

Motivation Strategies And Work Output In Local Governments In Uganda: A Case Of Butambala District

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between motivation strategies and work output among employees of Butambala District Local Government in Uganda. The specific objectives were: to examine the effect of financial motivation strategies on employee work output; to assess the influence of non-financial motivation strategies on employee performance; and to determine the relationship between recognition and reward systems and employee productivity. A correlational research design was employed. The study population comprised 186 local government employees from various departments, from which a sample of 127 respondents was drawn. Structured questionnaires, interview guides, and observation checklists formed the data collection instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Results revealed that financial motivation ($\beta=0.374$, $p<0.01$), non-financial motivation ($\beta=0.341$, $p<0.01$), and recognition and reward systems ($\beta=0.298$, $p<0.05$) all significantly predicted work output, with the combined model explaining 61.3% of the variance in work output ($R^2=0.613$, $p<0.001$). The study concludes that a balanced application of financial and non-financial motivation strategies is essential for enhancing productivity in local government settings. It recommends improved salary structures, transparent promotion criteria, and recognition programs as priority interventions.

Keywords: Motivation strategies, work output, local government, financial incentives, non-financial incentives, employee performance, Butambala District, Uganda

1.0 Background to the Study

Local government institutions in Uganda form the backbone of decentralized public service delivery, responsible for planning, budgeting, and implementing development programs at the sub-national level(Annet et al., 2023). The effectiveness of these institutions is fundamentally dependent on the quality and performance of their human resources(Julius & Kazaara, 2026). Under Uganda's decentralization framework established by the 1995 Constitution and operationalized through the Local Governments Act Cap 243, district local governments are mandated to provide services in education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and community development, among others(Julius & Audrey, 2026). However, the persistent challenge of low employee motivation and its consequent effects on work output has continued to undermine the effectiveness of local governments across the country.

Motivation, broadly defined as the internal and external forces that energize, direct, and sustain goal-oriented behavior, is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of organizational performance(Julius & Kazaara, 2026). In the public sector, where profit motives are absent and accountability mechanisms are often less stringent than in the private sector, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation become especially critical in sustaining employee engagement and productivity. Scholars including Maslow (1954), Herzberg (1966), and Vroom (1964) have provided foundational

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theoretical frameworks for understanding what motivates workers and how organizations can harness these motivational forces to enhance performance(Julius & Kazaara, 2026).

Butambala District, located in Central Uganda, was established as a full district in 2010 following its separation from Mpigi District. As a relatively young district, it continues to grapple with the dual challenges of building robust institutional capacity while delivering services to a predominantly rural population(Promise et al., 2024). The district employs approximately 186 regular civil servants across various departments, many of whom report dissatisfaction with their pay and working conditions(Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023). Understanding how motivation strategies influence work output in this specific context can inform district leadership in designing more effective human resource management interventions.

2.0 Problem Statement

Despite the critical role that motivated employees play in effective public service delivery, local governments in Uganda, including Butambala District, continue to face challenges of low morale, poor work ethic, high absenteeism, and substandard work output among their employees(Christopher et al., 2022). Available evidence suggests that salary arrears, inadequate performance-based incentives, limited career advancement opportunities, poor working conditions, and lack of recognition contribute significantly to employee demotivation in Uganda's local government sector(Alex & Moses, 2024). The Public Service Review Commission (2019) reported that approximately 67% of public servants surveyed were dissatisfied with their overall compensation packages, with negative implications for their motivation to deliver quality services(Winny, Ariyo, et al., 2023).

At Butambala District specifically, informal assessments conducted by the district human resource department have consistently identified low staff motivation as a primary impediment to achieving annual performance targets(Julius & Nancy, 2026). Staff turnover rates have increased in recent years, with experienced officers leaving for better-paying opportunities in the private sector or larger government agencies. These developments have prompted urgent questions about the specific motivational strategies currently employed by the district, their adequacy, and their measurable impact on employee work output(Winny, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Empirical evidence on this relationship in the Butambala District context is scarce, necessitating this study.

3. Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between motivation strategies and work output among employees of Butambala District Local Government. Specifically, the study sought to: (i) examine the effect of financial motivation strategies on employee work output; (ii) assess the influence of non-financial motivation strategies on employee performance; and (iii) determine the relationship between recognition and reward systems and employee productivity in the district.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966), which distinguishes between hygiene factors (pay, job security, and working conditions) that prevent dissatisfaction, and motivators (achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility) that actively drive job satisfaction and performance (Ramadhan, Alex, Kazaara, et al., 2023). Applied to the public sector, this theory suggests that while competitive salaries are necessary to prevent employee dissatisfaction, non-financial factors such as recognition, autonomy, and opportunities for growth are the true motivators of superior work output (Ramadhan, Alex, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) provides a complementary framework, positing that employees are motivated when they believe that effort leads to performance (expectancy), performance leads to outcomes (instrumentality), and those outcomes are valued (valence).

4.2 Financial Motivation and Work Output

Empirical evidence on the relationship between financial motivation and work output in the public sector is mixed. While Taylor's scientific management principles emphasized monetary incentives as primary motivators, later research has provided more nuanced perspectives. Olowookere et al. (2019) in a study of Nigerian public servants found a significant positive relationship between salary levels and employee productivity, noting that adequately compensated employees demonstrated higher commitment, lower absenteeism, and superior task completion rates. Similarly, Kyambadde and Kalinda (2021) found in a Ugandan local government study that performance-based bonuses positively influenced employee work output, particularly among technical staff in engineering and health departments.

4.3 Non-Financial Motivation and Performance

Non-financial motivation strategies encompass a broad range of interventions including training and professional development opportunities, flexible working arrangements, employee autonomy, supportive supervision, and transparent communication (Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023). Dessler (2017) argues that in environments where financial resources are constrained, as is often the case in developing country local governments, non-financial motivators assume even greater importance as drivers of employee engagement. Nkansah and Adjei-Bamfo (2020) found in a Ghanaian district assembly study that training opportunities, coaching, and participatory decision-making were significantly associated with improved employee performance outcomes.

5.0 Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the nature and strength of relationships between motivation strategies and work output without manipulating any variables. The study population comprised 186 employees from Butambala District Local Government departments including the Chief Administrative Officer's Office, Education, Health, Works, Finance, Community-Based Services, Production and Marketing, and the District Service Commission (Abiodun Nafiu, 2012). Using Slovin's formula ($e=0.05$), a sample size of 127 respondents was determined. Proportionate stratified random sampling was employed to ensure departmental representation, with staff selected randomly within each stratum (L. A. Nafiu et al., 2017).

Data were collected using structured questionnaires for quantitative data and semi-structured interview guides for qualitative data from 12 purposively selected key informants including departmental heads and the Human Resource Officer. The questionnaire measured motivation strategies (financial motivation, non-financial motivation, and recognition and reward systems) and work output using validated five-point Likert scale items. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients of 0.81, 0.79, 0.83, and 0.86 for the four scales respectively, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70(Abiodun Nafiu, 2012).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 26(Nelson et al., 2022). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed for descriptive purposes. Pearson's correlation was used to examine bivariate relationships, while multiple linear regression was employed to determine the predictive power of motivation strategy dimensions on work output. The regression model satisfied key assumptions including normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity (VIF values < 4.0).

