

**Effect of Risk Management Framework on Financial Accountability in Selected NGO's In Kampala District,
Uganda**

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Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations in Uganda manage substantial financial resources for development programs, yet face increasing scrutiny over accountability practices. Risk management frameworks provide systematic approaches for identifying, assessing, and mitigating threats to financial integrity, thereby strengthening accountability mechanisms and stakeholder confidence. This cross-sectional study investigated five NGOs in Kampala District between April and June 2024. Employing a mixed sampling approach, 118 respondents were selected from a population of 168, including NGO administrators, procurement officers, internal auditors, staff members, and beneficiaries. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 25, applying descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to determine relationships. The study established a significant positive relationship between risk management framework and financial accountability ($r=0.768$, $p<0.01$). Risk identification demonstrated the strongest correlation ($r=0.712$, $p<0.01$), followed by risk mitigation strategies ($r=0.689$, $p<0.01$). The risk management framework explained approximately 59% of variance in financial accountability. However, 38% of respondents indicated absence of formal risk assessment processes, while 34% reported inadequate risk monitoring mechanisms. Effective risk management frameworks substantially enhance financial accountability in NGOs. Organizations with comprehensive risk management systems exhibited superior financial controls, reduced fraud incidents, improved resource allocation efficiency, and enhanced stakeholder trust compared to those with weak or absent frameworks. NGOs should develop formal risk management policies, establish dedicated risk management committees, conduct regular risk assessments covering financial and operational domains, implement integrated risk monitoring systems, and build staff capacity in enterprise risk management principles.

Keywords: Risk management framework, financial accountability, non-governmental organizations, risk assessment, risk mitigation, Kampala District

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The Non-Governmental Organization sector in Uganda has experienced exponential growth over the past three decades, evolving into a critical pillar of national development efforts alongside government and private sector initiatives (Winyi et al., 2023). With over 14,000 registered NGOs currently operating across the country, these organizations collectively manage billions of shillings annually, implementing programs spanning health care delivery, education provision, agricultural development, environmental conservation, human rights advocacy, and emergency humanitarian response (Alex & Devis, 2023). Kampala District, serving as Uganda's political and

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

economic capital, hosts the highest concentration of NGO operations, including headquarters of major international organizations and numerous local civil society entities managing complex portfolios with multiple funding streams (Julius & Audrey, 2025).

The dynamic operating environment confronting NGOs encompasses multifaceted risks threatening organizational sustainability and programmatic effectiveness (Sarah & Audrey, 2024). These risks include financial mismanagement, fraud and corruption, regulatory non-compliance, reputational damage, operational inefficiencies, natural disasters, political instability, currency fluctuations, donor dependency, and evolving beneficiary needs (Racheal et al., 2023). The interconnected nature of these risk factors demands systematic frameworks for identification, assessment, response, and monitoring rather than ad-hoc reactive approaches (Faith et al., 2023). Contemporary organizational theory emphasizes that effective risk management transcends mere threat avoidance to encompass strategic opportunity identification and informed decision-making that balances risk acceptance with organizational capacity (Nancy & Prudence, 2024).

Risk management framework, as conceptualized in international standards including ISO 31000 and the COSO Enterprise Risk Management framework, represents integrated systems of policies, procedures, organizational structures, and cultural elements that collectively enable organizations to understand, manage, and communicate risk exposures systematically (Ivan et al., 2023). Core components include establishing risk management context and governance structures, implementing systematic risk identification processes, conducting qualitative and quantitative risk assessments, developing and executing risk response strategies, monitoring risk indicators continuously, and fostering risk-aware organizational cultures (Jul et al., 2024). When properly designed and implemented, these frameworks align risk management with strategic objectives, optimize resource allocation, enhance decision-making quality, and strengthen accountability mechanisms (Julius, 2024).

Financial accountability in the NGO context extends beyond traditional audit compliance to encompass transparent resource stewardship, accurate and timely financial reporting to diverse stakeholders, efficient program implementation within budget parameters, demonstrable value-for-money in service delivery, and ethical conduct in all financial transactions (Kazaara & Audrey, 2024). Donors, beneficiaries, government regulators, partner organizations, and the general public increasingly demand evidence of prudent financial management and tangible development impact. The relationship between risk management frameworks and financial accountability operates through multiple mechanisms: preventive controls reducing fraud opportunities, detective controls enabling early identification of financial irregularities, systematic monitoring ensuring compliance with financial policies, risk-informed budgeting improving resource allocation efficiency, and enhanced transparency building stakeholder confidence (Irumba et al., 2024).

