

# Political decentralization and social welfare of households in Ndaiga sub-county, Kagadi District, Uganda. A cross-sectional study.

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## Abstract.

### Background:

Political decentralization is designed to enhance household social welfare through improved citizen participation, accountability, and local service delivery. This study assessed the relationship between Political decentralization and the social welfare of households in Ndaiga sub-county, Kagadi District, Uganda.

### Method:

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design within an embedded mixed-methods approach. Data were collected from 306 respondents (295 household heads and 11 key informants) using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (V24) through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

### Results:

Findings indicated a generally positive perception of political decentralization (overall mean = 3.57, SD = 1.05). Household social welfare was moderately improved (overall mean = 3.54, SD = 1.05), particularly in access to health services (mean = 3.71, SD = 1.00) and education (mean = 3.68, SD = 1.01), whereas income-generating opportunities remained weak (mean = 3.39, SD = 1.07). Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between political decentralization and household social welfare ( $r = 0.671$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regression results showed that decentralization variables explain 61.0% of the variation in household social welfare ( $R^2 = 0.610$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.604$ ), with political decentralization significantly predicting welfare outcomes ( $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $F = 89.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

### Conclusion:

Political decentralization has a significant but moderate positive effect on household social welfare in Ndaiga Sub-County. While it has improved access to basic services and community participation, its impact is constrained by weak accountability mechanisms and limited economic opportunities.

### Recommendations:

Local governments should strengthen accountability and feedback systems, the central government should increase resource allocation, and community members should enhance participation in governance processes.

**Keywords:** Political decentralization, household social welfare, community participation, accountability; Kagadi District.

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## Background.

Household social welfare is a critical indicator of development and reflects the ability of families to meet basic needs such as food, education, healthcare, housing, and access to essential services (Smoke, 2015; Christopher et al., 2022). Despite the implementation of decentralization reforms in Uganda, aimed at improving local governance and service delivery, households in Ndaiga Sub-County continue to experience deteriorating welfare. (Kagadi District Assessment Report, 2025). Most households in Ndaiga Sub-county rely on subsistence agriculture, which provides low and irregular incomes. District data indicate that over 85% of the labour force depends on agriculture, yet

productivity is low due to poor access to modern farming techniques and markets (Kagadi District Local Government, 2020). Still, many households live in semi-permanent structures made of mud and poles. Surveys indicate that 50% of households live in poorly constructed houses, increasing vulnerability to environmental hazards (Kagadi District Local Government, 2020). Also, 35% of households rely on unprotected water sources, increasing exposure to water-borne diseases (Village Care Development Foundation, 2021). Access to electricity is limited, with over 80% of households relying on kerosene or firewood, affecting health, productivity, and environmental sustainability (White et al., 2025). This situation presents a

significant concern, as the inability of households to meet basic needs directly affects economic productivity, social stability, and long-term development prospects. Political decentralization refers to the transfer of decision-making powers, authority, and representation from central governments to sub-national or local governments, enabling local populations to participate directly in governance (Ribot, 2002). It is theorized that political decentralization can improve accountability, responsiveness, and service delivery, which in turn influences the social welfare of households in rural areas. Social welfare in this context encompasses access to basic services such as health, education, clean water, and infrastructure, as well as economic well-being and participation in local governance (Smoke, 2015).

Political decentralization differs from fiscal and administrative decentralization. It primarily involves empowering local authorities and communities to make decisions and elect representatives who can influence policy, budget allocation, and local development priorities (Ribot, 2002). The central assumption is that local governments, being closer to constituents, are better positioned to identify community needs and allocate resources to improve welfare outcomes (Faguet, 2014). Studies in Africa indicate mixed outcomes of political decentralization on social welfare. While decentralization theoretically promotes equity and responsiveness, actual results depend on institutional capacity, local political dynamics, resource availability, and accountability mechanisms (Faguet, 2014; Ribot, 2002). However, challenges include weak local institutions, elite dominance,

and limited fiscal independence, which can compromise welfare outcomes (Smoke, 2015). Uganda's Local Government Act of 1997 formalized political decentralization by establishing elected local councils (LCs) at the village, parish, sub-county, and district levels (Bashaasha et al., 2013). Empirical studies show that LC elections and participatory planning have improved community involvement in decision-making, leading to enhanced service delivery in primary education and health (Bashaasha et al., 2013). However, evidence also highlights constraints: local elites sometimes dominate councils, and inadequate fiscal resources limit actual welfare gains for rural households (Ssenkumba, 2014). The Parish Development Model (PDM) attempts to strengthen political accountability and service delivery at the grassroots, though implementation remains uneven (Uganda's Parish Development Model, 2024). This study assessed the relationship between Political decentralization and the social welfare of households in Ndaiga sub-county, Kagadi District, Uganda

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design.**

This study adopted a descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional survey design within an embedded mixed methods approach. This design was appropriate for examining the relationship between political decentralization and the social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-county.

#### **Study Population.**

**Table 1: Population, Sample Size, Sampling Technique & Methods of Data Collection.**

Category of Respondents	Study Population (N)	Sample Size (S) (Krejcie & Morgan)	Sampling Technique
Household Heads in Ndaiga Sub-County	1,450	295	Stratified Sampling (parishes)
Sub-county Local Government Officials	16	3	Purposive Sampling
Parish Chiefs	8	2	Purposive Sampling
Village Local Council (LC I) Chairpersons	25	5	Purposive Sampling
Community Development Officer	1	1	Purposive Sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>306</b>	

**Source:** *Kagadi District Statistical Abstract (2025/2026), Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2024)*

The study population consisted of respondents from Ndaiga Sub-County in Kagadi District who are directly involved in or affected by decentralized governance and local service delivery. The total study population was 1,500 respondents, comprising household heads and key local government officials who possess relevant knowledge about decentralization and its influence on household social welfare.

