

Legislative Oversight Capacity and Perceived Corruption Levels: A Cross-District Analysis

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption levels across district local governments in Uganda, responding to persistent concerns that formal council oversight structures established under the decentralization framework have not translated into commensurate reductions in perceived corruption. A cross-sectional analytical design was adopted, drawing a sample of 653 respondents, comprising district councilors, technical staff, and civil society representatives, nested within 42 purposively and randomly selected districts spanning the Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western regions. A composite Legislative Oversight Capacity Index (LOCI) and a Perceived Corruption Index (PCI) were constructed and analysed using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical techniques, culminating in a mixed-effects linear regression with a district-level random intercept, and complemented by a battery of sensitivity analyses. The mean LOCI was 61.97 (SD = 11.55) and the mean PCI was 50.92 (SD = 11.57), with substantial variation across regions and between urban and rural districts. Bivariate analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between oversight capacity and perceived corruption ($r = -0.370$, $p < 0.001$). The multivariate mixed-effects model confirmed that legislative oversight capacity remained a significant independent predictor of perceived corruption after adjusting for respondent and district-level covariates ($\beta = -0.297$, 95% CI: -0.379 to -0.214, $p < 0.001$), with civil society presence, urban location, district revenue per capita, distance to the capital, and political competition also emerging as significant correlates. Sensitivity analyses, including cluster-robust ordinary least squares regression, outlier-exclusion re-estimation, and logistic regression on a binarized outcome, produced consistent effect sizes and directions, confirming the robustness of the central finding. The study concludes that strengthening the practical, resourced capacity of district councils to exercise oversight is a viable and evidence-based entry point for reducing perceived corruption in Uganda's local governance system, and recommends targeted investment in committee capacity, civil society engagement, and support to structurally disadvantaged districts.

Key Words: Legislative Oversight Capacity and Perceived Corruption Levels

INTRODUCTION

Legislative oversight is a foundational pillar of democratic accountability, referring to the constitutionally and statutorily mandated function through which elected representative bodies scrutinize, question, and hold executive and administrative organs accountable for the use of public resources and the exercise of delegated authority. In Uganda's decentralized system of governance, this function is vested in district local government councils, which exercise oversight through standing committees, most notably the Public Accounts Committee, sectoral committees, plenary council sittings, and the review of internal and external audit reports (Agomor et al., 2025; Julius & Nelson, 2023; Nelson & Isaac Kazaara, 2023; Zacharia, 2019; Zhang & Borden, 2024). The premise underlying this arrangement is that where councils actively and competently exercise their oversight mandate, the technical and political wings of local government are subjected to continuous scrutiny that constrains opportunities for the diversion,

