

Accountability Mechanisms and Performance of Women Empowerment Programmes: A Study of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts

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Abstract: The study examined the effects of accountability mechanisms on performance of women empowerment programmes in Kisoro and Kabale Districts focusing on Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme. The study was guided by objectives which were; to assess the effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, to establish the effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts. The study adopted a pragmatism philosophy and a cross sectional survey research design supported by mixed methods research approach. The sample size for the study was 343 and respondents were selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guide and analysed using descriptive, inferential and thematic analyses. The findings of the study confirmed that participatory monitoring and transparent reporting positively and significantly affects performance of UWEP in the selected districts. The study recommends that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in collaboration with local UWEP implementation teams should prioritize strengthening participatory monitoring by developing clear guidelines and capacity-building programs which can be achieved through organizing regular community-based monitoring forums and training sessions to equip women with knowledge and tools for effective participation. Furthermore, the study recommends that UWEP management at the district and national levels should strengthen and formalise transparent financial reporting mechanisms by adopting standardized reporting formats and ensure that all beneficiary groups receive simplified, written financial summaries. This should be supported by training local group leaders on effective financial management and communication to foster inclusivity and understanding. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, under which UWEP operates, should work to enhance participatory feedback systems during reporting sessions.

Keywords: Accountability mechanisms, Participatory monitoring, Transparent reporting, Performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the promotion of women empowerment has been widely recognized as a vital driver for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Accountability mechanisms, such as transparent reporting, participatory monitoring, and performance evaluations, are critical in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of women empowerment programmes (Ntirandekura, 2024). The United Nations (2023) underscores that inclusive governance structures and robust accountability systems significantly contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and women empowerment. In countries like Sweden and Canada, institutional frameworks that integrate gender-responsive budgeting and oversight bodies have enabled women empowerment programmes to succeed through transparent resource allocation and continuous stakeholder engagement (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022).

In Africa, women's empowerment initiatives have grown steadily, yet many countries struggle with weak accountability systems that limit the effectiveness of these programmes. The African Union Agenda 2063 emphasizes the importance of gender equality and urges member states to establish strong accountability and monitoring frameworks to track the performance of women-targeted interventions (African Union, 2020). However, studies such as that by Oduro and Doss (2021)

note that corruption, limited citizen participation, and poor monitoring tools continue to impede the realization of empowerment objectives in many sub-Saharan African nations. Countries like Rwanda and Ghana have made notable progress by establishing clear accountability mechanisms within their gender-focused programmes, enhancing transparency, resource use and impact.

In East Africa, governments have launched a variety of women empowerment programmes that focus on economic inclusion through entrepreneurship, education, and access to financial services. However, accountability challenges remain. According to the East African Community (EAC, 2021), the absence of rigorous tracking systems and inadequate feedback mechanisms often lead to poor implementation and diminished outcomes of women-targeted projects. For instance, in Kenya and Tanzania, studies reveal that weak institutional oversight and poor documentation practices reduce the success rates of women entrepreneurship schemes (Mutua & Kamau, 2022). These challenges have led to calls for enhanced transparency and participatory monitoring by both civil society and development partners.

In Uganda, the government has implemented various initiatives to empower women economically, socially, and politically. One of the flagship interventions is the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), launched in 2015 under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

(MGLSD). The programme aims to improve women's access to financial services, skills training, and markets to enable them to start and grow sustainable enterprises. According to the MGLSD (2023), UWEF has supported over 200,000 women through revolving funds and capacity-building activities. However, the programme faces accountability issues that affect its performance. Reports by the Auditor General (2022) and civil society organizations such as ACODE (2021) highlight problems such as mismanagement of funds, weak monitoring structures, limited community involvement, and inadequate transparency in fund disbursement. These shortcomings have raised concerns about the programme's sustainability and its actual impact on women's economic empowerment.

In Kisoro and Kabale Districts, which are part of Uganda's southwestern region, the implementation of UWEF reflects both opportunities and challenges in relation to accountability and performance. Local government reports and community assessments indicate that while the programme has enabled many women to start income-generating activities, its effectiveness is constrained by irregular supervision, limited feedback mechanisms, and low levels of community awareness on rights and entitlements (Kabale District Local Government, 2023; Kisoro District Annual Report, 2023). For example, some women groups have reported delays in fund release and lack of follow-up from technical officers, which undermines the intended impact of UWEF.

Additionally, local-level corruption, lack of proper record-keeping, and political interference have also been cited as barriers to accountability and effective implementation in these districts (Nuwagaba & Tumushabe, 2022). Strengthening local accountability mechanisms, such as beneficiary feedback channels, financial transparency forums, and community-based monitoring committees, is essential to enhance the performance of UWEF and ensure that it truly empowers rural women in Kisoro and Kabale District (Ntirandekura et al., 2025). This article examined the effects of accountability mechanisms on performance of women empowerment programmes in Kisoro and Kabale Districts focusing on Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme.

Objectives

- i. To assess the effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.
- ii. To establish the effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.

Hypotheses

- i. To examine the effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.
- ii. To establish the effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability mechanisms are institutional arrangements through which individuals or agencies are held responsible for their actions, decisions, and performance, typically involving reporting, justification, and the possibility of sanctions (Bovens, 2021). Bovens emphasizes that accountability goes beyond mere reporting; it includes the obligation of actors to explain and justify their conduct to oversight bodies and face consequences if performance falls short. This definition is applicable to public programmes such as UWEF, where government agencies must report to stakeholders and respond to beneficiaries' concerns.

Furthermore, Fox (2022) defines accountability mechanisms as the tools, processes, and institutions that enable citizens and oversight bodies to monitor, evaluate, and influence the actions of duty-bearers to ensure responsiveness and prevent abuse of power. Fox focuses on the "answerability" and "enforceability" aspects of accountability, stressing that mechanisms must empower citizens and civil society to actively participate in governance. This definition supports participatory monitoring approaches in women empowerment initiatives.

In addition, accountability mechanisms are structured systems both formal and informal, through which service providers and public officials are required to inform, justify, and be held liable for the allocation and use of public resources and for performance outcomes (World Bank (2023). The World Bank's definition highlights the dual nature of accountability mechanisms formal (e.g., audits, evaluations) and informal (e.g., community scorecards). In the context of UWEF, both types are critical for ensuring funds reach the intended women beneficiaries effectively.

Goetz & Jenkins (2023) refers accountability mechanisms as institutionalized processes through which power holders are required to explain their actions, submit to scrutiny, and potentially face sanctions thereby creating incentives for responsible and inclusive governance. Goetz and Jenkins focus on how accountability mechanisms promote responsible governance by making power dynamics more transparent. Their emphasis is particularly relevant to gender-sensitive programmes where inclusive governance can promote better outcomes for women.

Accountability mechanisms involve a set of institutional and procedural practices aimed at tracking and evaluating public service delivery, clarifying roles and ensuring performance compliance through both vertical (citizen-led) and horizontal (institutional) checks (Brinkerhoff, 2023). Brinkerhoff introduces a dual perspective vertical accountability (citizens holding officials to account) and horizontal accountability (agencies checking each other) which is particularly applicable in decentralized settings like Uganda's local governments managing UWEF.

Accountability in programmes aimed at supporting women entrepreneurship and economic empowerment is an important

consideration for achieving sustainable outcomes (Twinomugisha & Tumwebaze (2022)). A growing body of literature has explored accountability in women entrepreneurship programmes and its effects on women economic empowerment as follows; Smith, Ahmed and Rahman (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between accountability in women entrepreneurship programmes and women economic empowerment in rural districts of Bangladesh using mixed methods approach and found that there was no significant positive relationship between accountability mechanisms in women entrepreneurship programs and women economic empowerment. However, this study suffered from conceptual gap because it did not collect data on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme which this study intended to address.

Nabirye, Ajambo & Kiwanuka (2020) investigated the relationship between accountability and women economic empowerment in Uganda using quantitative data from 300 female entrepreneurs in the Ugandan City of Kampala. The study revealed that accountability had a positive relationship with women economic empowerment by ensuring success of women enterprises, accessibility to capital and capacity for making decisions. However, the conceptual gap in this study was that it did not investigate how accountability was maintained in UWEP programme such as clear procedure for managing finances and compliance with laws which are critical for the success and longevity of any programme which was addressed by this study.