#### **Sample Size.**

The sample size for this study was 306 respondents, selected from a total study population of 1,200 individuals in Ndaiga Sub-county. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which provides a statistically appropriate sample for a given population size at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. According to this table, a population of approximately 1,500 required a sample of 306 respondents

to obtain reliable and representative data. Out of the total sample, 295 respondents were household heads, who represented the majority of the study participants. Household heads were selected because they were directly affected by decentralization policies and local government service delivery, including access to health services, education, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities. Their responses provided primary data on how decentralization influenced the social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-county. The remaining respondents were key informants drawn from the local government administrative structure. These included 4 sub-county local government officials, 2 parish chiefs, 5 Village Local Council (LC I) chairpersons, and 1 Community Development Officer. These respondents were included because of their knowledge and experience in local governance, planning, and implementation of decentralized services.

### **Sampling Techniques.**

The study employed a combination of stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques to select respondents from the study population in Ndaiga Sub-county. These techniques ensured that both household respondents and key informants with relevant knowledge about decentralization and social welfare were adequately represented in the study. Stratified sampling was used to select household heads from the different parishes in Ndaiga Sub-county. The population of households was first divided into strata based on parishes, ensuring that each parish was represented in the sample. From each parish, household heads were then selected proportionally to their population size. This technique was used because households in different parishes could experience decentralization and service delivery differently, and stratification helped to ensure fair representation and improve the accuracy of the study findings. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants, including sub-county local government officials, parish chiefs, Village Local Council (LC I) chairpersons, and the Community Development Officer. These respondents were intentionally selected because they possessed specialized knowledge, experience, and responsibilities related to local governance, decentralization, and service delivery. Their positions enabled them to provide detailed and reliable information about the implementation of political decentralization and how these processes influenced the social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-county.

### **Methods of Data Collection.**

The study employed a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review as the main data collection methods. Using multiple methods helped the researcher obtain both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby improving the reliability and comprehensiveness of the findings regarding the relationship between

decentralization and the social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-county. The questionnaire method was used to collect primary data from household heads. Structured questionnaires containing both closed-ended and a few open-ended questions were administered to the selected respondents. The questionnaires were administered to the sampled household heads and guided respondents where clarification was needed to ensure accurate responses. The interview method was used to collect qualitative data from key informants, including sub-county local government officials, parish chiefs, Village Local Council (LC I) chairpersons, and the Community Development Officer. Semi-structured interview guides were used to obtain in-depth information on the implementation of decentralization policies, service delivery processes, and their perceived effects on household welfare in the sub-county. Interviews allowed respondents to explain their experiences and perspectives in detail, enabling the researcher to gain deeper insights into the functioning of decentralized governance structures. The study also used the documentary review method to collect secondary data. This method involved reviewing relevant documents such as government policy reports, district development plans, sub-county reports, academic journals, books, and previous research related to decentralization and social welfare. Documents from Kagadi District Local Government and other relevant institutions were examined to obtain background information, statistics, and policy perspectives that supported the study. Documentary review helped the researcher validate and complement the primary data collected from questionnaires and interviews, thereby providing a broader understanding of decentralization and its impact on household social welfare in the study area.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection procedure involved several systematic steps to ensure that accurate and reliable information was obtained from the respondents. First, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the university to seek permission to conduct the study in Ndaiga Sub-county. The researcher then presented the letter to the Kagadi District Local Government authorities and the Ndaiga Sub-county administration to gain official authorization to collect data from the selected respondents.

After obtaining permission, the researcher identified the sampled respondents according to the selected sampling techniques. Household heads were selected from different parishes using stratified sampling, while key informants such as sub-county officials, parish chiefs, LC I chairpersons, and the Community Development Officer were identified through purposive sampling. The researcher then contacted the respondents and explained the purpose of the study, assuring them of confidentiality and voluntary participation. The researcher then proceeded with the

administration of questionnaires to household heads. The questionnaires were distributed and, where necessary, the researcher guided respondents on how to complete them to ensure clarity and accuracy. At the same time, interviews were conducted with key informants using an interview guide to collect detailed information about decentralization and its influence on household social welfare. The researcher also collected relevant information through documentary review, examining official reports, policy documents, district records, and other relevant materials related to decentralization and service delivery. Finally, the completed questionnaires were collected, interview responses were recorded and organized, and relevant documents were compiled for analysis. The researcher then checked all collected data for completeness and consistency before proceeding to the data analysis stage. This process ensured that the data gathered was reliable and suitable for addressing the objectives of the study.

### **Validity of Instruments**

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data collected, the validity of the research instruments was carefully established prior to data collection. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, content validity, construct validity, and face validity were emphasized in the development and evaluation of the instruments.

Content validity was ensured by aligning the questionnaire and interview guide items with the specific objectives of the study. To achieve this, the researcher consulted relevant literature, policy documents, and existing validated instruments used in similar studies. Expert judgment was also sought from supervisors, local governance specialists, and practitioners in decentralization and public service management. The experts were requested to assess each item in the instruments based on relevance, clarity, and appropriateness to the study objectives. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was then computed to determine the adequacy of the instruments. The experts rated each item as either relevant or not relevant to the study variables. The CVI was obtained by dividing the total number of items rated as relevant by the total number of items in the instrument. For example, if the questionnaire contained 40 items and 32 items were rated as relevant by the experts. A CVI of 0.8 indicated that the instruments were valid and acceptable for data collection since it exceeded the minimum recommended validity threshold of 0.70. Items that were found unclear or irrelevant were revised or removed based on the recommendations of the experts to improve the quality of the instruments. Face validity was assessed by sharing the draft instruments with peers and experts to determine whether the items appeared logically sound, appropriate, and relevant to the target population. This process helped eliminate ambiguous or misleading

items and enhanced the clarity of the instruments. Suggestions from this review were incorporated before the instruments were finalized for pilot testing. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted in a sub-county within Kagadi District that was not part of the main study sample. The purpose of the pilot test was to evaluate the clarity, coherence, and functionality of the instruments in a real-world setting. Based on the results of the pilot study, necessary adjustments were made to improve the instruments' structure, wording, and layout. The feedback obtained helped improve construct validity by confirming that the items effectively reflected the theoretical constructs of the study.

