainability of higher education institutions. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates the strategic value of stakeholder relationships in strengthening university capacity and institutional positioning.

In Ethiopia, Gemeda *et al*. (2026) examined the challenges and opportunities influencing university and industry collaboration (UIC). The study adopted a pragmatist paradigm and a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected from five Ethiopian public universities, where 644 of the targeted 749 participants responded, representing an 86 percent response rate. The findings established that the regulatory and legal framework, misaligned expectations and priorities, institutional challenges, and communication barriers significantly influenced university-industry collaboration, with the regulatory framework and misaligned expectations emerging as particularly important factors. The study concluded that strengthening university-industry partnerships requires coordinated interventions by government and appropriate strategies by universities and industries.

In Ghana, Quaye *et al*. (2026) examined how universities are positioned to promote and institutionalise entrepreneurship through leadership and governance structures, teaching and curriculum development, funding arrangements and partnerships, and entrepreneurial pathways. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and

quantitative analysis based on the OECD and European Commission entrepreneurial university framework. Data were collected from 70 respondents across 13 public and private universities in Ghana, and ordered logistic regression was employed to determine how entrepreneurship-supporting structures, services, and programmes influenced the likelihood of universities attaining a higher entrepreneurial status. The findings indicated varying levels of institutionalisation of the entrepreneurial university concept, although both public and private universities demonstrated a shift towards entrepreneurship, with private universities performing slightly better across the dimensions examined.

The regression results further showed that entrepreneurial universities were more likely to thrive where institutional mechanisms were effective, visible, and capable of building confidence among internal and external stakeholders. The study concluded that effective governance and curricular reforms need to be supported by sustainable financing and structured partnerships in order to translate entrepreneurial initiatives into practical outcomes. However, the study focused on entrepreneurial university development in Ghana and did not specifically examine Strategic Business Process Reengineering (BPR) or determine how stakeholder collaboration and redesigned institutional processes influence university competitiveness. It also did not investigate the role of government regulations in this relationship.

In Nigeria, Wara *et al*. (2021) investigated the role of employee-based brand equity in sustaining the competitiveness of private universities in Southern Nigeria, using structural equation modelling with 594 survey responses. Their quantitative methodology examined how the corporate reputation perceptions of employees influence external stakeholder interactions and institutional competitiveness. The study established that the understanding of the institutional brand promise among employees significantly affects their engagement with external stakeholders, thereby influencing financial performance and market positioning. The research further demonstrated that knowledge sharing and feedback loops enhance both institutional reputation and competitive performance through the systematic involvement of employees in branding strategies.

In Kenya, Komora *et al*. (2025) investigated the influence of stakeholder collaboration on the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in public universities in Mombasa County. The study was grounded on the Theory of Constraints, Stakeholder Theory, Resource-Based View Theory, and Contingency Theory. Using a descriptive cross-sectional design, the researchers targeted 390 university staff members, from whom 197 departmental heads and lecturers were selected through stratified random sampling and 12 senior

management members through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through questionnaires and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings demonstrated that participation in decision-making, empowerment, communication, and grievance management had a significant and positive effect on TQM implementation, jointly explaining 78.1 percent of its variance, with grievance management being the most influential.

Mbithe *et al*. (2024) examined stakeholder collaboration through Instagram for the enhancement of corporate social responsibility, using a qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Their approach investigated the effectiveness of digital platforms in fostering transparency, trust, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, and communities. The findings demonstrated that interactive communication platforms significantly strengthen institutional outcomes and build shared responsibility that enhances corporate social responsibility initiatives and competitive positioning. The research further established that systematic digital engagement creates sustainable stakeholder relationships that support institutional development and market differentiation.

Kibigo (2024) examined Kenya's education reforms through a multi-stakeholder collaboration approach, highlighting how partnerships between the Ministry of Education (MoE), civil society, and development partners drive systemic transformation. The article focused on the implementation of the Presidential Working Party on Education Reform (PWPER) and the National Education Sector Strategic Plan (NESSP), emphasising inclusivity, equity, and collaborative governance. Using a descriptive and action-based documentation approach, the report detailed practical strategies such as the co-creation of teacher education policies, the retooling of teacher educators, and resource mobilisation to strengthen marginalised regions such as Sololo in Marsabit County and Cheptais in Bungoma County. The findings underscored that effective education reforms depend on continuous collaboration, trust, and shared accountability between public and private actors.

