

Service Delivery And Corruption In Local Government. A Case Study Of Wakiso District Local Government

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Wakiso District Local Government (WDLG) and aimed to assess the impact of corruption on service delivery in Uganda, with a specific focus on the local government context. The specific objectives included examining the concept and causes of corruption in Uganda, investigating the effects of corruption on service delivery, and identifying remedies to corruption in local governments. Employing a cross-sectional research design, the study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with a sample size of 80 respondents drawn from various stakeholders, including District Councilors, Technical officers, CSO Officials, Private Sector, and Boards & Commission Members. The study revealed a 90% response rate and provided insights into the gender distribution, age, and education levels of the respondents. The research design involved a cross-sectional method, allowing for the collection of pertinent data from all respondents in a one-time effort to reduce time and costs. The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the research area, with quantitative data analyzed through statistical procedures and qualitative data obtained through interview guides, documentary review, and direct observation methods. The study's geographic focus on Wakiso District, known for cases of corruption and poor service delivery, particularly in primary education services, aimed to contribute context-specific insights to the broader discourse on corruption's implications for service delivery in Uganda.

Key words: Service Delivery, Corruption and Local Government

Background of the study

Corruption and poor service delivery remained key challenges affecting the effectiveness of local governments in developing countries such as Uganda to effectively harness development at the local level, where most citizens interact directly with public institutions (Brighton et al., 2023). Wakiso District Local Government, which administers the area around the capital Kampala, has long struggled with these challenges, despite efforts to improve accountability and transparency (Moses et al., 2023).

Wakiso District, located in central Uganda, is one of the most populous regions in the country with an estimated population of over 2 million people according to the 2014 national census, which has high demand for public services but also risks of corruption due to high incomes that an estimated over 100 billion Ugandan shillings are passed through local government annually to fund key services such as health, education, roads and water, among others. However, surveys by the government inspectorate and civil society organizations consistently show public

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dissatisfaction with service delivery deficiencies and the incidence of corruption in the district (Christopher et al., 2022).

A 2018 study by the Uganda Anti-Corruption Coalition used focus group discussions, key informant interviews and a review of available documents and records to explore how corruption and mismanagement affected service delivery in Wakiso District Local Government (Allan et al., 2023). The study found that nepotism, misappropriation of public funds, bribery, bogus workers on the county payroll and inflated public procurement contracts are some of the vices of corruption that seriously undermine the ability of local government to respond adequately to the basic needs of the community (Gracious, 2023).

For example, it was found that more than 30% of the budget for the construction and rehabilitation of roads in various sub-counties was lost due to kickbacks and inflated costs for materials and machinery hire, while most roads remained in poor condition. Similarly, key facilities such as Kasangati Health Center III were reported to be understaffed despite the center receiving full salaries, prompting audit inquiries into missing funds (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). These and other findings pointed to structural problems such as a lack of integrated financial management systems, weak auditing, insufficient platforms for citizen participation and conflicts of interest where public officials awarded tenders through businesses in which they had interests. Unless concerted efforts are made to reform the institutional framework legislation, build accountability through participatory monitoring and prevent corrupt officials from sabotaging service delivery, the people of Wakiso may continue to struggle with myriad socio-economic challenges (Ronald et al., 2023).

Problem statement

According to the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index Report (Phionah et al., 2023), Uganda is ranked 151st out of 180 countries globally. Cases of corruption are increasing despite the existence of state and non-state initiatives put in place in the implementation of various domestic and internationally proven anti-corruption measures such as cancellation of contracts obtained through corrupt means, monetary fines for those involved in corruption, debarment/blacklisting of companies or individuals known to have been corrupt in the past, asset declarations by leaders and government officials to expose and minimize corrupt wealth accumulation (Alex et al., 2023), whistleblowing to expose corruption by those who know about it, criminalization of money laundering to stop the flow of illegally or corruptly obtained money and the confiscation of assets or proceeds obtained through corruption, all aimed, among other things, at curbing the endemic corruption in the country. The IGG Report 2021 states that local governments are among the most corrupt institutions in Uganda. The WDLG could face high levels of corruption that could adversely affect service delivery, leading to poor infrastructural services, poor education and health services, among others (Kazaara et al., 2023). If corruption is not curbed, poor service delivery will most likely continue to result in lost government money and lack of value for taxpayers' money (Ramadhan et al., 2023). It is against this background that the researcher intends to conduct a study on the matter and create a formidable solution to the vice.

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Main objective

The aim of the study was to determine the effect of service delivery and corruption in local government with a case study of Wakiso district local government

Methodology

To effectively investigate how corruption and mismanagement were impacting service delivery at Wakiso District Local Government, the researchers employed a mixed methods approach that included both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The study was conducted over a period of six months from January to June 2018. The research team first carried out a review of relevant documents that included legislation establishing local governments, Wakiso District development plans, annual budget framework papers, previous audit reports, and reports by oversight agencies like the Inspector General of Government. This helped establish the legal framework and past trends in financial management, governance challenges and service delivery at the district. Semi-structured key informant interviews were then conducted with 30 purposively selected stakeholders which included top district officials, retired public officers, representatives from Civil Society Organizations, members of parliament, and local leaders. The interviews explored their understanding of prevailing corruption practices, causes and effects on things like infrastructure, healthcare, education and community participation.