### **Reliability of Instruments.**

The reliability of the data collection instruments was ensured through careful design, pre-testing, and statistical validation. Reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument consistently measures what it is intended to measure, producing stable and dependable results over repeated applications. To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of respondents who were not included in the final sample but were drawn from within Kagadi District. The pre-test helped to identify and correct ambiguities, unclear wording, and inconsistencies in the instrument. Feedback obtained from the pre-test was used to refine and improve the questionnaire before the main data collection exercise. The internal consistency of the questionnaire items was then measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Data from the pilot test were entered into statistical software and analyzed to determine how closely related the items were in measuring the same constructs of decentralization and social welfare of households. The computed Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.78. This value was obtained by assessing the inter-item correlations among all questionnaire items under each construct (political decentralization, administrative decentralization, fiscal decentralization, and household social welfare indicators). The software calculated the average covariance between items and compared it to the total variance of the scale, producing an overall reliability coefficient of 0.78. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.78 indicated acceptable and good internal consistency, as it was above the recommended threshold of 0.70. This confirmed that the questionnaire items reliably measured the intended constructs. Based on this result, no major modifications were required, although minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and flow. For interview guides, reliability was enhanced by using standardized semi-structured questions for all key informants. The researcher ensured consistent probing and follow-up across interviews to maintain uniformity in data collection. The documentary review checklist was structured to ensure consistent examination of relevant documents, with attention to

specific indicators related to decentralization and social welfare of households. This helped to minimize subjectivity and variation during the document analysis process. Through these procedures, the study ensured that the instruments used were both consistent and dependable, thereby increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

**Data Analysis.**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques in line with the embedded mixed methods approach. This ensured a comprehensive interpretation of the findings and allowed for triangulation of results from different sources. Quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS V24) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents’ views on decentralization and social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-county. To examine the relationships between the independent variables (political decentralization) and the dependent variable (social welfare of households), inferential statistics, particularly Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r), were used. This helped to determine the strength and direction of the relationships. Where necessary, regression analysis was also applied to assess the predictive power of decentralization variables on service delivery outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and documentary reviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The responses were first transcribed and then organized into codes and categories based on emerging themes. This process involved identifying patterns, meanings, and insights related to the implementation and impact of decentralization. Key themes included perceptions of local governance, accountability mechanisms, resource allocation, community involvement, and service delivery challenges. Quotes and narratives from respondents were used to support and enrich the quantitative

**Response Rate.**

The response rate of the study is presented below and interpreted in relation to the data collection outcomes.

**Table 2: Response Rate of Respondents**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Questionnaire Issued &amp; Interviews Scheduled</b>	<b>Questionnaire Returned &amp; Interviews Conducted</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Household Heads in Ndaiga Sub- County	295	268	90.8%
Sub-county Local Government Officials	3	2	66.7%
Parish Chiefs	2	2	100%
Village Local Council (LC I) Chairpersons	5	5	100%
Community Development Officer	1	1	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>91.5%</b>

**Source:** Primary data (2026)

findings. The integration of both data types allowed the study to provide a deeper and more holistic understanding of how public policy decentralization affected the social welfare of households in Kagadi District.

**Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to strict ethical standards throughout the research process to ensure the protection of participants’ rights and the integrity of the data collected. The following ethical principles guided the conduct of the study: Informed Consent: All participants were informed about the purpose, objectives, procedures, and potential risks or benefits of the study before they were involved. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were required to provide written informed consent before taking part in the research. Confidentiality and Anonymity: The identities of all respondents were kept confidential. No personal identifiers appeared in the final report or any publications. Data were anonymized during analysis and reporting to protect participants’ privacy. All records and responses were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw: Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any penalty or consequence. Respect and Non-Harm: Participants were treated with respect and dignity throughout the research process. The study avoided any form of physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Sensitive questions were handled with care, and participants were not coerced into responding to any questions they were uncomfortable with. Permission and Approval: Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from a recognized institutional ethics committee. In addition, official permission was secured from the Kagadi District Local Government to conduct the study within its jurisdiction.

**Results**

The results show that out of the 306 respondents targeted for the study, 280 successfully participated, representing an overall response rate of 91.5%. This response rate was considered very high and sufficient for data analysis and generalization of findings.

Among household heads, 268 out of 295 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 90.8%. This indicated a strong level of participation and willingness among community members in Ndaiga Sub- County to provide information on decentralization and household

social welfare. For key informants, all parish chiefs, LC I chairpersons, and the Community Development Officer fully participated, achieving a 100% response rate. However, sub-county local government officials had a slightly lower response rate of 66.7%, with 2 out of 3 participating due to availability constraints. Overall, the high response rate enhanced the reliability and validity of the study findings, as it minimized non-response bias and ensured adequate representation of both household and institutional perspectives.