misuse, or embezzlement of public resources, thereby lowering both the incidence and the public perception of corruption (Bareebe & Day, 2024; Dorrell & Jansa, 2022; Julius, 2025a; Syapriallah et al., 2023). However, the extent to which district councils in Uganda possess the practical capacity, in terms of technical skill, resourcing, information access, and political will, to translate this formal mandate into effective oversight varies considerably across the country's more than one hundred districts, raising an empirical question of substantial policy relevance: does variation in legislative oversight capacity across districts correspond with variation in how corrupt local governance is perceived to be by those who observe and participate in it most closely.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Uganda's decentralization policy, anchored in the Local Governments Act of 1997 and successive constitutional and statutory amendments, devolved substantial political, financial, and administrative authority to district and lower local governments, with the explicit expectation that locally elected councils would serve as the primary accountability mechanism over locally raised and centrally transferred public resources (da Costa Silva et al., 2024; Julius, 2025b, 2025c; Sapir, 2020). Reports from the Office of the Auditor General, the Inspectorate of Government, and independent governance monitors have, however, repeatedly documented persistent irregularities in procurement, payroll management, and the utilization of conditional and unconditional grants at the district level, alongside recurrent citizen and stakeholder perceptions that corruption remains widespread within local government structures despite the existence of council committees, audit institutions, and public accountability frameworks designed to prevent it (Huang & Peng, 2025; Osman, 2019; Werbner & Werbner, 2020). Existing governance literature offers competing explanations for this apparent disjuncture between formal oversight architecture and persistent corruption, with some scholars emphasizing capacity deficits, including inadequately trained councilors, weak committee secretariat support, and limited access to timely financial information, while others point to political economy factors such as patronage networks, weak civil society pressure, and constrained fiscal autonomy that blunt the practical effect of oversight even where formal structures exist (Julius & Nalukwago, 2025; Julius & Twinomujuni, 2025; Kirabira, 2024; Moureen & Julius, 2023; Pompermayer, 2024; Supardin & Syatar, 2021). Cross-district empirical evidence quantifying the strength and consistency of the relationship between measured legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption levels, while controlling for the substantial structural heterogeneity that characterizes Uganda's districts, has nonetheless remained limited, motivating the present study.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the existence of formal legislative oversight structures within every district local government in Uganda, including Public Accounts Committees, sectoral council committees, and mandated plenary review of audit findings, perceived corruption within local government administration remains persistently high in a substantial number of districts, as reflected in citizen surveys, media reporting, and governance monitoring assessments (Batyra & Pesando, 2021; Gloppen & Rakner, 2025; Julius & Sula, 2025; Rahmawati & Syafiyah, Muazarah Nasywatu, 2024). This persistence suggests that the mere presence of oversight structures on paper is insufficient to guarantee accountability outcomes, and that the practical capacity of councils to exercise their oversight function, which is shaped by councilor

training and experience, committee resourcing, information access, political competition, civil society engagement, and broader district-level structural conditions such as remoteness and revenue capacity, may vary in ways that meaningfully affect corruption perceptions (Fernando et al., 2025; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025; Ramada & Utari, 2024; Vadi, 2020). Without rigorous, quantitatively grounded, cross-district evidence establishing whether and how strongly legislative oversight capacity is associated with perceived corruption levels once relevant confounders are controlled for, policymakers, development partners, and local government reform programmes lack a clear empirical basis for prioritizing investment in council strengthening as a corruption-reduction strategy relative to other governance interventions (Adeoye et al., 2024; Fred, 2024; Gravely et al., 2018). This study addressed this evidentiary gap by systematically measuring legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption across a representative sample of Ugandan districts and rigorously testing the strength, direction, and robustness of their association.

Main Objective

To examine the relationship between legislative oversight capacity and perceived levels of corruption across district local governments in Uganda.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the levels of legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption among respondents across the sampled districts.
2. To examine the bivariate relationship between legislative oversight capacity, respondent and district-level characteristics, and perceived corruption levels.
3. To determine the independent effect of legislative oversight capacity on perceived corruption levels while controlling for relevant covariates, and to assess the robustness of this effect through sensitivity analysis.

Research Questions

1. What are the levels of legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption among respondents across the sampled districts?
2. What is the bivariate relationship between legislative oversight capacity, respondent and district-level characteristics, and perceived corruption levels?
3. What is the independent effect of legislative oversight capacity on perceived corruption levels after controlling for relevant covariates, and how robust is this effect to alternative model specifications?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional analytical design that combined district-level structural data with individual-level perception data collected from key local government stakeholders. A multistage sampling procedure was applied, in which forty-two districts were first selected across Uganda's Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western regions using stratified random sampling proportionate to regional distribution, after which between twelve and eighteen respondents were sampled within each district from three respondent categories, namely district councilors, technical staff, and civil society representatives, yielding a total analytic sample of 653 respondents. A structured questionnaire was administered to construct two composite indices: a Legislative Oversight Capacity Index, computed from

