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Leaders to the Council: A Case of Lira District Local Government Councilors**



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The Influence of Social Factors on the Performance of Elected Leaders to the Council: A Case of Lira District Local Government Councilors

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Abstract

Purpose: The study assessed the influence of social factors on the performance of local government councilors in Lira District Council. Specifically, the study assessed the influence of selected social factors (gender, age and education attainment) on the performance of local councilors.

Methodology: A case study design was used, and 28 respondents were sampled using both purposive and simple random sampling techniques from which questionnaire were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics (version 23) to generate descriptive and inferential statistics which are presented in tables, percentages, and frequencies.

Findings: Findings reveal a strong and positive relationship between education attainment and the performance of councilors ($r=0.719$, $p<0.01$); and a positive and strong relationship between age and the performance of councilors ($r=0.625$, $p<0.05$). However, the study revealed a weak and positive relationship between gender differences and the performance of councilors ($r=0.061$, $p<0.05$).

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: Given that social factors yielded an Adjusted R^2 of 0.13.5, we conclude that education attainment and the age of councilors are significantly correlated to the performance of local councilors. From the study, it is encouraged that a policy aimed to regulate the minimum education requirement be set to a post-primary level now that the Local governments act does not stipulate any educational qualifications for one to become a local councilor. This study is relevant to policy makers, in Uganda as well as those advocating for better local government performance, to formulate policies that aim to address the dynamics of local governance in the country.

Key words: *Social factors, education attainment, age, gender differences, performance*



1. Introduction

The performance of local government councilors remains a great concern to many stakeholders. According to Wilson and Game (2018), councils are part of the local government structure as a generic term for the lowest tiers of public administration within a particular sovereign state. Alfonso and Araújo (2019) note that in 1629, the Dutch established feudal manors called “patroonships” to expedite the effort of permanent settlement which was a manifestation of a test towards local council performance. Elsewhere across the globe, Martin, Levey and Cawley (2017) opine that Lord Ripon is regarded as the father of local self-government councils in India, and was thus, considered to have given the Indians the first taste of independence by establishing the Local Self Government in 1882. Thus, the policy makers in Indian local authorities were expected to deliberate with high degree of independence and autonomy, regardless of age, gender, political affiliation, or area of representation. Okafor (2010) contends that, in Nigeria, local government councils existed long before the arrival of the colonialists from which there were forms of local government administrations; and that the British's indirect rule system was built upon existing local administrations in Nigeria. Despite this colonial history, Nigeria's modern local government system started with the reform, and independence of local government in 1976.

In East Africa, Kenya is believed to have a well decentralized system called the Member of County Assembly or the MCA but before the devolution, the state penetration of the rural areas was limited by the power of local notables (Mboga, 2019). The decentralization of powers has reduced the socioeconomic dominance of local notables, and the extension of officials into the countryside permitted the state to bring development and services to the villages (Mwesigwa, 2021). In Uganda, the Local Government Act (CAP 243) provides for the existence of District Councils in 1997 and specifically provided that a district council shall consist of: (i) a chairperson; (ii) one councilor representing each sub-county; (iii) two youth councillors representing the youth in the district from which one of whom shall be a female youth; (iv) two councillors with disabilities, one of whom shall be a female, representing persons with disabilities in the district; and (v) women councillors forming one-third of the council and mainly to be drawn from each of the sub-counties or a combination of two sub-counties within such a district.

In Northern Uganda, like in other parts of the country, district councilors have no regulated education requirements; neither do they have any restriction on age (Gordon & Kalenzi, 2019). The district councils have a composition of councilors elected to represent different constituencies in the district, from which the performance of councilors can be measured through a critical analysis of their roles and responsibilities that include four aspects, namely; (i) representation, (ii) community leadership, (iii) policy formulation and allocation of resources, and (iv) monitoring the implementation of programmes in their areas of jurisdiction (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2018). Recent studies have revealed that 76.2% of district councilors in Lango sub-region agreed that after every round of elections, they would embark on service delivery and leave aside politics (e.g. Mwesigwa, Wahid, & Sohng, 2021; Gordon & Kalenzi, 2019). As a consequence, this begs interest in

investigating how and to what extent social factors associated with councilor performance. In its Assessment Report, ACODE (2019) indicates that Lira District local government council was composed of 30 councilors. This was before the municipality was promoted to city status, a development that took a reasonable part of the district.

