
Decentralization And Staff Performance In Rubirizi Local Government, Rubirizi District

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Abstract

Rubirizi District in Western Uganda has experienced substantial decentralization reforms over the past decade aimed at empowering local governments to better deliver services through transfer of functions, funds and staffing. However, studies and internal assessments continue to demonstrate generally low levels of staff performance across key technical departments within Rubirizi Local Government inhibiting achievement of set targets and citizens' service satisfaction. Against this backdrop, this study sought to investigate the deep-rooted systemic challenges impeding optimal utilization of decentralization through in-depth analysis of workplans, reports and stakeholder perspectives. A mixed methods approach incorporating review of government documents and records, key informant interviews, focus group discussions as well as staff and community surveys were employed. Findings revealed that limited financial resources, lack of modern equipment and infrastructure, inadequate continuous training and entrenched bureaucratic processes collectively undermine decentralization gains despite reforms. Specifically, only approximately 30% of annual departmental targets are achieved while citizen satisfaction lags at around 40%. From the findings, there existed a strong positive correlation of 0.762 at a highly significant level of 0.01 or 1% between the two variables, with decentralization shown to have a Pearson correlation coefficient of 1 when correlated with itself as the same variable and staff performance demonstrated to have a Pearson correlation of 0.762 when correlated with decentralization. The research provides vital empirical and contextual insight into the multifaceted constraints decentralization faces at the local level. It recommends comprehensive, well-coordinated interventions integrating financial, material, human and institutional strengthening across sectors to bolster staff competencies, working conditions and accountability systems.

Keywords: Decentralization And Staff Performance

Background of the study

Employee performance is defined as how well employees perform their duties and responsibilities. Many organizations evaluate the performance of their employees on an annual or quarterly basis to define certain areas that need improvement and encourage further success in areas that meet or exceed expectations (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). Decentralization is described as the transfer of powers and responsibilities of major government functions from central governments to sub-national governments, its civil society and the private sector. Conceptually, the study aims to examine the relationship between staff decentralization and performance (Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022). There are two variables in this study, the independent variable is staff decentralization and the dependent variable is performance (Lydia et al., 2023).

Decentralization refers to the transfer of responsibility for the recruitment of in-house staff or human resources from the central government and its agencies to the field units of government agencies (Winny et al., 2023). Subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public bodies or corporations (Faith et al., 2023). Personnel

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decentralization can also mean shifting responsibility from central government officials in the capital to workers in regions or districts. However, in the context of this study, personnel decentralization will mean capacity building of personnel who work in Rubirizi District, such as training, motivation, discipline, salary, increments and timely remuneration, discharge, rewards, for example, financial rewards such as professional allowance, pension and non-financial rewards, such as employee development, recognition and motivation (Micheal et al., 2023). Performance means understanding what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved and an approach to managing people that increases the likelihood of success (Winny et al., 2023). Performance enables people to identify their own unique contribution to the achievement of their organizations' goals (Hurley, 1999).

Performance means achieving better results from the organization, team and individuals within an agreed framework of planned goals, objectives and standards (Emmanuel et al., 2023). It also refers to a number of procedures that an organization uses to achieve desired goals (Edgar & Moses, 2023). Performance in this study refers to the timely execution of tasks and commitment to ensure that set goals are met effectively and efficiently (Deus, 2023).).

The study was conducted in Rubirizi Local Government, Rubirizi District, Western Uganda. The district got its name from the village where its district headquarters was located, called Rubirizi. The reason it was called Rubirizi and not Bunyaruguru which was the name of the county was to neutralize the tension between the natives of Banyaruguru who wanted the district to be called Bunyaruguru and the emigrants who did not want the name "Bunyaruguru" to avoid the dominance of Banyaruguru. Uganda's decentralization program was among the most radical in Africa after its inception in the mid-1990s (Christopher, Muhindo et al., 2022). It derives its powers from the Local Government Policy Document and the Constitution of Uganda. The civil service at all levels of government needs capable, motivated and efficient employees in order to provide services to its citizens. Rubirizi Local Government could only achieve its goals and serve the people effectively when the employees were willing to engage in the work. Adriana, (2008) also confirms that capacity building is essential to increase employee engagement in order to achieve set goals. Most of the employees in Rubirizi Local Government were fairly financially rewarded as evidenced by their timely salaries, provision of bonuses, non-financial rewards i.e. employee recognition, continuous training and development of employees (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022).

Although local governments are empowered to recruit their own staff, train, promote recognition, develop, discipline and fire, in the context of Rubirizi there are several staff who are not trained, not equipped, disloyal at work, less committed to duties as at a high level. absenteeism, constant late arrivals, yet service delivery was poor and therefore poor performance (Tasha et al., 2023). Personnel decentralization as part of the decentralization process in Rubirizi District was designed with the general objective of transforming human resources into more responsive public machines for better service delivery (Gracious, 2023).