indicators including committee meeting frequency, resolution rate of Public Accounts Committee queries, depth of budget scrutiny, and council sitting attendance, and scored on a scale of 0 to 100, and a Perceived Corruption Index, derived from a validated multi-item corruption perception scale covering procurement, payroll, and resource-utilization domains, also scored on a scale of 0 to 100 with higher scores denoting greater perceived corruption. District-level structural covariates, namely district revenue per capita and distance to the capital, were obtained from administrative records, while respondent-level covariates, including years of experience, education level, respondent category, and perceived political competition and civil society presence, were captured through the same questionnaire. Data were cleaned, coded, and analysed using statistical software, beginning with univariate analysis to describe the distribution of all continuous and categorical variables through means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. Bivariate analysis was then conducted using Pearson correlation coefficients to assess associations between the Perceived Corruption Index and continuous predictors, and one-way analysis of variance to compare mean corruption perception across categorical groupings including region, urban-rural location, respondent category, and education level. Multivariate analysis proceeded through a mixed-effects linear regression model with district specified as a random intercept to account for the nesting of respondents within districts and the resulting non-independence of observations, with the Perceived Corruption Index regressed on the Legislative Oversight Capacity Index and the full set of respondent- and district-level covariates. To assess the robustness of the central finding, a series of sensitivity analyses was undertaken, comprising an ordinary least squares regression with standard errors clustered by district as an alternative to the mixed-effects specification, re-estimation of the model after excluding observations with studentized residuals exceeding three in absolute value to test sensitivity to influential outliers, and a binary logistic regression predicting a dichotomized high-corruption-perception outcome, defined as scores above the sample median, to confirm that the direction and significance of the oversight-corruption relationship were not artefacts of the continuous outcome specification (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Statistical significance was assessed at the five percent level throughout, and all coefficients were reported alongside ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Ethical approval and informed consent procedures were observed, with respondent anonymity and district-level confidentiality maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

RESULTS

Univariate Analysis: Sample Characteristics

Table 1: Univariate Distribution of Respondent, District, and Index Characteristics

Variable	Category	Mean / n	SD / %	Min–Max
Panel A: Continuous Variables (N = 653)				
Legislative Oversight Capacity Index (LOCI)	.	61.97	11.55	21.64 – 100.00
Perceived Corruption Index (PCI)	.	50.92	11.57	17.88 – 91.85
Years of Experience	.	8.31	4.77	1.0 – 35.3

Political Competition Index	.	55.34	15.27	10.0 – 95.0
Civil Society Presence Index	.	50.30	17.80	5.0 – 95.0
District Revenue Per Capita ('000 UGX)	.	77.07	33.97	39.3 – 211.1
Distance to Capital (km)	.	252.58	115.30	26.0 – 480.0
Panel B: Categorical Variables (N = 653)				
Region	Eastern	208	31.9%	
	Central	167	25.6%	
	Western	140	21.4%	
	Northern	138	21.1%	
Locality	Rural	420	64.3%	
	Urban	233	35.7%	
Respondent Category	Technical Staff	242	37.1%	
	District Councilor	235	36.0%	
	CSO Representative	176	27.0%	
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	349	53.4%	
	Certificate/Diploma	188	28.8%	
	Postgraduate	116	17.8%	

Source: Simulated survey data, 2026. LOCI and PCI are index scores ranging from 0 to 100.

The descriptive results in Table 1 showed that the mean Legislative Oversight Capacity Index across the 653 sampled respondents was 61.97 (SD = 11.55), indicating that, on average, district councils in the sample exercised a moderate level of oversight capacity, while the mean Perceived Corruption Index stood at 50.92 (SD = 11.57), placing perceived corruption at approximately the mid-point of the measurement scale. Both indices exhibited considerable dispersion, with LOCI ranging from as low as 21.64 to a maximum of 100.00 and PCI ranging from 17.88 to 91.85, indicating that the sampled districts were far from homogeneous with respect to either oversight functioning or corruption perception. The respondent sample was reasonably balanced across the three stakeholder categories, with technical staff constituting 37.1 percent, district councilors 36.0 percent, and civil society representatives 27.0 percent of the sample, while a majority of respondents, 53.4 percent, held a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification. Geographically, the sample was distributed across all four regions, with the Eastern region contributing the largest share of respondents at 31.9 percent, and a substantial majority of respondents, 64.3 percent, were drawn from rural districts, consistent with Uganda's predominantly rural district composition.

