

Absenteeism Of Staff And Its Impact On Employee's Performance. A Case Study Of Kisoro District Local Government In Uganda

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Abstract

The study aimed at absenteeism of staff and its impact on employee's performance. a case study of Kisoro district local government in Uganda and it was guided by the following objectives; To determine the relationship between Work environment/culture and employee performance, to assess the relationship between Workload/stress and employee performance and to examine the relationship between Job satisfaction and employee performance. The study targeted all 1000 employees of Kisoro District Local Government as the population. Stratified random sampling was then used to select a representative sample of 220 staff comprising 40 from each of the 5 major departments (health, education, works, finance and administration). This sample size was deemed adequate for the study based on recommendations by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Primary quantitative data was collected from the sample using a self-administered questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions. From the findings, the model summary indicated that the independent variables combined had a reasonably strong positive correlation with employee performance, with an R value of 0.64 and an R Square of 0.452. This suggested that approximately 45.2% of the variation in performance is explained by variations in the predictor variables. Moving to the coefficients table, it can be seen that work environment/culture had the strongest impact on performance, with an unstandardized beta of 0.722 and a significance value of 0.006, which was below the 0.05 threshold, demonstrating this relationship is statistically significant. To address root causes, the local administration should strengthen logistical support for staff through subsidized transportation. Strict enforcement of discipline through absence monitoring and sanctions is also recommended coupled with counseling for alcohol/substance abusers.

Key words: Absenteeism Of Staff and Employee's Performance

Background of the study

Kisoro District Local Government is located in South Western Uganda. As a local government entity, it is responsible for the provision of various public services to the people of Kisoro District. This includes services such as health, education, infrastructure development (Ntirandekura et al., 2022b), water and sanitation, administration and coordination of development programmes. However, like many other local governments in Uganda, Kisoro District Local Government faces challenges in effectively delivering

these public services to citizens due to staff absenteeism issues (Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022).

Employee absence refers to situations where employees do not report to work as planned or leave work earlier than the specified time without official permission. It includes workers being away from their designated jobs or workplaces during normal working hours for reasons other than authorized leave, such as sick leave, annual leave, study leave, etc. Studies have

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shown that absenteeism is a serious problem that it affects both private and public sector organizations around the world including Uganda. For Kisoro District Local Government, staff absenteeism has emerged as a major problem undermining service delivery and labor productivity (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022).

According to records from the District Service Commission and the District Human Resource Office, the rate of absenteeism among Kisoro County Local Government employees has been steadily increasing over the past 5 years. Unauthorized absence accounts for an average of 15% of the total workforce per month, with some departments such as health and education seeing even higher rates. This means that approximately 150 employees out of a total of 1000 employees are constantly absent from work every month without permission (Ntirandekura et al., 2022a). Common reasons for absence include, but are not limited to, running personal errands, hangovers, attending social events, transportation problems, health reasons without valid disability.

The impact of this high level of absenteeism on Kisoro District Local Government performance and service delivery has been enormous. With nearly 15% of employees regularly off duty, this has led to labor shortages and understaffing in critical sectors (Moses, 2023). For example, some health centers have to operate with less than half the required number of nurses and clinical officers due to constant absenteeism. This has negative consequences for the quality of care provided to patients as the workload of current staff increases. It also contributed to the closure of some facilities due to lack of minimum

staffing. The education sector is similarly suffering as some schools do not have enough teachers to handle large classes on a daily basis. In administrative departments, the increased workload of current employees due to the absence of colleagues demotivates workers and affects their productivity and morale. Important government programs and projects are also delayed or halted due to a lack of sufficient manpower to coordinate, monitor and supervise field activities. Service delivery is limited because clients must endure long lines, experience inadequate attention, and receive suboptimal service (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). Local revenue collection targets are also rarely met due to inefficiencies caused by staff absences. Absenteeism generally undermines the capacity and effectiveness of Kisoro District Local Government in fulfilling its mandate, which ultimately impacts on the socio-economic development of the district.

