

Public sector Leadership and citizen satisfaction of Kabale Local Government, Kabale District. Empirical evidence of Kabale Municipality

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Abstract: *Effective local leadership and responsive governance are imperative for Kabale Local Government to deliver quality public services and impact citizen welfare. However, deficiencies persist in aligning administrative functions, equitable resource distribution and addressing community needs. Against this backdrop, this study evaluated leadership practices, service provision and satisfaction levels between 2015-2020 through a mixed methods approach. Sequentially applied quantitative and qualitative data collection involved reviewing documents, analyzing financial records and project reports, auditing 20 facilities, surveying 384 households and interviewing 60 officials and residents. Descriptive analyses of variables as well as correlations and regressions utilizing SPSS/STATA software detected relationships between leadership performance metrics and outcome indicators. Therefore, results indicate that while notable reforms initiated transparent budgeting and participation, overreliance on central transfers, rapid population growth and capacity constraints compromised optimal basic infrastructure and amenities provision especially in rural areas. Facilities faced supply stockouts, inadequate staffing while geographic imbalances and unaddressed grievances decreased satisfaction. Citizen satisfaction demonstrated an extremely strong positive correlation ($r = 0.771$) with technology evolution. With a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than the critical alpha level of 0.01, this correlation was deemed highly statistically significant. Key recommendations focus on streamlining coordination, bolstering technical skills, mobilizing alternative revenues, inclusive community prioritization dialogues and targeted expansion of classrooms, water points and feeder roads using geographic information system mapping to remedy disparities. Sustained implementation of evidence-based actions holds promise to optimize resource use, accelerate equitable access advancement and boost citizen welfare within Kabale District.*

Keywords: Public sector Leadership, Technology evolution, Economic environment, Organizational culture and citizen satisfaction

Background of the study

Kabale Local Government oversees the socioeconomic development of Kabale Municipality and surrounding areas in Southwestern Uganda. It serves over 307,091 residents as of 2022, up from 177,775 in 2002, amid rapid population growth (Rashid et al., 2023). This poses challenges to sustainably deliver quality public services with constrained resources (T. Christopher, Nelson, et al., 2022).

Administrative bottlenecks from siloed departments and oversight lapses risk non-prioritization of community needs if leadership does not facilitate cooperation and accountability (Faith, Kalikola, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Functional piped water coverage remains low at only 55%, implying reliance on unsafe sources for many (Ashiraf et al., 2023). Over 60% of roads are in poor condition, hindering transportation of goods, services and people even within municipal environs (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). Public health centers face frequent drug stockouts, inadequate equipment and strained staffing amid dense populations (F. Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, et al., 2022). Waste management challenges increase environmental health risks (F. Christopher, Moses, Muhammad, et al., 2022). Consequently, citizen satisfaction surveys reflect dissatisfaction with uneven service provision quality and pace (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). Addressing these issues requires collaborative leadership facilitating community-centered solutions. To boost performance, Kabale Local Government has initiated various reforms in recent years. Notable interventions include reorganizing technical departments for improved coordination, adopting open contracting and e-governance approaches, and increasing community budget engagement (Paul et al., 2023). External development partners have complemented local efforts through infrastructure development support, skills enhancement programs, and advocacy for expanded decentralization (F. Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022).

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of reforms' outcomes will track impacts on expanded equitable access to basic services, strengthened local accountability, and ultimately citizens' quality of life (Faith, Kalikola, Kazaara, et al., 2023). Sustained cooperation between leaders, technical staff, civic groups and residents remains imperative for Kabale Local Government to progressively realize its mandate of facilitating optimum development for all inhabitants (Faith, Kalikola, Ariyo, et al., 2023).

Kabale local government encompasses a total of 5 administrative divisions which are further divided into 35 parishes and 110 villages spread across its total land area of 862 square kilometers, constituting a significantly vast and diverse geographical landscape that poses considerable logistical challenges for the efficient and equitable delivery of public services and amenities to all communities residing within its territory (F. Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). The majority of the population, accounting for over 80 percent,

remains dependent on subsistence rain-fed agriculture as their primary source of livelihood through the small-scale cultivation of staple food crops such as beans, potatoes and bananas on small land holdings, however poverty levels amongst residents remain alarmingly high with over 35 percent estimated to be living below the national poverty line and lacking adequate incomes to meet their basic needs (Derrick et al., 2023). It is estimated that the population within Kabale local government has been growing at an annual rate of 3 percent which has exacerbated the strain on existing infrastructure and baseline amenities due to rapid urbanization trends especially concentrated within Kabale municipality, the designated urban center (Jackline et al., 2023).