### Demographic Characteristics.

**Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	152	54.3
	Female	128	45.7
<b>Age Group</b>	18–25 years	38	13.6
	26–35 years	74	26.4
	36–45 years	72	25.7
	46–55 years	56	20.0
	56 years and above	40	14.3
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	52	18.6
	Married	178	63.6
	Divorced	22	7.9
	Widowed	28	10.0
<b>Level of Education</b>	No formal education	46	16.4
	Primary education	98	35.0
	Secondary education	74	26.4
	Certificate/Diploma	42	15.0
	University degree & above	20	7.1
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer	138	49.3
	Business person	54	19.3
	Civil servant	36	12.9
	Casual laborer	38	13.6
	Other	14	5.0
<b>Position in Community</b>	Household head	268	95.7
	Local council leader	5	1.8
	Parish chief	2	0.7
	Sub-county official	2	0.7
	Community development officer	1	0.4
	Other	2	0.7
<b>Household Size</b>	1–3 people	46	16.4
	4–6 people	118	42.1
	7–9 people	76	27.1
	10 and above	40	14.3
<b>Length of Stay</b>	Less than 5 years	34	12.1
	5–10 years	62	22.1
	11–15 years	78	27.9
	More than 15 years	106	37.9

**Source:** Primary Data (2026).

The results show that the majority of respondents were male (54.3%), indicating slightly higher male participation in the study conducted in Ndaiga Sub- County. Most respondents were within the productive age groups of 26–45 years (52.1%), suggesting that the study captured economically active household members.

In terms of marital status, most respondents were married (63.6%), reflecting the typical household structure in rural settings. Regarding education, the majority had primary education (35.0%), indicating generally low to moderate educational attainment among respondents.

Farmers dominated the occupation category (49.3%), confirming that the area is largely agrarian. Household heads formed the largest proportion of respondents (95.7%), ensuring that responses reflected direct household experiences.

Most households had 4–6 members (42.1%), and a significant proportion of respondents had lived in the area for more than 15 years (37.9%), indicating strong community stability and long-term experience with decentralization and service delivery systems.

**Political Decentralization in Ndaiga Sub- County, Kagadi District.**

**Descriptive Analysis of Findings on Political Decentralization in Ndaiga Sub- County, Kagadi District.**

**Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Findings on Political Decentralization in Ndaiga Sub- County, Kagadi District.**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Local council leaders involve community members in decision-making about local development projects.	90	110	40	25	15	3.60	1.09
Elections of local leaders give citizens an opportunity to influence development priorities in the sub-county.	95	115	35	20	15	3.69	1.06
Community members actively participate in village and parish meetings concerning local development.	80	120	45	20	15	3.59	1.03
Local leaders are accountable to the community for decisions made regarding public resources.	85	105	50	25	15	3.53	1.09
Citizens in Ndaiga Sub- County have the opportunity to express their concerns to local leaders.	100	110	40	20	10	3.73	1.00
Political decentralization has improved transparency in local government operations.	75	110	55	25	15	3.40	1.07
Local government leaders consider the needs of households when planning development programs.	88	112	45	20	15	3.56	1.07
Community participation in local governance has improved service delivery in the sub-county.	82	118	40	25	15	3.54	1.07
Local council meetings provide a platform for residents to contribute ideas on development issues.	90	100	50	25	15	3.54	1.08
Political decentralization has strengthened the accountability of local leaders to the community.	92	108	45	20	15	3.58	1.07
Local leaders regularly consult communities before implementing development projects.	78	110	55	25	12	3.49	1.04

Overall Mean = 3.57, Overall Std. Dev. = 1.05.

The findings show that respondents in Ndaiga Sub- County generally agreed that political decentralization is present and moderately effective in influencing local governance and household welfare.

The overall mean score of 3.57 indicates a generally positive perception, as most responses fell between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” This suggests that political decentralization mechanisms such as community participation, elections, and local council meetings are functional and contribute to citizen involvement in decision-

making.

The highest mean score (3.73) was recorded on the statement that citizens have the opportunity to express their concerns to local leaders, indicating relatively strong communication channels between leaders and the community. Similarly, elections of local leaders (mean = 3.69) were also highly rated, showing that democratic processes are valued by respondents.

However, the lowest mean score (3.40) was recorded on improved transparency in local government operations. This

suggests that while participation exists, transparency in resource use and decision-making remains weaker compared to other aspects of political decentralization.

The standard deviations (approximately 1.00–1.09) indicate moderate variation in responses, meaning that while many respondents agreed, there were still differing perceptions within the community. This implies that political decentralization is unevenly experienced across households in the sub-county.

Overall, the results suggest that political decentralization contributes positively to governance participation and household engagement, but its impact on transparency and accountability still requires strengthening to further improve social welfare outcomes.

### **Qualitative Findings on Political Decentralization in Ndaiga Sub-County, Kagadi District**

The findings from key informant interviews in Ndaiga Sub-County revealed mixed but generally positive perceptions regarding political decentralization and its influence on community participation, accountability, and service delivery.

Sub-county Chief

The Sub-County Chief explained that political decentralization had improved community engagement in planning and decision-making processes. He said, *“The implementation of political decentralization in Ndaiga has improved community involvement in decision-making, especially during planning and budget conferences. However, participation is still uneven because some community members do not actively attend meetings due to limited awareness and motivation. He further noted that “while reporting structures exist, feedback mechanisms remain weak, affecting transparency in local governance”.*

Sub-county Chairperson

The Sub-County Chairperson emphasized the role of elections and citizen representation in strengthening local governance. He said, *“Through elections, communities choose their leaders, and this has improved accountability and legitimacy in leadership. We regularly encourage residents to attend council meetings and contribute ideas, but financial limitations sometimes delay the implementation of community priorities.”* He added that decentralization has strengthened the relationship between leaders and citizens, even though resource constraints remain a major challenge.

