
CORRUPTION PRACTICES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN UGANDA, A CASE STUDY OF BUYENDE SUB COUNTY, BUYENDE

DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the effect of corruption on health service delivery at Buyende sub county Centers. The objectives of the study included; to find out how bureaucratic corruption affects service delivery at Buyende sub county centers, to examine how causes of corruption in local government affects service delivery at Buyende sub county Centers and to find out how bribery and extortion affects the delivery of services at Buyende sub county Centers. A case study research design was adopted employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Out of the targeted sample size of 161 respondents, 126 respondents participated in the study, which was equivalent to a response rate of 78.2%. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation and regression analysis techniques. Qualitative data was summarized and presented using verbatim statements. The findings showed that, bureaucratic corruption affected service delivery by 23.9%, causes of corruption in local government had 38.9% effect on health service delivery while bribery and extortion affected health service delivery by 18.9%. The results therefore mean that causes of corruption in local government had the greatest effect on service delivery. In conclusion, the researcher observed that bureaucratic corruption which results into low morale among the health workers significantly contributes to poor health service delivery. Causes of corruption in local government contributed to poor service delivery since it compromises the recruitment process and cheats the health centers of would-be competent and committed staff. Solicitation for bribes from the patients was also contributed to poor service delivery. The study recommended that Buyende sub county should come up with strategies to motivate its workers, especially in the health department; streamline the recruitment system to minimize causes of corruption in local government and seriously revise and emphasize the work ethics and code of conduct.

Key words: corruption practices, implementation, government, projects and local governments

Background to the Study

Corruption is a complex problem that threatens public access, fairness and outcomes (Paul et al., 2023). The threat of corruption is related to many vices. Its roots are linked to injustice, mistrust, suspicion, extremism and terrorist activities. It creates a sense of insecurity, deepens poverty and contributes to the misery of vulnerable sections of society. It also creates a sense of hopelessness and despondency and threatens the strength of good values that have been established over centuries of civilized struggle (Phionah et al., 2023). The

concept of corruption has different definitions. The United Nations Anti-Corruption Manual, Transparency International and multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank define corruption as “the abuse of public office for private gain” (Akankwasa et al., 2022).

For Uganda, the definition contained in the Laws of Uganda, Section 1, Government Inspectorate Act (2002) refers to “abuse of public office for private gain and includes, among others, embezzlement,

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bribery, nepotism, influence, , theft of public funds or property, fraud, forgery, causing financial or property loss and false accounting in public affairs (Racheal et al., 2023). Corruption can be categorized as petty or survival corruption practiced by poorly paid civil servants, and grand corruption, which involves the theft of vast amounts of public resources. It can also be divided into political, corporate and even moral corruption. Whichever way we look at it, corruption has an element of moral breakdown; corrupt practices ignore acceptable practice and put their own needs above those of the public (Pdu et al., 2023). On

Problem Statement

Corruption in the public sector is a problem in all countries, but it is a particularly critical problem in developing and transition economies where public resources are already scarce (Musaibah et al., 2023). According to the Inspector General of the Government Office (2011), local government was among the government institutions complained of rampant corruption. Local government processes are riddled with corruption, embezzlement and fraudulent activities. Corruption in local government manifests itself in mismanagement, fraud and lack of financial accountability on the part of both staff and political leaders (Ramadhan et al., 2023). The absence of an accountability system manifested by inflated claims, falsification of documents and outright fraud, including payments for undelivered services (Mark et al., 2023). Corruption reduces the resources effectively available for health, reduces the quality, equity and efficiency of public services, reduces the volume and increases the cost of services provided (Richard, 2022). It discourages people from using and paying for public services and ultimately has a corrosive effect on the health level of the population (Cand et al., 2022). Uganda has decentralized the administration of public services to districts and local governments and to sub-districts (Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022). At the lower county level, reports of nepotism, fraud collusion, intrigue, bribery, illegal use of government land and other forms have saturated the country. When the government of Uganda introduced a new model of local government decentralization called the Parish Model, which focused on sub-districts, one wonders if this good leadership strategy will actually achieve its well-intentioned goals (Polycarp et al., 2023). This study will therefore examine the impact of corrupt practices on the implementation of government projects in local governments in Uganda, using Buyende County as a case study.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out how bureaucratic corruption affects implementation of local government projects in Buyende Sub-County.
2. To examine causes of corruption in local government projects in Buyende Sub County.
3. To assess the remedies to corruption in local government projects in Buyende Sub County.

January 17, New Vision and Monitor reported the stories of 10 doctors and nurses who used drugs from Mulago, the national referral hospital, were arrested and asked to return the drugs. Similar arrests took place in all parts of the country and served to reduce public drug losses in the theft of health workers. The actions of these health workers played a role in the lack of availability of drugs for various projects, which subsequently led to the death of many community members too poor to afford to buy drugs from pharmacy shelves (Ntirandekura & Friday, 2022).