Studies by Twinomugisha, Mugisha and Kwikiriza (2020) and Nyamutale (2022) have shown that while the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme has helped increase access to finances, business skills training and market linkages for women entrepreneurs in Kisoro district, a lack of proper accountability mechanisms in the programme's implementation meant that women have had little say and participation in how the resources are utilized which resources are prioritized and how outcomes are measured, thus limiting the potential for true women economic empowerment. Furthermore, more participatory and community-based accountability approaches that promote transparency, feedback loops and involvement of women in monitoring and evaluation processes have been found to be more effectively leading to women feeling empowered and having greater control over decisions that affect their lives rather than seeing the programme simply as something that is done to them.

Performance of Women Empowerment Programmes

The performance of women empowerment programmes refers to the extent to which such interventions enable women to gain access to resources, make strategic life choices, and exercise agency in economic, social, and political spheres (Kabeer, 2021). Kabeer emphasizes empowerment as a process, and performance is judged by how well programmes expand women's capacity to make decisions and act on them. This

definition is useful in assessing the transformative impact of programmes like UWEP beyond just economic outputs.

Additionally, performance of women empowerment programmes is measured by the ability of such programmes to challenge and shift existing gender norms, increase women's participation in decision-making, and improve their control over productive assets (Cornwall & Rivas, 2022). This definition integrates both practical (e.g., income generation) and strategic (e.g., changing power relations) components, indicating that successful performance must include changes in societal attitudes toward gender.

United Nations Women (2023) states that performance of women empowerment programmes refers to how effectively these initiatives achieve their intended objectives in improving women's livelihoods, promoting equality, and enabling access to rights and opportunities across sectors. UN Women stresses measurable outcomes such as increased income, education, employment, and legal rights. The performance of UWEP, for instance, would be evaluated based on how many women-owned businesses have become sustainable or how many beneficiaries report improved living conditions.

Performance of women empowerment programmes is the extent to which initiatives reduce gender inequalities and enhance women's resilience, autonomy, and bargaining power within households and communities (Chant & Sweetman, 2021). Chant and Sweetman connect performance with social empowerment, highlighting that successful programmes should empower women not only economically but also within the domestic and community spheres.

The performance of women empowerment programmes is also defined by their efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability in delivering services and outcomes that contribute to women's economic independence and improved quality of life (World Bank, 2022). The World Bank adopts a results-based management perspective, focusing on performance indicators such as cost-effectiveness, outcome sustainability, and scalability. This definition supports data-driven evaluations of programmes like UWEP. The performance of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) has shown mixed outcomes across Uganda, including in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.

According to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2023), UWEP has successfully enabled thousands of women to access revolving funds, acquire entrepreneurship skills, and start income-generating activities. Additionally, Ntirandekura (2022) highlights that women equipped with vocational skills are better positioned to participate in income-generating activities, which in turn enhances their economic development. This supports the recommendation that the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme should prioritize and strengthen the delivery of vocational training to women. However, Fox and Liebenenthal (2022) argue that the programme's overall effectiveness is

limited by weak accountability mechanisms, delayed fund disbursement and inadequate monitoring. In Kisoro and Kabale, reports by Nuwagaba and Tumushabe (2022) revealed that while some women have benefited significantly, many face challenges due to political interference, lack of follow-up support and poor record-keeping. The Auditor General's report (2022) further highlights concerns about mismanagement and sustainability especially at the community level.

Effect of Participatory Monitoring on Performance of Women Empowerment Programmes

Mbuvi and Gekara (2019) investigated how participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) affects the success of gender-focused projects in Nairobi City County, Kenya. They used a descriptive research approach and gathered information from project managers using structured questionnaires. The responses were analyzed using both numbers (quantitative methods) and explanations (qualitative methods), with data processed through SPSS software. The results showed that proper M&E planning, training, effective information systems, and involving stakeholders all significantly improved the performance of these gender projects. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended strengthening M&E planning and developing a strategic plan to track project outcomes more effectively. They also highlighted the importance of building partnerships and collaborations to ensure project success, emphasizing that M&E training has a direct impact on how well gender mainstreaming projects perform.

Leariwalla (2021) examined how participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices affect the performance of NG-CDF projects in Samburu County, Kenya. The study focused on M&E planning, resource allocation, staff training, and community participation. Using a descriptive research design, it targeted 51 projects initiated in the 2017/2018 financial year. A sample of 30 projects was selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The results revealed strong, positive relationships, with M&E planning and resource allocation having the most significant impact on project performance.

However, Leariwalla's (2021) study focused on NG-CDF projects in Kenya, whose institutional frameworks and implementation contexts differ significantly from those of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). These contextual differences limit the applicability of its findings to UWEP. Consequently, a gap remained in understanding how participatory monitoring and evaluation influences performance within gender-focused economic empowerment programs in Uganda. This study, therefore, addressed that gap by focusing specifically on UWEP to examine the unique operational dynamics and participatory structures within the Ugandan context.

Kiraga (2023) explored how involving people in monitoring and evaluation affects the delivery of community development

services in Kabale District, Uganda. The study focused on three main areas: participatory planning, participatory implementation, and participatory decision-making by team members, and how each influences service delivery. Data was collected using both numbers (quantitative) and descriptive responses (qualitative), and analyzed using SPSS software and thematic analysis. The findings showed that participatory planning had a strong positive link with trainees getting employed. Similarly, involving people in implementation and decision-making also had a significant positive effect on employability. Overall, the study concluded that when team members are actively involved in planning, carrying out, and making decisions in projects, the quality and effectiveness of service delivery improve in the community development services department in Kabale District.

Nevertheless, the study by Kiraga focused on community development services, whose operational dynamics differ significantly from those of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). These distinctions limit the applicability of its findings to UWEP. Community development services often emphasize social welfare, whereas UWEP prioritizes economic empowerment through entrepreneurship. As such, extrapolating conclusions from one context to the other would risk inaccuracies. This divergence underscored the need for a tailored investigation into the effect of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme.

Baghasheva, Nandi and Rogger (2020) state that monitoring and evaluation of business and economic activities is an important part of the success of women entrepreneurship development programs. Nevertheless, the study left out participant self-reporting and documentation of best practices which would lead to continuous improvement of the program in economically empowering. Having participants self-report on their experiences, challenges and outcomes would allow program managers to gain insight directly from those benefiting from the services, thus, helping to address those challenges and improve on the programme's impact.

Hassan & Njoroge (2021) used mixed methods to examine the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on performance of government programs with reference to UWEP in Busoga Sub Region and the results showed a strong relationship between monitoring and evaluation planning and performance of UWEP program. Furthermore, Tumushabe and Busingye (2019) conducted an assessment of the monitoring and evaluation system of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro district and the findings revealed that while UWEP aims to regularly track outcomes, the M&E framework was not adequately tailored to the local context nor consistently implemented which restricted the effectiveness of the programme in economically empowering women. Nonetheless, the conceptual limitation in the two previous studies done on monitoring and evaluation was that they did not address the frequency of monitoring and evaluation and the ways of ensuring monitoring and evaluation planning such as

setting clearly defined objectives to be achieved by the programme's beneficiaries which this study addressed.

Effects of Transparent Reporting on Performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

Transparent reporting has been recognized as a critical element in enhancing the performance of development programmes such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). Studies by Nakato and Muwanga (2023) revealed that clear and consistent financial reporting under UWEP led to improved trust among beneficiaries, enhanced accountability, and more efficient use of resources. Similarly, a study by Akello et al. (2022) noted that transparent reporting mechanisms such as periodic disclosure of fund utilization and activity outcomes significantly increased beneficiaries' commitment and reduced mismanagement of funds within women's groups. These findings align with global perspectives that emphasize the role of transparency in promoting program efficiency and stakeholder engagement (UN Women, 2021). Despite these insights, a notable gap exists in the literature regarding the extent to which transparent reporting influences specific performance indicators such as loan recovery rates, group cohesion, and income growth among UWEP beneficiaries in rural versus urban settings.