King'oo *et al*. (2020) investigated the role of networking capability in the performance of private universities, using a descriptive survey methodology with structured questionnaires administered to management personnel across multiple Kenyan private universities. Their quantitative approach employed correlation and regression analysis to examine the relationships between relational variables and organisational performance measures. The findings established that relational trust, relational capability, relational strength, coordination within networks, and information sharing significantly influenced organisational performance,

while relationship initiation and learning mechanisms showed non-significant effects. The research demonstrated that systematic networking approaches create measurable competitiveness through enhanced stakeholder relationships.

In summary, research on stakeholder collaboration consistently demonstrates that the systematic involvement of diverse stakeholders through collaborative governance models, strategic industry partnerships, and structured engagement forums creates measurable competitiveness through enhanced institutional capabilities, improved market positioning, and strengthened stakeholder relationships. The evidence across multiple contexts supports the proposition that universities implementing comprehensive stakeholder collaboration strategies achieve superior competitive outcomes compared to institutions that maintain limited stakeholder interaction approaches.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework positions stakeholder collaboration as the independent variable, measured through three dimensions, namely collaborative governance models, industry partnerships, and stakeholder engagement forums. The competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities is the dependent variable, measured through student enrolment patterns, staff retention rates, research output, programme diversity, and financial stability, as presented in Figure 1.

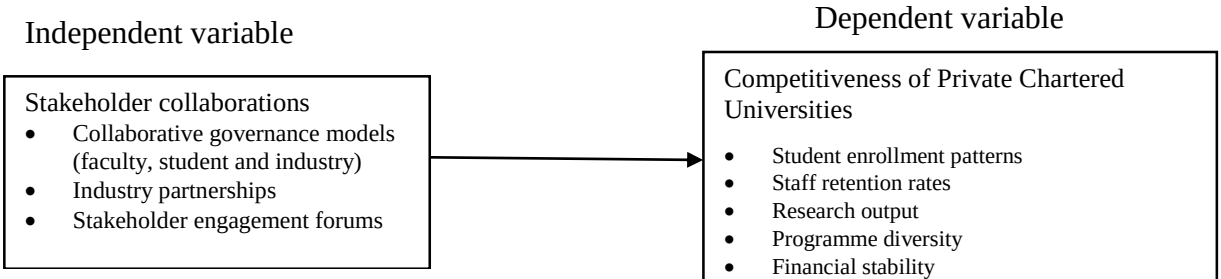

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivist philosophical orientation, consistent with the objective of empirically testing the relationship between stakeholder collaboration and institutional competitiveness using quantitative data and inferential statistics (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). An explanatory research design was employed to examine the nature, direction, and magnitude of the relationship between stakeholder collaboration and the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. The target population comprised the 32 Chartered Private

Universities in Kenya authorised by the CUE, with 224 management board members as respondents. A two-stage sampling technique was used, involving stratified sampling at the institutional level to ensure that all 32 universities were represented, and judgement sampling at the individual level to select seven management board members per university based on their strategic oversight roles. These included Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Human Resources Directors, Finance Directors, ICT Directors, Quality Assurance Directors, and Registrars.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires consisting of closed-ended five-point Likert scale items ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A total of 176 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 78.6 percent, which exceeds the 70 percent threshold accepted as adequate for social science survey research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Content validity was established using the Content Validity Index with seven expert judges, while construct validity was confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with the stakeholder collaboration scale achieving a coefficient above the 0.70 threshold, which confirmed adequate internal consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple regression analysis in SPSS version 26, and the results were presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

The study targeted 224 respondents drawn from the management boards of all 32 Chartered Private Universities in Kenya, with seven members sampled per institution. Of the 224 questionnaires administered, 176 were returned in a usable condition, representing a response rate of 78.6 percent. This rate exceeds the 70 percent threshold commonly accepted as adequate for survey-based studies in social science research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) and was considered sufficient. The high response rate was attributed to follow-up visits by research assistants to universities where initial responses were delayed, advance notice given to respondents prior to data collection, adequate time for questionnaire completion, and confidentiality assurances regarding the information sought. The non-response rate of 21.4 percent, accounting for 48 unreturned questionnaires, was not considered a threat to the validity of the findings, since non-response was distributed across institutions rather than concentrated in any particular university.

Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Collaboration

This section presents the descriptive statistics for stakeholder collaboration among Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Collaboration

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our university has effective collaborative governance models involving faculty, students, and industry.	3.86	1.23
Industry partnerships significantly contribute to our academic program development.	3.61	1.23
Stakeholder collaboration forums provide valuable input for institutional decision-making.	3.85	1.00
Our university actively involves alumni in strategic planning and development activities.	3.62	1.02
Industry collaborations improve graduate employability and career prospects.	3.66	1.02
Stakeholder feedback is regularly incorporated into institutional improvement initiatives.	3.81	0.98
Our university maintains strong relationships with regulatory bodies and government agencies.	4.02	0.95
Partnership activities generate additional revenue streams for the university.	3.90	1.09
Stakeholder collaborations strengthen our university's competitive positioning in the market.	4.03	1.09
Our university engages community stakeholders in institutional development initiatives.	3.96	1.02
Stakeholder collaborations have contributed to enhanced institutional reputation and visibility.	4.23	0.88
Average	3.87	1.05

Source: Research Data (2026)

As shown in Table 1, the aggregate mean score for stakeholder collaboration was 3.87 (standard deviation = 1.05), indicating that the respondents generally agreed that their universities actively engaged stakeholders across various dimensions of institutional governance and development. The highest mean of 4.23 (standard deviation = 0.88) was recorded for the statement that stakeholder collaboration has contributed to enhanced institutional reputation and visibility, reflecting a strong consensus that collaborative engagement yields tangible reputational benefits for Chartered Private Universities. This was closely followed by the statement that stakeholder collaboration strengthens the competitive positioning of the university, which recorded a mean of 4.03 (standard deviation = 1.09). This

result further affirms that the respondents perceive stakeholder engagement as a strategic instrument for market differentiation.

Items relating to institutional relationships with regulatory bodies and community stakeholders also recorded high mean scores. The statement that the university maintains strong relationships with regulatory bodies and government agencies recorded a mean of 4.02 (standard deviation = 0.95), while community stakeholder engagement in institutional development recorded a mean of 3.96 (standard deviation = 1.02). The relatively moderate standard deviations on these items suggest a degree of consistency in the experience of external institutional engagement across universities. The statement that partnership activities generate additional revenue streams recorded a mean of 3.90 (standard deviation = 1.09), indicating that, while the financial benefits of partnerships are recognised, the extent of revenue diversification through collaboration varies across institutions. All these items fell within the agree range of the measurement scale.

The lowest mean scores were recorded for industry partnerships contributing to academic programme development (mean = 3.61, standard deviation = 1.23) and alumni involvement in strategic planning and development activities (mean = 3.62, standard deviation = 1.02). These findings suggest that, while Chartered Private Universities maintain broad stakeholder relationships, the depth of industry and alumni engagement in core academic and strategic processes remains comparatively limited. The higher standard deviations associated with collaborative governance models (1.23) and industry partnerships (1.23) further indicate considerable variability in the degree to which different institutions have formalised these collaborative arrangements. This points to an opportunity for universities to deepen and institutionalise industry and alumni engagement as a driver of both academic relevance and competitive positioning.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation results for stakeholder collaboration and the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Stakeholder Collaboration and Competitiveness

	Competitiveness	Stakeholder Collaboration
Competitiveness (Pearson r)	1.000	
Stakeholder Collaboration (Pearson r)	.641	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Source: Research Data (2026). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As presented in Table 2, stakeholder collaboration had a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya ($r = .641$, $p < .05$). This finding indicates that, as universities intensify efforts to involve diverse stakeholders through collaborative governance models, industry partnerships, and structured engagement forums, their competitive performance correspondingly improves. The correlation coefficient of .641 confirms that stakeholder collaboration is not a peripheral institutional activity but a strategically significant driver of competitive outcomes, with stronger and more formalised engagement frameworks associated with higher institutional competitiveness. Notably, stakeholder collaboration recorded the highest correlation coefficient among the three strategic business process reengineering dimensions examined in the broader study, exceeding process reengineering ($r = .636$) and technological transformation ($r = .606$). This affirms that collaborative engagement with diverse stakeholders is the most influential individual dimension of strategic business process reengineering in driving competitiveness.

Simple Regression Analysis

Simple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect of stakeholder collaboration on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. Table 3 presents the regression results.