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Methodology

This study adopted the case study and cross-sectional research designs. The case study design facilitated an in-depth investigation (Amin, 2005) into corruption and service delivery at local government projects. The research involved cross-sectional survey to enable data collection to be carried out only once within a short period of time (Amin, 2005). Further, the study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis, in order to triangulate the findings. Quantitative data is any data that is in numerical form like number of Sub County Officers in a sub county. The researcher asked questions and collected data from participants. The study population included staff of the sub county and community members that witnessed government projects between January 2015 and December 2020. It comprised of a total of 189 respondents, out of which a sample was drawn for the study. The sample size was determined based on Morgan and Krujice (1970) Table. Using the Table, the sample size in the study was 161 respondents as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size and selection

Category	Accessible Population	Sample size	Sampling technique
Sub county management committees (of the four projects, 11 members the)	48	40	Simple random
Political leaders	32	28	Simple random
Community members	86	70	Simple random
Project workers	23	19	Simple random
Total	189	161	

Source:

The staffs were ~~agid~~ into strata like political leaders and sub county officers to enable inclusion of the category in the sample. After stratification, the relative proportion of the stratum was computed and sample size determined based on proportion. Random numbers were then generated from computer and assigned to the staff and selection was done by randomly selecting the numbers until the sample size was obtained. Questionnaire survey was conducted with community members and sub county staff using questionnaires. Survey questionnaires were used to gather information from people. They were one of the most convenient and popular methods of collecting survey data in social research (Amin, 2005). Coded (quantitative) data was entered in a computer program known as a Special Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 13) for analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics was used to determine the distribution of respondents on personal information and on the questions under each of the variables. Inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis. Spearman rank order correlation and coefficient of determination was used to test the hypothesis given that the scale used in the questionnaire was ordinal (Sekaran, 2003). Spearman rank order correlation determined the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficient of

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determination was used to determine the effect of independent variable on dependent variable. The significance of the coefficient (p) was used to test the objectives by comparing p to the critical significance level at (0.05). The data was organized and presented by charts and tables.

RESULTS

Table 1: Implementation of government projects

Timeliness	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Sub county support staff take long to obtain drugs	16% (19)	9% (11)	7% (9)	57% (70)	11% (13)
Sub county support staff take long to be examined treatment	14% (16)	8% (10)	3% (4)	53% (65)	22% (27)
Administrative staff are not competent	15% (18)	3% (4)	10% (12)	50% (61)	22% (27)
Administrative staff are few	18% (23)	4% (5)	11% (13)	47% (57)	20% (24)
Administrative staff are often away from health units	12% (15)	6% (8)	11% (13)	52% (63)	19% (23)
Staff efficiency	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Administrative staff are so many but do-little work	21% (26)	7% (9)	6% (7)	43% (52)	23% (28)
It takes long for staff to see a client	21% (26)	10% (11)	4% (5)	49% (60)	16% (20)
Sub county records are not often kept	21% (26)	10% (11)	4% (5)	39% (48)	26% (32)
Sub county records often take long to trace	20% (24)	8% (10)	14% (17)	31% (38)	27% (33)
Service quality	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Service quality is low	12% (15)	9% (10)	7% (9)	57% (70)	15% (18)
Customer care is lacking	9% (11)	8% (9)	3% (4)	53% (65)	27% (33)
Treatment is often in adequate	13% (16)	3% (4)	10% (12)	51% (62)	23% (28)
Prescribed drugs are often not available	16% (20)	4% (5)	11% (13)	46% (56)	23% (28)
Customers are delayed	11% (13)	4% (5)	11% (13)	49% (60)	25% (31)

Source: Primary data, 2022

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To analyze the findings, sub county support staff and administrative staff who strongly disagreed and those who disagreed were combined into one category who “opposed” the items and in addition, sub county support staff and administrative staff who strongly agreed and those who agreed were combined into another category who “concurred” with the items (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Komunda, 2022). Thus, three categories of sub county support staff and administrative staff were compared, which included “Sub County support staff and administrative staff who opposed the items”, Sub County support staff and administrative staff who were not sure about the items and Sub County support staff and administrative staff who concurred with the items”. Interpretation was then drawn from the comparisons of the three categories as shown in the following paragraph (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Finding show that more sub county support staff and administrative staff were concurred to all the 14 items about implementation of government projects. For example, relating to timeliness, more sub county support staff and administrative staff (68%) concurred that sub county support staff take long to obtain drugs compared to 25% who opposed while 7% were not sure (Victoria et al., 2023). More sub county support staff and administrative staff (75%) concurred that sub county support staff took long to be examined treatment compared to 22% who opposed while 3% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (72%) concurred that administrative staffs were not competent compared to 18% who opposed while 10% were not sure (Christopher, Moses, Muhammad, et al., 2022). More sub county support staff and administrative staff (67%) concurred that administrative staff were few compared to 22% who opposed while 11% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (71%) concurred that administrative staff were often away from health units compared to 18% who opposed while 11% were not sure (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, Muhammad, et al., 2022). These findings show there was delayed implementation of government projects at Buyende Sub County (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Interviews findings about Buyende sub county’ implementation of government projects was supportive of findings obtained using questionnaires as they also showed that all the four interviewees were dissatisfied with it.

