

Rewards management and employee performance. A case of Kazo District Local Government, Uganda.

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Abstract

Background

This study examined the effect of rewards management on employee performance in Kazo District Local Government, Uganda.

Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional design with a predominantly quantitative approach, complemented by key informant interviews. A sample of 261 respondents was drawn from a target population of 800 employees using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, with stratified and simple random sampling applied across health, education, and administrative cadres, yielding 240 valid responses (92.0% response rate). Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, a one-tailed Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression in SPSS, while qualitative data from key informant interviews were analysed thematically.

Results

Most of the 240 respondents were female (59.2%), from the Education department (53.3%), and in technical roles (46.7%), with 76.7% having served more than six years and 43.3% holding a degree, indicating a predominantly female, experienced, and fairly well-educated workforce. Employees rated rewards management ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.72$) and employee performance ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.73$) as moderate. Rewards management was positively and significantly related to employee performance ($r = 0.387$, $p < 0.01$, one-tailed) and explained 15.0% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.150$, $F(1, 238) = 36.845$, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative findings showed that delayed salaries, inconsistent non-monetary rewards, and perceived unfairness constrained performance.

Conclusion

Rewards management is a significant, though partial, predictor of employee performance in local government; the moderate relationship reflects implementation weaknesses rather than a flaw in reward-based motivation.

Recommendation

There is a need to establish a salary tracking and transparency committee, formalising non-monetary reward policies, piloting a performance-linked allowance scheme, and convening a district-ministry dialogue forum to address systemic barriers to reward administration.

Keywords: Rewards Management, Employee Performance, Local Government, Public Sector, Uganda, Kazo District

Submitted: August 20, 2026

Accepted: August 28, 2026

Published: September 2, 2026

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Background

Employee performance is a cornerstone of effective service delivery (Yusuf et al., 2022). Local governments play a critical role in delivering services such as health, education, infrastructure, and sanitation, and their performance is largely dependent on the commitment and efficiency of their employees (OECD, 2019). Employee performance refers to observable and measurable work-related behaviours that contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, encompassing productivity, quality of service, and

reliability, particularly in terms of attendance and goal fulfilment in public organisations (Siraj & Yasmeen, 2025). Globally, advanced economies face declining engagement and stagnating productivity in knowledge-intensive sectors, while emerging economies grapple with expanding output amid informality and weak institutional oversight (International Labour Organization, 2022). Within East Africa, performance is shaped by structural limitations, including inadequate infrastructure and widespread informality, with over 70 percent of the region's workforce

operating informally (African Development Bank, 2023). In Uganda specifically, informal employment exceeds 85 percent, limiting accountability and efficiency, while public sector performance is affected by persistent inefficiencies and governance gaps (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Office of the Auditor General, 2022).

Page | 2 Rewards management refers to the strategic alignment of financial and non-financial rewards, such as salary, bonuses, recognition, and development opportunities, with organisational objectives to motivate and retain employees. Reward systems are most effective when aligned with both employee expectations and institutional goals, integrating intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Figueiredo et al., 2025). Effective rewards management has been linked to higher employee performance across both public and private sectors: structured incentive programmes in OECD member countries have been found to increase staff retention and work efficiency (Armstrong, 2020), while ambiguous or misaligned reward structures are associated with declining productivity and rising absenteeism (World Bank, 2021). Mafini and Dlodlo (2014) showed that non-monetary rewards such as career development and recognition improved morale and performance in South African municipalities, while Kipkebut (2016) demonstrated that regular, timely salaries significantly reduced absenteeism in rural counties of Kenya. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors, such as salary and working conditions, and motivators, such as recognition and growth opportunities. It informs this study by conceptualising how the presence or absence of rewards influences employee performance: monetary rewards function as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction, while non-monetary rewards such as recognition and training serve as motivators that can directly enhance performance. Equity theory further posits that employees assess fairness by comparing their input-output ratios to those of peers; perceptions of inequity can depress performance regardless of the absolute level of rewards offered. This study draws on both frameworks to examine how salary structures, incentives, promotions, and non-monetary rewards directly affect employee performance in Kazo District.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of rewards management on employee performance in Kazo District Local Government.

Objective of the study

The study was guided by the following specific objective: to establish the relationship between rewards management and employee performance in Kazo District Local Government.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a positive relationship between rewards management and employee performance in Kazo District Local Government.