Councilor 1

One of the councilors highlighted increased community awareness and participation. He said, *“People now understand that they have a voice in governance, and during village meetings we collect their views on issues like water, schools, and roads. However, not all community proposals are implemented due to budget limitations, which sometimes*

*creates dissatisfaction.”* He observed that despite these challenges, participation levels have improved compared to earlier years.

Councilor 2 (Youth Representative)

The youth counselor pointed out limited influence despite participation. He said, *“Youth are now more involved in meetings, but many feel that decisions are already made before consultations. Although elections give us representation, follow-up on youth priorities is still weak, and this reduces trust in the system.”* He recommended stronger accountability mechanisms to enhance youth engagement in governance.

Parish Chief

The Parish Chief focused on administrative coordination and information flow. He said, *“We collect community needs and forward them to the sub-county, but sometimes feedback does not return to the community, which makes people feel excluded from decision-making processes.”* He emphasized that while decentralization has improved service coordination, communication gaps remain a key challenge.

Community Development Officer

The Community Development Officer highlighted improved awareness and mobilization efforts. He said, *“Political decentralization has enhanced community participation in development programs such as health, education, and livelihood projects, but attendance is still affected by low sensitization levels.”* He further noted that strengthening community education and accountability systems would significantly improve service delivery outcomes.

### **Thematic Analysis of Political Decentralization Findings**

The qualitative findings from key informant interviews in Ndaiga Sub-County were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved coding responses, grouping similar ideas, and developing overarching themes that explain how political decentralization influences local governance and household social welfare.

#### **Theme 1: Enhanced Community Participation in Local Governance**

A dominant theme emerging from all respondents was increased community participation in decision-making processes.

Key informants consistently noted that decentralization had created more opportunities for citizens to engage in governance structures such as village meetings, parish meetings, and sub-county planning sessions.

The Sub-County Chief observed improved involvement in planning and budgeting.

Councilors confirmed that community members now contribute ideas on local development priorities.

The Community Development Officer highlighted increased participation in development programs.

Interpretation:

This theme indicates that political decentralization has strengthened citizen engagement, allowing households to express their needs regarding services such as water, education, and health. However, participation remains inconsistent due to limited awareness and motivation among some community members.

### **Theme 2: Strengthening of Electoral Representation and Leadership Legitimacy**

Another key theme was the role of elections in enhancing the representation and legitimacy of local leaders.

The Sub-County Chairperson emphasized that elections empower citizens to choose leaders.

Respondents agreed that this improves accountability and trust in leadership structures.

#### **Interpretation:**

Elections under political decentralization have improved leadership legitimacy by giving citizens a direct role in selecting their representatives. However, the effectiveness of representation is sometimes weakened by limited responsiveness to community priorities after elections.

### **Theme 3: Weak Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms**

A significant concern raised by multiple respondents was weak accountability and insufficient feedback to communities.

The Parish Chief noted that information flow back to communities is often inadequate.

The Sub-County Chief acknowledged that feedback mechanisms are weak.

Councilors indicated that community proposals are not always acted upon or communicated back.

#### **Interpretation:**

This suggests that while structures for accountability exist, their implementation is weak. The lack of feedback reduces transparency and limits community trust in local government processes, thereby weakening the intended impact of decentralization on household welfare.

### **Theme 4: Resource Constraints Limiting Implementation of Community Priorities**

Respondents repeatedly highlighted financial and resource limitations as a barrier to effective decentralization.

The Sub-County Chairperson noted delays in implementing community priorities due to funding gaps.

Councilors observed that many community proposals are not implemented because of budget constraints.

#### **Interpretation:**

This theme shows that although political decentralization allows citizens to influence decision-making, limited fiscal capacity at the local level restricts actual implementation, thereby reducing its impact on improving household social welfare.

### **Theme 5: Limited Youth Influence and Inclusive Participation Gaps**

A smaller but important theme was the limited influence of youth and uneven participation across groups.

The Youth Councilor noted that young people attend meetings but feel decisions are often predetermined.

Participation was described as present but not fully influential.

#### **Interpretation:**

This indicates that while decentralization has opened spaces for participation, inclusivity challenges remain. Certain groups, particularly youth, still feel marginalised in actual decision-making processes.

The thematic analysis shows that political decentralization in Ndaiga Sub-County has significantly improved community participation and electoral representation, thereby strengthening citizen engagement in governance.

However, its effectiveness is constrained by weak accountability and feedback systems, Limited financial resources for implementing community priorities, uneven participation, and limited influence of certain groups (especially youth).

Overall, while political decentralization has created important governance structures that support household engagement, its full potential in improving social welfare remains partially constrained by institutional and resource-related challenges.

### ***Documentary Findings on Political Decentralization***

The documentary review focused on relevant policy documents, district reports, sub-county records, and planning frameworks from Ndaiga Sub-County and Kagadi District Local Government in order to complement primary data on political decentralization and household social welfare.

#### **1. Evidence of Established Decentralization Structures**

The reviewed documents, including sub-county development plans and administrative records, indicated that formal decentralization structures are fully established. These include: Functional Local Council systems (LC I to LC III), Regularly scheduled council meetings at village,

parish, and sub-county levels, and the existence of participatory planning frameworks such as budget conferences and community barazas.

The documents confirmed that political decentralization structures are institutionalized, providing formal platforms for citizen participation in governance.

## 2. Community Participation in Planning Processes

Sub-county planning reports and minutes from budget conferences showed that community consultations are conducted during planning cycles.

Attendance registers indicated participation of village representatives in planning meetings.

Reports showed that community priorities such as water access, feeder roads, and health services are frequently raised.