Table 3: Regression Results for Stakeholder Collaboration and Competitiveness

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.641a	0.411	0.407	0.363786

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.04	1	16.04	121.2	.000
Residual	23.027	174	0.132		
Total	39.067	175			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.521	0.22		6.904	0.000
	Stakeholder Collaborations	0.622	0.057	0.641	11.009	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder Collaborations

b. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness

Source: Research Data (2026)

The simple regression model is expressed as follows:

$Y = 1.521 + 0.622X$

Where:

Y = Competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities

X_3 = Stakeholder Collaboration

The model summary results reveal that stakeholder collaboration explained 41.1 percent of the variance in the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities, as shown by an R Square value of 0.411, which is the highest explanatory power among the three individual simple regression models. The R value of 0.641 denotes the strength of the linear relationship between stakeholder collaboration and competitiveness. The adjusted R Square of 0.407 confirms that stakeholder collaboration contributes substantially to explaining variations in institutional competitiveness, while the remaining 58.9 percent of the variance is explained by other factors not included in the model. The ANOVA results confirm that the model was statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 121.200 and a significance value of $p < .05$. This is the highest F-statistic among the three individual models, confirming that stakeholder collaboration

significantly predicts the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities and that the model fits the data well.

The regression coefficients demonstrate that stakeholder collaboration had a statistically significant positive effect on competitiveness. The unstandardised coefficient (B) was 0.622, indicating that a one-unit increase in stakeholder collaboration results in a 0.622 unit increase in the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities, which forms the regression equation Competitiveness = 1.521 + 0.622 (Stakeholder Collaboration). The standard error of 0.220 indicates the degree of uncertainty in estimating the constant value of 1.521, that is, the predicted level of competitiveness when stakeholder collaboration is held at zero. The t-value of 6.904 ($p < .05$) confirms that the constant is statistically significant, indicating that competitiveness is significantly different from zero even when stakeholder collaboration is held at zero. This implies that other institutional factors sustain a baseline level of competitiveness.

Comparing the standardised coefficients across the three predictors examined in the broader study, stakeholder collaboration recorded the highest Beta value ($\beta = 0.641$) relative to process reengineering ($\beta = 0.636$) and technological transformation ($\beta = 0.606$), confirming that it had the strongest relative effect on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya ($p < .05$). Based on these results, the null hypothesis that stakeholder collaboration has no statistically significant effect on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya was rejected. The findings demonstrate that universities that more actively engage faculty, students, industry partners, alumni, regulatory bodies, and community stakeholders in governance, academic programme development, and institutional planning achieve significantly higher levels of competitive performance. The explanatory power of 41.1 percent, the highest among the three individual models, underscores stakeholder collaboration as the most influential individual dimension of strategic business process reengineering.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that stakeholder collaboration has the strongest significant positive effect on the competitiveness of Chartered Private Universities in Kenya among the three dimensions of strategic business process reengineering. Stakeholder collaboration, encompassing collaborative governance, industry partnerships, alumni involvement, stakeholder feedback, regulatory relationships, community engagement, and partnership revenue, is positively associated with institutional competitiveness through enhanced reputation, stronger market positioning, and improved programme relevance. Stakeholder collaboration recorded the

highest standardised coefficient in both the simple regression (β = 0.641) and the multiple regression model (β = 0.344), exceeding those of process reengineering (β = 0.283) and technological transformation (β = 0.260). This is consistent with the view that relationship capital is positively associated with competitive positioning in the private higher education market in Kenya. Effective stakeholder collaboration therefore requires deliberate formalisation of engagement mechanisms, sustained investment in partnership development, and institutional commitment to incorporating stakeholder feedback into strategic decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that management boards of Chartered Private Universities should prioritise investment in formalising and deepening stakeholder collaboration frameworks, given that stakeholder collaboration recorded the strongest positive and statistically significant association with competitiveness ($B = 0.622$, $\beta = 0.641$, $p < .05$). Particular attention should be given to industry partnerships and alumni involvement, which recorded the lowest mean scores among all stakeholder collaboration items. Management boards should develop formal industry partnership agreements that create structured pathways for curriculum co-development, student placement, graduate employment tracking, and research collaboration. They should also establish alumni engagement programmes with clearly defined roles in strategic planning, fundraising, mentorship, and institutional advocacy. Furthermore, universities should institutionalise collaborative governance arrangements that integrate faculty, student, and industry perspectives into policy development, and establish stakeholder engagement forums that provide structured platforms for ongoing dialogue, feedback collection, and collaborative problem-solving to support continuous institutional improvement.

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