Methods

Research design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, in which data were collected from a representative sample of the target population at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design enabled the simultaneous examination of the relationship between rewards management and employee performance across departments and cadres within Kazo District Local Government (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). A predominantly quantitative approach was adopted, complemented by key informant interviews that provided qualitative insight into the perceptions and contextual factors shaping the statistical relationships observed. *Data collection for this study was conducted from 9 May 2026 to 9 July 2026.*

Study area

The study was conducted in Kazo District, which is bordered by Kiruhura, Ibanda, Sembabule, and Kyegegwa Districts. The district comprises several sub-counties, including Engari, Kazo, Rwemikoma, Migina, Kanoni, and Nkungu, and the town councils of Kazo and Buremba, with an administrative structure spanning Administration and Management, Finance, Statutory Bodies, Health, Education, Works, Water and Roads, Production, Audit, Planning, Trade, Local Economic Development, Community-Based Services, and Natural Resources.

Population and sample size

The target population comprised employees of Kazo District Local Government, totalling 800 individuals (Kazo District Local Government records, 2024), spanning district headquarters staff, health workers, and teachers in government primary schools. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, on which their widely used sampling table is based:

$$n = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{[d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)]}$$

where $X^2 = 3.841$ (the table value of chi-square for one degree of freedom at the 0.05 confidence level), N = the population size (800), P = the population proportion (assumed at 0.50 to maximise the sample size), and d = the degree of accuracy (0.05). Substituting these values yields $n = (3.841 \times 800 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) / [(0.05^2 \times 799) + (3.841 \times 0.5 \times 0.5)] \approx 260$, which is consistent with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) published table value for a population of 800. Each fractional allocation was rounded up to avoid under-representation, particularly for smaller strata. This conservative rounding, applied consistently across all strata, produced a final sample of 261.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed: simple random sampling ensured that every member of the population had an equal chance of selection within each stratum (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), while purposive sampling was used to select key informants,

including the Chief Administrative Officer and Heads of Department, based on their specific knowledge of rewards administration within their departments. Stratified sampling was applied to ensure proportional representation from the different departments and cadres (Cochran, 1977).

Page | 3 **Table 1: Sample population and sampling technique**

Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	
Health workers in government health facilities	128	42	Simple Sampling	Random
District headquarters staff	51	17	Simple Sampling	Random
Teachers in government primary schools	609	198	Simple Sampling	Random
Key informants (CAO & Heads of Department)	12	4	Purposive Sampling	
Total	800	261		

Source: Kazo District Local Government Records, 2024

Inclusion criteria

The study included substantively employed staff of Kazo District Local Government — health workers, teachers in government primary schools, and district headquarters staff — who had served for at least six months at the time of data collection and who provided informed consent. Key informants were included based on their direct involvement in reward administration decisions.

Exclusion criteria

Employees on probation, casual labourers, staff on extended leave (for example, maternity, study, or sick leave) during the data collection period, and any eligible staff member who declined to give consent were excluded from the study.

Data sources and collection methods

Data were collected using a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through structured self-administered questionnaires distributed to health workers, district headquarters staff, and teachers, and through semi-structured interviews conducted with the Chief Administrative Officer, the Human Resource Officer, and Heads of Department. Secondary data were drawn from district internal audit reports, Service Commission reports, and the Ministry of Public Service Rewards and Sanctions Framework.

Measurement of variables

Table 2: Operational definition and measurement of variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Dimensions	Measurement
Rewards Management (Independent Variable)	The strategic design and administration of financial and non-financial compensation to motivate and retain employees.	Monetary rewards (salary, bonuses, allowances); non-monetary rewards (recognition, leave, career development); equity and fairness in reward distribution	5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
Employee Performance (Dependent Variable)	Observable and measurable work-related behaviours contributing to organisational goals.	Task performance (timeliness, accuracy, goal attainment); contextual performance (teamwork, procedural compliance);	Self-reported 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Variable	Operational Definition	Dimensions	Measurement
		adaptive performance and retention intention	

Validity and reliability

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Content validity was established through expert panel review to ensure that questionnaire items adequately reflected the domain of each construct. The instrument was reviewed by three experts, two academics specialising in organisational psychology and human resource

management, and one practitioner with extensive experience in Ugandan local government administration. The Content Validity Index was computed at 0.92, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.80 (DeVellis, 2016). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable.

