

The impact of political, administrative and financial factors on local participants in Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to ascertain the impact of political, administrative and financial factors on local participants in Hoima district, Uganda.

Research methodology: To ascertain the factors that impact participants in Uganda, a descriptive study was used in which primary data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results: The factors were identified and clustered into thematic areas; they indicate a cluster of three factors appeared as themes. The results suggest that financial and political challenges are key impediments to effective participation and a good number of the technical personnel were not appointed on the basis of technical know-how. Hoima district needed to intensify its advocacy regarding increased central government transfers as well as the disbursements of more unconditional grants coupled with regular monitoring of its technical personnel.

Limitations: The key limitation is the geographical scope since this study covered only one district, implying that the results cannot be generalized for the whole country.

Contribution: The results of this are essential to academics in both Public Administration and Policy studies interested in enhancing local democracy and citizen-based governance.

Keywords: Administrative, Citizen participation, Financial, Hoima district, Political

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1. Introduction

Uganda is believed to have adopted a system of decentralised governance in the immediate post-independence era albeit that system was a mixture of federal, semi-federal and district councils. The key impetus behind decentralised governance is the need to foster and enhance popular participants in every aspect affecting communities ([Musenze & Mayende, 2020](#)). Ideally, decentralisation cannot be successful without popular citizen participation, which is believed to be the engine oil. Recent studies attest to the fact that dearth of popular participants is very dangerous to the process as it impacts virtually every hope for realising meaningful local economic development (LED) strategy worldwide and Uganda ([Tamukbula, Sseguya, Miiro & Okry, 2020](#); [Ciang, 2020](#); [Fiorentino, 2019](#); [Buttazzoni, Arku & Cleave, 2019](#); [Hossain & Roy, 2019](#)). Yet, without LED, even if a country boasts of a wide range of opportunities for expanded democracy, the notion of decentralisation becomes as irrelevant as its non-existence ([Mwesigwa, 2021](#)).

When the Museveni government took over power, initially as a rebel group in 1986, it built on the very foundation that the nation's forefathers had dreamt and adopted an independence – decentralisation strategy ([Khisa, 2020](#)). Indeed, the new regime re-introduced decentralisation through a five-tier system of local governance as a prospect of extending local democracy to every corner of the country and to every citizen including those who had previously been marginalised by histories such as women, the youths, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The councils became elective an issue that was

perceived to have extended local democracy to the local citizen both as a voter and as a potential leader ([Musenze & Mayende, 2020](#)). Indeed, local councils become an opportunity through which good national leaders would be trained to form a nursery bed. As a consequence, a good number of members of parliament and ministers went through that system as it offered them opportunities for hands-on leadership. Opportunities for popular participants in terms of regular elections, local planning and budgeting, problem identification and collective decision-making became real and meaningful for a better part of the first two decades (1986 to 2006).

By the end of 2005, which saw a number of political controversies at the national level, opportunities for effective participants became very occasional and consequently, the progress of consolidating meaningful devolution was affected ([Tangri & Mwenda, 2019](#)). This deterioration in devolution may well be described by a number of factors that local governments come across on a domestic scale and or those super-imposed from the central government machinery ([Khisra, 2020](#)). In fact, some scholars have observed that the continued existence of local governments that are devoid of effective participants is comparable to the absence of those institutions. It has been noted that the country appears to be turning away from democratic decentralisation towards what can be termed as democratic centralism. This situation is illustrated by several happenings. For example, a number of sources of revenue that were hitherto available to local governments have either been suspended or re-centralised ([Tabaro, 2018](#)). To this end, the central government, through the Uganda revenue authority (URA) is now collecting every significant revenue only to be partially returned to the source in form of central government transfers under stringent conditionalities that do not favour popular participants ([Mwondha, Barugahara, Mubiru, Kanaabi & Nalukwago, 2018](#)). Also, the appointment of key personnel mainly the chief administrative officer (CAO) for rural local governments and or town clerk for urban councils has since been re-centralised to the public service commission (PSC) and so allowing those key officials to be transferred from one local government to another without consulting with the local citizens where they are serving or they are to be transferred. Regrettably, the CAO and or town clerk is the chief accounting officer of every programme and/or project within a local government ([Elliot, 2015](#)). While the CAO and or town clerk is perceived to be answerable to the local government where is posted to serve, the situation is far from true as they (the CAO and or town clerk) remain, instead, answerable to the central government.

