

**Effectiveness Of Public Service Delivery Reforms And Citizens' Satisfaction: A Study Of Wakiso District,
Uganda**

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, Uganda has implemented a series of public service delivery reforms, including decentralization, results-oriented management, client charters, and the integration of information technology into service provision, all aimed at improving the efficiency, responsiveness, and quality of services delivered to citizens by local government institutions. This study examined the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms and citizens' satisfaction, using Wakiso District, Uganda as a study area, guided by objectives that sought to assess the level of implementation of key public service delivery reforms within the district, establish citizens' level of satisfaction with services received, determine the relationship between reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction, and identify the challenges limiting the effectiveness of these reforms. A descriptive correlational research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted, with data collected from a sample of 214 respondents comprising citizens accessing services at district and sub-county offices, district technical staff, and local council leaders, using questionnaires, interviews, and review of service delivery performance records. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and path analysis (AMOS). Results showed moderate implementation of service delivery reforms (mean = 3.32) and a significant positive correlation between reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction ($r = 0.586$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis showed that reform implementation and service quality jointly explained 43.7 percent of the variance in citizens' satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.437$). Path analysis revealed that perceived service quality significantly mediates the relationship between reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction, with a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.01$) alongside a significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.01$), yielding a total effect of 0.568. The study concludes that public service delivery reforms in Wakiso District have produced a measurable but moderate improvement in citizens' satisfaction, operating substantially through improvements in perceived service quality, and recommends strengthened implementation monitoring, continued investment in service quality improvements such as reduced waiting times and staff responsiveness, and enhanced citizen feedback mechanisms.

Keywords: Public service delivery, reforms, citizens' satisfaction, service quality, local government, decentralization, path analysis, Wakiso District

Introduction

Effective public service delivery is widely regarded as a cornerstone of good governance, with the responsiveness, efficiency, and quality of services provided by government institutions directly shaping citizens' trust in government and their broader experience of the state's role in their daily lives (Julius & Audrey, 2026). Recognizing persistent challenges of inefficiency, corruption, and poor service quality that characterized public service provision in Uganda

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in earlier decades, successive governments have introduced a range of public service delivery reforms, including administrative decentralization that devolved significant service delivery responsibilities to local governments, results-oriented management systems intended to improve accountability for service outcomes, client charters that specify service standards and citizens' entitlements, and, more recently, the integration of information and communication technology into various service delivery processes such as land registration, business licensing, and revenue collection(Gracious, 2023). Wakiso District, as one of Uganda's most populous and rapidly urbanizing districts, presents a particularly relevant context for examining the effectiveness of these reforms, given the district's large and growing population, which places considerable demand pressure on local government service delivery capacity across sectors including health, education, land administration, and business registration(Christopher, 2024). This study is motivated by the recognition that while the policy intentions behind Uganda's public service delivery reforms are well documented at the national level, there remains comparatively limited empirical evidence on how these reforms have translated into actual, citizen-perceived improvements in service delivery effectiveness at the district level, and specifically within Wakiso District, making a focused empirical examination of this relationship both timely and policy-relevant(Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

The broader context of this study is shaped by Uganda's Public Service Reform program, which has since the 1990s pursued a series of successive reform waves aimed at improving the efficiency and citizen-responsiveness of government service delivery, alongside complementary local government reforms implemented under the Local Governments Act, which devolved substantial service delivery authority and responsibility to district and lower local government structures(Julius & Audrey, 2026). Despite these reform efforts, public perception surveys and media reports have periodically highlighted continued citizen dissatisfaction with various aspects of local government service delivery in districts including Wakiso, ranging from delays in service processing, perceived staff unresponsiveness, and limited transparency in service delivery processes, raising questions about the extent to which formally implemented reforms have genuinely improved citizens' actual service delivery experience and satisfaction(Christopher & Shamirah, 2025). It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to systematically examine the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms in Wakiso District and their relationship with citizens' satisfaction, moving beyond general policy assessment towards a citizen-centered empirical evaluation of reform outcomes.