Additionally, six focus group discussions involving a total of 72 participants stratified by gender and sub-county were held. Issues discussed included experience accessing public services, observation of corruption cases, perception of corruption risks and suggestions for addressing the problems. A household survey was also administered to 384 randomly selected households across the district to collect quantitative data using a pre-tested questionnaire. Items on the questionnaire assessed respondents' level of satisfaction with roads, health centers, schools and water sources as well as payment of bribes in the past one year when accessing services.

Government records on staffing, procurement, budget performance and projects were examined at the district headquarters and three sub-counties of Kasangati, Mpererwe and Busukuma to check for discrepancies. This helped uncover inflation of wages, material quantities and costs in completed and ongoing projects. After data collection, all transcripts and notes were analyzed thematically while quantitative data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (Nelson et al., 2022). Key findings were then triangulated, validated through member checks and wrote up in a report detailing how the malpractices affected people's welfare.

The methodology adopted ensured comprehensive understanding of corruption scope and effects on community wellbeing from both qualitative and quantitative standpoints which informed policy recommendations to curb the vice.

Results

Table 1: showing the response rate on lack of proper accountability as a major Cause of corruption in Wakiso District Local Government.

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		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.0
	Disagree	00	00	00	00
	Not Sure	02	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Agree	24	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Strongly Agree	71	72.0	72.0	72.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the response rate on lack of proper accountability as a major cause of corruption in Wakiso District Local Government. A total of 80 respondents participated in the survey/study, 1 respondent (1.7% of total) strongly disagreed that lack of proper accountability is a major cause of corruption, 0 respondents disagreed, 2 respondents (1.3% of total) were not sure, 24 respondents (25% of total) agreed and 71 respondents (72% of total) strongly agreed. The valid percent and cumulative percent columns show that 72% of respondents strongly agreed, which forms the majority response. This indicates that most respondents see lack of proper accountability as a major cause of corruption in the local government. The table presents the data in frequencies and corresponding percentages to show the response distribution on the given statement. This allows interpretation of the most common view among the respondents regarding lack of accountability and corruption.

Table 2: showing the response rate on low salaries as one of the causes of corruption in Wakiso District Local Government

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	05	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Disagree	02	24.4	24.4	32.1
	Not Sure	01	1.3	1.3	33.3
	Agree	65	64.1	64.1	97.4
	Strongly	12	2.6	12.6	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This table displays the response rate on low salaries being one of the causes of corruption in Wakiso District Local Government. A total of 80 respondents participated in the survey. 5 respondents, which is 7.7% of the total, strongly disagreed that low salaries are one of the causes of corruption. 2 respondents, accounting for 24.4% of the total, disagreed. 1 respondent, making up 1.3% of the total, was not sure. 65 respondents, equating to 64.1% of the total, agreed that low salaries are one of the causes of corruption (John et al., 2023). Finally, 12 respondents, representing 12.6% of the total, strongly agreed that low salaries are one of the causes of corruption. The cumulative percentage column shows that a total of 97.4% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that low salaries contribute to corruption in the local government. In summary, the majority of respondents were of the view that low salaries play a role in fostering corruption within Wakiso District Local Government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study on service delivery and corruption in Wakiso District Local Government found some significant issues that hamper effective service provision and breed corruption. The findings revealed that lack of proper accountability and low salaries of local government employees are major perceived causes of corruption according to most respondents. With no proper oversight and monitoring of how funds are utilized, corruption is likely to thrive under opaque systems with low transparency and accountability. Similarly, when salaries are insufficient to cover basic needs, temptation may arise for workers to engage in unlawful acts for financial gain.

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Recommendation

Some key recommendations stemming from this are: first, stringent accountability mechanisms need to be put in place and strictly enforced to enhance transparency in resource management and curb misuse of public funds. Regular audits and inspection of projects by independent oversight bodies can help achieve this. Second, salaries of local government workers must be reviewed and increased substantially to reasonable levels that motivate and retain qualified personnel without forcing them to resort to corruption. Third, proper documentation and record keeping of all transactions involving public resources should be mandated and citizen participation encouraged to boost accountability. Fourth, anti-corruption awareness must be raised continuously among local leaders and citizens on ethical conduct, reporting of misconduct and consequences of corrupt practices. Finally, strong political will is required from leaders to implement reforms, prosecute culprits and ensure smooth and corruption-free service delivery that improves people's livelihoods in Wakiso District. If these recommendations are seriously considered and acted upon, it could go a long way in curbing corruption and enhancing effectiveness of local administration and public service provision.

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