The distortion of the two major dimensions of decentralisation, namely administrative and financial suggests that even if the local governments are left with political power, they can do so little given wider knowledge that *he who holds the piper dictates the tune*, in this case, the central government appears to dictate every necessary tune ([Mushemeza, 2019](#)). Ideally, once the central government dominates what is expected to be done, how it is done, where and by who, then, the essence of decentralisation becomes a prank ([Madinnah, 2020](#); [Cardoso, 2019](#); [Madinah, Boerhannoeddin, Ariffin & Bwengye, 2015](#)). A national survey of local governments in Uganda indicates that the proportion of local revenue to their annual budget estimates ranges below 30%. This fraction does not suggest that local governments have no source of revenue but every potential source has been centralised leaving local governments with uncertain sources (such as food market dues), which are often politicised by central government politicians to suit their ambitions.

While several studies have been conducted regarding decentralisation, not much has been done in Hoima district yet popular participants remains key to successful LED strategies worldwide ([Pfeifer, Opitz & Geis, 2020](#); [Biljohn & Lues, 2020](#); [Liao & Ma, 2019](#); [Blühdorn & Butzlaff, 2020](#); [Kwak, 2019](#)). It is as well essential given the budding discovery of oil and a range of projects and programmes linked to the oil industry in Uganda's Albertine graben ([Green, 2015](#); [Republic of Uganda, 2014](#)). As a consequence, without assessing the factors affecting popular citizen participation, it may be difficult for development partners, including the government, to evolve sustainable development interventions for the citizenry. Given this revelation, this study aimed to ascertain the impact of political, administrative and financial factors on local participants in Hoima district, Uganda.

2. Literature review

A snapshot at theoretical issues

Citizen participation denotes a practice that offers individuals an opening to take part and have an effect on community choices in the democratic process of making policies and/or decisions. A study by [Pfeifer, Opitz and Geis \(2020\)](#) reveals that from the time citizen participation was institutionalised in the mid-1960s, public involvement has become a cross-cutting issue in virtually every community development program and intervention. The basis of this is to guarantee that the community has a direct voice in the decisions which affect them directly or indirectly. In recent days, the two terms, viz participation and involvement have become very synonymous in community development interventions and or literature among democratic and democratising societies ([Kuutti, Sajaniemi, Björn, Heiskanen & Reunamo, 2020](#)). While a number of government departments, organisations and local governments prefer to underestimate the spirit of public participation in key phases on the pretext that participants are costly and take much of their time, there are a number of positive outcomes which can be achieved from successful citizen participation. For example, a study by [Carruthers, Busser, Cain and Brown \(2010\)](#) identifies a number of positive outcomes of citizen participation, namely: improved public backing for resolutions; generation of ideas and data on community concerns; enhancing a sense of collaboration and confidence between the government and the community; ensuring justifiable imminent resolutions; and, facilitating to evade skirmishes and overpriced postponements.

Other studies (such as [Tesfay, 2020](#); [Wales, Davis, Kelly & Lynott, 2020](#)) suggest that public participation leads to a realisation of authorised requirements, symbolising the principles of democratic involvement and presence; advancing communal integrity; updating the community; improving awareness of community challenges and discovering and producing possible alternatives; and generating strategies, procedures and ventures of advanced value. For instance, participatory policy formulation ([Mwesigwa, Bogere & Anastassova, 2021](#)). This corroborates well with the agency theory. In governance, the notion of public participation entails the unswerving contribution or auxiliary contribution by way of agents in making decisions regarding programs for which they have a vested interest. This, in itself, allows participants to work together with departments of government and those outside the direct bureaucracy of government. From obtainable literature, it is clear that dearth of effective citizen participation may have led to political, administrative and financial implications echoed in this study.

3. Research methodology

Research design

To achieve the study objective, a descriptive study design was employed in one local government (Hoima District) located in mid-western Uganda.

Study population and sampling procedures

The study population was composed of elected leaders and appointed staff at the district level and at the sub-county level. The key informants for this study were the district executive membership and the central government representative seeing that these were found to be too busy to attend to the questionnaire. Consequently, a sample of 182 was generated using Krejcie and Morgan's (1972) table and as many as 164 respondents (90.0%) returned the questionnaires. This number was exceptionally high given that a number of studies realise as low as 60% and their results remain valid. But the choice of one district was due to limitations imposed by the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected from August to November 2020 by use of a self-administered questionnaire and personal interviews. Primary data was analysed using descriptive statistics and as result, the impeding factors were identified and clustered into thematic areas, namely; political, administrative and financial. These are all presented in table form as encapsulated in tables 1 to 6; these give the factors affecting participants followed by available alternatives in each case.