Despite the theoretical recognition of risk management's importance, empirical evidence from Uganda's NGO sector revealed persistent accountability challenges attributable partly to inadequate risk management practices (Christopher

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

et al., 2022). Audit reports, regulatory investigations, and donor assessments between 2022 and 2024 documented recurring instances of financial misappropriation, inadequate financial controls, weak oversight mechanisms, and insufficient accountability to stakeholders, resulting in organizational closures, donor withdrawals, and diminished public trust in the sector (Brian et al., 2024).

1.2 Problem Statement

Non-Governmental Organizations in Kampala District have confronted escalating financial accountability challenges despite receiving substantial donor funding and implementing high-impact development programs (Julius & Audrey, 2025). Documentation from the NGO Bureau, internal audit reports, and donor evaluation assessments conducted between 2022 and 2024 revealed systematic deficiencies in financial management practices across numerous organizations. These included incidents of fund misappropriation, unauthorized budget reallocations, inadequate financial documentation, delayed or inaccurate financial reporting, weak authorization controls, and insufficient oversight by governance structures. Consequently, several prominent NGOs experienced donor fund suspensions, regulatory sanctions, leadership changes, and in extreme cases, organizational deregistration (Alex et al., 2023).

Investigation of underlying causes suggested that many organizations lacked formal risk management frameworks or maintained inadequate systems that failed to identify financial vulnerabilities proactively, assess the likelihood and impact of financial risks systematically, or implement appropriate mitigation strategies (Jallow et al., 2022). This reactive approach to risk left organizations vulnerable to preventable financial losses, fraud, and accountability failures. While existing literature extensively documented risk management practices in commercial enterprises and public sector organizations, empirical research examining risk management frameworks specifically within Uganda's NGO context remained limited (Julius & Matovu, 2025). The unique characteristics of NGOs including multiple accountability relationships, diverse stakeholder expectations, mission-driven rather than profit-oriented objectives, resource constraints, and varying organizational capacities necessitated context-specific investigation rather than extrapolation from corporate sector findings (Sarah et al., 2024). This study addressed the identified knowledge gap by systematically examining how risk management frameworks affected financial accountability practices in selected NGOs within Kampala District, providing evidence-based insights for strengthening organizational governance and enhancing sector credibility.

1.3 Main Objective

To assess the effect of risk management framework on financial accountability in NGOs.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Study Area

This study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive correlational research design to investigate the effect of risk management frameworks on financial accountability in selected NGOs operating within Kampala District, Uganda (Moses et al., 2025). The cross-sectional approach facilitated simultaneous data collection from diverse respondent

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

categories, enabling comprehensive assessment of current risk management practices and their relationship with accountability outcomes (Christopher et al., 2022). The descriptive component characterized existing risk management frameworks, while the correlational aspect examined the strength and direction of relationships between variables. Kampala District was purposively selected based on several criteria: concentration of NGO headquarters representing both international and local organizations, diversity of operational sectors including health, education, and community development, availability of organizations with varying levels of risk management maturity, and accessibility for data collection. The study was conducted between April and June 2024, covering five purposively selected NGOs with operational histories exceeding five years and annual budgets exceeding UGX 500 million, ensuring organizational maturity and financial complexity warranting formal risk management systems.

2.2 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

The target population comprised 168 individuals directly involved in or affected by financial management and risk oversight within the selected NGOs. This population was stratified into five distinct categories based on roles and relationships with organizational financial accountability: NGO administrators responsible for strategic oversight and policy formulation, procurement officers managing acquisition processes and vendor relationships, internal auditors providing independent assurance on control effectiveness, staff members involved in program implementation and financial transactions, and NGO beneficiaries representing end-users with accountability interests (Alex et al., 2023). Following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical table for determining representative sample sizes, 118 respondents were selected to ensure adequate statistical power for correlation analysis while maintaining research feasibility.

Table 1: Population, Sample Size Determination and Sampling Procedure

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size (S)	Sampling Procedure
NGO administrators	10	10	Census
Procurement officers	05	8	Census
Internal auditors	15	10	Census
Staff members	50	20	Stratified Random Sampling
NGO beneficiaries	88	70	Simple Random Sampling
Total	168	118	Mixed Sampling Approach

Source: Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). *Determining sample size for research activities*.