Therefore, this study addressed the gap by conducting a study, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the effect of transparent reporting on programme performance outcomes in order to give a contextual understanding of how transparent reporting can be strengthened to improve the impact of UWEP interventions at grassroots levels.

Several studies have shown that transparent reporting improves the performance of women entrepreneurship programmes, but many had contextual and conceptual limitations. For instance, Wang, Chen, and Liu (2022) found that transparency in a Chinese programme through clear funding information and criteria boosted women's confidence and business success. However, their study was based in a developed country context, where transparency standards differ greatly from Uganda's, where corruption and lack of clear public funding disclosure are common. Moreover, their study relied only on quantitative data, missing deeper insights that a mixed-methods approach could offer an issue this study addressed.

Naidoo, Ngcobo, and Ncama (2021) discovered in South Africa that reforms in transparency led to better business and community outcomes for women. Yet, they did not examine whether women were selected fairly and transparently, which this study explored. Similarly, research by Bobobee and Agyeman (2022) in Ghana showed that having clear selection and reporting processes helped more women start businesses and earn higher incomes. Otu et al. (2021) also found in Ghana that transparent budgeting and reporting ensured more funds reached the intended beneficiaries, but their study did not cover repayment challenges like delayed or failed loan returns, which this study considered. Furthermore, in Kenya, Muriithi et al., (2021) emphasized the value of regular performance updates,

while Nkansah et al. (2021) stressed that transparency at every programme stage helps reduce corruption. In Uganda, Mugisha (2019) found that regular progress reports led to more successful businesses, though he didn't explore monitoring challenges like poor access to remote areas which this study addressed.

Tumusiime and Mutongole (2019) found that women who understood UWEP guidelines performed better, showing the value of awareness. Similarly, Ogora et al. (2020) reported that clear selection criteria and fund audits improved empowerment, but they didn't study the impact of direct meetings between managers and beneficiaries something this research looked into. Mugume and Tumwesigye (2022), and Muhwezi et al. (2021), confirmed that transparency supports women's decision-making, especially in rural areas. However, a study by Khainza and Mwiine (2020) found no strong link between transparency and empowerment outcomes.

METHODS

The study was guided by the pragmatism philosophy, which posits that reality can be interpreted in multiple ways and that no single perspective can provide a complete understanding of a phenomenon, as multiple realities may coexist (Kumar, 2011). This philosophical stance served as the foundation for the research, as it supported the use of mixed research methods to gain a more holistic understanding of the research problem. Pragmatism also enabled the researcher to focus on practical, actionable solutions relevant to real-world challenges. Moreover, the philosophy aligned well with Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the need to recognize and engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, each holding unique viewpoints and experiences. In line with this approach, the study employed a cross-sectional survey research design, which was appropriate for capturing a snapshot of the population at a specific point in time, thereby allowing the collection of sufficient and relevant data within a defined timeframe. The total target population for this study was 2,397 individuals, comprising 1,332 participants from Kisoro District and 1,065 from Kabale District. In Kisoro, the population included 1,301 women beneficiaries, 14 Sub-county Chiefs, 15 Community Development Officers (1 District Community Development Officer [DCDO] and 14 Sub-county Community Development Officers [SCDOs]), 1 LCV Chairperson, and 1 Labour Officer. In Kabale District, the population consisted of 1,038 women beneficiaries, 12 Sub-county Chiefs, 13 Community Development Officers (1 DCDO and 12 SCDOs), 1 LCV Chairperson, and 1 Labour Officer. A total sample size of 343 respondents was selected from both districts. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (1960), which is expressed as: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, where n is the required sample size, N is the total population, and e is the margin of error, set at 0.05 for this study.

$$n = 2397 / (1 + 2397(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 2397 / (1 + 2397(0.0025))$$

$$\Rightarrow n = 2397 / (1 + 5.9925)$$

$$\Rightarrow n = 343 \text{ respondents}$$

$$n = 2397 / (6.9925)$$

The total sample size for the two selected districts was 343 respondents. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 285 respondents who provided quantitative data. This method was chosen because it ensured that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being included in the sample, thereby reducing selection bias. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select 58 key informants who contributed qualitative insights on the effects of participatory monitoring and transparent reporting on the performance of women empowerment programmes, with a focus on the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to the 285 women beneficiaries of UWEP from Kisoro and Kabale Districts. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews conducted with the purposively selected key informants.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Response rate

The total number of questionnaires distributed to the targeted beneficiaries of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro and Kabale Districts was first recorded. After the data collection period, the fully completed and returned questionnaires were counted. The response rate was then calculated by dividing the number of completed questionnaires by the total number of questionnaires distributed, and multiplying by 100 to express it as a percentage. The same was done for key informants and the findings were indicated in Table 4.1 as follows;

Table 4.1: Response rate for quantitative data

Instruments	Sample Size	Percentage response rate
Questionnaires returned	255	89.5
Un returned questionnaires	30	10.5
Total	285	100

Response rate for qualitative data

Categories of respondents	Sample Size	Response rate	Percentage
Sub County Chiefs	26	13	50
CDOs	28	20	71.4
LCV Chairpersons	2	2	100
Labour Officers	2	2	100
	58	37	63.8

Source: Primary data (2024)

The response rate for the quantitative data presented in Table 4.1 shows a high level of participation. Out of the 285 questionnaires distributed to UWEP beneficiaries in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, 255 were returned, representing an 89.5% response rate, while only 30 questionnaires (10.5%) were not returned. This high return rate indicates strong engagement and willingness among beneficiaries to provide information about their experiences with the programme. A response rate above 80% is generally considered excellent in social research and suggests that the data collected is likely to be representative and reliable. It also reduces the risk of non-response bias, enhancing the validity of the study's quantitative findings as suggested by Fink (2013).

For the qualitative data, the overall response rate was slightly lower but still adequate, with 37 out of 58 targeted key informants participating, resulting in a 63.8% response rate. The breakdown shows full participation from LCV Chairpersons (100%) and Labour Officers (100%), while Community Development Officers (CDOs) and Sub County Chiefs had

response rates of 71.4% and 50% respectively. The implication is that although the qualitative responses provide useful insights from key stakeholders, future studies may need to improve engagement strategies to ensure a more balanced representation of views critical for informed programme evaluation and policy formulation.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics of respondents refer to the statistical data that describe the population of participants in a study based on key attributes such as age, gender, education level and marital status among others. The characteristics provide a better understanding of the diversity and composition of the sample, helping to identify trends, patterns, or biases that may influence the study's outcomes. In this research, demographic data was essential for ensuring that the sample was representative of the target population and for analyzing how different groups responded to the questions. The demographic characteristics of the respondents is indicated in Table 4.2 below;

Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	0	0.0%
	Female	255	100%
	Total	255	100%
Age	20-30	57	22.4%
	31-40	92	36.1%
	41-50	66	25.9%
	50+	40	15.6%
	Total	255	100%
Marital status	Single	32	12.5%
	Married	197	77.3%
	Others	26	10.2%
	Total	255	100%
Education	Primary	65	25.5%
	Secondary	146	57.3%
	Tertiary	44	12.2%
	Total	255	100%

Source: Primary data (2024)

The demographic data in Table 4.2 shows that all respondents (100%) were female, with no male participants involved in the study. This is consistent with the focus of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), which specifically targets the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship support. The implication is that the findings of the study are directly relevant to the intended beneficiaries of the program and provide gender-specific insights into the challenges and successes of UWEP. However, it also limits the perspective to only women, excluding potential views of male stakeholders who may indirectly influence or support the programme.

In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (36.1%) were between 31 and 40 years, followed by 25.9% aged 41–50, 22.4% aged 20–30, and 15.6% aged 50 and above. This distribution suggests that UWEP primarily engages women in their most economically active years (31–50) which is strategic for promoting productivity and sustainability in entrepreneurship. The implication of these findings is that UWEP is effectively reaching women at a stage in life where they are more likely to apply skills and resources to create economic value, though attention could also be given to younger and older women who may have different empowerment needs.