Quality management

A maiden version of the questionnaire was pretested. To guarantee the content validity of the items, each one was assessed using three local government professionals serving in the department of community development. This version of the questionnaire was then revised by two local government authorities along with the principal researcher. To measure the validity of the measures, we conducted a pre-test of the subsequent questionnaire with a trial sample of 12 members randomly selected from two sub-counties. This pre-test recommended some modifications in the phrasing of a few items. The district personnel officer facilitated the generation of the ultimate sample. The district personnel, through a letter of introduction, requested members to contribute to the study.

4. Results and discussion

The two objectives of the study sought were: (a) to determine the factors affecting local participants in Hoima District and (b) to determine the potential alternatives to each of the challenges. The different factors were assessed along three lines, namely; financial, administrative and political. Each of the three constructs was further expanded using a five-item Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree. The respondents were required to rate each by identifying the degree to which they agree or disagree with each construct. Data under the variable were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation).

Financial factors affecting local participants

Successful local participants call for basic finances in order to help local citizens in conducting various activities. This section illustrates financial factors using frequencies and percentages since the respondents were presented with a range of optional constructs. Table 1 summarises the outcomes that were generated from the questionnaires administered to selected local councillors and technical officials in Hoima District.

Table 1. Financial factors affecting local participants in Hoima District (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
My district does not receive enough central government transfers.	154	94.0	10	6.0
My district does not receive central government transfers or grants in time.	160	96	04	2.4
My district gets more conditional grants than unconditional grants.	139	84.8	25	15.2
My district does not provide accountability in time.	74	45.1	90	54.9
My district does not make annual budgets in time.	25	15.2	139	84.8
There is no proper financial prioritization in the district.	153	94.0	11	6.0
My district does not have enough civil society organisations to provide budget support.	148	90.2	16	9.8
My district does not collect adequate local revenue to support its budget.	151	92.1	13	7.9
Average		76.6		23.4

Source: Primary data, 2020

The first set of factors affecting local participants revolved around the “financial” factor and they were measured using eight constructs. The study established that respondents agree with all the Constructs except two. This notion points to the view that the amount of resources available for local citizens to engage effectively in various district activities was, for the most part, inadequate. The study establishes that on top of getting inadequate central government transfers, Hoima district rarely received those transfers in time. The study reveals that the delay by the central government to remit financial resources translated, in part, directly into low local participants. This is especially so because a good number of the avenues available for local citizen engagement receive late financial facilitation, which hampered

local citizen participation. Regarding the timing and sufficiency of central government grants to Hoima district, one of the key informants noted that since 2006, when the popular graduated tax was suspended by the government, it has not been possible for the district to finance our annual budgets. This is mainly true because those transfers are rarely made in time nor are they enough to meet a good number of the priority targets such as primary health care, primary education, feeder road maintenance and agricultural extension services.

The study indicates that the ratio of conditional grants that are transferred to Hoima District is more than unconditional grants. Unfortunately, conditional grants do not allow any significant local participants since they are, for the most part, pre-allocated from the central government ministry. On the other hand, unconditional grants allow more opportunities for local citizens to engage in resource allocation, project monitoring and evaluation. Since the degree of conditional grants is higher than that of unconditional grants, the lack of local participants followed in Hoima District. As one of the key informants maintained that the central government has since 2001 been reducing the number of unconditional grants while increasing the amount of conditional grants forthwith. Consequently, conditional grants maintain the control of the central government thereby handcuffing the local citizens from taking part in determining their own destiny. The study establishes that even though financial allocations were being done in the District, local citizens were not focusing those finances on priority programmes and projects. The absence of proper financial prioritisation in Hoima district had, to a great extent, hampers local citizen participation. Moreover, the bigger the number of CSOs, the more opportunities for local citizens to participate effectively at all levels of local governance. Since there are not many CSOs in the district, the study argues that there is inadequate local participation in Hoima District.

The study reveals that the amount of local revenue collected in Hoima District is not adequate to sustain the budget. It is thus inferred that once local citizens fail to raise adequate revenues for their district, their degree of vigilance concerning how the finances are spent will drop proportionately. The study indicates that the drop in the scale of financial vigilance resulting from low internal revenues has translated into limited local citizen anticipation in Hoima District. Unsurprisingly, one of the members in the focus group discussion emphasised that Hoima district is comprised of mainly subsistence farmers whose per capita agricultural production rotates around home consumption rather than the market; it is, thus, hard for those people to take much product to the marketplace through which they can get some taxes in form of market dues. In addition, the size of the private sector has not grown to permit an increasing tax base; this has left Hoima district with limited local revenue to support their budget.

The study indicates that Hoima District provides accountability in time. This implies that given the fact that the district received more conditional grants than unconditional grants and failed to raise adequate revenues, it is obliged to provide time accountability for the external revenues. The study establishes that the Hoima district council makes its annual budgets in time. Therefore, given the highly participatory budget cycle that starts from July to June using a bottom-up strategy, there is a likelihood of local participation in Hoima district. Nonetheless, local participation in budgeting can not be translated into a wholesome strategy since budget financing is deemed to be more important.