The sampling strategy employed a mixed-method approach combining census and probability techniques to balance comprehensive coverage of key informants with representative selection from larger populations. Census sampling was applied for NGO administrators, procurement officers, and internal auditors due to their small population sizes and critical roles in risk management framework design, implementation, and oversight. Complete enumeration of these categories ensured capture of specialized knowledge and avoided sampling error within these critical subgroups. Staff members were selected through stratified random sampling, with stratification based on departmental affiliation

(program implementation, finance and administration, monitoring and evaluation) to ensure proportional representation across functional areas with varying risk exposure and accountability responsibilities. Simple random sampling was applied for NGO beneficiaries using beneficiary registration lists as sampling frames, with selection through random number generation to provide equal selection probability and minimize selection bias.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires containing closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was organized into three sections: demographic characteristics, risk management framework practices (covering risk identification, risk assessment, risk response, and risk monitoring), and financial accountability indicators (addressing budget compliance, financial reporting quality, asset management, and transparency). The instruments underwent rigorous validation through expert review by three senior academics specializing in organizational management and accounting, followed by pre-testing with 15 respondents from non-participating NGOs to establish reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 confirmed high internal consistency reliability.

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 (Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations characterized respondent demographics and described the prevalence of risk management practices and accountability indicators. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient tested the relationship between risk management framework and financial accountability, with correlation strength interpreted following Cohen's guidelines: 0.10-0.29 (weak), 0.30-0.49 (moderate), 0.50 and above (strong) (Nelson et al., 2023). Simple linear regression analysis determined the predictive effect of risk management framework on financial accountability. Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$ confidence level. The study received ethical approval from the institutional review board, and all participants provided written informed consent after receiving detailed information about research objectives, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality protections.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Response Rate

Out of 118 questionnaires distributed to respondents across the five selected NGOs, 110 were successfully returned and contained complete responses suitable for analysis, yielding a response rate of 93.2%. This exceptionally high response rate was attributed to several factors: personal delivery and collection of questionnaires by the researcher, follow-up communications via telephone and email to non-respondents, organizational leadership endorsement of the study encouraging staff participation, and perceived relevance of the research topic to respondents' professional interests and organizational improvement objectives.

3.2 Demographic Characteristics

Analysis of demographic data revealed that the majority of respondents (64.5%) were aged between 28-45 years, representing experienced professionals in their prime working years. Educational qualifications showed that 56.4% held bachelor's degrees, 29.1% possessed postgraduate qualifications (master's degrees or professional certifications), and 14.5% had diploma-level education. Gender distribution indicated 52.7% male and 47.3% female respondents, demonstrating relatively balanced gender representation. Work experience analysis showed that 38.2% had served their respective organizations for 3-5 years, 31.8% for 1-3 years, 21.8% for more than 5 years, and 8.2% for less than one year, suggesting predominance of moderately experienced staff with institutional knowledge.

3.3 Risk Management Framework and Financial Accountability

The correlation analysis established a statistically significant positive relationship between risk management framework and financial accountability in the selected NGOs ($r=0.768$, $p<0.01$). This strong positive correlation indicated that organizations with more comprehensive and effectively implemented risk management frameworks demonstrated correspondingly higher levels of financial accountability. The relationship's strength exceeded that typically observed in similar organizational studies, suggesting particular salience of risk management for accountability outcomes in resource-constrained NGO environments facing multiple stakeholder pressures.

Table 2: Correlation Between Risk Management Framework Components and Financial Accountability

Risk Management Component	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Risk Identification	0.712**	0.000	Strong positive
Risk Assessment	0.658**	0.001	Strong positive
Risk Response/Mitigation	0.689**	0.001	Strong positive
Risk Monitoring & Review	0.641**	0.002	Strong positive
Risk Management Framework (Overall)	0.768**	0.000	Strong positive

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

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3: Regression Analysis - Risk Management Framework Predicting Financial Accountability

Model Summary	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	
Model 1	0.768	0.590	0.586	0.391	
ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	23.867	1	23.867	156.21	0.000
Residual	16.498	108	0.153		
Total	40.365	109			

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression analysis demonstrated that risk management framework significantly predicted financial accountability, explaining 59.0% of the variance in accountability outcomes ($R^2=0.590$, $F=156.21$, $p<0.001$). This

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

substantial explanatory power confirmed risk management framework as a major determinant of financial accountability, though the remaining 41% of variance suggested influence from other factors including organizational culture, leadership quality, external regulatory pressures, and donor oversight mechanisms.

