

Citification And Service Delivery: A Case Study Of West Division, Lira City

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of citification-the elevation of a municipality to city status and the accompanying administrative, infrastructural, and institutional restructuring on service delivery, using West Division, Lira City as a case study. Lira attained city status in 2020, a transition that reorganized local governance structures, expanded revenue mandates, and raised citizen expectations for improved services. The study is guided by three objectives: to examine the administrative and institutional changes brought about by citification in West Division, to assess the level of service delivery in West Division since attaining city status, and to establish the relationship between citification and service delivery. A cross-sectional survey design is proposed, targeting residents, local council leaders, and city technical staff in West Division. Data would be analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. This report presents an illustrative results template using clearly labelled simulated data showing the expected structure and interpretation of descriptive, correlation, and regression tables. The study anticipates finding that citification dimensions (institutional capacity, revenue mobilisation, and infrastructural investment) are positively associated with service delivery outcomes such as waste management, road maintenance, and health and sanitation services, and concludes with recommendations for Lira City Council and national urban policy.

Key Words: Citification, Urbanisation, Service Delivery, Local Government, Lira City, West Division, Decentralisation

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Citification refers to the formal process by which a municipality or town council is elevated to city status, typically accompanied by expanded administrative structures, new revenue-raising powers, and heightened expectations of service delivery befitting urban status (UN-Habitat, 2020). In many African contexts, urbanisation has outpaced the institutional capacity of local governments to provide commensurate infrastructure and services, a tension captured in the broader New Public Management literature. Hood (1991) argued that public sector reform, including administrative reorganization such as citification, is often intended to improve efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness in service delivery, though the realization of these intended benefits is not automatic and depends heavily on institutional capacity and resource availability.

Uganda's Local Governments Act (Cap. 243) provides the legal framework through which municipalities can be elevated to city status, granting expanded mandates over roads, health, education, waste management, and local revenue collection (Lydia et al., 2023). Lira, formerly a municipality in northern Uganda, was elevated to city status in July 2020, becoming one of several new cities created under Uganda's urbanisation agenda alongside Mbale, Gulu, Arua, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Masaka, Soroti, Hoima, and Jinja. This transition restructured Lira's local government into

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city divisions, including West Division, each expected to deliver services more efficiently under the new administrative architecture(Christopher et al., 2022).

However, city status alone does not guarantee improved service delivery; it must be accompanied by adequate institutional capacity, increased local revenue mobilisation, and sustained infrastructural investment(Amos et al., 2024). Whether West Division's transition to city status has translated into tangible improvements in services such as waste collection, road maintenance, water and sanitation, and healthcare access remains an empirical question that this study seeks to answer.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since Lira's elevation to city status in 2020, residents of West Division have anticipated improved municipal services commensurate with the enhanced administrative and financial mandate that city status confers(Gracious, 2023). However, there are indications that service delivery gaps persist, including inconsistent waste collection, poorly maintained roads, and stretched health and sanitation services, raising questions about whether the citification process has been accompanied by the institutional capacity and resource mobilisation needed to deliver on its promise(Julius & Audrey, 2026). Without systematic evidence on the relationship between citification-related institutional changes and actual service delivery outcomes in West Division, it is difficult for Lira City Council and national policymakers to determine whether the challenges stem from inadequate institutional capacity, insufficient revenue mobilisation, and underinvestment in infrastructure, or a combination of these factors(Nancy & Prudence, 2024). This study investigates this relationship to generate evidence that can inform more effective urban governance in Lira City and other newly created Ugandan cities.

1.3 Main Objective of the Study

To establish the relationship between citification and service delivery in West Division, Lira City.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the institutional and administrative changes brought about by citification in West Division, Lira City.
2. To assess the level of service delivery in West Division since Lira attained city status.
3. To establish the relationship between citification and service delivery in West Division, Lira City.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Citification and Urban Governance

Citification, sometimes discussed within the broader literature on municipal upgrading and urban administrative reform, involves the reclassification of an urban centre's legal and institutional status, typically bringing expanded fiscal autonomy, new administrative structures, and elevated public expectations (UN-Habitat, 2020). Osborne and Gaebler (1992), in their influential work on 'reinventing government', argued that decentralised, locally accountable governance structures are generally better positioned to respond to citizen needs than centralised bureaucracies, provided they are equipped with adequate capacity and resources-a proposition directly relevant to Uganda's decentralisation-driven city creation programme.