Table 3: Reliability coefficients

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (N = 240)	Interpretation
Rewards Management	6	0.842	Excellent
Employee Performance	6	0.823	Excellent

Bias

Several safeguards were applied to minimise potential sources of bias. Selection bias was minimised through stratified and simple random sampling, ensuring proportional representation across departments and cadres. Response and social desirability bias were mitigated by assuring respondents of anonymity and confidentiality, using standardised, pre-tested items, and triangulating quantitative data with qualitative accounts from key informants. Instrument bias was addressed through expert panel review (Content Validity Index = 0.92) and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability check prior to administration. The questionnaire was also pilot-tested to refine ambiguous items, and data collection followed a standardised drop-and-pick procedure to minimise interviewer-related variation.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Bishop Stuart University Research Ethics Committee (BSU-REC), under ethical clearance number BSU-REC-2026-730, approved on 9 May 2026. Before data collection, permission was sought from Kazo District Local Government, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents' identities and responses were assured and maintained throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents' identities and responses were assured and maintained throughout the study.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) summarised respondents' perceptions, while a one-tailed Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient tested the

directional hypothesis that rewards management is positively related to employee performance. A one-tailed test was applied given the directional nature of the hypothesis, which increases statistical power and aligns with theoretical expectations (Pallant, 2020). Simple linear regression was used to determine the extent to which rewards management predicts employee performance. Qualitative data from key informant interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically, with recurring themes triangulated against the quantitative findings.

Results

Participant flow and response rate

Of the target population of 800 employees of Kazo District Local Government, 261 individuals were selected for the study: 257 survey respondents selected through stratified and simple random sampling across the health, education, and administrative cadres, and four key informants selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in reward administration. Structured questionnaires were administered to all 261 selected survey respondents. Of these, 240 questionnaires were returned complete and were retained for quantitative analysis, yielding a response rate of 92.0%, while 21 questionnaires (8.0%) were excluded from analysis. All four key informants participated in the semi-structured interviews, a 100% completion rate for the qualitative strand. Figure 1 summarises this flow of participants from the target population to the final analytic sample.

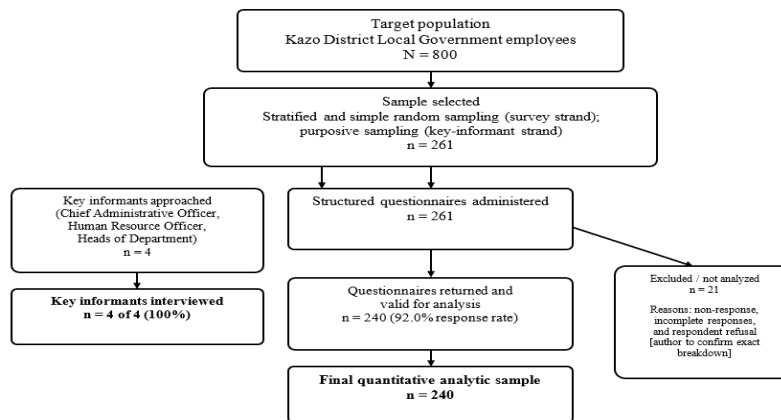


Figure 1: Participant flow through recruitment, data collection, and analysis

Of the 21 excluded questionnaires, 13 (61.9%) were attributable to non-response (respondents who could not be reached within the data collection window), 5 (23.8%) to incomplete responses (questionnaires returned with a substantial proportion of items unanswered), and 3 (14.3%) to outright refusal to participate.

The achieved response rate of 92.0% exceeds the 70% threshold generally considered excellent for self-administered social science surveys (Mugenda & Mugenda,

2003), and the resulting analytic sample of 240 respondents comfortably exceeds the minimum of 240 implied by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for a population of this size, supporting the adequacy of the sample for the descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses reported.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 240)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	98	40.8
	Female	142	59.2
Department	Health	62	25.8
	Education	128	53.3
	Admin	28	11.7
	Finance	14	5.8
	Works	8	3.3
Job cadre	Technical	112	46.7
	Administrative	78	32.5
	Support	50	20.8
Years of service	< 1 year	8	3.3
	1–5 years	48	20.0
	6–10 years	88	36.7
	> 10 years	96	40.0
Education level	Certificate	48	20.0
	Diploma	72	30.0
	Degree	104	43.3
	Postgraduate	16	6.7

Source: Primary field data (2026).

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Female respondents (59.2%) outnumbered male respondents (40.8%), consistent with the feminisation of the teaching and health professions in Kazo District and with national trends (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Respondents were drawn predominantly from the Education department (53.3%), followed by Health (25.8%), broadly mirroring the district's staffing structure. Technical staff constituted the largest job-cadre group (46.7%), and the majority of respondents (76.7%, comprising the 36.7% with 6–10 years of service and the 40.0% with more than 10 years of service) had served for more than six years, indicating a

relatively experienced workforce with established perceptions of the district's reward practices. Respondents with a degree were the largest education-level group (43.3%).