Administrative factors affecting local participants

The second challenge to local participants in Hoima district was administrative issues, which was measured using five factors, illustrated in Table 2. The views were generated from the questionnaires administered to selected local councillors and technical officials. As a result, frequencies and percentages were generated from the various views arising out of the study instrument.

Table 2. Administrative factors affecting local participants in Hoima District (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
The local government council appoints key personnel in my district.	160	96	4	2.4

A good number of technical officials are appointed on the basis of technical know-how.	73	44.5	91	55.5
The technical officials are often influenced by local councillors rather than community-based priorities.	139	84.8	25	15.2
There is a shortage of qualified personnel in a good number of the district departments/units.	152	92.7	12	3
There are numerous conflicts between the technical personnel and local councillors in the district.	82	50.0	82	50.0
The District Technical Planning Committee officials do not allow local personnel to explore their potential.	96	58.5	68	41.5
The technical personnel in the district are poorly motivated.	109	66.5	55	33.5
The district does not have a clear programme for capacity development among its personnel.	127	74	37	22.6
There are fewer workshops and seminars held annually for the key personnel.	118	72.0	46	28.0
There is inadequate monitoring of technical personnel in all departments and sectors at the grassroots.	153	93.3	11	6.7
Overall		73.7		26.3

Source: Primary data, 2020

Accordingly, four constructs were rated excellent, with scores well above 80%. Hoima district has a functioning District Service Commission (DSC) that is duly appointed by the council and that the appointment of key personnel and any other support staff are done by the DSC on behalf of the council. Nonetheless, the scale of local participants during the appointment process does not show local citizen participation, given the fact that the process is skewed in favour of a small group working on delegated authority. Community-based priorities do not influence the technical officials but they are a good number often influenced by local councillors. It is, thus, prudent to envisage that local councillors' influence is oriented towards satisfying personal needs rather than community needs. By and large, the process of generating community priorities lost meaning since a good number of the issues generated there was not being taken into consideration. Owing to the inadequate popular community influence, it becomes apparent to presuppose local participants in Hoima district. Regarding this, one of the key informants stated that they always wanted to have their own space through which they could effectively perform their duties. However, some of the district councillors want to continue influencing the technical bench even when, at some point, they are well versed with the business...*this is not good for the district.* (Head of unit, 25 January 2020)

A good number of every department/unit in Hoima district does not have enough qualified personnel. The shortage indicates that Hoima district will not achieve effective administrative stability and consequently not realise successful local citizen participation. As a result, Hoima district lacks adequate personnel who will be able to conduct numerous activities related to policy formulation and policy implementation. This revelation was further confirmed by one of the key informants who noted that Hoima district has not yet filled up all the technical positions since some of the fundamental offices are still lacking the requisite staff members. Unfortunately, some of those offices have been held by staff in the acting capacity for the past two years. In addition, a good number of the acting staff do not possess the minimum basic qualifications...*this has stalled several project implementation which would have been worked sometime back.* (Councillor, 25 January 2020) .

Adequate monitoring is critical to local participants since the more local citizens take part in project monitoring the more local participants become. Table 2 confirms that inadequate monitoring of technical personnel is spread across all departments and sectors in Hoima district. This revelation is further amplified by one of the interviewees who remarked that throughout Hoima district, the degree of monitoring of the technical personnel is very low as this is oftentimes pegged on the scarcity of resources to do so. The District Inspector of Schools, for instance, has not been able to monitor the

schools because of the dearth of facilitation...*this led to gross laxity among a good number primary school teachers and performance is continually going down.* (Councillor, 25 January 15 2020)

On the other hand, five constructs were rated between 50% and 78%. intra-district conflicts between technical officials and elected councillors were noticeable but at a very moderate level. Nonetheless, since the score was 50%, the conditions were not good enough to allow local participants in the district. The DTPC tends to dominate their subordinates whenever it came to allowing them the liberty to explore their potential. One of the interviewees commented that the DTPC officials have slowly but selectively built a canopy to control all their subordinates by not allowing them any reasonable opportunity to take part in decision-making even concerning a good number of trivial issues...*unfortunately, the DTPC rarely interfaces with the actual project implementation neither at the district nor municipality.* (Community-based services, 25 January 15 2020)

The study revealed that there is poor motivation among the technical personnel in Hoima District and that this affects all dimensions of staff stimulus. Moreover, when technical personnel are not well motivated their level of participation in various local government activities is bound to be low and so will the degree of local citizen participation. In fact, one of the key informants stated that a good number of the district personnel are inadequately motivated, seeing that they are not fully committed to their jobs. Many of them report to work as late as 9.30 a.m. while others at 10.00 a.m. The study established that Hoima district does not have a clear strategy for capacity development among its personnel, an issue which brings down the scale of administrative Participation and hence local participants suffer enormously. Lack of effective capacity development programme in Hoima district tends to eliminate the opportunity for local citizen participation.