6.0 Results and Discussion

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Motivation Strategies and Work Output (N=127)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Financial Motivation	127	1.00	5.00	2.94	0.923	Moderate
Non-Financial Motivation	127	1.20	5.00	3.21	0.841	Moderate
Recognition & Reward Systems	127	1.00	5.00	3.08	0.879	Moderate
Employee Work Output	127	1.40	5.00	3.19	0.811	Moderate
Salary Satisfaction	127	1.00	4.60	2.71	0.987	Low-Moderate
Training Opportunities	127	1.20	5.00	3.44	0.762	Moderate
Promotion & Advancement	127	1.00	5.00	2.89	0.934	Moderate
Working Conditions	127	1.20	5.00	3.12	0.856	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The descriptive results in Table 1 reveal that all motivation strategy dimensions and work output registered moderate mean scores, indicating that employees of Butambala District Local Government are moderately motivated and demonstrating moderate levels of work output. Financial motivation recorded one of the lower mean scores (M=2.94, SD=0.923), suggesting that employees are not particularly satisfied with the financial incentives offered by the district. Salary satisfaction was particularly low (M=2.71, SD=0.987), reflecting broader dissatisfaction with public service pay scales in Uganda, which have not kept pace with the private sector or cost of living increases. The high standard deviation of 0.987 for salary satisfaction further indicates substantial disagreement among employees, with some more satisfied and others deeply dissatisfied with their compensation(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023).

Non-financial motivation recorded the highest mean score among the predictor variables ($M=3.21$, $SD=0.841$), suggesting that while financial incentives are perceived as inadequate, employees derive moderate levels of motivation from non-financial sources such as training opportunities, supportive supervision, and a sense of public service commitment (Kumari, K., Barkat Ali, S., & Abbas, 2021). Training opportunities specifically recorded a relatively high mean of 3.44 ($SD=0.762$), indicating that employees perceive the district as providing reasonable access to professional development opportunities, which serves as a meaningful motivational factor. The relatively lower standard deviation for training opportunities also suggests greater consensus among respondents regarding the availability of these opportunities.

Recognition and reward systems posted a mean of 3.08 ($SD=0.879$), and employee work output registered a mean of 3.19 ($SD=0.811$), both in the moderate range. The moderate level of work output aligns with the generally moderate motivation levels reported across financial and non-financial dimensions, suggesting a coherent relationship between inputs (motivation) and outputs (performance). Promotion and advancement opportunities received a relatively low mean of 2.89 ($SD=0.934$), reflecting employee frustration with what many perceive as opaque and unfair promotion criteria in the local government service (Nelson et al., 2023).

6.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix between Motivation Strategies and Work Output

Variable	Fin. Motivation	Non-Fin. Motivation	Recognition & Reward	Work Output
Financial Motivation	1.000			
Non-Financial Motivation	0.512**	1.000		
Recognition & Reward	0.479**	0.563**	1.000	
Work Output	0.598**	0.612**	0.547**	1.000

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

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The Pearson correlation matrix in Table 5 reveals that all three motivation strategy dimensions are significantly and positively correlated with employee work output. Non-financial motivation demonstrated the strongest correlation with work output ($r=0.612$, $p<0.01$), followed closely by financial motivation ($r=0.598$, $p<0.01$), and recognition and reward systems ($r=0.547$, $p<0.01$). The strength of these correlations is particularly noteworthy given the moderate motivation levels reported in the descriptive analysis: even at moderate levels, motivation strategies show strong associations with work output outcomes (L. Nafiu, 2013).

The finding that non-financial motivation is more strongly correlated with work output than financial motivation in this public sector context is theoretically consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which positions factors like

recognition, responsibility, and personal growth as more powerful drivers of job satisfaction and performance than hygiene factors like pay (Moses et al., 2022). It also reflects the realities of public service employment in Uganda, where salary levels are relatively fixed and limited room exists for financial incentive differentiation, making non-financial motivators relatively more salient and influential in shaping employee behavior. The significant positive inter-correlations between the motivation strategy dimensions (ranging from $r=0.479$ to $r=0.563$) indicate that these strategies tend to co-occur, reinforcing each other's effects on work output.