Objective One: Effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The first objective examined the effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts. Data was collected on the statements of participatory monitoring to ascertain the level of agreement using likert scale

The data revealed that a significant proportion of the respondents were married (77.3%), with smaller percentages being single (12.5%) or falling under 'others' (10.2%) such as widowed or divorced. This shows that the programme attracts or benefits mostly married women, possibly due to their perceived stability or availability of support systems. The implication is that marital status may influence access, participation, or effectiveness of the programme and UWEP implementers may need to ensure that single or widowed women are not unintentionally excluded from opportunities.

Regarding education, most respondents (57.3%) had secondary-level education, followed by 25.5% with primary education and only 12.2% having reached tertiary level. This suggests that UWEP largely serves women with moderate educational backgrounds. The implication is that training and support materials should be designed in a simple and practical manner to suit the educational levels of the majority. Furthermore, there is room to promote functional business literacy for women with limited formal education to enhance their entrepreneurial outcomes.

of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the items as indicated in Table 4.4

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics for participatory monitoring of UWEP in Kisoro and Kabale Districts

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std
I am actively involved in the monitoring of UWEP activities	51(20.0%)	64(25.1%)	0(0.0%)	85(33.3%)	55(21.6%)	2.89	1.490
UWEP management regularly seeks feedback from beneficiaries about the program's progress	70(27.5%)	93(36.5%)	0(0.0%)	53(20.8%)	39(15.2%)	3.40	1.460
I feel that my input in monitoring UWEP is valued by the management	61(23.9%)	76(29.8%)	0(0.0%)	71(27.8%)	47(18.5%)	3.13	1.504
There are clear channels for beneficiaries to report issues related to UWEP	63(24.7%)	90(35.3%)	15(5.9%)	48(18.8%)	39(15.3%)	3.35	1.423
The monitoring process in UWEP is transparent and easy to understand	50(16.6%)	66(25.9%)	0(0.0%)	76(29.8%)	63(24.7%)	2.86	1.521
I trust the information shared through the participatory monitoring process	65(25.5%)	105(41.2%)	0(0.0%)	48(18.8%)	37(14.5%)	3.44	1.418
UWEP management acts on the feedback gathered through participatory monitoring	61(23.9%)	76(29.8%)	0(0.0%)	71(27.8%)	47(18.5%)	3.13	1.504
Participatory monitoring has helped ensure that the resources allocated to UWEP are used effectively	49(19.2%)	84(32.9%)	0(0.0%)	72(28.3%)	50(19.6%)	3.04	1.474

Source: Primary data (2024)

From Table 4.3, the results for the statement that "I am actively involved in the monitoring of UWEP activities" indicate that 45.1% of respondents (20.0% strongly agreed, 25.1% agreed) felt involved, a slightly higher proportion of 54.9% disagreed (33.3% disagreed and 21.6% strongly disagreed). The mean score of 2.89, which falls just below the neutral midpoint of 3.0, suggests high tendency toward disagreement, implying that many beneficiaries did not feel adequately involved in the monitoring process. The standard deviation of 1.490 reflects a wide range of responses, indicating diverse experiences or perceptions across the districts. These findings suggest that the participatory monitoring in UWEP may need strengthening, with efforts to enhance inclusion and empower beneficiaries to take an active role in oversight and feedback. Improved engagement could foster ownership, transparency and overall programme effectiveness.

The results for the statement that "UWEP management regularly seeks feedback from beneficiaries about the program's progress" revealed a generally positive perception among participants.. The majority of 64% (27.5% strongly agreed, 36.5% agreed) acknowledged that management actively sought their input, compared to 36% who disagreed (20.8%) or strongly disagreed (15.2%). The mean score of 3.40, indicated a moderate inclination toward agreement. The standard deviation of 1.460 suggests a considerable spread of opinions, reflecting varied experiences across respondents. These results imply that while many beneficiaries felt engaged through feedback mechanisms,

there remained a significant portion who did not share this view. To enhance participatory monitoring, UWEP may need to ensure that feedback opportunities are consistently and equitably implemented across all areas, thereby strengthening inclusiveness, accountability and programme responsiveness.

Furthermore, the statement "I feel that my input in monitoring UWEP is valued by the management" yielded mixed responses from beneficiaries. A total of 53.7% (23.9% strongly agreed and 29.8% agreed) felt that their contributions were appreciated, while 46.3% (27.8% disagreed and 18.5% strongly disagreed) did not feel the same. The mean score of 3.13 indicates a slight leaning toward agreement, though it is very close to the neutral midpoint, suggesting moderate satisfaction with how beneficiary input is regarded. The standard deviation of 1.504 shows a wide variation in responses, pointing to inconsistencies in how different individuals perceive the value of their input. These findings imply that while some UWEP beneficiaries feel acknowledged in the monitoring process, nearly half still feel undervalued. Strengthening mechanisms for incorporating and recognizing community feedback could enhance participatory monitoring, trust, and commitment to the programme's success.

The statement that there are clear channels for beneficiaries to report issues related to UWEP received a generally positive response from participants. The majority of respondents represented by 60% (24.7% strongly agreed and 35.3% agreed) affirmed the presence of clear reporting channels, while 34.1% (18.8% disagreed and 15.3% strongly disagreed) felt otherwise.

Only a small proportion (5.9%) were undecided. The mean score of 3.35, which is above the neutral midpoint of 3.0, indicates a moderate agreement with the statement, suggesting that most beneficiaries perceive the communication structures within UWEP as accessible and functional. However, the standard deviation of 1.423 points to a relatively wide range of views, reflecting inconsistencies in experiences across the districts. The implication is that while progress has been made in establishing channels for issue reporting, gaps remain in ensuring that all beneficiaries are equally aware of or satisfied with these mechanisms. Strengthening and standardizing these channels could improve accountability, responsiveness and overall programme effectiveness.

The findings related to the statement that monitoring process in UWEP is transparent and easy to understand showed that 42.5% (16.6% strongly agreed, 25.9% agreed) believed the monitoring process is transparent and easy to follow, while a slightly higher 54.5% (29.8% disagreed, 24.7% strongly disagreed) had differing views. The mean score of 2.86 indicates that most respondents were in disagreement. The standard deviation of 1.521 reflects substantial variation in responses, suggesting that experiences differ widely across individuals and possibly locations. These findings imply that many beneficiaries face challenges in understanding or trusting the monitoring procedures of UWEP. To enhance participatory monitoring, it is crucial for UWEP management to simplify and clarify its monitoring processes, ensure consistent communication and provide training or guidance where necessary.

The findings of the study revealed that a majority of beneficiaries trust the information shared through the participatory monitoring process under UWEP as shown by 66.7% (25.5% strongly agreed and 41.2% agreed) who expressed trust in the information provided, while a smaller proportion of 33.3% (18.8% disagreed and 14.5% strongly disagreed) did not share this confidence. The mean score of 3.44 indicates a positive leaning toward agreement. The standard deviation of 1.418 suggests moderate variability in responses, showing that while many beneficiaries felt assured by the information provided, others still harbor doubts. These findings imply that although participatory monitoring is contributing to trust in UWEP processes, further efforts are needed to address the concerns of the skeptical minority by ensuring consistency, clarity, and reliability in shared information. This could enhance transparency and reinforce beneficiaries' confidence in the programme.

The findings in on UWEP management acts on the feedback gathered through participatory monitoring." 53.7% of respondents agreed (23.9% strongly agreed, 29.8% agreed), while 46.3% disagreed (27.8% disagreed, 18.5% strongly disagreed). The mean of 3.13 reflects a slight leaning toward agreement, though still close to neutral, and the standard deviation of 1.504 indicates considerable variation in responses. This suggests that while some beneficiaries perceived management as responsive to feedback, nearly half feel their input is not adequately acted upon.