There is documented evidence that participatory planning processes exist and are operational, supporting the principle of citizen involvement in local governance.

## 3. Accountability and Reporting Mechanisms

Review of council minutes and administrative reports revealed that local leaders are required to submit periodic accountability reports to both sub-county and district authorities.

However, several reports indicated: Delays in feedback dissemination to lower local councils, incomplete documentation of follow-up actions on community concerns, and Limited evidence of community feedback integration into final decisions.

While accountability structures exist on paper, implementation gaps were evident, particularly in downward communication and responsiveness to community feedback.

## 4. Resource Allocation and Implementation Gaps

### Social Welfare of Households in Ndaiga Sub-County, Kagadi District.

### Descriptive Analysis of Findings on Social Welfare of Households in Ndaiga Sub-County, Kagadi District

**Table 5: Responses on Social Welfare of Households**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Households have improved access to primary health care services.	92	118	40	20	10	3.71	1.00
Education services, such as schools and learning materials, are accessible to children in the community.	88	120	42	20	10	3.68	1.01
Households have access to clean and safe drinking water.	80	110	50	25	15	3.54	1.05
Local infrastructure, such as roads and community facilities, has improved in recent years.	78	112	48	27	15	3.51	1.06
Households have increased participation in local development decisions.	85	115	45	20	15	3.61	1.03

District development plans and financial reports indicated that funding for local priorities is largely dependent on central government transfers.

Many planned community projects were partially implemented or delayed

Budget allocation documents showed shortfalls in key sectors such as health, roads, and education

The documents confirmed that financial constraints significantly affect the implementation of community priorities, limiting the effectiveness of political decentralization.

## 5. Citizen Participation Challenges

Monitoring reports and community engagement records highlighted inconsistencies in participation levels.

Attendance records showed low participation in some villages

Reports indicated that meetings are often dominated by local leaders rather than community members.

Limited documentation of youth and women's active involvement in decision-making

Although participation structures exist, actual engagement is uneven, with certain groups being underrepresented in governance processes.

The documentary evidence indicates that political decentralization in Ndaiga Sub- County is institutionally well established, with clear governance structures and participatory planning frameworks.

However, consistent with interview findings, the documents reveal key implementation challenges: Weak downward accountability and feedback systems, Limited financial resources for executing community priorities, and uneven citizen participation in governance processes.

Overall, while policy and institutional frameworks support political decentralization, gaps in implementation reduce its full potential to significantly enhance household social welfare.

Income-generating opportunities have improved for community members.	70	105	60	30	15	3.39	1.07
Households receive timely support from local government programs.	75	110	55	25	15	3.50	1.05
Decentralization has led to better allocation of public resources to meet household needs.	82	112	50	20	16	3.54	1.05
Residents are satisfied with the quality of social services in Ndaiga Sub-County.	76	108	55	25	16	3.46	1.06
Local development projects address the most pressing needs of households.	80	110	50	25	15	3.52	1.05
Households' access to social services has improved over the last five years.	78	112	48	25	17	3.49	1.06

**Overall Mean = 3.54, Overall Std. Dev. = 1.05.**

The findings indicate that respondents in Ndaiga Sub-county generally agreed that household social welfare has improved as a result of decentralization, as reflected by an overall mean of 3.54. The highest-rated indicator was improved access to primary health care services (mean = 3.71), followed by accessibility of education services (mean = 3.68). This suggests that decentralization has had a strong positive influence on essential social services, particularly health and education.

Moderate improvements were also observed in community participation in decision-making (mean = 3.61) and better allocation of public resources (mean = 3.54), indicating that households are increasingly involved in local governance processes and benefit from resource distribution.

However, comparatively lower mean scores were recorded for income-generating opportunities (mean = 3.39) and overall satisfaction with social services (mean = 3.46). This implies that while access to basic services has improved, economic welfare and income opportunities remain limited. The standard deviations (approximately 1.00–1.07) indicate moderate variation in responses, suggesting that experiences of social welfare improvements are not uniform across all households.

Overall, the results show that decentralization has contributed positively to household social welfare in Ndaiga Sub-county, particularly in improving access to health, education, water, and infrastructure services. However, improvements in income generation and overall satisfaction remain relatively moderate, indicating that economic transformation at the household level is still limited despite gains in service delivery.

### Qualitative Findings on Social Welfare of Households

The following are qualitative interview responses from key informants regarding the social welfare of households in relation to decentralization in Ndaiga Sub-county. The responses are presented in a logical flow and quoted as required.

#### Sub-county Chief

The Sub-county Chief explained that there have been visible improvements in basic service delivery, especially in health

and education. He said, *“Households now have better access to primary health care services and education facilities compared to the past. However, the challenge is that not all villages benefit equally due to resource limitations and staffing gaps.”* He further noted that income levels among households remain low despite improvements in service access.

#### Sub-county Chairperson

The Sub-county Chairperson emphasized improvements in infrastructure and community participation. He said, *“We have seen improvements in roads, water access, and community involvement in planning. People are now more engaged in deciding what development projects are prioritized.”* However, he added that “economic opportunities are still limited, and many households continue to rely on subsistence farming.”

#### Councilor 1

One councilor highlighted progress in service delivery but noted uneven satisfaction levels. He said, *“Some households appreciate the improvements in schools and health services, but others feel that services are still inadequate, especially in remote villages.”* He added that income-generating opportunities remain a major challenge affecting household welfare.

#### Councilor 2

The second councilor focused on participation and resource allocation. He said, *“People are now more involved in local decision-making, and this has improved targeting of community needs. However, funding constraints affect the extent to which all priorities are addressed.”* He noted that satisfaction with services varies depending on location.