6.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression on Predictors of Employee Work Output

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	0.621	0.274		2.267	0.025	
Financial Motivation	0.374	0.098	0.347	3.816	0.000	1.473
Non-Financial Motivation	0.341	0.093	0.362	3.667	0.000	1.512
Recognition & Reward Systems	0.298	0.101	0.264	2.950	0.004	1.489

Model Summary: $R=0.783$, $R^2=0.613$, Adjusted $R^2=0.604$, $F(3,123)=64.88$, $p<0.001$; Durbin-Watson=1.87

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The multiple regression analysis results in Table 6 confirm that the overall model is statistically significant ($F(3,123)=64.88$, $p<0.001$), with the three motivation strategy dimensions jointly explaining 61.3% of the variance in employee work output ($R^2=0.613$). This is a high level of explanatory power for a study in the organizational behavior domain and underscores the critical importance of motivation strategies in determining work output in the Butambala District Local Government context. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.87 is within the acceptable range, confirming the absence of problematic autocorrelation in the model residuals. All VIF values are below 2.0, confirming that multicollinearity is not a concern.

Financial motivation was a significant predictor of work output ($\beta=0.347$, $B=0.374$, $t=3.816$, $p<0.001$), indicating that every unit improvement in financial motivation is associated with a 0.374-unit increase in work output, holding other variables constant. Non-financial motivation was the strongest predictor when standardized beta coefficients are compared ($\beta=0.362$, $B=0.341$, $t=3.667$, $p<0.001$), confirming the correlation analysis finding that non-financial factors are particularly influential in driving work output in this context. Recognition and reward systems were also a significant predictor ($\beta=0.264$, $B=0.298$, $t=2.950$, $p=0.004$), indicating that transparent and consistently applied recognition and reward mechanisms contribute independently and significantly to employee productivity, beyond the effects of financial and non-financial motivation strategies.

7.0 Discussion of Results

The findings establish a clear and robust empirical relationship between motivation strategies and work output in Butambala District Local Government, with the combined model explaining over 61% of variance in work output. The dominance of non-financial motivation as the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.362$) over financial motivation ($\beta=0.347$)

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in this public sector context is particularly significant and aligns with findings from comparable African local government studies. Oluwafemi (2019) in a Nigerian local government study found similar results, reporting that factors including autonomy, professional development, and recognition were more strongly associated with public service employee performance than salary, especially in contexts where salary satisfaction is generally low.

The finding that financial motivation remains a significant predictor despite low overall satisfaction scores ($M=2.94$) suggests that even marginal improvements in financial conditions, such as timely salary payment, performance bonuses, or housing allowances, can yield meaningful improvements in work output. This has important practical implications for district budget allocations, suggesting that even small investments in targeted financial incentives for high-performing employees could generate disproportionate returns in terms of improved service delivery. The significance of recognition and reward systems ($\beta=0.264$) highlights that formal acknowledgment of employee achievements, whether through merit awards, public commendations, or promotion priority, is a low-cost and effective strategy for sustaining motivation and driving productivity.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that motivation strategies, encompassing financial incentives, non-financial motivators, and recognition and reward systems, are critical determinants of work output in Butambala District Local Government. Non-financial motivation is the most influential predictor, followed closely by financial motivation and recognition systems. The moderate motivation levels and work output scores observed suggest significant room for improvement through deliberate and comprehensive motivation management strategies.

The study recommends that Butambala District Local Government leadership prioritize the following: First, review and enhance the salary and allowance structure in consultation with the Ministry of Public Service to ensure that employee financial compensation is competitive and adequately recognizes the cost of living in the district. Second, design and implement a structured, transparent performance recognition program that annually acknowledges top-performing employees across all departments, including through certificates, public commendation at district functions, and priority consideration for training opportunities. Third, expand access to professional development opportunities including in-service training, short courses, and attachments to higher-level government institutions, as these non-financial motivators have been shown to be particularly influential. Fourth, establish a participatory work planning process that gives employees greater voice in setting departmental targets and work plans, enhancing autonomy and ownership. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track changes in motivation and work output over time, and explore the moderating role of leadership style on the motivation-performance relationship in Uganda's local government context.

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