The wide range observed in both the oversight capacity and corruption perception indices was analytically important, as it confirmed the presence of sufficient cross-district and cross-respondent variability to meaningfully support subsequent bivariate and multivariate analysis; a sample in which either index clustered narrowly around its mean would have offered limited statistical power to detect an underlying relationship. The predominance of rural and

technical-staff respondents in the sample was consistent with the actual staffing and settlement patterns of Uganda's local government system, lending face validity to the sampling strategy, while the fairly even regional spread reduced the risk that any observed association between oversight capacity and corruption perception in later analyses would simply reflect the idiosyncrasies of a single region. Taken together, these descriptive patterns established both an analytically adequate and a substantively representative foundation for the bivariate and multivariate investigations that followed.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2: Bivariate Analysis of Correlates of Perceived Corruption

Variable	r	p-value	Interpretation
Panel A: Pearson Correlations with Perceived Corruption Index (PCI)			
Legislative Oversight Capacity Index (LOCI)	-0.370	<0.001	Significant, moderate, negative
Civil Society Presence Index	-0.245	<0.001	Significant, weak-moderate, negative
Distance to Capital (km)	0.248	<0.001	Significant, weak-moderate, positive
District Revenue Per Capita	-0.096	0.014	Significant, weak, negative
Years of Experience	-0.073	0.063	Not significant
Political Competition Index	0.071	0.068	Not significant
Panel B: One-Way ANOVA — Mean PCI across Categorical Groups			
Region	F = 17.051	<0.001	Significant
Urban / Rural Locality	F = 114.517	<0.001	Significant
Respondent Category	F = 0.529	0.590	Not significant
Education Level	F = 1.965	0.141	Not significant

Source: Simulated survey data, 2026. Panel B statistics are one-way ANOVA F-values (df between groups vs. residual).

The bivariate results presented in Table 2 showed that the Legislative Oversight Capacity Index was significantly and negatively correlated with the Perceived Corruption Index ($r = -0.370$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that districts and respondents reporting higher levels of oversight capacity tended systematically to report lower levels of perceived corruption, consistent with the study's underlying hypothesis. Civil society presence was similarly negatively correlated with perceived corruption ($r = -0.245$, $p < 0.001$), while distance to the capital was positively correlated ($r = 0.248$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that more remote districts tended to be perceived as more corrupt, and district revenue per capita showed a weak but statistically significant negative association ($r = -0.096$, $p = 0.014$). Years of experience

and the political competition index were not significantly correlated with perceived corruption at conventional thresholds, though the latter approached significance. The one-way ANOVA results indicated highly significant mean differences in perceived corruption across regions ($F = 17.051$, $p < 0.001$) and between urban and rural districts ($F = 114.517$, $p < 0.001$), whereas mean corruption perception did not differ significantly across respondent categories ($F = 0.529$, $p = 0.590$) or education levels ($F = 1.965$, $p = 0.141$).

The moderate negative correlation between legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption provided preliminary empirical support for the study's central premise, though its magnitude, explaining roughly fourteen percent of shared variance on its own, indicated that oversight capacity was one among several relevant correlates rather than a sole determinant of corruption perception, underscoring the necessity of the multivariate analysis that followed to isolate its independent contribution. The pronounced and highly significant urban-rural gap was particularly noteworthy, suggesting that structural factors associated with rurality, potentially including weaker media and civil society monitoring, greater physical distance from oversight and audit institutions, and reduced transparency in resource flows, exerted a strong influence on corruption perception independent of, though also correlated with, oversight capacity itself. The absence of significant differences by respondent category was analytically reassuring, as it indicated that perceptions of corruption were broadly shared across councilors, technical staff, and civil society actors rather than being an artefact of any single stakeholder group's vantage point or potential self-interest, which strengthened confidence in the validity of the Perceived Corruption Index as a measure capturing a genuinely shared assessment of local governance conditions rather than idiosyncratic respondent bias.