Similarly, for the statement "Participatory monitoring has helped ensure that the resources allocated to UWEP are used effectively," 52.1% agreed (19.2% strongly agreed, 32.9% agreed), whereas 47.9% disagreed (28.3% disagreed, 19.6% strongly disagreed). The mean of 3.04 again reflects a borderline agreement, and the standard deviation of 1.474 shows moderate variability. These results imply that participatory monitoring is perceived by a slim majority to contribute to effective resource use, but skepticism remains among a significant number of beneficiaries. The implication is that while participatory monitoring mechanisms are in place, their actual impact on decision-making and resource management needs to be more visible and consistent to gain broader beneficiary confidence and support.

A question on what measures put in place to ensure those implementing the UWEP programme are held accountable for proper use of funds and achieving intended results, it was testified that,

"As the district coordinator, accountability is core to how I oversee program implementation at district, sub county and group levels. Firstly, we hold the staff directly responsible for activities accountable- they must submit monthly work plans and expense reports that I thoroughly review. Any discrepancies are followed up. Secondly, we sometimes conduct field monitoring visits throughout project sites so we can observe work and engage beneficiaries for feedback. Beneficiaries have also been empowered to report issues to the district coordinator and our district programme managers are evaluated based on targets like number of businesses supported, training hours delivered and feedback received" (Key Informant from Kabale District, 13/4/2024).

A key informant was asked whether there was established implementation timeline for the programme. He reported that;

"Yes, we do have an implementation timeline laid out for the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme. It's designed to ensure activities and disbursements occur according to plan. The programme runs on an annual cycle, beginning each financial year in July" (Key Informant from Kabale District, 13/4/2024).

When a key informant from Kisoro District was interrogated about whether he was satisfied with the monitoring and evaluation and feedback reporting in UWEP, his response concurred with quantitative data as he reported that;

"Monitoring and evaluation on my side is still a problem at district level due to lack of facilitation because there is no budget allocated to monitoring and evaluation exercise under UWEP. In overseeing the program and projects, planning is a very crucial element for achieving success. However, the planning for monitoring and evaluating activities of UWEP is not given the attention it deserves" (Key Informant from Kisoro District, 15/4/2024).

In agreement quantitative findings, key informant from Kabale District reported in the same way that;

“Monitoring and evaluating in UWEP requires funding because I need fuel to visit all beneficiaries to see how their businesses/projects are being run and sensitise them but most times, I do not go there because I am not given fuel. I'm not even sure whether financial resources for monitoring and evaluation of the activities are allocated within the budget” (Key Informant from Kabale District, 12/4/2024, Kisoro District, 15/4/2024).

Key informant from Kisoro Districts was asked if they train UWEP beneficiaries on the use and management of funds given under UWEP and this is what was reported;

“One of the objectives of UWEP is to enable women start their own income-generating enterprises. Prior to joining UWEP, women are equipped with a variety of knowledge and skills

including being able to identify and start income generating enterprises and manage their finances. However, through experience, we have seen that only very few of these women who received this training have been able to effectively use this knowledge and start their own enterprises and effectively manage their funds” (Key Informant from Kisoro District, 15/4/2024).

Objective Two: Effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The second objective established the effects of effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme and descriptive statistics on transparent reporting in Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale District were analysed and presented as follows;

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics on transparent reporting in Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale District

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std
Our group discusses UWEP financial reports during meetings	86(33.7%)	135(52.9%)	0(0.0%)	34(13.4%)	0(0.0%)	4.09	.932
UWEP reporting allows beneficiaries to ask questions or raise concerns	70(27.5%)	97(38.0%)	0(0.0%)	70(27.5%)	18(7.0%)	3.51	1.334
The management of and beneficiaries of UWEP provide clear information about how funds are allocated	62(24.3%)	86(33.7%)	0(0.0%)	57(22.4%)	50(19.6%)	3.21	1.511
Reports on UWEP project progress are shared in a timely manner	86(33.7%)	93(36.5%)	0(0.0%)	55(21.6%)	21(8.2%)	3.66	1.353
I am regularly updated on how well UWEP is performing	52(20.4%)	62(24.3%)	0(0.0%)	81(31.8%)	60(23.5%)	2.86	1.519
UWEP management provides clear information about how funds are allocated	57(22.4%)	71(27.8%)	0(0.0%)	68(26.7%)	59(23.1%)	3.00	1.541
I feel confident that UWEP information shared with us is accurate	59(23.2%)	89(34.9%)	0(0.0%)	61(23.9%)	46(18.0%)	3.21	1.483
I receive regular updates on the financial performance of our UWEP group	65(25.5%)	78(30.6%)	0(0.0%)	60(23.5%)	52(20.4%)	3.17	1.535
There are clear and well known guidelines for disbursement of UWEP funds	83(32.5%)	108(42.4%)	0(0.0%)	38(14.9%)	26(10.2%)	3.72	1.330
Transparent reporting has helped improve trust in UWEP management	56(22.0%)	68(26.7%)	0(0.0%)	68(26.7%)	63(24.6%)	2.95	1.551
Regular progress updates are shared widely to all stakeholders of UWEP program	67(26.3%)	85(33.3%)	0(0.0%)	57(22.4%)	46(18.0%)	3.27	1.504

Source: Primary data (2024)

The results in Table 4.4 show that a majority of respondents either agreed (52.9%) or strongly agreed (33.7%) that their group discusses Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) financial reports during meetings. This implies a high level of transparency in reporting within the programme. Notably, none of the respondents were undecided or strongly disagreed, and only 13.4% disagreed, suggesting that a very small portion felt out or uninformed. The mean score of 4.09 reinforces a general agreement with the statement, while the standard deviation of 0.932 indicates a moderate spread of responses around the mean, showing that most respondents share similar views. In the context of UWEP in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, these findings reflect positively on transparent reporting practices, which are essential for building trust, promoting accountability, and enhancing the effectiveness of women's empowerment initiatives.

The results in Table 4.4 indicate that 27.5% of the respondents strongly agreed (27.5%) and (38.0%) agreed that UWEP reporting allows beneficiaries to ask questions or raise concerns. However, a notable 27.5% disagreed, and 7.0% strongly disagreed, showing that the reporting process does not adequately provide room for beneficiary feedback. No respondent was undecided, indicating that all had a clear opinion on the matter. The mean score of 3.51 suggests a moderate level of agreement, while the standard deviation of 1.334 indicates a higher variation in responses. In relation to the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, this implies that while a majority believe there is space for raising concerns during reporting, a significant minority felt excluded from the feedback process. This variation suggests a need for UWEP to strengthen participatory reporting mechanisms to ensure more inclusive and transparent communication with all beneficiaries.

Regarding the clarity of information provided by UWEP management and beneficiaries about funds allocation, 24.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 33.7% agreed that clear information is provided, while 22.4% disagreed and 19.6% strongly disagreed. There were no undecided respondents, suggesting that all participants had a definite opinion. The mean score of 3.21 indicates a neutral to slightly positive perception, and the relatively high standard deviation of 1.511 suggests a wide variation in responses. In relation to the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, these findings imply that although some beneficiaries acknowledge transparency in fund allocation, a substantial portion perceive gaps in how clearly financial information is communicated. This underscores the need for UWEP to improve the consistency and clarity of financial disclosures to foster greater trust and accountability among all stakeholders.

The results in also show that a majority of respondents 33.7% strongly agreed and 36.5% agreed that reports on UWEP projects progress are shared in a timely manner, but 21.6% disagreed and 8.2% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.66 reflects a generally positive perception toward timely reporting, while the

standard deviation of 1.353 suggests some variability in the responses. In the context of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, these findings imply that while most beneficiaries recognize efforts to provide timely updates on project progress, there remains a notable minority who experience delays or inconsistencies. This points to a need for UWEP to strengthen and standardize its reporting timelines to enhance transparency and ensure consistent access to project information for all stakeholders.