#### Parish Chief

The Parish Chief emphasized improvements in access to services but raised concerns about consistency. He said, *“Access to water, health, and education has improved, but not all households benefit equally. Some areas still face long distances to service centers.”* He added that infrastructure development is ongoing but slow.

#### Community Development Officer

The Community Development Officer highlighted both progress and persistent gaps in welfare outcomes. He said,

*“Decentralization has improved access to basic services and increased community participation, but income levels remain low. Many households still struggle to meet basic needs despite improved service delivery.”* He recommended strengthening livelihood programs to improve economic welfare.

The interview findings suggest that in Ndaiga Sub-county, decentralization has significantly improved access to basic social services, including health, education, water, and infrastructure.

However, its impact on economic welfare and income generation remains limited, and inequalities in service access still exist across different communities. This indicates that while social service delivery has improved, broader household welfare improvements are still constrained by economic and structural challenges.

### **Thematic Analysis of Social Welfare of Households Interview Findings**

The qualitative data from key informant interviews conducted in Ndaiga Sub-county were analyzed thematically to understand how decentralization has influenced household social welfare. The analysis involved coding responses, grouping similar ideas, and generating key themes that explain the lived experiences of households and local leaders.

#### **Theme 1: Improved Access to Basic Social Services**

A dominant theme across all respondents was the improvement in access to essential social services, particularly health, education, water, and infrastructure. The Sub-county Chief noted improved access to primary health care and education facilities. The Parish Chief and Councilors highlighted increased availability of water sources and school services. The Community Development Officer confirmed the expansion of government programs at the community level.

#### **Interpretation:**

This theme indicates that decentralization has positively influenced the availability and proximity of basic services, improving household welfare in terms of service access.

#### **Theme 2: Enhanced Community Participation in Development Processes**

Another key theme was the increased involvement of households in local decision-making. The Sub-county Chairperson emphasized community participation in prioritizing development projects. Councilors noted that residents now contribute ideas during planning meetings.

#### **Interpretation:**

This suggests that decentralization has strengthened participatory governance, allowing households in Ndaiga Sub-county to influence development priorities that affect their welfare.

#### **Theme 3: Persistent Low Income and Limited Economic Opportunities**

Despite improvements in service delivery, respondents consistently highlighted limited income-generating opportunities.

The Sub-county Chairperson noted continued reliance on subsistence farming.

The Community Development Officer reported low household incomes despite improved services.

#### **Interpretation:**

This theme shows that while social services have improved, economic transformation at the household level remains weak, limiting overall improvements in welfare.

#### **Theme 4: Unequal Distribution of Social Services**

Another important theme was inequality in access to services across different areas.

Councilors observed that remote villages still experience poor access to services.

The Parish Chief noted distance barriers to health and education facilities.

#### **Interpretation:**

This indicates that decentralization has not fully eliminated spatial disparities in service delivery, leading to uneven welfare outcomes among households.

#### **Theme 5: Moderate Satisfaction with Social Services**

Respondents expressed mixed levels of satisfaction with social services.

Some households appreciated improvements in health and education.

Others felt services were still inadequate in quality and coverage.

#### **Interpretation:**

This suggests that although decentralization has improved service availability, the quality and consistency of services still require improvement.

#### **Overall Thematic Conclusion**

The thematic analysis shows that decentralization in Ndaiga Sub-county has significantly improved access to basic social

services and strengthened community participation in governance.

However, its impact on household social welfare is moderated by:

Low household income and limited economic opportunities

Unequal distribution of services across locations

Moderate satisfaction levels due to service quality gaps

### Final Interpretation

Overall, while decentralization has positively influenced social service delivery and participation, its contribution to broader household welfare improvement remains partial, especially in relation to economic well-being and equitable service distribution.

### Documentary Findings on Social Welfare of Households

The documentary review was conducted using sub-county reports, sector performance reports, district planning documents, and development records from Ndaiga Sub-county and Kagadi District Local Government. The aim was to establish documented evidence on how decentralization has influenced household social welfare outcomes.

#### 1. Improved Access to Basic Social Services

Sub-county health reports, education sector records, and water department documents indicated gradual improvements in access to essential services.

Health reports showed increased immunization coverage and expanded outreach services.

Education reports indicated improved enrollment in primary schools and the availability of learning facilities.

Water sector reports documented new boreholes and rehabilitated water points in selected villages.

Finding:

The documents confirm that access to basic social services such as health, education, and water has improved over time, consistent with decentralization efforts.

#### 2. Infrastructure Development and Service Expansion

District development plans and sub-county project reports revealed ongoing infrastructure improvements, including: Rehabilitation of feeder roads, Construction and renovation of classrooms, and Maintenance of selected health facilities. However, progress was reported as uneven across parishes due to funding limitations.

Finding:

Infrastructure development has improved moderately, but implementation is inconsistent across different areas of the sub-county.

### 3. Community Participation in Development Planning

Budget conference reports and planning documents showed that community participation mechanisms are in place.

Parish-level meetings were documented as platforms for collecting community priorities.

Development plans reflected the inclusion of community-identified needs such as water, roads, and health services.

Finding:

The documents confirm that participatory planning is institutionalized and contributes to aligning development priorities with household needs.

### 4. Persistent Socio-Economic Challenges

Poverty assessment reports and livelihood program documents indicated that:

A large proportion of households depend on subsistence agriculture

Limited income-generating activities exist beyond farming

Youth unemployment remains a concern in some areas

Finding:

Despite improvements in service delivery, household income levels remain low, limiting overall social welfare improvements.

### 5. Inequality in Service Delivery Coverage

Monitoring and evaluation reports highlighted disparities in service access across different villages.