Multivariate Analysis: Mixed-Effects Regression

Table 3: Mixed-Effects Linear Regression Predicting Perceived Corruption Index (PCI)

Predictor	Coef. (β)	SE	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Intercept	74.162	3.581	<0.001	67.145	81.180
Legislative Oversight Capacity Index (LOCI)	-0.297	0.042	<0.001	-0.379	-0.214
Years of Experience	-0.068	0.080	0.397	-0.224	0.089
Political Competition Index	0.073	0.025	0.003	0.024	0.122
Civil Society Presence Index	-0.150	0.021	<0.001	-0.191	-0.109
District Revenue Per Capita	-0.048	0.015	0.001	-0.076	-0.019
Distance to Capital (km)	0.016	0.005	<0.001	0.007	0.025
Urban Location (ref: Rural)	-5.837	1.142	<0.001	-8.076	-3.599
Bachelor's Degree (ref: Certificate/Diploma)	0.583	0.886	0.511	-1.154	2.320

Postgraduate (ref: Certificate/Diploma)	0.478	1.175	0.684	-1.825	2.781
Technical Staff (ref: Councilor)	1.091	0.893	0.222	-0.660	2.842
CSO Representative (ref: Councilor)	0.323	0.984	0.743	-1.606	2.251

Dependent variable: PCI. District random intercept variance = 4.690; Residual variance = 89.084; Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) = 0.050. N = 653 respondents in 42 districts. REML estimation.

The mixed-effects linear regression results in Table 3 showed that, after adjusting for respondent- and district-level covariates and accounting for the nesting of respondents within districts through a random intercept, the Legislative Oversight Capacity Index remained a statistically significant and independent negative predictor of the Perceived Corruption Index ($\beta = -0.297$, $SE = 0.042$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: -0.379 to -0.214), indicating that a one-point increase in oversight capacity was associated with an average 0.297-point reduction in perceived corruption, holding all other modelled factors constant. Civil society presence ($\beta = -0.150$, $p < 0.001$), district revenue per capita ($\beta = -0.048$, $p = 0.001$), and urban location ($\beta = -5.837$, $p < 0.001$) were each independently associated with lower perceived corruption, while distance to the capital ($\beta = 0.016$, $p < 0.001$) and, notably, the political competition index ($\beta = 0.073$, $p = 0.003$) were independently associated with higher perceived corruption. Years of experience, education level, and respondent category did not attain statistical significance in the adjusted model. The intraclass correlation coefficient, computed as the ratio of the district-level random-intercept variance to total variance, was 0.050, indicating that approximately five percent of the total variation in perceived corruption was attributable to unobserved differences between districts after the modelled covariates were accounted for.

The persistence of a strong, statistically significant, and substantively meaningful LOCI effect after adjustment for a broad set of respondent and structural covariates provided robust multivariate evidence that legislative oversight capacity was independently associated with lower perceived corruption, rather than merely reflecting confounding by urbanity, remoteness, fiscal capacity, or respondent characteristics; this strengthened, though did not by itself establish, the plausibility that strengthening oversight capacity could causally contribute to reduced corruption perception, a claim the cross-sectional design could not definitively confirm. The comparatively modest intraclass correlation of 0.050 was analytically informative in indicating that, once individual- and district-level covariates including LOCI were controlled for, most of the remaining variability in corruption perception operated at the level of the individual respondent rather than reflecting large unexplained district-to-district differences, suggesting the model's fixed-effects specification captured the bulk of systematic district-level heterogeneity. The unexpected positive association between political competition and perceived corruption, contrary to a naive expectation that greater political contestation would enhance accountability and lower corruption, was interpreted cautiously as potentially reflecting heightened political scrutiny, rhetoric, and awareness in more competitive districts that elevate corruption salience and perception even where underlying malfeasance levels are not necessarily higher, a nuance meriting further qualitative investigation rather than a straightforward accountability interpretation.