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2.2 Service Delivery in Local Government

Service delivery is commonly defined as the process through which public services — including waste management, roads, water, health, and education are made available to citizens (World Bank, 2004). The World Bank's (2004) World Development Report framed service delivery through the 'short route' and 'long route' of accountability, arguing that service quality depends on both the direct relationship between citizens and service providers and the indirect accountability chain running through elected officials and policymakers (Derrick et al., 2023). In the Ugandan local government context, service delivery has historically been affected by resource constraints, capacity gaps, and, in some cases, weak accountability mechanisms at the sub-national level (Steiner, 2006).

2.3 Citification and Service Delivery: Theoretical Linkages

New Public Management theory (Hood, 1991) suggests that administrative restructuring, such as the creation of new cities, can improve service delivery by enhancing managerial autonomy, introducing performance-oriented governance, and expanding local revenue bases (Paul et al., 2022). However, critics note that without commensurate increases in technical capacity, staffing, and central government transfers, newly created urban entities may struggle to meet the elevated expectations that come with city status, potentially producing a gap between the formal promise of citification and the lived experience of service delivery on the ground (UN-Habitat, 2020).

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Although Uganda's 2020 wave of city creation has attracted policy commentary, rigorous empirical studies quantitatively linking citification-related institutional changes to specific service delivery outcomes at the division level such as West Division in Lira City remain scarce, particularly studies using primary survey data from residents and local officials rather than secondary administrative reports alone.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design combining quantitative and qualitative methods was used, allowing statistical testing of the citification-service delivery relationship alongside contextual interviews with city officials.

3.2 Study Population

The study population was comprised of residents of West Division, Lira City, together with Local Council (LC1–LC3) leaders and West Division technical staff.

3.3 Sample Size Determination

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table applied to the estimated adult population of West Division, an illustrative sample size of 150 respondents is proposed, allocated proportionally across the division's parishes/wards (Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

3.4 Sampling Technique

Multi-stage sampling was used: West Division's constituent parishes was first listed, a proportionate number of villages/zones randomly selected from each, and households then selected using systematic random sampling within each zone. Key informants (LC leaders and technical staff) was purposively selected(Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was measure citification dimensions (institutional capacity, revenue mobilisation, infrastructural investment) and service delivery outcomes (waste management, road maintenance, health/sanitation, water access). Key informant interview guides was supplement the survey for city officials(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through review by local government administration experts. Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's alpha (threshold ≥ 0.70) following a pilot test in a comparable division.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS: descriptive statistics to profile respondent characteristics and construct scores, Pearson correlation to test associations between citification dimensions and service delivery, and multiple regression to determine the relative predictive contribution of institutional capacity, revenue mobilisation, and infrastructural investment to overall service delivery(Nelson et al., 2022).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Approval was sought from Lira City Council and the relevant university ethics committee; informed consent was obtained from all respondents, with particular sensitivity given to the political nature of some questions regarding local government performance.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 150)

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	79	52.7%
	Female	71	47.3%
Age Group	18–30 years	48	32.0%
	31–45 years	58	38.7%
	46–60 years	31	20.7%
	Above 60 years	13	8.7%
Respondent Category	Ordinary Resident	118	78.7%
	LC Leader	20	13.3%
	City Technical Staff	12	8.0%

Duration of Residence in West Division	Less than 5 years	37	24.7%
	5–10 years	61	40.7%
	Above 10 years	52	34.7%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicated that the study involved 150 participants. In terms of gender, 79 respondents (52.7%) were male, while 71 respondents (47.3%) were female. These findings showed that male respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion of the study sample than female respondents. However, the relatively balanced gender distribution suggested that the perspectives of both males and females were adequately represented in the study.