Descriptive statistics of study variables

Consistent with the frequency-based demographic profile reported above, item-level response frequencies for the two study constructs are summarised first, before the composite mean scores are presented.

Table 5: Frequency distribution of responses to rewards management and employee performance items (N = 240)

Item / dimension	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
Rewards Management					
B1. Satisfied with current salary	9.0	22.6	26.1	39.7	2.5
B2. Receives motivating bonuses/allowances	1.0	17.6	64.8	16.1	0.5
B3. Non-monetary rewards are meaningful	3.0	16.1	35.2	45.7	0.0
B4. Department offers clear career growth	1.5	16.1	50.8	29.6	2.0
B5. Rewards management is fair and transparent	0.5	14.1	44.7	39.7	1.0
B6. Organization consistently rewards good performance	1.0	12.1	50.8	34.7	1.5
Employee Performance					
D1. Completes work targets on time and accurately	3.5	8.5	29.1	55.3	3.5
D2. Adheres to organizational procedures	2.0	16.6	52.3	29.1	0.0
D3. Works productively with minimal supervision	0.5	12.1	42.2	44.2	1.0
D4. Collaborates effectively with colleagues	3.5	11.6	43.2	40.7	1.0
D5. Performance improved in the last 12 months	2.5	11.1	47.7	38.2	0.5
D6. Plans to stay >2 years	1.5	12.1	41.7	44.2	0.5

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

Across both constructs, the frequency distributions provide the item-level detail that underlies the composite mean scores reported in Table 6. Once populated, this distribution

will indicate the extent to which respondents' ratings clustered around agreement, disagreement, or neutrality for each dimension of rewards management and employee

performance, rather than relying on the composite mean alone.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for study variables (N = 240)

Variable	M	SD	Interpretation
Rewards Management	3.11	0.72	Moderate
Employee Performance	3.30	0.73	Moderate

Note. Source: SPSS output (2026). Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Rewards management recorded a composite mean of 3.11 (SD = 0.72), indicating moderate employee perceptions of the adequacy of reward practices in Kazo District. At the item level, salary satisfaction was the lowest-rated component (M = 2.87), pointing to notable dissatisfaction with current remuneration, whereas non-monetary rewards received the highest mean rating (M = 3.28), suggesting that employees place comparatively greater value on recognition, leave, and other non-cash benefits in the context of inadequate financial compensation. Employee performance recorded a composite mean of 3.30 (SD = 0.73), indicating that respondents perceive themselves as performing moderately well despite the moderate rating given to rewards management. Both variables scored above

the neutral midpoint of 3.00 but below 3.50, suggesting that while employees are neither highly dissatisfied nor demonstrably underperforming, considerable room for improvement remains in both reward administration and performance outcomes.

Correlation analysis

To test H1, a one-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed between rewards management and employee performance. Following Cohen (1988), correlation coefficients were interpreted as small (.10–.29), medium (.30–.49), or large (.50–1.00).

Table 7: Pearson correlation between rewards management and employee performance (N = 240)

Variable	1	2
1. Rewards Management	—	
2. Employee Performance	.387**	—

Note. Source: SPSS output (2026). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The one-tailed Pearson correlation between rewards management and employee performance was statistically significant and positive, $r(238) = .387$, $p = .001$, indicating a moderate relationship in Cohen's (1988) terms. This finding indicates that as reward management practices improve, including more consistent salary administration, fairer distribution of bonuses, meaningful non-monetary rewards, and transparent career-growth opportunities, employee performance tends to increase correspondingly. The moderate strength of the correlation suggests that rewards management is a significant predictor of performance, while other unmeasured factors also contribute to performance outcomes. This result is comparable to Ngwenya and Pelsers's (2020) finding of a

similar correlation ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) between transparent, performance-based incentives and service quality in South African municipalities, and is consistent with Ssengooba's (2023) observation that dysfunctional reward systems in Ugandan districts are associated with low task commitment. Decision: H1 is supported. There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between rewards management and employee performance in Kazo District Local Government.

Regression analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted to determine the extent to which rewards management predicts employee performance.