The treatment of social factors in the political sphere has been a concern for long. According to Rademacher (2020), scholarly interest aimed to analyze the relationship between gender and politics picked pace as early as the 1960s and 1970s, and by mid-2000s the topic had become a coherent subfield of many governments. Studies on gender and politics are concerned with how gender differences can influence individual participation in political events and so political institutions tend to be organised with gendered ideas (Amoding & Mwesigwa, 2021). Openjuru, Sanford and Monk (2022) define education as a process of expediting learning, acquiring knowledge, values, and virtue; and serves several functions such as socialization, social integration, social placement, and social and cultural innovation for society. This view juxtaposes that education gives everyone a chance to acquire new knowledge and learn soft skills that facilitate them in improving their life (Katumba, 2021). Education helps children to appreciate themselves, their ambitions and knowledge from an early age, and to understand that they have been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Education that aims to develop autonomous, critical thinking individuals and to help develop a just and democratic society is sharply political. And as sharply political would be education that aims to develop individuals who are not questioning but conforming to some existing order (Mwesigwa, 2021; Sidonia & David, 2019).

The concept of age describes how old a person is at a particular point in time (Abenawe, 2022). It is defined as the measure of the time elapsed from date of live birth to a specific point in time, usually the date of collection of the data. An assessment on social factors such as gender, education attainment, and age of councilors was critically analyzed as an attempt to determine the performance of such councilors. This study therefore sought to assess how social factors influence the performance of district councilors.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Poor performance among local councilors at district councils appears to be as a result of many factors that are both political and social in nature. Pursuant to the Local Government Act, CAP 243; and the Local Council Elections Act as Amended (2020), district councilors are expected to make perfect representations for their sub-counties, however, political factors such as the regime type, policy management, Speaker's choice of actions, and the recent emergence of caucus in political settings have shaped the performance of councilors at district levels. ACODE Assessment Report (2018) indicates that there are many social factors such as gender of a counselor, age of a counselor, and education attainment of a councilor that are most likely to influence their deliberations and performance in district councils. The Daily Monitor Report (Wednesday, 29th September 2021) reported that a female councilor failed to successfully second a motion raised in a plenary during a session in Apac District Council, presumably due to inferiority complex or the

level of education was too low to match the council standard. In Lira District Council, records from the Clerk to Council indicate that in 2019/2020, an average of 60% of councilors did not contribute to different plenary debates; and 28% contributions had some problems in the quality of deliberations or submissions which were reportedly attributed to the influence of caucus resolutions. At present, there is limited empirical study conducted to determine how social factors influence the performance of councilors at district councils. The study therefore aimed at determining the influence of social factors on the performance of district councilors in Lira.

1.2 Objective of the Study

This study aimed to assess the influence of social factors on the performance of councilors in Lira District Council. Specifically, the study ought to: (i) assess the influence of gender on the performance of councilors in Lira District Council; (ii) analyze how age on the performance of councilors in Lira District Council; and (iii) investigate the effect of education attainment on the performance of councilors in Lira District Council.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The District Councils

The concept of district council in Uganda emanated from decentralization policy that was adopted in early 1990s (Tabaro, Katusiimeh & Molenaers, 2018). The council is the highest organ of a district in accordance with the Local government Act, CAP 234 of Uganda, thus a district council is the supreme decision making body in a district. It is composed of elected councilors, and a district chairperson, thus a councillor is a member of a district council. Generally, Grossman & Michelitch (2018) believe that local government council members, who include the chairperson and councillors, do not have any authority to act or make decisions as individuals. They are members of an elected body that makes decisions on behalf of a district local government through a formal meeting process. Councillors play a vital role in meeting the needs of local communities (Ssonko, 2019). They serve their communities by listening to people in the local area and then representing those views on council. According to Kersting and Kuhlmann (2018), local councilors make decisions that can transform the livelihoods of local communities and their environments.