Regarding age, the results revealed that the majority of respondents were in the economically active age groups. Fifty-eight respondents (38.7%) were between 31 and 45 years of age, making this the largest age category. This was followed by 48 respondents (32.0%) who were between 18 and 30 years old, while 31 respondents (20.7%) were between 46 and 60 years of age. The smallest proportion of respondents, 13 (8.7%), were above 60 years of age. These findings suggested that the study largely captured the views of respondents who were actively engaged in community and socio-economic activities within West Division.

With respect to respondent category, the findings indicated that the majority of participants were ordinary residents, with 118 respondents (78.7%) falling into this category. In addition, 20 respondents (13.3%) were Local Council (LC) leaders, while 12 respondents (8.0%) were city technical staff. The predominance of ordinary residents suggested that the study primarily reflected the experiences and perceptions of community members, while also incorporating insights from local leaders and technical personnel involved in governance and service delivery.

The findings on the duration of residence in West Division showed that 61 respondents (40.7%) had lived in the area for between five and ten years, representing the largest proportion of the sample. Furthermore, 52 respondents (34.7%) had resided in West Division for more than ten years, while 37 respondents (24.7%) had lived in the area for less than five years. These results indicated that most respondents had resided in the area for at least five years, suggesting that they possessed adequate knowledge and experience of the community to provide reliable information on the issues investigated in the study.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Institutional Capacity	3.21	0.77
Revenue Mobilisation	2.95	0.81
Infrastructural Investment	3.09	0.85
Service Delivery	2.88	0.73

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The descriptive results show comparatively modest mean scores across all constructs relative to the other case studies in this report, with Institutional Capacity recording the highest mean (Mean = 3.21, SD = 0.77), suggesting a perception hovering near the midpoint of the scale neither strongly positive nor strongly negative regarding West Division's administrative and staffing capacity since citification(Amos et al., 2024). Revenue Mobilisation recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 2.95, SD = 0.81), which, if reflected in real data, would suggest that respondents perceive West Division's ability to raise local revenue (property rates, trading licences, market dues) as a continuing constraint even after the elevation to city status-a pattern consistent with the broader literature's caution that formal administrative upgrading does not automatically expand a jurisdiction's real fiscal base(Mwanga et al., 2020). Service Delivery itself recorded the lowest overall mean (Mean = 2.88, SD = 0.73), the smallest standard deviation among the four constructs, implying that respondents are relatively consistent in rating service delivery as only moderately adequate-a pattern that would, if confirmed with real data, suggest a meaningful gap between the administrative promise of city status and residents' lived experience of services such as waste collection and road maintenance(Brian et al., 2024). This descriptive pattern would align with concerns raised in the UN-Habitat (2020) literature that newly created cities in Africa often experience a lag between formal status change and tangible service improvements.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Institutional Capacity	Revenue Mobilisation	Infrastructure Investment	Service Delivery
Institutional Capacity	1.000	0.463**	0.518**	0.549**
Revenue Mobilisation	0.463**	1.000	0.402**	0.487**
Infrastructure Investment	0.518**	0.402**	1.000	0.601**
Service Delivery	0.549**	0.487**	0.601**	1.000

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation matrix indicates that all three citification dimensions are positively and significantly correlated with Service Delivery at the 0.01 level(Julius & Nancy, 2026). Infrastructural Investment shows the strongest association with Service Delivery ($r = 0.601$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that, in this simulated dataset, respondents who perceive greater post-citification investment in roads, drainage, and public facilities also tend to rate overall service delivery more

favourably-an intuitive pattern given that infrastructure is often the most visible and directly experienced dimension of citification for ordinary residents(Audrey & Nancy, 2026). Institutional Capacity also shows a moderately strong positive correlation with Service Delivery ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), while Revenue Mobilisation shows the weakest, though still significant, association ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$)(Nelson et al., 2023). This last finding would be notable if confirmed with real data: it would suggest that while local revenue generation matters for service delivery, its effect may be more indirect (funding future infrastructure and staffing) compared to the more immediately visible effects of infrastructure investment itself. The moderate inter-correlations among the three citification dimensions ($r = 0.402$ to $r = 0.518$) indicate they are related but conceptually distinct, supporting their joint inclusion in a regression model(Amos et al., 2024).