Fewer workshops and seminars are held annually for the key personnel in Hoima district. This indicated that opportunities for identifying the strengths, weaknesses and lessons learned are limited. It is this vacuum that, to a certain extent, limits local participants in Hoima district. Only one statement was rated below 50% revealing that a good number of the technical personnel are not appointed on the basis of technical know-how, thus suggesting that technical “know-who” (nepotism, favouritism and tribalism) is prevalent. One of the study participants attested to this thus the technical staff appointments in Hoima district are rarely done on technical 'know-how' but technical 'know-who'. This is mainly indicated through connections and lobbying of local councillors and members of the technical desk who bring in their family or political party supporters to dominate much of the district positions. Once the basis for making technical appointments largely falls short of the stipulated criteria and thus runs counter to the expectations of many local citizens, the degree of local participants will suffer proportionately.

Political factors affecting local participants

The third factor affecting local participants in Hoima was “political”, which was assessed using several constructs that were presented to the respondents in Hoima district. The variable necessitated the elected members in local governments to harmonise their opinions and decisions concerning different programmes and projects in the district.

Table 3. Political factors affecting local participants in Hoima District (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Local councillors have a poor relationship with technical officials.	78	46	86	52.4
The local government committees are not recognised by all local citizen s.	26	15.9	138	84.1
There is lack of adequate supervision of local councillors by local citizen s.	156	95.1	8	4.9
Local councillors in higher councils undermine the capacity of councillors in lower councils.	142	86.6	22	13.4

Local councillors are rarely provided with performance standards.	97	59.1	67	40.9
Local councillors are not offered constant training about new policies.	128	78.0	36	22.0
Local councillors have less knowledge of local concerns of the people whom they represent.	127	74	37	22.6
Local councillors have less capacity to present local concerns during and after council sessions.	159	97.0	5	3.0
A good number local councillors are less motivated to conduct their responsibilities as designated.	161	98.2	3	1.8
My councillor gives and takes bribes during and after local elections.	163	99.4	1	0.6
Female councillors are not given equal opportunities with male councillors.	102	62.2	62	37.8
Not all local councillors find English language, which is used in councils, easy.	161	98.2	3	1.8
Average		76.2		23.8

Source: Primary data, 2020

Table 3 shows the various factors that were presented to respondents in Hoima district. The results prove that six constructs were the most highly rated, with scores ranging between 80% and 100%. Bribe-giving and bribe-taking among local councillors in Hoima district are widespread. Bribery has, for the most part, affected local participants in the district. A good number of local councillors lack the necessary capacity to present local concerns whether during or outside council sessions. As a consequence, dearth of capacity among local councillors has precipitated several issues, including stifling local participants in Hoima district. As one of the key informants emphasised that a good number of local councillors use bribery during and after local elections as the only means for selling their candidature rather than vital issues which concern the electorate. Those who never have the finances to bribe voters were rarely voted to the council. Moreover, a good number of the local councillors have less capacity to present local concerns during council sessions.

Lack of motivation coupled with lack of ability to understand the English language has affected local participants in Hoima district. Supervision of local councillors by local citizens is not adequate, an issue that affects local participants in the district. Lower local councillors are not appreciated by their counterparts in the higher councils. This system has greatly retarded local participants in Hoima district. In this connection, one of the key informants noted that English language which is used in councils is not easy for a good number of the local councillors as they can express themselves in the local language[s] and articulate every critical issue, [and] this is not possible with the English language. *This has resulted into the dominance of few councillors taking an active part in every aspect while the majority were merely passive spectators.* (Member DTPC, 18 January 2020).

Four constructs were rated between 60% and 80%. Local councillors in Hoima district are not offered continuous training regarding new policies. By inference, the vacuum caused by the lack of regular training has led to a deficiency in local participants in the district. Therefore, the study indicates that local councillors in Hoima district have the challenge of possessing less knowledge concerning the local concerns of their constituents. The limited knowledge about the concerns of their people has, to a large degree, affected the degree of local participants in the district. This was emphasised by one of the key informants, who stated: *In the past, local councillors were given constant training about any new policies. However, that is no longer the concern nowadays since the government believes that there is no more need for capacity-building given the age of the current decentralisation strategy in Uganda. As a consequence, our councillors are assumed to be knowledgeable about all the new policies and yet this is not true for the case of Hoima district.* (Member DTPC, 15 January 2020).