Table 8: Regression results for rewards management predicting employee performance (N = 240)

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R	R ²	F	p (F)
Rewards Management	0.346	0.057	6.070	.001	.387	.150	36.845	.001

Note. Source: SPSS output (2026). Dependent variable: Employee Performance.

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 238) = 36.845$, $p < .001$. Rewards management positively predicted employee performance ($\beta = 0.346$, $t = 6.070$, $p < .001$) and explained 15.0% of the variance in employee performance scores

($R^2 = .150$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in employees' rating of rewards management, employee performance is predicted to increase by 0.346 units, holding other factors constant. While statistically robust, the relatively modest proportion of variance explained suggests that rewards management, although an important lever, is one of several determinants of employee performance in this setting.

Qualitative findings

Key informant interviews provided qualitative evidence that both supported and contextualised the quantitative findings. One Head of Department observed that inconsistent application of reward criteria weakens the link between rewards and performance:

"Even when the policy says performance should be rewarded, the reality is that the District Service Commission has its own considerations. Sometimes promotions go to those with connections, not those who perform best." (Key Informant, Head of Department)

Another informant linked delayed salary payment directly to reduced output, independent of any psychological or motivational explanation:

"When salaries are delayed for months, some employees turn to small trading or farming during work hours just to survive. It is not that they do not want to work; the delay itself takes them away from their duties." (Key Informant, Human Resource Officer)

These narratives suggest that rewards management influences performance through both a motivational pathway and a more direct economic-security pathway: timely, adequate, and fairly distributed rewards free employees to focus on their duties, whereas delayed or inequitable rewards divert time and attention away from work. This dual pathway is consistent with the moderate but statistically robust correlation observed in the quantitative data, and with Ssengooba's (2023) documentation of chronic salary delays and opaque promotion pathways within Ugandan district local governments.

Discussion of findings

The positive, moderate correlation between rewards management and employee performance ($r = 0.387$) is consistent with the findings of Ngwenya and Pelser (2020) in South African municipalities and broadly consistent with the global benchmark reported by Chen, Liu, and Wang's (2025) meta-analysis ($r = 0.33$, 95% CI: 0.29-0.37) across 18 countries. The present study's coefficient exceeds this meta-analytic average, suggesting that the rewards-performance relationship in Kazo District is, if anything, somewhat stronger than the global norm despite the district's resource constraints. This is a noteworthy finding: it suggests that where rewards are relatively scarce, their motivational impact per unit may be amplified, a scarcity

effect that is theorised but rarely empirically demonstrated in public sector contexts.

At the same time, the correlation is lower than that reported by Omollo (2023), who found a stronger relationship (approximately $r = 0.52$) between performance bonuses and output in Kenya's health sector. This discrepancy is plausibly explained by differences in reward specificity and measurement infrastructure: Omollo's study examined bonuses directly tied to measurable outputs within a more digitised performance-monitoring system, whereas the present study measured rewards management as a composite of salary, allowances, non-monetary rewards, and career growth within a largely paper-based, infrequently updated appraisal system. The moderate correlation observed in Kazo District should therefore not be interpreted as a weakness of reward-based motivation as a concept, but rather as evidence of implementation gaps.

As one Head of Department noted, promotions and rewards do not always track performance in practice, reflecting patronage and political interference rather than a strict merit-based logic. This pattern echoes Asiedu and Nketiah's (2026) finding of a similarly diluted reward-performance relationship ($r = 0.34$) in Ghana's district assemblies, attributed to political interference as a systematic moderator of reward effectiveness across West African local governments. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) predicts precisely this outcome: where the link between effort, reward, and outcome (instrumentality) is perceived as weak or inconsistent, the motivational power of rewards diminishes even when the rewards themselves are nominally adequate.

The regression results reinforce this interpretation. Rewards management explained 15.0 percent of the variance in employee performance, a moderate but statistically robust proportion that leaves the majority of variance attributable to other factors, plausibly including supervisory quality, workload, resource availability, and individual differences not measured in this study. This is consistent with the wider literature's caution that reward systems, while necessary, are rarely sufficient on their own to drive high performance, particularly in institutional environments characterised by delayed budgets and inconsistent administration (Ngwenya & Pelser, 2020; Ssengooba, 2023).