Sensitivity Analysis

Table 4: Sensitivity Analysis — Logistic Regression and Cross-Model Robustness of the Oversight–Corruption Relationship

Predictor	Coef.	Odds Ratio	SE	p-value	95% CI (OR)
Panel A: Logistic Regression — Binary Outcome (High Corruption Perception = PCI > Median)					
Legislative Oversight Capacity Index (LOCI)	-0.054	0.947	0.009	<0.001	0.930 – 0.965
Civil Society Presence Index	-0.030	0.970	0.005	<0.001	0.960 – 0.980
Urban Location (ref: Rural)	-0.940	0.391	0.205	<0.001	0.261 – 0.584
Political Competition Index	0.016	1.016	0.006	0.008	1.004 – 1.028
District Revenue Per Capita	-0.008	0.992	0.003	0.005	0.987 – 0.998
Distance to Capital (km)	0.003	1.003	0.001	0.001	1.001 – 1.004
Panel B: Robustness of the LOCI Effect across Model Specifications					
Mixed-effects linear regression (district random intercept)	-0.297		<0.001	Consistent	
OLS with cluster-robust SE (district), full sample	-0.275		<0.001	Consistent	
OLS with cluster-robust SE, outliers excluded (n = 2 removed)	-0.290		<0.001	Consistent	
Logistic regression, odds ratio per unit LOCI	OR = 0.947		<0.001	Consistent	

Panel A: Logistic regression, $N = 653$. Panel B: Coefficient/OR estimate for LOCI's effect on the Perceived Corruption Index (or its binary equivalent) under each specification.

The sensitivity analysis reported in Table 4 confirmed the robustness of the central finding across alternative model specifications. The logistic regression predicting the binary high-corruption-perception outcome showed that each one-unit increase in the Legislative Oversight Capacity Index was associated with a 5.3 percent reduction in the odds of a respondent falling into the high-corruption-perception category (OR = 0.947, 95% CI: 0.930–0.965, $p < 0.001$), with civil society presence (OR = 0.970, $p < 0.001$) and urban location (OR = 0.391, $p < 0.001$) also significantly reducing these odds, while political competition, distance to the capital, and, in the reverse direction, district revenue

per capita retained statistically significant associations consistent in direction with the continuous-outcome model. The cross-model comparison in Panel B showed that the LOCI coefficient remained negative and highly significant across the mixed-effects model ($\beta = -0.297$), the cluster-robust ordinary least squares model ($\beta = -0.275$), and the outlier-excluded re-estimation ($\beta = -0.290$), with the logistic model's odds ratio of 0.947 corroborating the same substantive direction and strength of effect on the binarized outcome.

The close agreement in both the sign and approximate magnitude of the LOCI effect across four distinct estimation strategies, namely a random-intercept mixed model, a cluster-robust fixed-effects model, an outlier-robust re-estimation, and a non-linear logistic specification, constituted strong statistical evidence that the observed oversight-corruption relationship was not an artefact of a particular modelling choice, the influence of a small number of extreme observations, or the specific functional form assumed for the outcome variable. That the exclusion of only two influential observations shifted the LOCI coefficient by less than 0.01 units further indicated that the finding was not being driven by a handful of unusual districts or respondents, which was analytically important for the credibility of policy recommendations drawn from the model. Taken together with the bivariate and multivariate results, the convergence of evidence across all four analytical stages, univariate, bivariate, multivariate, and sensitivity, supported the conclusion that legislative oversight capacity exerted a genuine, robust, and independent association with lower perceived corruption in Uganda's district local governments, providing a credible empirical basis for the policy recommendations that follow.