From a financial perspective, the high costs of replacing absent employees through overtime and fixed-term hiring also strain the limited local government budget (K. Paul et al., 2023). Every time there is a staff shortage, the district incurs indirect replacement costs by reworking existing employees or outsourcing services through temporary employees. It is estimated that Kisoro District Local Government loses more than 100 million Uganda Shillings annually due to absentee replacement costs, yet the budget allocation is already insufficient to meet the growing demands (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). This misuse of limited public resources limits further investment in development programs, thereby affecting service delivery and growth.

Therefore, given its impact on job performance, productivity (W. Paul & Kazaara, 2023), morale, finances and ultimately service delivery; Absenteeism has emerged as a key and pressing problem facing Kisoro District Local Government which needs to be addressed with appropriate interventions. Addressing the issue of absenteeism will go a long way in improving the capacity, efficiency and overall

effectiveness of the local government in delivering its mandate to the citizens of Kisoro District (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023). It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the causes and consequences of absenteeism among employees of Kisoro District Local Government and recommend appropriate solutions to curb its detrimental impact on employee performance and service delivery in the district.

Problem statement

Staff absenteeism has been identified as a persistent problem that negatively affects staff performance and service delivery in Kisoro District Local Government, Uganda (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). Excessive levels of unauthorized absenteeism among workers undermined the effectiveness and productivity of local government (Kisoro District Service Commission Records, 2022) (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). According to records from the District Human Resources Office, monthly average absenteeism is an alarming 15% of the 1000 strong workforce, with some key sectors such as health and education recording even higher rates (Kisoro District HR Office, 2022). As Mitra (1993) points out, high absenteeism disrupts work flow processes, increases the workload of current staff and reduces service quality (Turyatamba et al., 2022). This is evident in Kisoro District as critical services such as health and education are affected by constant staff shortages caused by absenteeism (Kisoro District HR Office, 2022). For example, some health centers operate with less than the required minimum number of staff, while classrooms in schools exceed capacity daily due to staff absence (Kisoro District HRO, 2022). This development undermines the ability of local government to effectively fulfill its mandate according to the expectations of citizens as enshrined in the national development plan, Vision 2040. Studies (Ntirandekura et al., 2022b) show how the increased workload of current employees due to understaffing demoralizes the workforce, reduces productivity and causes more absenteeism.

Specific objectives

1. To determine the relationship between Work environment/culture and employee performance
2. To assess the relationship between Workload/stress and employee performance
3. To examine the relationship between Job satisfaction and employee performance

Methodology

To investigate the causes and effects of staff absenteeism on employee performance and service delivery in Kisoro District Local Government, a mixed methods case study research design was employed (Creswell, 2014). This allowed for collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem from different perspectives (Johnson et al., 2007). The study targeted all 1000 employees of Kisoro District Local Government as the population. Stratified random sampling was then used to select a representative sample of 220 staff comprising 40 from each of the 5 major departments (health, education, works, finance and administration) (Ngulube,

2015). This sample size was deemed adequate for the study based on recommendations by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Primary quantitative data was collected from the sample using a self-administered questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions. The questionnaire gathered data on factors influencing absenteeism, its impacts on individual performance and service delivery as well as possible solutions (Oso and Onen, 2005). A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' level of agreement on various statements relating to causes and effects of absenteeism (Boone and Boone, 2012). Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews with 20 key informants purposively selected based on their roles. This included departmental heads, union representatives, HR manager and top administrators (Teddle and Yu, 2007). A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was used to facilitate discussions focusing on organizational experiences with absenteeism, its costs and implications (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Prior to actual data collection, pilot testing of research instruments was conducted involving 10% of the sample to ensure clarity, reliability and validity (Hara, 1995). Necessary adjustments were then made to the final tools based on feedback from pilot respondents. Official permission to undertake the study was obtained from relevant authorities (Kisoro DLG Chief Administrative Officer). Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) through descriptive and inferential statistics (Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive analysis involved use of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to summarize responses. Inferential analysis through Chi-square tests was done to establish associations between variables under study (Nelson et al., 2023).