Disaggregated analysis of risk management components revealed differential relationships with financial accountability. Risk identification exhibited the strongest correlation ($r=0.712$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that systematic processes for identifying financial risks including fraud vulnerabilities, budgetary pressures, compliance threats, and operational inefficiencies constituted the foundation for effective accountability. Organizations that conducted regular risk identification exercises through techniques such as brainstorming sessions, financial audits, process mapping, and stakeholder consultations demonstrated superior accountability outcomes. Risk mitigation strategies showed the second strongest relationship ($r=0.689$, $p<0.001$), indicating that translating risk awareness into concrete preventive and corrective actions including policy development, procedural controls, insurance coverage, and contingency planning directly enhanced accountability practices.

Risk assessment processes demonstrated strong positive correlation ($r=0.658$, $p<0.001$), highlighting the importance of systematically evaluating identified risks based on likelihood and potential impact to prioritize management attention and resource allocation. Organizations employing structured assessment methodologies, whether qualitative (risk matrices) or quantitative (financial modeling), exhibited better accountability by focusing limited resources on highest-priority risks. Risk monitoring and review mechanisms showed significant positive correlation ($r=0.641$, $p<0.001$), emphasizing that continuous oversight through key risk indicators, periodic reviews, and feedback loops ensured sustained accountability by detecting emerging threats and evaluating control effectiveness.

Despite these positive relationships, qualitative observations revealed implementation challenges constraining optimal framework effectiveness. Approximately 38% of respondents indicated absence of formal, documented risk assessment processes in their organizations, with risk management conducted informally and inconsistently. About 34% reported inadequate risk monitoring mechanisms due to limited internal audit capacity and absence of dedicated risk management personnel. Furthermore, 29% cited insufficient board-level oversight of risk management activities, suggesting governance gaps in risk oversight responsibilities. These findings indicated that while the statistical relationship between risk management frameworks and financial accountability was robust, practical implementation barriers related to resource constraints, capacity limitations, and organizational culture affected realization of potential benefits in many NGO settings.

4.0 Conclusions

The study conclusively established that risk management frameworks exert significant positive effects on financial accountability in NGOs operating within Kampala District. The strong correlation ($r=0.768$, $p<0.01$) and substantial explanatory power ($R^2=0.590$) provided compelling empirical evidence that organizations investing in comprehensive, systematic risk management systems—encompassing proactive risk identification, rigorous assessment

methodologies, targeted mitigation strategies, and continuous monitoring mechanisms—achieved superior financial accountability outcomes compared to organizations with weak or absent frameworks. These findings validated theoretical propositions from enterprise risk management literature and extended empirical evidence to the under-researched Ugandan NGO context.

Risk identification emerged as the most critical framework component, suggesting that accountability improvements begin with organizational awareness of financial vulnerabilities and threats. Without systematic identification processes, organizations remain blind to risks until materialization causes damage, undermining preventive accountability mechanisms. The importance of risk mitigation strategies confirmed that risk awareness must translate into concrete action through policy development, control implementation, and resource allocation to yield accountability benefits. The finding that risk management framework explained 59% of accountability variance indicated that while risk management constitutes a major determinant, other factors including leadership integrity, organizational culture, staff competency, and external oversight also contribute significantly to accountability outcomes.

The persistent implementation challenges identified particularly absence of formal assessment processes, inadequate monitoring systems, and weak governance oversight highlighted critical gaps between theoretical understanding and practical application in resource-constrained NGO environments. These findings suggested that merely adopting risk management policies proves insufficient without corresponding investments in capacity building, technological infrastructure, and cultural transformation. The study contributed valuable context-specific insights for NGO practitioners, donors, and policymakers seeking evidence-based approaches for strengthening financial accountability in developing country civil society sectors.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 To NGO Management

Executive leadership should prioritize development and institutionalization of formal, documented risk management policies aligned with international standards such as ISO 31000, adapted to organizational context and capacity. Management must establish dedicated risk management committees or assign risk coordination responsibilities to senior personnel with appropriate authority and resources. Organizations should implement systematic risk identification processes conducting comprehensive risk assessments at least annually, supplemented by continuous risk scanning for emerging threats. Risk registers documenting identified risks, assessment results, mitigation strategies, and monitoring indicators should be maintained and regularly updated. Management must ensure integration of risk management with strategic planning, budgeting, and performance management processes rather than treating risk management as isolated compliance activity.