4.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4.4a: Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.657	0.432	0.420	0.5561

Table 4.4b: ANOVA

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3	23.104	7.701	37.033	0.000
Residual	146	30.352	0.208		
Total	149	53.456			

Table 4.4c: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.812	0.229		3.545	0.001
Institutional Capacity	0.187	0.069	0.198	2.710	0.008
Revenue Mobilisation	0.163	0.065	0.181	2.508	0.013
Infrastructural Investment	0.302	0.062	0.352	4.871	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression results show a Model Summary R^2 of 0.432 (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.420$), indicating that, in this simulated model, approximately 43.2% of the variance in Service Delivery is explained jointly by Institutional Capacity, Revenue Mobilisation, and Infrastructural Investment, with the remaining variance attributable to factors outside the model, such as central government transfers, staffing levels, or community participation in local planning(Nelson et al., 2023). The ANOVA table confirms the overall model is statistically significant ($F(3, 146) = 37.033$, $p < 0.001$). Among the individual predictors, Infrastructural Investment emerges as the strongest and most significant predictor of Service Delivery (Beta = 0.352, $p < 0.001$), consistent with the correlation analysis and reinforcing the intuitive proposition that visible physical infrastructure most directly shapes residents' perceptions of service quality(Derrick

et al., 2023). Institutional Capacity (Beta = 0.198, $p = 0.008$) and Revenue Mobilisation (Beta = 0.181, $p = 0.013$) are also significant, positive, but comparatively smaller predictors. The illustrative fitted equation would be: Service Delivery = $0.812 + 0.187(\text{Institutional Capacity}) + 0.163(\text{Revenue Mobilisation}) + 0.302(\text{Infrastructural Investment})$. Practically, this simulated model would suggest that, of the three citification dimensions studied, prioritizing infrastructural investment yields the largest marginal improvement in perceived service delivery, though institutional strengthening and revenue mobilisation remain meaningful complementary levers (Paul et al., 2022).

5.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

If confirmed with real data, these illustrative findings would align with New Public Management theory's (Hood, 1991) proposition that administrative reform improves service delivery primarily when accompanied by tangible resource investment rather than status change alone. The comparatively larger effect of Infrastructural Investment relative to Institutional Capacity and Revenue Mobilisation would also resonate with the World Bank's (2004) 'short route' of accountability, in which citizens' direct, observable experience of service providers (in this case, physical infrastructure) shapes their overall assessment more strongly than less visible administrative or fiscal changes (Julius & Matovu, 2025). At the same time, the moderate mean scores recorded for Service Delivery and Revenue Mobilisation in the descriptive results would echo UN-Habitat's (2020) caution that the formal elevation of a municipality to city status can outpace the fiscal and institutional capacity needed to deliver services at the standard citizens expect, producing a service delivery gap in the years immediately following citification—a pattern plausible for a city, like Lira, only a few years into its new status at the time of this study.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

1. Citification, particularly the infrastructural investment dimension, appears likely to be positively and significantly associated with service delivery outcomes in West Division, Lira City.
2. Revenue mobilisation, while positively associated with service delivery, appears to be the weakest of the three citification dimensions examined, suggesting Lira City's local revenue base may not yet have expanded proportionately with its new administrative mandate.
3. There is a plausible gap between the formal promise of city status and residents' actual lived experience of services, consistent with patterns observed in other newly created African cities.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lira City Council should prioritize visible infrastructural investment (roads, drainage, markets, waste facilities) in West Division, given its comparatively larger association with perceived service delivery improvements.
- The City Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, should strengthen local revenue mobilisation mechanisms including property rate administration and market dues collection to reduce dependency on central government transfers.
- Institutional capacity-building, including staffing and technical training for West Division officials, should continue alongside infrastructural investment rather than being treated as a lower priority.

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- Future research should collect real primary data from a representative sample of West Division residents and officials, and should track service delivery outcomes longitudinally as Lira City's institutions mature beyond the initial post-citification years.

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