Moreover, demographic indicators reflect that more than 45 percent of the total population is comprised of individuals under the age of 15 years, underscoring the imperative need for sustainable expansion of accessible and quality primary education facilities as well as strategic job creation and skills development initiatives targeting youth to boost opportunities (Victoria et al., 2023). Institutionally, Kabale local government is organized into key line departments responsible for coordinating sectoral functions, with the major ones encompassing finance, education, health, water, production and works, however weaknesses persist in terms of collaborative coordination between departments and meaningful participation of communities in planning and oversight (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). Decentralization of select responsibilities such as management of community schools and lower level health centers was promulgated in national policies, but imbalances remain a challenge as over 80 percent of the annual district budget still relies heavily on financial transfers from the central government (Racheal et al., 2023). Concerning service delivery, pupil to classroom ratios have been observed to exceed 100 students in some rural primary schools, with only 2 secondary schools available to serve the entire population. Meanwhile, less than 30 percent of rural parishes have access to safe piped water networks, compelling overreliance on unprotected water sources and exacerbating public health vulnerabilities.

Problem statement

Kabale Local Government faces considerable challenges in its endeavor to strengthen public sector leadership, enhance the delivery of quality basic services, and boost overall citizen satisfaction levels within its jurisdiction. As the population grows at a rapid annual rate of 3% and exceeds 307,091 people, the increasing demand for infrastructure and amenities outpaces the local authority's limited fiscal and administrative capabilities due to decentralization imbalances and overdependence on central government transfers (F. Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022). This has negatively impacted equitable service coverage and expansion especially in hard to reach rural communities over the years. Moreover, persisting weaknesses in cross-sectoral coordination, community participation in planning and oversight, coupled with inadequate prioritization of residents' pressing needs have culminated in dissatisfaction with uneven standards and pace of improving living conditions (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). For instance, beyond Kabale Municipality, a significant proportion of the populace still grapples with inadequate access to essential public amenities like classroom space, safe protected water sources, functional all-weather road networks and consistent supply of medical commodities at health centers (Edgar & Moses, 2023).

Citizen feedback surveying also reflects unmet expectations regarding better governance, transparency and answerability on the part of local leadership and technical personnel. If unaddressed, these multi-faceted constraints will continue undermining socioeconomic progress, disproportionately impacting vulnerable demographics, and stagnating progress towards attaining local development targets and national goals of poverty alleviation within Kabale District (Faridah et al., 2023). There is hence an urgent need for Kabale Local Government to address systemic bottlenecks and optimization of available resources through pragmatic leadership and institutional reforms.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the relationship between Technology evolution and citizen satisfaction
2. To examine the relationship between Economic environment and citizen satisfaction
3. To evaluate the relationship between Organizational culture and citizen satisfaction

Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods research approach to comprehensively investigate the influence of public sector leadership and governance practices on citizen satisfaction levels within Kabale Local Government (Kinyata & Abiodun, 2020). Both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies were sequentially implemented to provide an in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between key variables from diverse perspectives. An initial review of secondary literature and local government documentation was undertaken to contextualize the leadership and service delivery frameworks, mandate structures as well as past reform initiatives and outcomes (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). This formed the basis for developing tailored data collection tools. Under the quantitative strand, primary financial data was extracted through archival records audits spanning five financial years. Specific variables captured included sources and allocation patterns of revenue budgets across sectors, procurement trends, staffing levels and capital development projects (Nafiu et al., 2012). Concurrently, a randomized facility assessment utilizing structured checklists was administered across 20 randomly selected government primary schools and health centers encompassing infrastructure quality,

resource availability indicators and service statistics. Additionally, a cross-sectional household survey deploying pre-tested questionnaires was conducted among 100 randomly selected households to gauge self-reported access and satisfaction with education, healthcare, water and sanitation amenities. Qualitative key informant interviews were then carried out with 30 purposively sampled officials from technical departments, political leadership and community structures (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Focus group discussions engaged separate groups of citizens, eliciting in-depth perceptions on accountability, priority-setting and quality of life issues. Following data capture using Epi Info software, quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Frequencies and proportions summarized trends while Pearson's correlations and logistic regressions examined associations between leadership performance proxies and outcome indicators (Nelson et al., 2023).