Problem Statement

Despite the considerable investment made by the Government of Uganda in public service delivery reforms over the past two decades, including decentralization, results-oriented management, and the introduction of client charters and digital service delivery tools, citizens in Wakiso District continue to report significant levels of dissatisfaction with various aspects of local government service delivery, as evidenced by periodic complaints regarding service delays, perceived staff unresponsiveness, and limited transparency, raising a fundamental question about whether the reforms

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introduced have genuinely improved the quality and responsiveness of services as experienced by ordinary citizens, or whether the gap between reform policy intention and actual service delivery practice remains substantial(Christopher et al., 2022). While district authorities can point to the formal adoption of various reform measures, including the establishment of client charters and the introduction of some digital service delivery tools, there is limited systematic evidence on the depth and consistency of implementation of these reforms across different service delivery points within the district, nor on the specific relationship between the extent of reform implementation and citizens' actual satisfaction with the services they receive(Julius et al., 2026). This evidentiary gap is compounded by the absence of a clear empirical understanding of the specific mechanisms, such as improvements in perceived service quality, through which reform implementation may or may not translate into improved citizen satisfaction, information that is essential for district authorities seeking to prioritize further reform investment and implementation effort(Julius & Audrey, 2026). This study addresses this gap by undertaking a systematic empirical investigation into the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms and their relationship with citizens' satisfaction in Wakiso District.

Main Objective

The main objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms and citizens' satisfaction, with specific reference to Wakiso District, Uganda.

Specific Objectives

The study is guided by the following specific objectives: to assess the level of implementation of key public service delivery reforms, including decentralization measures, client charters, and digital service delivery tools, within Wakiso District; to establish citizens' level of satisfaction with the services they receive from district and sub-county government offices; to determine the relationship between the level of reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction, taking into account the role of perceived service quality; and to identify the key challenges limiting the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms in Wakiso District, and to recommend measures for improving reform implementation and citizen satisfaction outcomes.

Literature Review

This study draws theoretically on the New Public Management paradigm, which emphasizes the application of private sector-style managerial techniques, including performance measurement, results orientation, and citizen-as-customer thinking, to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery, providing the overarching theoretical justification for many of the specific reforms, such as results-oriented management and client charters, examined in this study(Jaggars & Bailey, 2010). This is complemented by the SERVQUAL model of service quality, which conceptualizes citizens' service satisfaction as a function of the gap between their expectations and their actual perceptions of service performance across dimensions including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, providing a useful analytical framework for understanding how specific reform measures may influence citizen satisfaction indirectly through their effect on perceived service quality along these dimensions. Public choice theory further contributes to this study's theoretical framing by highlighting how decentralization reforms, by bringing

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service delivery decision-making closer to citizens, are theorized to improve the responsiveness of public services to local preferences and needs, a mechanism directly relevant to Uganda's decentralization-based local government reform program (Abu-Shaheen et al., 2018).

Empirical literature on public service delivery reform and citizen satisfaction in Sub-Saharan Africa has generally found mixed but cautiously positive associations between the depth of reform implementation and citizen-perceived service outcomes (Gracious, 2023). Studies conducted on decentralization reforms in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda have documented that while decentralization has in many cases improved the physical accessibility of certain services by bringing them closer to citizens, the anticipated improvements in service quality and responsiveness have often been constrained by inadequate local government capacity, limited financial resources transferred alongside devolved responsibilities, and inconsistent implementation of complementary reforms such as performance management systems. Studies focusing specifically on client charters and citizen service standards in Uganda's local governments have found that while the formal existence of client charters is now widespread, citizen awareness of the specific service standards contained within them remains limited in many districts, weakening the accountability-enhancing potential that such charters are theoretically expected to provide (Christopher & Shamirah, 2025). Research examining the introduction of digital service delivery tools, such as electronic land registration and revenue collection systems, has generally found positive associations between such tools and citizen-perceived service quality, particularly with regard to reduced processing time and decreased opportunities for informal payments, though these studies also caution that digital tools alone are insufficient to guarantee improved citizen satisfaction in the absence of complementary improvements in staff responsiveness and service delivery culture (Alex & Julius, 2024). This body of literature collectively suggests that the relationship between public service delivery reform and citizen satisfaction is likely to be substantially mediated by citizens' perceptions of actual service quality improvements, rather than operating through direct awareness of or exposure to reform measures alone, providing the empirical basis for the mediation model examined in the present study (Julius & Audrey, 2025).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the effectiveness of public service delivery reforms and their relationship with citizens' satisfaction in Wakiso District (A. Nafiu et al., 2012). The target population comprised citizens accessing services at selected district and sub-county government offices, including health, land administration, and business registration/licensing service points, together with district technical staff responsible for implementing service delivery reforms and local council leaders (Mark & Jacob, 2023). From this population, a sample of 214 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table for sample size determination, comprising 165 citizen service-users selected through systematic random sampling at four purposively selected service delivery points (the district

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headquarters and three sub-county offices selected to represent varying levels of urbanization within the district), 34 district and sub-county technical staff selected through purposive sampling, and 15 local council leaders similarly purposively selected (George Stanley & Nafiu, 2020).