Regarding staff efficiency, it is shown that more sub county support staff and administrative staff (66%) concurred that administrative staff were so many but do-little work compared to 28% who opposed while 6% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (65%) concurred that it took long for staff to see a client compared to 31% who opposed while 4% were not sure (Innocent et al., 2023). More sub county support staff and administrative staff (65%) concurred that sub county records were not often kept compared to 31% who opposed while 4% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (58%) concurred that sub county records often took long to trace compared to 28% who opposed while 14% were not sure. Thus, these findings show staff inefficiency at Buyende Sub County. In support of these findings were interview findings from four sub county officers (Oscar et al., 2023). Inefficiencies in government project implementation were the most cited during interviews.

In relation with service quality, it is shown that more sub county support staff and administrative staff (72%) concurred that service quality was low compared to 21% who opposed while 7% were notsure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (80%) concurred that customer care was lacking compared to 17% who opposed while 3% were not sure (Wegulo et al., 2023). More sub county support staff and administrative staff

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(74%) concurred that treatment was often inadequate compared to 16% who opposed while 10% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (69%) concurred that prescribed drugs were often not available compared to 20% who opposed while 11% were not sure. More sub county support staff and administrative staff (74%) concurred that customers were delayed compared to 15% who opposed while 11% were not sure (Moses et al., 2023). Therefore, these findings show that service quality in Sub County projects was poor. Interviews with four sub county officers also revealed the same. Interview findings revealed that there remained significant challenges in matching Buyende Sub County's services with local community needs. It was established that most of the services that Buyende sub county services were insufficient and of poor quality.

Table 2: Bureaucratic corruption at Buyende sub county

Bureaucratic corruption	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1. Administrative staff engage in corrupt practices	3.3% (4)	4.1% (5)	10.7% (13)	46.7% (57)	35.2% (43)
2. Use public health facilities for own use	4.9% (6)	13.9% (17)	15.6% (19)	51.6% (63)	13.9% (17)
3. There is misappropriation of public funds meant for project implementation	4.1% (5)	5.7% (7)	13.9% (17)	48.4% (59)	27.9% (34)
4. Only the rich received quality services	1.6% (2)	8.2% (10)	9.8% (12)	45.1% (55)	35.2% (43)
5. Administrative staff often do not attend to sub county support staff because of corrupt practices	2.5% (3)	16.4% (20)	18.0% (22)	41.0% (50)	22.1% (27)
6. There are mishandled cases because of corrupt practices	0.8% (1)	2.5% (3)	5.7% (7)	61.5% (75)	29.5% (36)
7. Sub county support staff's conditions get worse due to delay because of corrupt practices	1.6% (2)	13.9% (17)	16.4% (20)	53.3% (65)	14.8% (18)
8. Sub county support staff do not get needed treatment	5.7% (7)	1.6% (2)	4.9% (6)	50.8% (62)	36.9% (45)
9. Workers lack motivation and interest in client care because of corrupt practices	4.1% (5)	0.8% (1)	22.1% (27)	50.8% (62)	22.1% (27)
10. There is misuse of public assets	4.1% (5)	2.5% (3)	13.9% (17)	52.5% (64)	27.0% (33)

11. There is low morale and lack of commitment from staff because corrupt practices	0.8% (1)	8.2% (10)	21.3% (26)	44.3% (54)	25.4% (31)
12. Health centers do not protect assets satisfactorily because corrupt practices	5.7% (7)	6.6% (8)	9.0% (11)	52.5% (64)	26.2% (32)

Source: Primary data, 2022

Finding show that more sub county support staff and administrative staff were concurred to all the 12 items about bureaucratic corruption compared to those who opposed the items and those who were not sure about the items (Mark et al., 2023). A comparison on these items shows that the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that opposed ranged from 4.9% to 18.9% while the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that were not sure ranged from 4.9% to 22.1% and the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that concurred ranged from 63.1% to 91% (1 Ourien Isaac, 2 Dr Ariyo Gracious Kazaara, 2023). From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentages that opposed the items and the percentages were not sure were lower compared to the percentages that concurred. Thus, from this analysis, the following is the interpretation (Oromo et al., 2023).