The results presented revealed a mixed perception among respondents regarding transparent reporting in the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro and Kabale districts. Specifically, only 20.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 24.3% agreed that they were regularly updated on how well UWEP was performing, indicating that less than half of the participants felt adequately informed. Conversely, a significant proportion of respondents disagreed (31.8%) or strongly disagreed (23.5%) with the statement, suggesting dissatisfaction with the level of transparency in reporting. Notably, no respondents were undecided, indicating strong and polarized opinions on this matter. The mean score of 2.86, which falls below the neutral point of 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale, further confirmed that overall, participants tend to disagree that UWEP provided regular performance updates. These findings imply a critical need for UWEP to strengthen its mechanisms for transparent reporting to ensure that beneficiaries are consistently informed, which is essential for accountability, trust-building, and effective programme participation.

The results indicated a divided perception among respondents regarding the transparency of fund allocation under the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro and Kabale districts. While 22.4% strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that UWEP management provides clear information on fund allocation, totaling 50.2% with a positive view, an almost equal proportion expressed dissatisfaction, with 26.7% disagreeing and 23.1% strongly disagreeing. Notably, no respondents were undecided, reflecting strong opinions on the issue. The mean score of 3.00 suggests a neutral overall stance, indicating that perceptions are evenly balanced between agreement and disagreement. The relatively high standard deviation of 1.541 points to significant variation in responses, suggesting inconsistent communication practices or varying levels of access to information across different groups. These findings imply that while some beneficiaries perceive transparency in fund allocation, a large portion remains unconvinced or dissatisfied. This signals a need for UWEP management to enhance clarity and consistency in communicating financial information to improve trust, accountability, and beneficiary engagement in programme activities.

The results indicate a moderately positive perception regarding the accuracy of information shared by the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro and Kabale districts. A combined 58.1% of respondents (23.2% strongly agree and 34.9% agree) expressed confidence in the accuracy of

the information provided by UWEP. However, a notable proportion 23.9% disagreed and 18.0% strongly disagreed indicates lingering concerns among a significant segment of beneficiaries. No respondents were undecided, suggesting clear and definitive views on this issue. The mean score of 3.21 shows a general leaning toward agreement, though not strongly. The standard deviation of 1.483 reflects a wide spread in responses, further emphasizing varied experiences or levels of trust among participants. These findings imply that while more than half of the respondents trust the accuracy of UWEP's information, there remains a considerable portion with doubts. This underlines the need for UWEP to reinforce the credibility and consistency of its communications to foster greater trust and engagement among all beneficiaries.

The results presented in Table 4.4 provide insights into beneficiaries' perceptions of transparent reporting within the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) in Kisoro and Kabale Districts. On the statement "I receive regular updates on the financial performance of our UWEP group," a combined 56.1% (25.5% strongly agree, 30.6% agree) expressed satisfaction, while 43.9% disagreed to some extent. The mean of 3.17 suggests a moderate level of agreement, though the high standard deviation (1.535) indicates varied experiences among respondents.

More still, concerning the statement that there are clear and well-known guidelines for disbursement of UWEP funds, 32.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42.4% agreed. This suggests that a significant majority of beneficiaries were confident about the transparency of the fund disbursement process. The mean score of 3.72 further reinforces this positive perception, indicating general agreement. Additionally, the relatively low standard deviation of 1.330 reflects a high level of consistency in responses, suggesting that most respondents share similar views on the clarity of the guidelines. This indicates that UWEP has been successful in establishing transparent procedures for fund allocation, which may contribute to beneficiary trust in the programme's financial management.

Regarding the statement "Transparent reporting has helped improve trust in UWEP management" showed a nearly even split, with 48.7% agreeing and 51.3% disagreeing. The mean score of 2.95, just below the neutral midpoint, suggests a slight lean toward disagreement. This indicates that while some beneficiaries believed transparency enhances trust in the programme, others remain unconvinced. The standard deviation of 1.551 shows that there is considerable variation in how respondents perceived transparency's impact on trust, pointing to inconsistent experiences or expectations. The results suggest a need for UWEP to address these concerns and work on improving transparency to foster greater trust.

Furthermore, on the statement that regular progress updates are shared widely to all stakeholders of the UWEP program, 59.6% of respondents agreed (26.3% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed), indicating that a majority of beneficiaries feel that updates are being shared widely. However, 40.4% (22.4% disagreed

and 18.0% strongly disagreed) believed otherwise. The mean score of 3.27 on a 5-point Likert scale shows a modest inclination toward agreement, suggesting that while efforts have been made to share progress updates, they may not be reaching all stakeholders effectively. The high standard deviation of 1.504 signals considerable variability in experiences, which could be due to disparities in access to information, differences in group leadership communication, or regional inconsistencies in programme implementation. These findings imply that although UWEP has made progress in disseminating updates, the communication strategy may not be uniformly effective across all areas or stakeholder groups. The significant proportion of respondents who disagreed points to a gap in inclusiveness and consistency. To build trust and enhance stakeholder participation, UWEP should strengthen its information dissemination channels particularly in rural or underserved areas and ensure that all beneficiaries, regardless of location or group affiliation, receive timely and comprehensive updates about programme progress.

"Yes, for the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme we do have publicly disclosed selection criteria and we also publish reports on the usage of the disbursed funds. The selection criteria are communicated in women community outreach sessions and programme discussion on radio. This is to ensure transparency in the application and selection process. Furthermore, annual reports are produced that highlight details such as number of beneficiaries supported, total funds disbursed and repaid (Key Informant from Kabale District, 13/4/2024, Key Informant from Kisoro District, 16/4/2024).

A key informant was asked whether financial information in Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) like budgets and spending are disclosed publicly and this is what was reported;

The Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) has mechanisms for financial reporting, but the extent to which financial information, including budgets and expenditures, is disclosed publicly varies. While some financial details are shared through official government reports, parliamentary briefings, and program evaluations, access to detailed financial statements by the general public remains limited. There are channels for accountability, such as audits and monitoring reports, but these are not always widely disseminated to the public, and accessing them requires engagement with relevant government offices. In some cases, program beneficiaries and stakeholders receive summarized financial updates, but comprehensive spending breakdowns are not always made readily available". (Key Informant from Kabale District, 13/4/2024).

Key informants were asked whether there are clear and well-known guidelines for the disbursement of UWEP funds, and it was stated that;

"Yes, there are official guidelines for the disbursement of UWEP funds, which outline the eligibility criteria, application process, approval mechanisms, and repayment terms. These guidelines are documented in programme manuals, government

circulars, and official communication from the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development". (Key Informant

from Kabale District, 13/4/2024, Key Informant from Kisoro District, 16/4/2024).

Descriptive statistics of performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts

This section addressed the various measurements of performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme and the responses to the items were tabulated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics of performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Kisoro and Kabale Districts

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std
Our input as a group is considered in setting priorities to be achieved	78(30.6%)	92(36.1%)	0(0.0%)	48(18.8%)	37(14.5%)	3.49	1.455
Our group's financial needs are easily and adequately addressed by the support from UWEP programme	49(19.2%)	55(21.6%)	0(0.0%)	82(32.1%)	69(27.1%)	2.74	1.526
We have full control over our own financial resources as a group	75(29.4%)	99(38.9%)	0(0.0%)	46(18.0%)	35(13.7%)	3.52	1.425
Our opinions as group members are considered important during decision making process	69(27.1%)	88(34.4%)	0(0.0%)	55(21.6%)	43(16.9%)	3.33	1.488
I feel am socially and economically empowered by UWEP programme	47(18.4%)	59(23.2%)	0(0.0%)	84(32.9%)	65(25.5%)	2.76	1.506
I have easy access to affordable financial services from other institutions due to UWEP programme	46(18.0%)	53(20.8%)	0(0.0%)	86(33.7%)	70(27.5%)	2.68	1.508
My access to finance from UWEP has enabled me to invest in business and created employment	64(25.1%)	83(32.6%)	0(0.0%)	58(22.7%)	50(19.6%)	3.21	1.482
I can afford to buy my own assets and have full control	47(18.4%)	59(23.1%)	0(0.0%)	81(31.8%)	28(26.7%)	2.75	1.516
I have gained knowledge and skills on how skills to properly manage my business	60(23.5%)	79(31.0%)	0(0.0%)	52(20.4%)	64(25.1%)	3.07	1.550
My savings have increased as a result of the support from UWEP	63(24.7%)	81(31.8%)	0(0.0%)	62(24.3%)	49(19.2%)	3.19	1.510

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study findings in Table 4.5 indicated that 78(30.6%) strongly agreed that their input as a group is considered in setting priorities to be achieved with the support from UWEP programme, 92(36.1%) agreed with the statement, 0(0.0%) undecided, 48(18.8%) disagreed and 37(14.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean response was 3.49 indicating that most of the respondents were in agreement with the statement with a standard deviation of 1.455 indicating a higher variation in responses. The findings imply that while there is generally positive feedback regarding the consideration of participant input in setting priorities, addressing the concerns of those who felt less involved could enhance overall satisfaction and effectiveness of the UWEP programme's implementation.