The policy of decentralization in Uganda was introduced in 1997 under the Local Government Act 1997, which has since undergone several amendments. As expected, decentralization generally led to greater participation and control over service delivery and good governance. However, local governments still face a number of problems, namely insufficient funding, over-reliance on conditional grants from central government, inability to attract and retain

sufficiently trained and experienced staff, corruption, nepotism and elite capture, and incomplete data or information (Paul et al. , 2023). Although local governments are empowered to recruit their own staff to achieve the set targets, Rubirizi district like all other districts in Uganda has not been able to adhere to non-merit recruitment due to some issues such as limited funds to recruit qualified staff. due to corruption, political interference, all these have affected performance and caused delays in service delivery and thus poor performance (Isaac et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Rubirizi Local Government in Rubirizi District has been implementing decentralization reforms over the past decade as part of the Government of Uganda's decentralization program to transfer key functions and resources from the central government to lower local government units (Victoria et al., 2023). However, several studies and local government's own internal evaluation consistently show that staff performance in its technical departments remains generally low, despite efforts to strengthen their position through capacity building, role redistribution and recruitment of additional staff (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). An in-depth analysis of available work plans and reports from the department reveals that only about 30% of the annual targets are being met due to many obstacles, while citizen satisfaction with the quality of services also lags behind at about 40% according to the latest city citizen report card. (Christopher, Komunda et al., 2022). The continued suboptimal work performance at Rubirizi LGC even after decentralization can be attributed to several deep-rooted systemic challenges, according to this investigation into the problem. Firstly, the limited financial resources allocated to local government have limited its ability to offer competitive remuneration packages and incentive initiatives for employee welfare, outdated equipment, poor office infrastructure and lack of necessary tools hinder efficiency, outdated skills due to lack of ongoing training mean that employees find Evolving responsibilities, entrenched bureaucratic procedures, weak monitoring systems and political interference undermine accountability (Faith et al., 2023). Together, these lingering constraints prevented Rubirizi LGC staff from making full use of the devolved authority to accelerate service delivery and local socio-economic development to expected community standards (Ntirandekura and Friday, 2022).

Specific objectives:

1. To examine the clear understanding of decentralization in Rubirizi District local government.
2. To find out how staff performed in Rubirizi District Local government.
3. To identify the relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi district Local Government.

Methodology

The study applies a descriptive research design to reflect aspects of perception, feelings, experiences, facts and emotional feelings of the study respondents in finding out the Decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government, Rubirizi District (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). This was because the research questions that were generated necessitated observing, explanatory, descriptive and analytical aspects of the research. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in data collection and analysis and general information on the subject matter was collected from the different stakeholders in Rubirizi Local Government, Rubirizi District through use of

questionnaires and interviews (Nafiu, 2012). Qualitative design was involved in-depth interviewing of the Chief administrative Officer of Rubirizi Local Government in Rubirizi District and key Staff in different public sectors of Rubirizi Local Government in Rubirizi District. On the other hand, the quantitative design was involved in the use of close-ended questionnaires which were issued to the selected staff in different public sectors in Rubirizi Local Government as the method was convenient for them to fill during their free time (Rasheed et al., 2022). The research was carried out in Rubirizi Local Government in Rubirizi district. The study looked at Decentralization and Staff Performance in Rubirizi Local Government, Rubirizi District (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The study population consisted of chief administrative officer and his deputy at Rubirizi Local government and staff from different public sectors in Rubirizi District Local government making the general study population of 144100 people. The researcher purposively selected the chief administrative officer, his deputy and other key staff. The other staff was randomly selected to give each an equal chance of representation (Victoria et al., 2023). All respondents were assumed to have vital information on decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government. Respondents who were willing to participate were approached. The sample was determined using Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) where a sample of 70 respondents was sampled. This was so because the nature of data that was to be generated required different techniques for better understanding of the research problem under investigation. Besides, this approach is also commonly known for achieving higher degree of validity and reliability as well as elimination of biases as per Amin (2005). Therefore, the sample size was 70 respondents (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The researcher used random sampling technique in collecting data that was relevant to the study. This is because random sampling technique gives each member equal opportunity of being selected during the study. The processing of data was done after the collection of data for verification of the information that was gathered and for attainment of completeness, accuracy and uniformity. Data editing involved checking the information for errors, which was an added advantage because it enabled the researcher to delete and eliminate possible errors which in the end would have manipulated the results of the study (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). Data was analyzed concurrently to avoid duplication thereby guiding the entire study for balanced and critical analysis. The researcher used questions based on the questionnaire and for other items, tabulation pie-charts and percentage and simple statistical methods were also used for data presentation, analysis and qualification (Rasheed et al., 2022). The study explained, described, and presented the findings basing on the specific objectives of the study and research questions, where data analysis was initially done through sketchy and generalized summaries of the findings from observation and conclusions in the process of data collection. Data was analysed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing the clear understanding of decentralization in Rubirizi local government as per the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
I have enough understanding of decentralization	52	74.28

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I have a little understanding of decentralization	10	14.28
I don't have any understanding of decentralization	05	7.14
I have never heard about decentralization	03	4.28

Source: Primary Data 2023

The above shows how the respondents answered on their understanding of decentralization and the majority of the respondents had enough understanding of decentralization which was represented by 74.28% followed by those who had a little understanding of decentralization represented by 14.28% and those who didn't have any understanding of decentralization were represented by 7.14% of the respondents and lastly those who had never heard about decentralization were 4.28% as shown in the table above (Faith et al., 2023). This showed that most respondents at Rubirizi Local government knew what decentralization meant.