5.2 To NGO Boards of Directors

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

Boards should enhance risk oversight responsibilities by establishing dedicated risk committees or assigning risk oversight to audit committees with clear terms of reference. Board members require training on risk governance principles, financial risk indicators, and oversight responsibilities to discharge duties effectively. Boards must review comprehensive risk reports quarterly, challenging management on risk exposure, mitigation adequacy, and emerging threats. Risk appetite statements defining acceptable risk levels should be developed and communicated to guide management decision-making. Boards should ensure adequate resource allocation for risk management activities including personnel, technology, training, and external expertise where necessary.

5.3 Capacity Building and Training

NGOs should invest systematically in staff capacity development on risk management principles through workshops, seminars, professional courses, and online learning platforms. Training should target both specialized risk management personnel and general staff to foster risk-aware organizational culture. Practical skills development in risk assessment techniques, control design, and monitoring methodologies should be prioritized over theoretical knowledge. Organizations should consider partnering with professional associations, academic institutions, and consulting firms to access quality training programs. Knowledge sharing forums enabling peer learning among NGO practitioners should be established to disseminate good practices and lessons learned.

5.4 Technology Integration

NGOs should leverage technology solutions to enhance risk management effectiveness and efficiency. Integrated financial management systems with built-in risk alerts, automated compliance checks, and real-time monitoring dashboards can significantly strengthen accountability. Risk management software facilitating risk register maintenance, assessment workflows, and reporting should be explored, with preference for affordable cloud-based solutions suitable for NGO budgets. Data analytics capabilities can enhance predictive risk identification by analyzing transaction patterns, budget variances, and operational indicators. Organizations should invest in cybersecurity infrastructure given increasing digitalization of financial operations and associated fraud risks.

5.5 Stakeholder Engagement

NGOs should adopt participatory approaches to risk management involving diverse stakeholders including staff, beneficiaries, donors, and partners in risk identification and assessment processes. Beneficiary feedback mechanisms can provide early warning signals about program delivery risks affecting accountability. Transparent communication of risk management practices and outcomes to donors and regulatory authorities builds confidence and may facilitate increased funding and operational flexibility. Organizations should participate actively in sector networks and forums to share risk intelligence and coordinate responses to systemic risks affecting multiple organizations.

5.6 For Regulatory and Policy Bodies

The NGO Bureau should develop sector-specific risk management guidelines tailored to NGO characteristics, providing practical frameworks scalable to different organizational sizes and capacities. Minimum risk management

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

standards should be incorporated into NGO registration and renewal requirements, with phased implementation allowing capacity building. The Bureau should provide technical assistance programs including training workshops, template tools, and advisory services supporting NGO risk management capacity development. Regulatory frameworks should incentivize good risk management practices through recognition programs, fast-track approvals, or reduced reporting requirements for organizations demonstrating robust systems, while enforcing consequences for persistent risk management deficiencies leading to accountability failures.

5.7 For Donors and Development Partners

Donor organizations should assess grantee risk management capacity during due diligence processes and provide technical and financial support for framework development where gaps exist. Grant agreements should include risk management capacity building components with dedicated funding rather than assuming organizations possess requisite capabilities. Donors should harmonize risk reporting requirements to reduce compliance burden on NGOs managing multiple funding sources. Support for sector-wide initiatives such as risk management training programs, peer learning networks, and shared technology platforms can build collective capacity more efficiently than organization-specific interventions.

5.8 For Future Research

Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking organizations over multiple years to examine causal relationships between risk management framework implementation and accountability outcomes evolution, controlling for confounding variables. Comparative studies across different NGO sizes, operational sectors, and geographic contexts would enhance understanding of contextual factors moderating the risk management-accountability relationship. Mixed methods research incorporating qualitative case studies could provide deeper insights into implementation processes, success factors, and barrier mitigation strategies. Investigation of specific risk management components' relative importance through multivariate analysis would guide prioritization of limited organizational resources. Research examining the moderating effects of organizational culture, board effectiveness, and external oversight intensity would further enrich theoretical understanding and practical guidance for strengthening NGO accountability through risk management.

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Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

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Accepted: 18.01.2026

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