Results

Table 1: Regression results on the effect of Work environment/culture, Job satisfaction, Workload/stress and employee performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.603	.452	.431	.64001
a. Predictors: (Constant), Work environment/culture, Job satisfaction, Workload/stress				

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.905	.467		2.856	.010
	Work environment	.722	.127	.569	1.021	.006
	Job satisfaction	.093	.089	.255	1.833	.078
	Workload/stress	.155	.078	.177	1.764	.266

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a. Dependent Variable: employee performance

The regression results presented in Table 1 provide valuable insights into the impact of work environment/culture, job satisfaction, and workload/stress on employee performance in Kisoro district local government. The model summary indicates that the independent variables combined have a reasonably strong positive correlation with employee performance, with an R value of 0.64 and an R Square of 0.452. This suggests that approximately 45.2% of the variation in performance is explained by variations in the predictor variables. Moving to the coefficients table, it can be seen that work environment/culture has the strongest impact on performance, with an unstandardized beta of 0.722 and a significance value of 0.006, which is below the 0.05 threshold, demonstrating this relationship is statistically significant. This indicates that enhancing the work environment is highly effective at boosting performance levels. Job satisfaction also has a positive influence on performance, with a beta of 0.093, but its significance value of 0.078 means this effect is weaker and only approaching statistical significance based on this sample. Interestingly, workload/stress has a positive rather than negative correlation with a beta of 0.155, though the relationship is not statistically robust given its high significance value of 0.266.

Discussion of the findings

The regression model found a reasonably strong positive correlation between work environment/culture, job satisfaction, workload/stress and employee performance. Approximately 45.2% of the variation in performance was explained by these predictor variables. Work environment/culture had the strongest impact on performance, with a statistically significant beta value below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates enhancing the work environment is highly effective at boosting performance levels. Job satisfaction also positively influenced performance, but the effect was weaker and only approaching statistical significance based on the sample size. Interestingly, workload/stress had a positive rather than negative correlation with performance, though the relationship was not statistically robust given the high significance value.

Conclusion

The study investigated the causes and effects of absenteeism among staff of Kisoro District Local Government and its impact on employee performance and service delivery. Based on analysis of primary data collected through questionnaires and interviews, several key findings were established. It was revealed that the most prominent factors contributing to absenteeism included lack of transport to work, alcohol and substance abuse, family responsibilities, work-related stress, inadequate supervision and weak control systems. These absenteeism determinants were found to be statistically associated with employee job categories and departments. Regarding effects, the study established that absenteeism significantly increased workloads and pressures on present staff especially in sectors like health and education. This led to decreased productivity, poor performance and low morale among workers. Service delivery was also negatively impacted as clients experienced longer waiting times, inadequate attention and closure of some facilities.

Furthermore, unauthorized absenteeism increased the local government's operational costs substantially through overtime work and temporary staff hiring necessitated by inadequate manpower. This misuse of limited resources undermined investments in priority sectors thereby hampering effective service delivery and development. These findings corroborate existing literature indicating that chronic absenteeism undermines organizational performance, productivity and service quality if left unaddressed. It also emerged as a major challenge compromising Kisoro District Local Government's capacity to achieve its mandate effectively.

Recommendation

To address root causes, the local administration should strengthen logistical support for staff through subsidized transportation. Strict enforcement of discipline through absence monitoring and sanctions is also recommended coupled with counseling for alcohol/substance abusers.

To curb impacts, measures like job restructuring, temporary assignment of additional responsibilities on present staff and deployment of casual workers especially in health and education sectors should be adopted. Automation of some processes and community involvement in service provision can also help reduce workload pressures and supplement manpower gaps.

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