Table 2: Showing how staff performs in Rubirizi Local government

Variables			
	Tick	Frequency	%age
Excellent		05	7.14
Good		40	57.14
Fair		10	14.28
Poor		15	21.42

Source: Primary Data 2023

The table above shows how respondents agreed upon how staff performed in Rubirizi Local government. Respondents who said that performance was excellent were 7.14%, those who said it was good were at 57.14%, and those who said it was fair were 14.28% and lastly those who described performance as poor were 21.42%.

Table 3: Showing the Relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government.

Is there any relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	65.71
No	20	28.57
Undecided	04	5.57
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

Table 3 above shows that out of the 70 respondents who were considered in the study, the majority 46 (65.71%) were of the opinion that there was a relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government, 20 (28.57%) of the respondents said there was no relationship while 04 (5.57%) were undecided. This shows that there is a good relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Table 4: Relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government.

		decentralization	staff performance
Decentralization	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	70	70
staff performance	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source; Primary Data, 2024

As evidenced from the results in the table, which provides findings from primary data collected in 2024 on the relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government using the Pearson correlation statistical analysis method, there exists a strong positive correlation of 0.762 at a highly significant level of 0.01 or 1% between the two variables, with decentralization shown to have a Pearson correlation coefficient of 1 when correlated with itself as the same variable and staff performance demonstrated to have a Pearson correlation of 0.762 when correlated with decentralization (Nelson et al., 2023), indicating that higher levels of decentralization through transfer of powers, functions and resources to lower local administrative units in Rubirizi District are closely associated with improved work output and productivity among personnel at Rubirizi Local Government as measured through achievement of set targets and satisfaction with quality and access to services among citizens.

Summary of findings

The main objective for this study was to investigate the impact of decentralization on staff performance in Rubirizi Local Government. Specifically, the study sought to examine the clear understanding of decentralization in Rubirizi District local government, to find out how staff performs in Rubirizi District Local government, and to identify the relationship between decentralization and staff performance in Rubirizi District Local Government. The study involved people from different levels of education and the majority of the respondents were Degree holders making a percentage of 48.57% of total respondents, followed by those holding master's represented by 21.42% and followed by those at certificate level represented by 15.71% of the respondents and lastly those at diploma which were represented by 14.28% (table 1).

The study also considered inquiring the time period spent by the respondents in Rubirizi local government and 7% of the respondents had been in service in Rubirizi Local Government for a period of less than a year, 29% had been in service at Rubirizi Local Government between 1-3 years, 50% had been in service at Rubirizi Local Government for a period between 4-6years and lastly 14% of the respondents had been in service at Rubirizi Local Government between 7-10 years (Table 2)

Conclusion

Generally, the study found out that decentralization had a great impact on staff performance in Rubirizi District Local Government. The impact was either positive or negative depending on how decentralization policy was implemented. Specifically, the study revealed that a substantial number of respondents (about 12%) at Rubirizi District Local Government did not have a clear understanding of decentralization yet they were part of the implementers of decentralization. This has a negative impact on services delivered to the people of Rubirizi District. The study also revealed that the implementers of decentralization themselves were not fully satisfied with the services they offered. Only 7.14% rated performance as excellent and 57.14% as good. 21.42% of the respondents rated performance as poor. This is a bad indicator where the servants are not satisfied with the services they offer.

The study also found out that a bigger number of respondents recognized the relationship between decentralization policy and staff performance. However 34% of respondents who did not recognize the relationship were a substantial number that could not be ignored. This too had a negative impact on the services delivered. This is partly the reason why performance of staff was relatively poor because a substantial number of personnel could not easily link the implementation of the policy to service delivery.

Recommendations

The study focused on Decentralization and staff performance, benefits of the policy, challenges and solutions in order to enhance performance. Based on the findings, the researcher came up with the following recommendations; There was need to regularly train, develop and update the quality of the personnel. This requires that the personnel office should ensure that all personnel get equal chances of attending timely and regular on job training to keep up with changes for better performance. This is important in raising awareness and clear understanding of decentralization policy among policy implementers. Thus staff would gain insight in the relationship between decentralization and staff performance in service delivery. In addition, more funds should be mobilized for capacity building to enable staff to attend longer-term training sessions and develop their careers.

Proper monitoring and evaluation tools should be developed to track performance of staff so as to improve service delivery.

Administrators should engage and involve politicians in trainings and capacity building programs so as to reduce conflicts between them and civil servants caused by ignorance.

Output-based recruitment should be adopted to encourage staff to perform. The current status where staff is permanent and pensionable irrespective of their performance at workplace is detrimental to service delivery.

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