The study findings in Table 4.5 on the statement “Our group's financial needs are easily and adequately addressed by the support from UWEP programme” revealed that 49(19.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 55(21.6%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 82(32.1%) disagreed and 69(27.1%) strongly disagreed (Mean=2.74, Std=1.526). The findings imply that while some participants found UWEP program beneficial for their financial needs, a significant proportion does not, indicating room for programmatic improvements and further investigation into participant satisfaction and program effectiveness.

Study findings in Table 4.5 revealed that 75(29.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 99(38.9%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 46(18.0%) disagreed and 35(13.7%) strongly

disagreed with the statement that they have full control over their own financial resources as a group. The mean response of 3.52 indicates a generally positive perception of beneficiaries having full control over financial resources as a group. However, the standard deviation of 1.425 suggests some variation in responses, suggesting that while many participants feel empowered, there are still underlying challenges or barriers that need to be addressed to enhance overall financial autonomy within the group. Furthermore, study findings in Table 4.5 indicated that 69(27.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 88(34.4%) agreed with the statement that “Our opinions as group members are considered important during decision making process”. 0(0.0%) undecided, 55(21.6%) disagreed and 43(16.9%) strongly disagreed (Mean= 3.33, Std=1.488).

The findings of the study indicated on Table 4.5 on the statement that “I feel am socially and economically empowered by UWEP programme” revealed that 47(18.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, that they feel socially and economically empowered by the programme, 59(23.2%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 84(32.9%) disagreed and 65(25.5%) strongly disagreed (Mean=2.76, Std=1.506).

Regarding the statement that “I have easy access to affordable financial services from other institutions due to UWEP programme”, the findings of the study indicated that 46(18.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 53(20.8%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 86(33.7%) of respondents disagreed and 70(27.5%) strongly disagreed that they have easy access to affordable financial services from other institutions due to the programme (Mean=2.68, Std=1.508). The mean score suggests that most of the respondents disagreed about the programme's effects on increasing women's access to affordable financial services from other financial institutions.

Table 4.5 shows that 64(25.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that their access to finance from UWEP programme has enabled them to invest in business and created employment” showed that 83(32.6%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 58(22.7%) disagreed and 50(19.6%) strongly disagreed (Mean=3.21, Std=1.482). The study findings indicated that a significant portion of respondents perceived that access to finance through the UWEP program positively impacted their ability to invest in businesses and generate employment.

This implication aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) by promoting economic empowerment and reducing poverty through sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, it supports Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by facilitating productive employment and decent work for all, thus contributing to broader economic development and social stability in the community. These

findings underscore the program's potential to drive local economic growth and enhance social well-being through targeted financial interventions.

The study responses concerning the statement “I can afford to buy my own assets and have full control over them” revealed that 47(18.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 59(23.1%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 81(31.8%) disagreed, 28(26.7%) strongly disagreed with the mean score of 2.75 and the standard deviation of 1.516, indicating moderate dissatisfaction on asset control.

Findings of the study in Table 4.5 revealed that 60(23.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 79(31.0%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 52(20.4%) disagreed and 64(25.1%) strongly disagreed that they gained knowledge and skills on how to properly manage their business (Mean=3.07, Std=1.550). The results indicated that a substantial proportion of respondents acknowledge gaining knowledge and skills in business management through the program, with few respondents disagreeing.

Regarding the statement that “My savings have increased as a result of the support from UWEP”, study findings indicated that 63(24.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 81(31.8%) agreed, 0(0.0%) undecided, 62(24.3%) of the respondents disagreed and 49(19.2%) strongly disagreed with the mean score of 3.19 and the standard deviation of 1.510.

The study findings revealed that a significant number of respondents perceive an increase in savings due to support from the UWEP program, with 24.7% strongly agreeing and 31.8% agreeing with this statement. This suggests that the programme has effectively contributed to improving financial resilience among beneficiaries, potentially leading to greater economic stability and opportunities for future investment. These findings align closely with efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) by enhancing economic security and reducing vulnerability among marginalized groups.

Hypotheses Testing

The study used multiple regression analysis to test the three research hypotheses

Multiple regression results for the effects of accountability mechanisms on performance of UWEP

Table 4.6 shows the findings on the joint effects of independent variables (accountability mechanisms) on the dependent variable (performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme);

Table 4.6: Multiple regression results for the effects of accountability mechanisms on performance of UWEP

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.721 ^a	.519	.512	.78358	.519	67.510	4	250	.000
ANOVA ^a									
Model			Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression		165.802		4	41.451	67.510	.000 ^b	
	Residual		153.498		250	.614			
	Total		319.301		254				
Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)		1.888	.300		6.304	.000		
	Participatory monitoring		.472	.113	.313	4.182	.000	.342	2.922
	Transparent reporting		.405	.118	.255	3.435	.001	.349	2.862

a. Predictors: (Constant), Participatory monitoring, Transparent reporting

b. Predicted: (Performance of UWEP)

The results presented in Table 4.6 indicate that accountability mechanisms significantly affects the performance of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). The model summary shows a strong multiple correlation coefficient ($R=0.721$) and the R Square value of 0.519 means that approximately 51.9% of the variance in the performance of UWEP is explained by the accountability mechanisms included in the model, namely participatory monitoring and transparent reporting. The ANOVA shows that the model is statistically significant ($F=67.510$, $p<.000$), indicating that the predictors jointly have meaningful effects on the performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP).

The coefficients table further reveals that both participatory monitoring and transparent reporting are statistically significant predictors of performance of UWEP. The beta coefficient of participatory monitoring is $\beta=0.472$, $p<.000$), indicating a unit increase in accountability brings about a 0.472 unit change in performance of UWEP and the beta coefficient of determination for transparent reporting is $\beta=0.405$, $p=.001$) also indicating that an increase in accountability by one unit improves performance of UWEP by 0.405 units.

These findings suggest that increased efforts in involving stakeholders in monitoring programme activities and providing clear, accessible, and honest reports significantly enhance programme outcomes. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) for both predictors are below 5 (2.922 and 2.862), indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern and the results are reliable. These findings have critical implications for policy and practice in the implementation of UWEP and similar empowerment initiatives. They suggest that strengthening participatory monitoring such as involving beneficiaries in planning, tracking progress, and evaluating projects and ensuring transparent reporting can substantially boost programme performance. This means that programme implementers and policymakers should prioritize the development of strong accountability frameworks that empower beneficiaries to participate and access timely, accurate information. Such efforts are likely to enhance trust, ownership, and responsiveness, ultimately leading to more successful and sustainable empowerment outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings was presented as follows;

Effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The findings regarding “I am actively involved in the monitoring of UWEP activities” received a mean score of 2.89, indicating a slight tendency toward disagreement. This shows that many beneficiaries felt excluded from the monitoring process. This finding partially contradicts Kiraga (2023), who found that active involvement of participants in planning and monitoring in Kabale District led to improved service delivery. However, it must be acknowledged that Kiraga’s study focused on community development services, which differ in scope and goals from UWEP’s entrepreneurial objectives. This contextual difference may account for the divergence in findings regarding perceived beneficiary involvement.