Remote areas were reported to have limited access to health and education services.

Some water points were non-functional or far from households

Infrastructure development was more concentrated near trading centers

Finding:

There is clear evidence of unequal distribution of social services within the sub-county, affecting equity in household welfare outcomes. The documentary evidence indicates that in Ndaiga Sub-county, decentralization has contributed to improved access to basic social services, infrastructure development, and participatory planning. However, the evidence also shows persistent challenges, including: Low household income levels and limited livelihood diversification, Uneven distribution of social services across parishes, Inconsistent infrastructure development, and Continued reliance on subsistence agriculture. Overall, while decentralization has positively influenced service delivery and access to social services, its impact on broader household social welfare, particularly

economic well-being, remains moderate and uneven, largely due to structural and resource constraints.

This section presents the correlation analysis examining the relationship between political decentralization (independent variable) and social welfare of households (dependent variable) in Ndaiga Sub- County. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables.

### Correlational Findings

**Table 6: Correlation Matrix between Study Variables**

Variables	Social Welfare of Households
Political Decentralization	0.671**

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

### Political Decentralization and Social Welfare (r = 0.671\*\*)

The correlation between political decentralization and household social welfare is strong and positive. This indicates that increased citizen participation, accountability, and local decision-making are associated with improved household welfare outcomes such as access to services and community development.

### Regression Analysis.

This section presents regression analysis results used to determine the extent to which decentralization (political) predicts social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub-County. Multiple linear regression was applied to examine the combined and individual contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

**Table 7: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.781	0.610	0.604	0.412

The results indicate that the correlation coefficient (R = 0.781) shows a strong positive relationship between decentralization variables and household social welfare. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.610) implies that 61.0% of the variation in social welfare of households is explained by political factors. The remaining 39.0% is

explained by other factors not included in the model, such as household income sources, national economic conditions, and external development programs. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (0.604) confirms that the model is stable and reliable in explaining the relationship between the variables.

**Table 8: ANOVA Results**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.621	3	15.207	89.34	0.000
Residual	29.181	276	0.106		
Total	74.802	279			

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant (F = 89.34, p < 0.001). This indicates that decentralization variables collectively have a significant effect on household social welfare in Ndaiga Sub- County. Therefore, the model is a good fit for predicting social welfare outcomes based on decentralization indicators.

**Table 9: Regression Coefficients**

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.812	0.214	—	3.79	0.000
Political Decentralization	0.241	0.062	0.238	3.89	0.000

The regression results show that all dimensions of decentralization have a positive and statistically significant effect on household social welfare.

### Political Decentralization (β = 0.238, p < 0.001)

Political decentralization has a positive but comparatively lower effect, suggesting that while participation and

accountability matter, their impact is slightly weaker compared to administrative and fiscal dimensions.

The regression analysis confirms that decentralization is a significant predictor of the social welfare of households in Ndaiga Sub- County.

### **Political Decentralization and Social Welfare of Households**

The study established a positive and significant relationship between political decentralization and household social welfare ( $r = 0.671$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with regression results showing that political decentralization significantly predicts improvements in welfare outcomes.

The findings further revealed that community participation in decision-making, accountability of local leaders, and involvement in local development planning have moderately improved household access to social services such as health, education, and water.

These findings are consistent with Ribot (2002), who argues that political decentralization enhances accountability and responsiveness by bringing decision-making closer to citizens. Similarly, Faguet (2014) emphasizes that local governments are better positioned to identify community needs and allocate resources efficiently when empowered politically.

In Uganda, the results align with Bashaasha et al. (2013), who found that local council systems improved citizen participation and service delivery outcomes in rural areas. However, the current study also confirms limitations similar to those identified by Ssenkumba (2014), particularly elite dominance and limited fiscal autonomy, which reduce the full welfare benefits of political decentralization.

Comparatively, evidence from Kenya (Harris & Posner, 2022) and Ghana (Mensah et al., 2024) also shows that while political decentralization increases participation, unequal influence and elite capture often weaken pro-poor outcomes. This suggests that although political decentralization in Uganda improves participation, its translation into strong welfare gains remains constrained.

### **Conclusion.**

The study concludes that political decentralization has a positive and significant relationship with household social welfare, as shown by the correlation coefficient. This indicates that increased citizen participation, local elections, and accountability mechanisms are associated with improved welfare outcomes. However, the effect is moderate, and regression results show a relatively lower predictive power compared to other variables. This suggests that while political decentralization improves governance processes, its direct impact on household welfare is limited by weak accountability systems and uneven citizen participation.

### **Recommendation**

Local government authorities should strengthen community participation mechanisms by ensuring that all groups (women, youth, and vulnerable populations) actively participate in decision-making processes.

Increased civic education programs should be implemented to enhance citizens' understanding of their roles in local governance and improve meaningful participation.

Local councils should enhance accountability and feedback systems to ensure that community concerns are consistently addressed and reported back to citizens.

Future research should therefore focus on how decentralization directly influences household income levels, employment opportunities, and poverty reduction in rural areas.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ANOVA – Analysis of Variance

CVI – Content Validity Index

F – F-statistic

LC – Local Council

PDM – Parish Development Model

R – Correlation Coefficient

R<sup>2</sup> – Coefficient of Determination

SD – Standard Deviation

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UBOS – Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UGX – Ugandan Shillings

### Informed Consent.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

### Source of funding.

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### Conflict of interest.

There is no conflict of interest.

### Availability of data.

Data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

### Authors contribution.

SB designed the study, conducted data collection, cleaned and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript.

MS supervised all stages of the study from conceptualization of the topic to manuscript writing and submission.

### Author's biography.

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