Inability to provide performance standards has affected the scale of local citizen participation. In any case, when there are no sufficient performance standards, the basic drive for Councillors to be engaged in council activities will more likely come down proportionately. A gender divide still exists among councillors in Hoima district; the lack of gender parity has, to a greater extent, affected the scope of women's effective participation in council activities. This was confirmed by one of the key informants, who noted: *There is still a wide divide between male councillors and female councillors, seeing that the males tend to dominate their female counterparts, especially during council sessions. This indicates that opportunities are skewed in favour of the male councillors offering a gross disadvantage to the female councillors.* (District councillor, 15 January 2020).

Only two constructs were rated below 50%. Thus, there is a good relationship between local councillors and technical officials in Hoima district. Moreover, the local government committees in Hoima district are recognised by all local participants. Through these twin outcomes, the appointed officials and the elected officials in Hoima district work in a mutually complementary sphere and all the committees are recognised by local citizens, which has expanded the scope of local citizen participation.

Alternatives available to local participants in Hoima District

The study established the solutions that can be adopted in order to mitigate the financial, administrative and political challenges affecting local participants in Hoima District. Tables 1 to 3 give a summary of the solutions.

Financial alternatives available to local participants

This section presents the outcomes obtained from the field regarding the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima. Table 4 illustrates the outcomes.

Table 4. Financial alternatives available to local participants in Hoima District (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Advocating for increased ratio of central government transfers to the district.	112	68.3	52	31.7
Advocating for timely release of central government transfers or grants to the district.	159	97.0	5	3.0
Advocating for more unconditional grants than conditional grants.	94	53	70	42.7
Providing appropriate accountability in the district in time.	160	96	4	2.4
Drawing up all annual budgets in time.	163	99.4	1	0.6
Having appropriate financial prioritisation in the district.	153	93.3	11	6.7
Attracting more civil society organisations to the district in order to allow budget support.	158	96.3	6	3.7
Increasing the tax base for local revenue so as to support the district budget.	132	80.5	32	19.5
Average		86.2		13.8

Source: Primary data, 2020

Table 4 gives a summary of the practical solutions to the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district. All the constructs, except two, were rated above 80%. If the district can intensify their advocacy for the timely release of central government transfers, then the financial challenges will be reduced in Hoima. In this connection, the central government developed a very unfriendly system of releasing every central government transfer late and sometimes such funds are released towards the end of the financial year. Even when the central government does so, it will insist that the money be spent within, sometimes very limited time, before the closure of the financial year. *If the transfers were effected in time, our district could achieve much.* (Member, DTPC 15 January 2020).

If Hoima district provides appropriate accountability in time, then the financial challenges will be partly addressed. Annual budgets need to be drawn up in time in order to overcome the financial challenges affecting local participants in the district. Timely budgeting is critical to overcoming the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district as local citizens should not merely follow the budget framework paper for the sake of it but invest more conscience in what and how local priorities are captured in the final document. Financial prioritisation is critical to solving the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district. If CSOs can be attracted to Hoima district, this will reinforce budget support and thus mitigate the financial challenges affecting local citizen participation. Indeed, civil society plays a fundamental role in facilitating the local government in matters of local financing. For instance, facilitating the local budgeting process, budget analysis and assessing accountability. *If we can have more of those civil society organisations in the district then our financial challenges affecting local participants would be reduced.* (Member, District Planning Unit, 15 February 2020).

An increase in the local revenue base will have a positive influence on the budget support and consequently address the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district. In this regard, there is a need to increase the opportunities for young people to make wealth so that they can pay more taxes to the district. This will require going to the root of poverty, especially in the rural and peri-urban areas where a good number of revenues is being generated from. This idea was confirmed by one of the key informants who asserted that the need for the central government to enlarge the amount of central government transfer to the district so that essential projects and programmes are met in time. This calls for the government's disbursement of more unconditional grants so that local citizens can make a substantial input into the process of budgetary allocation to critical priorities. Through the twine outcomes, the study revealed that Hoima district needs to intensify its advocacy regarding increased central government transfers to the district as well as the disbursements of more unconditional grants than conditional grants. The two proposals will, hopefully, go a long way in addressing the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district.

Administrative alternatives available to local participants

In this section, the administrative solutions to the challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district have been highlighted. Table 34 gives a summary of the specific solutions sought.