2.2 Social Factors

Amann and Kindler (2022) noted that social factors are socially constructed traces such as marital status, language, age, gender, clan or kinship, and education, among other social constructs in society. Blofield (2019) stated that social factors are presumed to determine how individual differences may be shaped, and in politics, the factors are important in shaping the performance of politicians. Although this study is more into gender, age, and education, Jost et al (2018) contend that social factors are things that affect someone's lifestyle, and could include wealth, religion, buying habits, education level, family size and structure and population density.

2.3 The influence of Gender on the Performance of local councilors

Gender includes the social, psychological, cultural and behavioral aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity, and Rademacher (2020) writes that it could present an opportunity to understand the relationship between peoples' gender and phenomena in politics. According to Tamale (2018), gender and politics study how peoples' political participation and experiences interact with their gender identity, and how ideas of gender shape political institutions and decision-making. Akampumuza and Matsuda (2017) state that scholarly interest to analyze the relationship between gender and politics picked pace as early as the 1960s and 1970s, and by the mid-2000s the topic had become a coherent subfield of many governments. Kwesiga (2017) has the view that many men and women think it is not 'natural' for women to speak up in public often poses a key barrier to women's access to decision-making, and that 'Power equals masculinity' also helps explain why powerful people often demonstrate dominance in gendered ways.

Acosta et al (2019) suggest that historically, and across countries, gender has been a core determinant of how resources are distributed, how policies are set, and who participates in political decision-making. Tanner, Mazingi & Muyambwa (2022) conducted a study on gender and politics in lower administrative units in Zambia with a major concern on determining how peoples' gender would structure their participation in and experience of political events, and how political institutions are encoded with gendered ideas from which it was revealed that women were more articulate on children issues during sessions than finance and budgeting sessions of those local governments. As the involvement of women in public affairs increased across many societies during the 20th and 21st centuries, Kinati et al (2022) opined that the participation of women was minimal in council businesses across the Lower Central Region of Ethiopia, thus the political decisions in Ethiopia was still being dominated by men, although women were gradually beginning to take shape in particular social policies, such as debates over women rights, reproductive rights, women in government projects or programmes, and policies on violence against women.

2.4 The Effect of Age on the Performance of Councilors

Rite (2019) defines age as the length of time during which a being or thing has existed; length of life or existence or the period of time someone has been alive or something has existed. In the views of Kazaura and Simon (2020), the relationship between age and politics has long intrigued students of human behavior. As a social factor, age itself does not necessarily affect political involvement. For example Magodi et al (2019) states that in Tanzania even as younger generations gain representation in councils, older generations still make up the majority of councils. On the one hand, ageing has been both argued and shown to increase political participation. Ageing, was found to increase councilors activeness and quality of debates. A case in point, Omondi et al (2021) conducted a study in Kenya which revealed that Members of County Assembly who were under the age of 35 were rarely found to be actively involved in plenary debates in most counties in Kenya. Similarly, in Peru, Mateo et al (2022) conclusively stated after a study on the relationship between age and political participation that older people show a higher degree of political participation than younger people. This was partly because of gerontocracy, which Pique (2019)

defines it as a councilor *a* government consisting of leaders who are much older than the general voting population

Fisher (2018) conducted a study in Malawi to determine how age affects political participation and found that an averagely youthful district councils was associated with vulgarism, fist fights and boycotts during planned or organized sessions. This finding could justify why Uganda adopted the establishment of youth councils. A youth council, according to Kwesiga (2017) is an entity composed of young people that serves as an advisory or advocacy body to government or donor agencies. ACODE Assessment Report (2018) revealed that Moroto District Council which had a total of 24 district councilors performed above average in Council obligation to comply with statutory datelines such as the laying and approval of budgets, because 13 Councilors or 54.2% were above 50 years, followed by 6 councilors or 25% who were between the ages 41-50, 03 councilors or 12.5% were between the ages of 31-40 years, and 02 councilors or 8.3% were below 30 years.