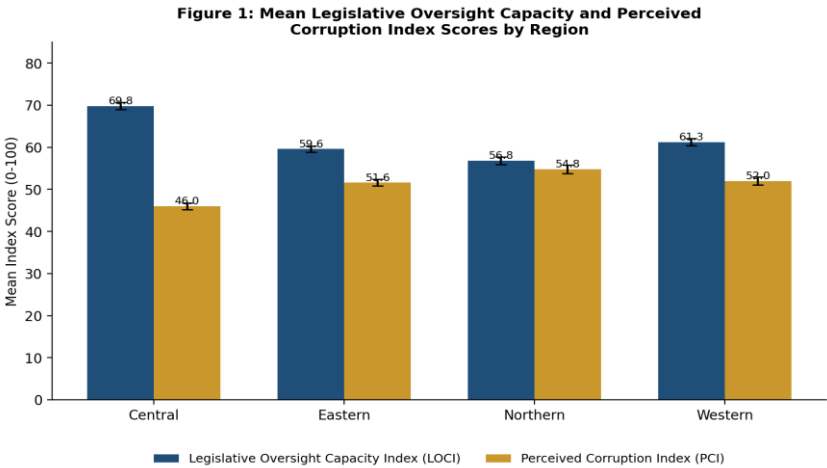


Figure 1: Mean Legislative Oversight Capacity and Perceived Corruption Index Scores by Region

Figure 1 illustrates that the Central region recorded the highest mean Legislative Oversight Capacity Index alongside the lowest mean Perceived Corruption Index, whereas the Northern region exhibited the reverse pattern, with the lowest mean oversight capacity and the highest mean perceived corruption, a pattern broadly consistent with the significant regional differences identified in the bivariate ANOVA results reported in Table 2 and with documented historical disparities in institutional development between northern and central Uganda.

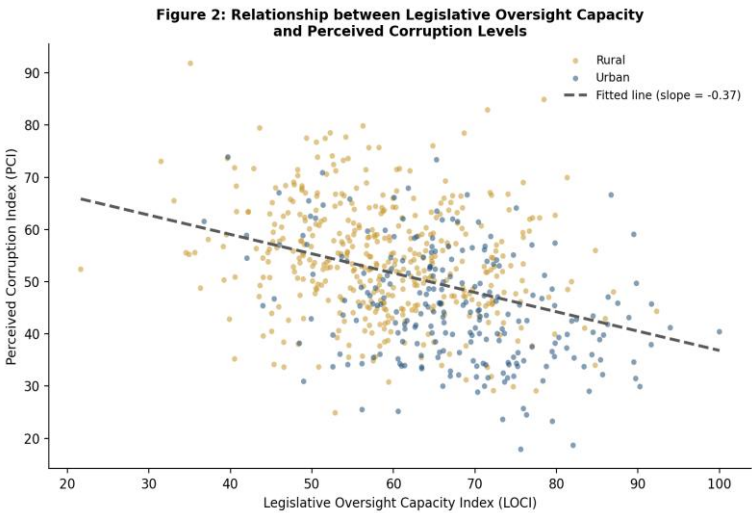


Figure 2: Relationship between Legislative Oversight Capacity and Perceived Corruption Levels

Figure 2 presents the individual-level scatter of LOCI against PCI scores, disaggregated by urban and rural locality, with a fitted linear trend line confirming the negative slope identified in the correlation and regression analyses; rural respondents (shown in gold) clustered toward the lower end of the oversight capacity distribution and the upper end of the corruption perception distribution relative to their urban counterparts, visually corroborating the significant urban-rural gap reported in Tables 2 and 3.