Table 5. Administrative alternatives available to local participants in Hoima district (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
The Service Commission should be allowed to appoint key personnel in the district.	156	95.1	8	4.9
Technical officials should be appointed on the basis of scientific selection.	148	90.2	16	9.8
The technical officials should focus on community-based priorities.	136	82.9	28	11
The district should appoint more qualified personnel in all district departments/units.	161	98.2	3	1.8
There should be mutual cooperation between the technical personnel and local councillors in the district.	162	98.8	2	1.2
The District Technical Planning Committee officials should allow local personnel to explore their potential.	153	93.3	11	6.7
The technical personnel in the district should be motivated.	150	91.5	14	8.5
The district should have a clear programme for capacity development among its personnel.	139	84.8	25	15.2
The district should organise enough workshops and seminars annually for the key personnel.	122	74.4	42	25.6

The district should conduct regular monitoring of technical personnel in all departments and sectors at the grassroots.	94	53	70	42.7
Average		86.7		13.3

Source: Primary data, 2020

All the factors, except two, in Table 4 were rated above 80%. The study confirmed that an independent District Service Commission is critical to the appointment of key personnel as one of the ways of overcoming the administrative challenges affecting local citizen participation. As a result, scientific selection during all key appointments is important for alleviating the administrative challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district if only it can be adopted. If the technical officials can focus on community-based priorities, then the magnitude of the administrative challenges affecting local participants would have, in part, been reduced. More qualified personnel are needed in all departments/units as one of the measures to combat the administrative challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district. Consequently, overcoming the administrative challenges to local participants in Hoima, in part, requires mutual cooperation between the technical personnel and local councillors in the district. If the district technical planning committee allows local personnel to explore their potential if the technical personnel are fully motivated, and if the district has a clear programme for capacity development among its personnel, some of the administrative challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district will be eliminated. If Hoima district organises sufficient workshops and seminars annually for the key personnel and if the district carries out regular monitoring of its technical personnel in all departments and sectors at the grassroots, then the administrative challenges affecting local citizen participation will be overcome. One of the key informants in the interview confirmed these proposals by noting:

“Administratively, our district service commission needs to be allowed to work without interference from local politicians when selecting key personnel. Once this is done then all appointments will be held on the basis of scientific selection rather than technical 'know-who'”.

This will give equal opportunities to candidates who qualify for the few job slots available in the district. In addition, the technical officials will then have the momentum to focus their attention on community-based priorities by way of the bottom-up paradigm. The district needs to employ more competent human resources in all its departments so that the existing vacancies are completely filled up. Moreover, local participants need to promote reciprocal teamwork among the technical personnel and local councillors so that they complement each other rather than fighting one another. By so doing, the Technical Planning Committee officials will, no doubt, allow the local personnel to discover their latent. There is a need for Hoima district to have a comprehensible agenda for capacity development among its personnel; such capacity can be built through workshops and seminars yearly for the key personnel so that threats are identified and lessons learned in the process. Finally, the district needs to carry out regular monitoring of its technical personnel in every department and sector that are based at the grassroots. These factors, if adopted, can help expand the degree of local participants in the district.

Political alternatives available to local participants

In this section, the political factors to the challenges affecting local participants in Hoima were presented and discussed. Table 6, in particular, illustrates the magnitude of each solution.

Table 6. Political alternatives available to local participants in Hoima District (No=164)

Construct	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Improving the relationship between local councillors and technical officials.	156	95.1	8	4.9
Encouraging all local citizens to recognise local government committees in the district.	104	63.4	60	36.6

Increasing the scale of supervision of local councillors among local citizens.	98	59.8	66	40.2
Recognising councillors in lower councils by local councillors in higher councils.	95	57.9	69	42.1
Providing local councillors with performance standards.	87	53.0	77	47.0
Providing local councillors with constant training about new policies.	91	55.5	73	44.5
Improving local councillors' capacity to present local concerns during and after council sessions.	107	65.2	57	34.8
Motivating local councillors to carry out their responsibilities as designated.	102	62.2	62	37.8
Banning local councillors who give and take bribes from electoral offices.	93	56.7	71	43.3
Providing equal opportunities for female and male councillors.	157	95.7	8	4.3
Allowing the use of local languages during all council sessions.	148	90.2	16	9.8
Average		68.6		31.4

Source: Primary data, 2020

Table 6 indicates that only three constructs were rated above 80%. Improved relationships between the elected politicians and the appointed officials, the equalisation of opportunities between male and female councillors, and allowing the use of local languages during all council sessions were significant factors for alleviating the political challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district. Four of the constructs were rated between 60 and 70%. Therefore, overcoming the political challenges to local participants in Hoima will, in part, require encouraging all local citizens to recognise local government committees in the district, increasing the scale of supervision of local councillors by local participants, improving local councillors' capacity to present local concerns during and after council sessions, and motivating local councillors to carry out their responsibilities as designated. Table 6 also illustrates that four of the 11 constructs were rated between 50% and 60%. Moreover, one of the key informants confirmed that:

“Hoima district ought to improve the bond between elected councillors and the technical officials. In addition, the district needs to make sure that female councillors are accorded equal opportunities as their male counterparts since they are both representatives of the electorate. Moreover, there is a need to improve the capacity of local councillors to allow them present local concerns in councils since a good number of them are of low education level. It is also important for local councillors to be motivated to carry out their responsibilities as designated; poor or lack of motivation stalls councillor performance in the long run.” (DEC member, 15 January 2020)

Hence, if local councillors in higher councils recognise councillors in lower councils, if local councillors are provided with performance standards if local councillors are provided with constant training about new policies, and if local councillors who give and took bribes are banned from electoral offices, then the political challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district will be overcome.

Discussion

The study has established that the local government committees in Hoima district were recognised by local participants. Through these undistinguishable consequences, the study agreed with the agency theory in that the appointed officials and the elected officials in the local government worked in a reciprocally harmonising domain and that all the committees were recognised by local citizens, which had expanded the scope of local participants thus being on the same wavelength with Wales et al (2020) even if their study was based in clinical disciplines focussing on long-term outcomes of participants in

severe acquired brain injury among children. Also, given the highly participatory budget cycle that starts from July to June using a bottom-up strategy, there was a likelihood of local participants in local governments. Although that study looked at public budgeting being accessioned by socio-political context, objective setting, resourcing, decision-making, and relationship building, [Lehtonen \(2020\)](#) appears to support the outcomes of this study in terms of participator budgeting frameworks. While there could be some alternatives ([Andani, 2018](#)), local participants' budgeting could not be translated into a wholesome strategy since budget financing was deemed to be more important. This reveals numerous deficiencies in the local governance system ([Silva, Nursalam & Toda, 2020](#)).

The study suggested that if local councillors in higher councils recognised councillors in lower councils, if local councillors were provided with performance standards, if local councillors were provided with constant training about new policies, and if local councillors who gave and took bribes were banned from electoral offices, then the political challenges affecting local participants in the district would be overcome. These findings mirror well with the previous findings of [Mashau, Molaudzi and Mutshaeni \(2017\)](#), even if it was conducted in the South African environment, it attested that traditional councillors were only engaged in political issues of council rather social service delivery. Administratively, our district service commission needs to be allowed to work without interference from local politicians when selecting key personnel. Once this is done then all appointments will be held on the basis of scientific selection rather than technical 'know-who'. This gives equivalent opportunities to candidates who qualify for the few job slots available in the district thus supporting the views of [Harris \(2000\)](#).

In addition, the technical officials will then have the momentum to focus their attention on community-based priorities by way of the bottom-up paradigm. The district needs to employ more competent human resources in all its departments so that the existing vacancies are completely filled up. Moreover, local citizens need to promote reciprocal teamwork among the technical personnel and local councillors so that they complement each other rather than fighting one another; a view that concurs with [Kortleven, Lala and Lotfi \(2019\)](#). Through the twine outcomes, the study revealed that Hoima district needed to intensify its advocacy regarding increased central government transfers to the district as well as the disbursements of more unconditional grants than conditional grants. While they established a statistical association between these transfers and improvements in interregional as well as interpersonal equity, the outcomes of a study conducted by [González \(2019\)](#) in Latin America brings to the fore supportive evidence regarding central government transfers. The two proposals would, hopefully, go a long way in addressing the financial challenges affecting local participants in Hoima district.

5. Conclusion

The success of local participants in Hoima district is affected by a multitude of challenges; these range from financial, through administrative to political. It is inferred that each of the three dimensions had consequences, which impacted both the central government and local capacity. Regarding the administrative challenges, on the other hand, all the three exceptional factors implicated the local government (failure of council to appoint key personnel, inadequate monitoring of technical personnel and shortage of qualified personnel). While the political challenges were principally policy-focused (such as election rigging and a generally acceptable language in councils) or deliberate choices of the local government (such as motivation, low capacity of councillors and inadequate supervision of councillors). However, the administrative and financial aspects had a greater influence on the life of the citizen in Hoima thus calling for greater effort in the twine dimensions if the agency theory is to hold more sway.

Limitation and study forward

The key limitation of this study arises from the geographical scope seeing that Uganda is made of over 140 districts local government yet this study covered only one district, implying that the results cannot be generalized for the whole country. It is encouraged that more studies be conducted on the same variables in other parts of the country to corroborate the results of this study.

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