Table 3: Correlation between bureaucratic corruption and implementation of government projects

	Bureaucratic corruption
Implementation of government projects	$\rho = -.495$ $\rho^2 = .245$ $p = .000$ $n = 122$

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Findings show that there was a moderate negative correlation ($\rho = .495$) between bureaucratic corruption and implementation of government projects. Since the correlation does imply causal- effect as stated in the first objective, the coefficient of determination, which is a square of the correlation coefficient ($\rho^2 = .245$) (Nelson et al., 2023), was computed and expressed as a percentage to determine the change in implementation of government projects due to bureaucratic corruption. Thus, findings show that bureaucratic corruption accounted for 24.5% change in implementation of government projects. These findings were subjected to a test of significance (p) and it is shown that the significance of the correlation ($p = .000$) is less than the recommended critical significance at 0.05. Thus, the effect was significant. Because of this, the null hypothesis “Bureaucratic corruption significantly affects implementation of government projects” was accepted.

Table 4: Causes of corruption in local government in Buyende sub county

Causes of corruption in local government and implementation of government projects	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Administrative staff pay more attention to relatives and acquaintances	2.5% (3)	4.1% (3)	11.5% (14)	57.4% (70)	24.6% (30)
Bribery by both project implementers and	0.8%	1.6%	4.9%	47.5%	45.1%

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beneficiaries is one major cause of corruption	(1)	(2)	(6)	(58)	(55)
Administrative staff segregate sub county support staff in implementation of government projects	2.5% (3)	10.7% (13)	13.1% (16)	41.0% (50)	32.8% (40)
Conflict of interest by the stakeholders of the projects causes corruption	4.1% (5)	9.0% (11)	10.7% (13)	54.9% (67)	21.3% (26)
Lack of functional controls and monitoring	6.6% (8)	7.4% (9)	17.2% (21)	48.4% (59)	20.5% (25)
Patronage systems and exhortation is one of the causes of corruption in Uganda's local government	6.6% (8)	18.0% (22)	26.2% (32)	39.3% (48)	9.8% (12)

Source: Primary data, 2022

Finding show that more sub county support staff and administrative staff were concurred to all the six items about causes of corruption in local government compared to those who opposed the items and those who were not sure about the items (Lydia et al., 2023). A comparison on these items shows that the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that opposed ranged from 2.4% to 24.6% while the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that were not sure ranged from 4.9% to 26.2% and the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that concurred ranged from 68.9% to 92.6%.

Remedies to corruption in local governments at Buyende Sub County

Table 5: Remedies of corruption in Uganda's local government

Possible remedies to corruption	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Through religious leaders and organization's preaching against corruption	1.6% (2)	8.2% (10)	32.0% (39)	45.1% (55)	13.1% (16)
There should be strict government legislation and implementation of punishments against corruption offenders	5.7% (7)	3.3% (4)	9.0% (11)	48.4% (59)	33.6% (41)
Involving the community in monitoring of the projects	0.8% (1)	2.5% (3)	5.7% (7)	45.1% (55)	45.9% (56)
Support of the civil society organizations in the fight against corruption	3.3% (4)	10.7% (13)	15.6% (19)	54.1% (66)	16.4% (20)
Involvement of the media in naming and shaming of corrupt individuals and demanding for accountability	9.0% (11)	10.7% (13)	11.5% (14)	46.7% (57)	22.1% (27)

Source: Primary data, 2022

Finding show that that corruption can be fought through religious leaders and organization's preaching against corruption. A comparison on these items shows that the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that opposed ranged from 2.5% to 10.7% while the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that were not sure ranged from 5.7% to 32.0% and the percentages of sub county support staff and administrative staff that concurred ranged from 58.2% to 91.0% (Christopher, Moses,

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Muhindo, & Komunda, 2022). From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentages that opposed the items and the percentages were not sure were lower compared to the percentages that concurred.

Conclusions

The study concluded that sub county support staff' conditions get worse due to delay in providing implementation of government projects at Buyende sub county. This was reflected when most of respondents agreed that workers misappropriate public funds meant for project implementation. The study also concluded that there was bureaucratic corruption. This could be due to low morale and lack of commitment from staff. This was further echoed when respondents were asked if workers lack motivation and interest in client care were most of respondents agreed. This study concludes that abuse of office significantly influences implementation of government projects at Buyende sub county. This was due to the fact most of respondents agreed with this fact.

This study concludes that causes of corruption in local government significantly influences implementation of government projects at Buyende sub county. This was due to the fact most of respondents agreed with this fact. This study concludes that workers pay more attention to relatives and acquaintances. This was due to the fact that Buyende sub county hire relatives and friends, which was agreed by most respondents. The study further concluded that quality of procurement was low.

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