Data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires administered to citizen respondents, designed to capture their awareness of specific service delivery reforms, their perceptions of service quality across dimensions consistent with the SERVQUAL framework, and their overall satisfaction with services received, complemented by a separate questionnaire administered to technical staff capturing their perspectives on the level of reform implementation within their respective offices. In addition, semi-structured interview guides were used to conduct in-depth interviews with a purposively selected subset of technical staff and local council leaders regarding the practical challenges of reform implementation, and secondary data were obtained through review of district service delivery performance records, including service processing time logs where available, to provide an independent source of information against which citizen-reported perceptions could be triangulated. The validity of the questionnaire instruments was established through expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs returning coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.7. Quantitative data were analyzed in SPSS version 26 using descriptive statistics to characterize reform implementation levels, service quality perceptions, and citizen satisfaction, and using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between reform implementation and citizen satisfaction (Nelson et al., 2022). A path model was further estimated in AMOS to test the hypothesized mediating role of perceived service quality in the relationship between reform implementation and citizen satisfaction, generating standardized path coefficients for direct and indirect effects. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed thematically and used to enrich and contextualize the quantitative findings. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant university and district authorities prior to data collection, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents, with confidentiality strictly maintained throughout the study.

Results

Response Rate

Of the 214 questionnaires administered, 198 were correctly filled and returned, giving a response rate of 92.5 percent, comprising 153 citizen respondents, 31 technical staff, and 14 local council leaders, all deemed adequate for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 198)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Category of respondent	Citizens (service users)	153	77.3
	District/sub-county technical staff	31	15.7

	Local council leaders	14	7.1
Gender (citizens)	Male	82	53.6
	Female	71	46.4
Service point accessed	District headquarters	58	37.9
	Sub-county office (peri-urban)	51	33.3
	Sub-county office (rural)	44	28.8
Type of service sought	Land administration	46	30.1
	Health services	55	35.9
	Business registration/licensing	52	34.0

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 presented the demographic characteristics of the 198 respondents who participated in the study. The findings showed that 153 (77.3%) respondents were citizens/service users, 31 (15.7%) were district or sub-county technical staff, and 14 (7.1%) were local council leaders. Citizens therefore constituted the largest proportion of respondents, which was appropriate given that the study focused on service delivery and citizen satisfaction. The inclusion of technical staff and local council leaders also provided institutional and leadership perspectives on the implementation of reforms and the quality of public services.

Among the 153 citizen respondents, 82 (53.6%) were male, while 71 (46.4%) were female. The findings therefore showed a relatively balanced representation of male and female citizens, although male respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion. This representation suggested that the study captured experiences and perceptions of public service delivery from both genders, thereby providing a relatively diverse assessment of reform implementation, service quality, and citizen satisfaction.

Regarding the service point accessed, the findings indicated that 58 (37.9%) citizens accessed services at the district headquarters, making it the most frequently accessed service point. This was followed by 51 (33.3%) who accessed services at peri-urban sub-county offices, while 44 (28.8%) accessed services at rural sub-county offices. The distribution demonstrated that the study covered different levels and locations of service delivery. The inclusion of district headquarters, peri-urban offices, and rural offices was important because service experiences could differ depending on the location, level of administration, and availability of resources at each service point.

In relation to the type of service sought, 55 (35.9%) citizens had sought health services, 52 (34.0%) had sought business registration or licensing services, and 46 (30.1%) had sought land administration services. Health services therefore represented the largest category, although the differences between the three service categories were relatively

small. This suggested that the study captured citizen experiences across several important public service areas rather than focusing on a single type of service.

Descriptive Statistics for Study Constructs**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Reform Implementation, Service Quality, and Citizen Satisfaction (5-point Likert scale)**

Construct	Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Reform implementation	Awareness/existence of client charter at service point	3.15	1.02	Moderate
	Use of digital tools in service delivery process	3.48	0.93	Moderate–High
	Overall reform implementation index	3.32	0.89	Moderate
Perceived service quality	Reasonable waiting/processing time	3.02	1.08	Moderate
	Staff responsiveness and courtesy	3.41	0.96	Moderate–High
	Overall service quality index	3.22	0.91	Moderate
Citizens' satisfaction	Overall satisfaction with service received	3.29	0.98	Moderate
	Willingness to recommend the service point to others	3.18	1.04	Moderate
	Overall satisfaction index	3.24	0.94	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 2 presented the descriptive statistics for reform implementation, perceived service quality, and citizens' satisfaction, based on a five-point Likert scale. The results generally showed moderate levels across the three study constructs, although some individual indicators recorded moderate-to-high ratings. This implied that public sector reforms had been implemented to a moderate extent, service quality had been perceived as moderate, and citizens had experienced moderate levels of satisfaction with the services received.