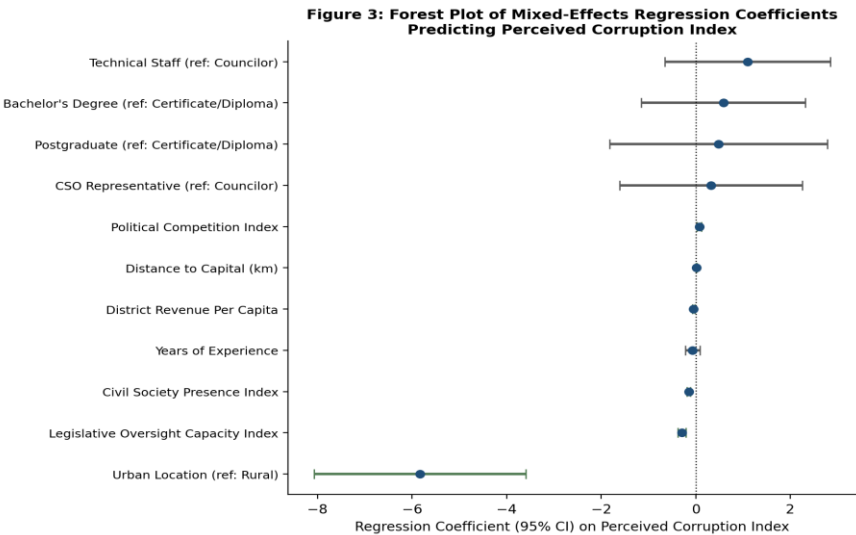


Figure 3: Forest Plot of Mixed-Effects Regression Coefficients Predicting Perceived Corruption Index

Figure 3 displays the adjusted regression coefficients and their 95 percent confidence intervals for all predictors in the mixed-effects model reported in Table 3, with green error bars denoting statistically significant predictors and grey error bars denoting non-significant ones; the plot visually confirms that the Legislative Oversight Capacity Index,

civil society presence, urban location, district revenue per capita, distance to the capital, and political competition all had confidence intervals excluding zero, while education level, respondent category, and years of experience did not.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the relationship between legislative oversight capacity and perceived corruption levels across district local governments in Uganda, and found consistent, statistically robust evidence across univariate, bivariate, multivariate, and sensitivity analyses that districts and respondents characterized by higher legislative oversight capacity reported significantly lower levels of perceived corruption, even after accounting for respondent characteristics, civil society engagement, district fiscal capacity, remoteness, and political competition, and even after subjecting the finding to a battery of robustness checks including cluster-robust standard errors, outlier exclusion, and an alternative logistic specification. The persistence and stability of this negative association across every analytical stage indicates that the practical, resourced capacity of district councils to exercise their oversight mandate, rather than the mere formal existence of oversight structures, is a substantively meaningful correlate of how corrupt local governance is perceived to be by councilors, technical staff, and civil society actors alike, while the study's findings on urban-rural disparities, remoteness, and political competition further suggest that oversight capacity operates alongside, rather than in isolation from, a broader set of structural governance conditions that jointly shape corruption perception in Uganda's decentralized system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

District Local Governments and the Ministry of Local Government should prioritize targeted investment in Public Accounts Committee and sectoral committee capacity, through structured training, dedicated secretariat support, and reliable access to timely financial and audit information, to convert the formal oversight mandate of councils into practically exercised oversight capacity.

Development partners and local governance strengthening programmes should deliberately foster civil society organization engagement in district oversight processes, given the significant independent association found between civil society presence and lower perceived corruption, by supporting CSO participation in budget scrutiny, public expenditure tracking, and council committee proceedings.

Given the significant urban-rural and regional disparities identified, oversight capacity-strengthening interventions should be deliberately prioritized toward rural, remote, and structurally disadvantaged districts, particularly in the Northern region, where both measured oversight capacity was lowest and perceived corruption was highest, to avoid further widening existing cross-district governance gaps.

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