In contrast, the findings on whether UWEP management regularly sought feedback from beneficiaries were more favorable, with a majority agreeing (mean = 3.40). This aligns with the findings of Mbuvi and Gekara (2019) who concluded that stakeholder involvement, including feedback mechanisms, significantly contributed to the success of gender-focused projects in Nairobi. Similarly, the perception that feedback is acted upon (mean=3.13) also shows agreement, indicating some level of responsiveness by UWEP managers. These outcomes suggest that although direct involvement in monitoring may be lacking, there is evidence that beneficiary voices are being acknowledged to a limited extent.

Another area of partial alignment with literature is the perception of the value attached to beneficiaries’ input. While 53.7% of respondents felt their input was valued, the mean score of 3.13 indicates only a slight agreement. This mirrors findings by Baghasheva, Nandi, and Rogger (2020) who emphasized the importance of incorporating participant feedback to enhance women entrepreneurship programs. However, their study criticized the lack of self-reporting mechanisms, which may explain the inconsistencies in perceptions found in this study. The relatively high standard deviation (1.504) supports the notion that valuing of input is not uniformly experienced across the study areas. Regarding the existence of clear reporting channels (mean=3.35) and trust in information shared (mean=3.44), the study presents findings that resonate with both Leariwa (2021) and Mbuvi and Gekara (2019) who emphasized the role of structured feedback and communication mechanisms in improving project performance.

The participants' recognition of clear channels and credible information flows suggests that the foundational aspects of monitoring are in place within UWEP. However, as Leariwa noted in a different institutional context, the effectiveness of such structures depends heavily on consistent follow-through and transparency in resource utilization, which remains questionable in the UWEP context.

Finally, the perception of the transparency and clarity of UWEP’s monitoring process showed more disagreement (mean=2.86), indicating skepticism about the system's openness. Similarly, the belief that participatory monitoring has helped

ensure effective resource use only narrowly leaned toward agreement (mean = 3.04). These findings partly contradict earlier research particularly Mbuvi and Gekara (2019) who found that effective monitoring and stakeholder engagement contributed to programme’s success. This discrepancy could stem from differences in implementation, oversight mechanisms, or the capacity of local UWEP structures to communicate results. The higher standard deviations observed in most of the variables suggest variability in how different groups experience UWEP’s participatory monitoring process highlighting the importance of localized improvements to enhance program inclusivity and performance.

Effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The findings from the study suggest a strong agreement among respondents regarding the discussion of UWEP financial reports during meetings with 86.6% of the respondents. This aligns with Nakato and Muwanga (2023) whose study emphasized that clear and consistent financial reporting fosters trust and accountability. Both sources highlight the importance of transparent communication for enhancing the effectiveness of women empowerment programmes. The high mean score of 4.09 in this study further supports the literature's assertion that transparency is crucial for building trust among beneficiaries.

Furthermore, while a majority of respondents (65.5%) believed that UWEP reporting allows beneficiaries to raise concerns, a significant minority (34.5%) disagreed. This discrepancy contrasts with Akello et al. (2022) who found that transparent reporting mechanisms significantly increased beneficiaries' commitment. The mixed perceptions about feedback opportunities suggest a gap in the participatory reporting processes highlighted in the literature. This indicates a need for UWEP to enhance its feedback mechanisms, as the literature advocates for inclusive communication to ensure all beneficiaries feel involved in the process.

Additionally, the findings revealed a divided perception regarding the clarity of information about fund allocation, with a combined 42% disagreeing. This to some extent agrees with the literature, which suggests that transparent reporting leads to improved accountability and resource utilization. For instance, Wang et al. (2022) found that clear funding information boosts confidence in program success. The neutral mean score of 3.21 in the current study indicates that while some beneficiaries recognize transparency, many perceive gaps in communication, highlighting an area where UWEP needs to improve to meet the expectations set forth in existing studies. More still, the results indicated that while 70.2% of respondents felt reports on progress of the programme are shared timely, a notable minority expresses dissatisfaction. This reflects findings from Muriithi et al. (2021), which underscore the importance of regular updates for stakeholder engagement. However, the variation in responses, as indicated by the standard deviation, suggests inconsistencies in the timeliness of communication across different groups. This inconsistency points to a critical area for improvement in UWEP's reporting practices, aligning with the

literature that emphasizes the need for regular and timely updates to enhance beneficiary trust.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were made arising from the findings of the study.

Effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The study confirmed that participatory monitoring significantly and positively affects performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in both districts. This means that a positive increase in participatory monitoring in Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme increases improves its performance. This suggests that ensuring participatory monitoring in UWEP is an important factor for maximizing the performance of UWEP in empowering women.

Effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The study concluded that there are significant positive effects of transparent reporting on performance of UWEP in the selected districts. This provided a clear evidence to reject the null hypothesis that transparency has no effect on women economic empowerment. It was conclusively shown that higher transparency in reporting significantly contributes to improved performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in the districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusions;

Effects of participatory monitoring on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

Based on the findings, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, in collaboration with local UWEP implementation teams, should prioritize strengthening participatory monitoring by developing clear guidelines and capacity-building programs. Many beneficiaries reported feeling excluded from monitoring activities. To address this, UWEP staff should organize regular community-based monitoring forums and training sessions to equip women with knowledge and tools for effective participation. This would promote inclusion, build ownership, and make the programme more responsive to the needs of all beneficiaries.

Secondly, while a majority of respondents acknowledged that UWEP management seeks feedback, inconsistent experiences across districts call for more standardized and equitable practices. Local government leaders and UWEP focal persons should institutionalize regular, structured feedback sessions in all beneficiary areas to ensure inclusivity. Utilizing mobile platforms, suggestion boxes, and community dialogues can help gather input from even the most remote beneficiaries. Doing so

will not only improve accountability but also build trust and show responsiveness to community voices.

Additionally, the findings suggest that many beneficiaries felt their feedback is not valued or acted upon. UWEP management at both district and national levels should create feedback utilization reports and share how beneficiary input influences decisions. These should be displayed at community centers or shared through local radio. Such transparency will show that beneficiary input is not merely symbolic, but integral to program decisions, thereby improving trust, engagement, and long-term sustainability of UWEP initiatives.

Finally, the findings highlight that while some progress has been made in trust, feedback, and reporting mechanisms, gaps in clarity and transparency still exist. UWEP implementers should develop user-friendly monitoring tools and materials translated into local languages to improve comprehension. They should also conduct routine monitoring sensitization campaigns using local leaders and peer educators. Making processes transparent, understandable and inclusive will help bridge perception gaps, strengthen participatory monitoring, and ultimately enhance the programme's impact and credibility among women in Kisoro and Kabale Districts.

Effects of transparent reporting on performance of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

Based on the findings, it is recommended that UWEP management at the district and national levels strengthen and formalize transparent financial reporting mechanisms. While the majority of respondents acknowledged that financial reports are discussed during meetings, a significant minority still felt left out. To address this, UWEP should adopt standardized reporting formats and ensure that all beneficiary groups receive simplified, written financial summaries ahead of each meeting. This should be supported by training local group leaders on effective financial communication to foster inclusivity and understanding.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, under which UWEP operates, should work to enhance participatory feedback systems during reporting sessions. Findings revealed that a considerable number of beneficiaries felt excluded from raising questions or concerns. To address this, UWEP should introduce structured questions and answers sessions during every report presentation and create anonymous feedback channels such as suggestion boxes or digital platforms, ensuring that all voices are heard and addressed in future decisions.

Additionally, it is essential for UWEP district focal persons to ensure consistency and clarity in financial disclosures, especially regarding funds allocation. While some participants confirmed receiving clear information, others expressed confusion or doubt. To improve this, focal persons should conduct periodic training sessions on how funds are allocated and provide visual guides such as flowcharts or infographics to demystify financial procedures. This will help increase trust and reduce misinformation within the programme.

Lastly, the local government leaders and Community Development Officers (CDOs) should collaborate with UWEP teams to monitor and enforce timely reporting of project progress and financial updates. The findings highlighted inconsistencies in the timing and regularity of updates, which risks undermining trust. Local leaders should schedule routine monitoring visits and follow up with group leaders to ensure timelines are met. These efforts will help build a culture of transparency, reinforce trust, and improve beneficiaries' engagement with the programme.

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