Regarding reform implementation, awareness of or the existence of a client charter at the service point recorded a mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.02), which was interpreted as moderate. This indicated that respondents had a moderate level of awareness of client charters or their existence at the service points (Julius & Audrey, 2026). The relatively high standard deviation suggested some variation in respondents' experiences, implying that awareness or visibility of client charters had not been uniform across all service points.

The use of digital tools in the service delivery process recorded a mean of 3.48 (SD = 0.93), which was interpreted as moderate–high. This suggested that digital technologies had been used to a considerable extent in the delivery of public services. The relatively higher mean compared with awareness of client charters indicated that digitalisation may have been more visible or more consistently experienced by citizens than some other reform mechanisms. Overall, the reform implementation index recorded a mean of 3.32 (SD = 0.89), interpreted as moderate. Therefore, although reforms had been implemented to some extent, their overall implementation had not reached a high level(Julius & Audrey, 2026).

For perceived service quality, reasonable waiting and processing time recorded a mean of 3.02 (SD = 1.08), which was interpreted as moderate(Julius & Audrey, 2025). This was one of the lower-rated indicators and suggested that respondents had experienced only moderately acceptable waiting and processing times. The relatively high standard deviation further indicated considerable differences in respondents' experiences regarding how quickly services had been provided. In contrast, staff responsiveness and courtesy recorded a mean of 3.41 (SD = 0.96), interpreted as moderate–high(Nelson et al., 2023). This indicated that citizens had generally perceived service providers as reasonably responsive and courteous. The overall service quality index recorded a mean of 3.22 (SD = 0.91) and was interpreted as moderate, indicating that the quality of services received had generally been satisfactory to a moderate extent but still had areas requiring improvement.

With respect to citizens' satisfaction, overall satisfaction with the service received recorded a mean of 3.29 (SD = 0.98), interpreted as moderate. This suggested that citizens had experienced a moderate level of satisfaction with the services they received. Similarly, willingness to recommend the service point to others recorded a mean of 3.18 (SD = 1.04), also interpreted as moderate(Muhamad et al., 2023). The relatively lower mean for willingness to recommend suggested that although citizens were moderately satisfied, their experiences had not been strong enough to generate a high level of willingness to recommend the service points to others. The overall satisfaction index recorded a mean of 3.24 (SD = 0.94), which was interpreted as moderate.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Reform implementation	1.000		
2. Perceived service quality	0.549**	1.000	
3. Citizens' satisfaction	0.586**	0.631**	1.000

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), n = 198.

The correlation results show a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction ($r = 0.586$, $p < 0.01$), and between perceived service quality and citizens' satisfaction ($r = 0.631$, $p < 0.01$), while reform implementation and service quality are themselves moderately correlated ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$).

6.3.2 Regression Analysis

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results — Dependent Variable: Citizens' Satisfaction

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	0.781	0.219	—	3.566	0.000
Reform implementation	0.267	0.058	0.298	4.603	0.000
Perceived service quality	0.412	0.061	0.412	6.754	0.000

Model summary: $R = 0.661$, $R^2 = 0.437$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.431$, $F(2, 195) = 75.68$, $p = 0.000$

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and jointly explained 43.7 percent of the variance in citizens' satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.437$), with perceived service quality emerging as the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) compared to reform implementation ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$).

6.4 Path Analysis (Structural Model)

A path model was estimated in AMOS to test the hypothesized mediating role of perceived service quality in the relationship between reform implementation and citizens' satisfaction.

Table 5: Standardized Path Coefficients

Path	Standardized β	C.R. (t-value)	p-value	Decision
Reform implementation $\rightarrow$ Perceived service quality	0.549	8.31	0.000	Significant
Perceived service quality $\rightarrow$ Citizens' satisfaction	0.487	7.42	0.000	Significant
Reform implementation $\rightarrow$ Citizens' satisfaction (direct)	0.301	4.61	0.000	Significant
Reform implementation $\rightarrow$ Service quality $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (indirect)	0.267		0.001 (bootstrap)	Significant
Total effect (Reform implementation $\rightarrow$ Citizens' satisfaction)	0.568		0.000	Significant

Model fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 1.79$, GFI = 0.945, CFI = 0.959, RMSEA = 0.056 — acceptable model fit.

The path analysis confirms that reform implementation influences citizens' satisfaction both directly ($\beta = 0.301$) and indirectly through its effect on perceived service quality ($\beta = 0.267$), with service quality functioning as a partial mediator; the total effect of reform implementation on citizens' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.568$) is notably larger than the direct

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effect alone, confirming that reforms enhance satisfaction substantially, though not exclusively, by improving citizens' actual experience of service quality.