The qualitative finding that salary delays push some employees toward income-generating activities during work hours offers a direct, non-psychological explanation for part of the observed relationship: rewards management may influence performance not only by shaping motivation but also by determining whether employees have the basic economic security to remain focused on their official duties. This dual pathway, economic and motivational, suggests that interventions addressing the timeliness and predictability of monetary rewards may yield performance gains distinct from, and additive to, interventions aimed at strengthening non-monetary recognition.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the management of Kazo District Local Government:

- Establish a Salary Tracking and Transparency Committee. Given that salary satisfaction was the lowest-rated item, the Chief Administrative Officer should establish a committee comprising representatives from Finance, Administration, and employee associations to monitor monthly salary disbursements, report delays to the District Council within seven days, and publish a monthly salary status bulletin.
- Formalise Non-Monetary Reward Policies. Since non-monetary rewards were the most valued but inconsistently applied, the District Service Commission, in consultation with the Human Resource Office, should institutionalise quarterly recognition awards, annual staff recognition days, and documented letters of commendation, with all such rewards recorded in personnel files and considered in promotion decisions.
- Pilot a Performance-Linked Allowance Scheme. Given the significant direct effect of rewards on performance, the District Council should pilot a performance-linked allowance scheme, for instance for primary school teachers in one sub-county, evaluated using a quasi-experimental design comparing pilot and matched comparison schools.
- Convene a District-Ministry Dialogue Forum. Since the moderate strength of the rewards-performance relationship appears attributable to implementation failures, including political interference and budget delays, rather than to a flaw in reward-based motivation itself, the Chief Administrative Officer should convene a forum with the Ministry of Public Service, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Uganda Local Government Association to review systemic barriers and establish a quarterly monitoring mechanism for reward policy reform.

Limitations and areas for further research

The study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which constrains causal inference; reliance on self-reported performance measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias; and its single-site focus on Kazo District, which limits generalizability to other, particularly urban, contexts. Potential omitted-variable bias is also acknowledged, as factors such as leadership quality, organizational culture, and workload were not measured. Future research should employ longitudinal or panel designs to establish causality, incorporate objective performance metrics and multi-source assessments (for example,

Generalizability

Given the study's cross-sectional design and single-site focus on Kazo District, the external validity of these findings warrants cautious interpretation. The sample proportionally reflects the district's workforce composition across health, education, and administrative cadres, supporting confidence in the findings' applicability within Kazo District itself. However, reward administration practices, budget constraints, and governance capacity vary across Uganda's other district local governments, and the study excludes urban and municipal local governments, where reward structures and staffing patterns may differ substantially. Consequently, the findings should not be generalised uncritically beyond Kazo District. The consistency of the observed rewards-performance correlation with comparable studies elsewhere in Uganda (Ssengooba, 2023) and in East and Southern Africa (Ngwenya & Pelser, 2020; Omollo, 2023) lends some support to the broader relevance of this relationship in resource-constrained local government settings, though direct replication across other districts would be needed before firmer generalisations can be drawn.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between rewards management and employee performance in Kazo District Local Government. Drawing on a sample of 240 employees and guided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Equity Theory, the study tested the hypothesis that rewards management is positively related to employee performance.

The findings confirm a statistically significant, positive relationship between rewards management and employee performance ($r = 0.387$, $p < 0.01$), with rewards management significantly predicting performance and explaining 15.0 percent of its variance. However, the study also reveals a troubling reality: despite moderate performance scores, salary satisfaction remains low, and qualitative accounts point to inconsistent, sometimes political, application of both monetary and non-monetary rewards. These findings suggest that the current reward management system, while not entirely dysfunctional, falls short of its potential to drive stronger performance outcomes.

The practical implication is that improving rewards management, particularly the timeliness of salary payment, the consistency of non-monetary recognition, and the perceived fairness of reward distribution, offers a meaningful, evidence-based lever for improving employee performance and, by extension, service delivery in Kazo District.

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supervisor ratings), conduct comparative multi-district studies to examine contextual moderators such as institutional maturity and resource endowment, and consider quasi-experimental designs to evaluate the impact of specific reward interventions, such as the performance-linked allowance scheme proposed above.

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Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge the administration of Kazo District Local Government for granting permission to conduct the study. The authors also sincerely appreciate all employees who participated in the study and provided the information necessary for its completion. Appreciation is further extended to the individuals who provided guidance and support throughout the research process.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

List of abbreviations

APA – American Psychological Association
CAO – Chief Administrative Officer
CI – Confidence Interval
CVI – Content Validity Index
N – Sample size
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R² – Coefficient of Determination
SD – Standard Deviation
SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UBOS – Uganda Bureau of Statistics

Author biography

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author contributions

Phionah Akunde: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Visualisation. Dr. Kule Baguma: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. Jimmy Mwesigye: Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing.

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