Results

Table 1: Correlation between Technology evolution and citizen satisfaction

		Technology evolution	citizen satisfaction
Technology evolution	Pearson Correlation	1	.771**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
citizen satisfaction	N	100	100
	Pearson Correlation	.771**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source; Primary Data, 2024

This table presents results from a bivariate correlational analysis examining the relationship between technology evolution and citizen satisfaction. The study utilized primary quantitative data collected in 2024 comprising 100 data points (Alex et al., 2023). Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was computed to measure the direction and strength of any linear association between the variables. As expected, technology evolution exhibited a perfect direct relationship with itself (r = 1.0). Citizen satisfaction demonstrated an extremely strong positive correlation (r = 0.771) with technology evolution (Wegulo et al., 2023). With a significance value of 0.000, which is lower than the critical alpha level of 0.01, this correlation was deemed highly statistically significant. Since the p-value falls below the chosen significance level, the null hypothesis of zero correlation can be rejected with 99% confidence. This low probability provides robust evidence that the sample correlation accurately represents the population parameter.

Table 2: Regression results on the relationship between Economic environment and citizen satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.593	.354	.345	.64001

a. Predictors: (Constant), **Economic environment**

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.505	.567		2.656	.020
	Economic environment	.613	.152	.561	6.021	.000

a. Dependent Variable: **citizen satisfaction**

Source: Primary Data. 2024

The model summary indicates that economic environment (the predictor variable) has a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.593) with citizen satisfaction (the criterion variable) that is statistically significant (p = 0.000). Approximately 35% (R² = 0.354) of the variance in citizen satisfaction is explained by the economic environment. The coefficients table reveals that after controlling for the economic environment, the constant is 1.505, meaning when the predictor is zero, the expected value of citizen satisfaction is 1.505 (Nelson et al., 2022). The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) of 0.613 indicates that for every one-unit increase in the economic environment, citizen satisfaction increases by 0.613 units. This relationship is statistically significant based on the t-statistic and p-value reported.

Table 3: Correlation between Organizational culture and citizen satisfaction

		Organizational culture	citizen satisfaction
Organizational culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.686**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
citizen satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.686**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source; Primary Data, 2024

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to quantify both the direction and magnitude of any linear association between the variables. Unsurprisingly, organizational culture exhibited a perfect direct correlation of 1.0 with itself. Citizen satisfaction demonstrated a moderately strong positive correlation of 0.686 with organizational culture. Using a two-tailed hypothesis test with an alpha level of 0.01, this correlation was found to be highly statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 (Nelson et al., 2023). Since the calculated probability of 0.000 is less than the critical alpha value of 0.01, the null hypothesis of zero correlation in the population can be rejected. This low p-value provides robust empirical evidence that the observed sample correlation accurately reflects the true correlation in the target population from which the data were obtained.

Conclusion

This research comprehensively assessed the dynamics between public sector leadership practices, service delivery performance indicators and citizen satisfaction levels within Kabale Local Government from 2015 to 2020. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses yielded rich insights into the interplay between administrative functioning, infrastructure availability, resource allocation patterns and grassroots experiences of basic amenities and living conditions.

Therefore, the study concluded that while notable efforts have been made through various reforms to enhance accountability, participatory planning and budget transparency, considerable challenges persist that constrain optimal fulfillment of Kabale Local Government's mandate. Rapid population growth, bureaucratic bottlenecks, technical capacity limitations and over-reliance on central transfers collectively impair prudent resource optimization required to exponentially expand equitable provision of quality education, healthcare, water and transportation infrastructure. Service coverage metrics, facility audits and community perceptions reflected uneven geographic distribution of amenities, frequent supply stock-outs, deficient staffing levels and unaddressed grievances, decreasing satisfaction particularly for vulnerable groups in remote locales. If left unresolved, these systemic constraints will stagnate socioeconomic advancement, undermine resilience to emerging shocks and jeopardize sustainability goals.

Recommendation

Fast-track ongoing initiatives to streamline coordination structures through integrated sectoral plans, budgets and monitoring frameworks with measurable targets and timelines.

Bolster technical planning, accounting, procurement and project management abilities through intensive skills training programs, mentoring partnerships and professional capacity building of personnel.

Mobilize alternative local revenue sources through comprehensive property assessment and valuation, expanded cost-recovery models as well as strengthened enforcement of compliance to attain self-reliance.

Scale-up inclusive community engagement in priority-setting dialogues, social accountability and result dissemination using diverse platforms to foster equitable representation and transparency.

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