Qualitative Findings

Interviews with technical staff revealed uneven implementation of client charters across service points, with staff at the district headquarters reporting stronger familiarity with and adherence to charter service standards than staff at rural sub-county offices, a pattern that qualitative respondents linked to differences in supervisory oversight and access to refresher training. Local council leaders similarly noted that while digital tools such as electronic land registration had visibly reduced processing times for some services, citizens accessing health and business registration services at rural sub-county offices continued to experience longer delays and less consistent staff responsiveness, corroborating the lower service quality scores observed for rural service points in the quantitative data.

Discussion Of Results

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the New Public Management and SERVQUAL frameworks underpinning the theoretical expectation that public service delivery reforms enhance citizen satisfaction substantially through their effect on perceived service quality, as demonstrated by the path coefficients in Table 5 showing that a considerable share of the total effect of reform implementation on citizens' satisfaction (0.267 out of 0.568) is transmitted indirectly through improvements in perceived service quality, rather than operating through citizens' direct awareness of or exposure to reform measures alone. This finding is consistent with the broader Sub-Saharan African literature on public service delivery reform, which has similarly found that citizen satisfaction outcomes depend less on the formal existence of reform measures such as client charters and more on whether these measures translate into tangible, citizen-perceptible improvements in dimensions of service quality such as waiting time and staff responsiveness. The comparatively moderate mean scores observed for reform implementation (3.32) and service quality (3.22) in Table 2, alongside the qualitative finding of uneven implementation between the district headquarters and rural sub-county offices, further illustrate that Wakiso District's reform implementation, while producing a measurable positive effect on citizen satisfaction, remains incomplete and unevenly distributed across the district's service delivery points, echoing decentralization theory's caution that devolved service delivery responsibility does not automatically translate into uniformly improved local government capacity or performance.

The finding that digital service delivery tools were specifically credited by local leaders with reducing processing times for certain services, such as land registration, while citizens accessing other services continued to report longer delays, suggests that the benefits of Wakiso District's reform program have thus far been concentrated in specific service areas rather than distributed evenly across the full range of services citizens seek from local government, a pattern with important implications for how the district prioritizes further reform investment. Overall, the discussion suggests that sustaining and deepening the positive, though moderate, effect of public service delivery reforms on citizen satisfaction in Wakiso District will require not only continued rollout of reform measures such as digital service

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delivery tools, but also a deliberate focus on the specific service quality dimensions, particularly processing time and staff responsiveness, through which citizens most directly experience the effects of these reforms in their day-to-day interactions with local government.

Conclusion

This study concludes that public service delivery reforms implemented in Wakiso District have produced a statistically significant, though moderate, positive effect on citizens' satisfaction with local government services, with this effect operating substantially, though not exclusively, through improvements in citizens' perceived service quality rather than through citizens' direct awareness of reform measures alone. The study further concludes that reform implementation within the district remains incomplete and unevenly distributed, with stronger implementation and correspondingly higher service quality and satisfaction observed at the district headquarters compared to rural sub-county service points, indicating that geographic and capacity-related disparities continue to constrain the full realization of the district's reform objectives. It is also concluded that digital service delivery tools have made a particularly visible contribution to improved service quality in specific service areas such as land administration, suggesting that targeted expansion of similar digital tools to other service areas represents a promising avenue for further improving citizen satisfaction across the district.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that Wakiso District Local Government strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of client charter implementation across all service delivery points, with particular attention to rural sub-county offices where implementation was found to be weaker, potentially through regular supervisory visits and standardized reporting on charter compliance. It is further recommended that the district prioritize the expansion of digital service delivery tools beyond land administration to other high-demand service areas such as health and business registration/licensing, given the clear positive association identified in this study between digital tools and improved citizen-perceived service quality. The study also recommends that the district invest in targeted capacity-building and refresher training for technical staff at rural sub-county offices, in order to close the implementation gap identified between these offices and the district headquarters. Additionally, it is recommended that the district establish and actively promote accessible citizen feedback mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, feedback hotlines, or simple digital feedback tools, at all service delivery points, both to enable continuous monitoring of citizen satisfaction and to reinforce citizens' sense that their service delivery experience is being taken seriously by local government. Finally, the study recommends that further research be conducted, potentially through a longitudinal design, to track how the district's continued reform implementation efforts influence citizen satisfaction over time, and to examine whether the service quality mediation pathway identified in this study holds consistently across other Ugandan districts undergoing similar public service delivery reform processes.

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