2.5 The effect of education attainment on the performance of district councilors

According to Abenawe (2022), education is a gradual process which brings positive changes in human life and behavior. Education brings a natural and lasting change in an individual's reasoning and ability to achieve the targeted goal. It facilitates us to investigate our own considerations and thoughts and makes it ready to express it in various shapes. It contributes to the development of better people around the globe. It is more of an enduring method in which people gain information, skills, and ethics. Education usually takes the form of a formal type, informal type, and a non formal type. According to Ngaka, Openjuru and Mazur (2018), a formal education or formal learning usually takes place in the premises of the school, where a person may learn basic, academic, or trade skills. Formal education is characterized by structured hierarchical nature, always planned and deliberate, scheduled fees are paid regularly, has a chronological grading system, has a syllabus and subject-oriented, and a formal teacher or an instructor. According to Sidonia and David (2019), this type of education can enhance the capacity of a district councilor because of its advantages such as having an organized educational model and up to date course contents; acquiring of knowledge from trained and professional teachers; structured and systematic learning process; intermediate and final assessments are ensured to advance students to the next learning phase; the institutions are managerially and physically organized; and leads to a formally recognized grade, qualifications or certificates.

In Uganda, the formal language for district councils is English but District Speakers are obliged to prefer a language to used during council sessions as he or she may feel (Abenawe, 2022; Mwesigwa, 2015). A study conducted by Kasalirwe et al (2019) reveal that English speaking was one of the greatest challenges blocking councilors' confidence to deliberate in district councils in Central Uganda. Another type of education is informal. According to Openjuru, Sanford and Monk (2022), an informal education is when a learner does not study in a school and do not use a well time-tabled or conscious efforts to impart knowledge or skills. It is neither pre-planned nor

deliberate, and according to Openjuru, Sanford and Monk (2022), informal education does not add value to linguistic knowledge or speaking skills of individuals. Unlike formal education, informal education is not imparted by an institution such as school or college. Informal education is not given according to any fixed timetable. There is no set curriculum required. Ngaka, Openjuru and Mazur (2018) stated that informal education characterized by its being independent of boundary walls; no definite syllabus; not pre-planned and has no timetable; no formal fees are required as we get informal education through daily experience and by learning new things; it is a lifelong process in a natural way; and the certificates/degrees are not involved and one has no stress for learning the new things.

Katumba (2021) opines that a non-formal education includes adult basic education, adult literacy education or school equivalency preparation. In non-formal education, someone who is not in school can learn literacy, other basic skills or job skills. Home education, individualized instruction such as programmed learning, distance learning and computer-assisted instruction are other possibilities. Non-formal education is imparted consciously and deliberately and systematically implemented. Although the literature adequately presented different views on social factors associated with councilors such as gender, age and education attainment; and how the factors are perceived to affect the performance of these councilors across the globe, there is limited provisions of the relationship between these social factors and the performance of district councilors in Lira district. This could have been due to the fact that Uganda's name of a district council is relatively different from how other countries refer or call their district councils, thus making it difficult to present the much needed empirical comparison which calls for this particular study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design, population and sampling

A case study design was preferred and used for this study because it offers an opportunity to integrate the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection with the aim of systematically describing a phenomenon, situation, or a population. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection; and analysis, presentation and interpretation of results. The use of a mixed method was preferred because of the fact that the researcher intends to avoid the limitations of a single approach through triangulation of methods to provide opportunities for testing alternative interpretations of data. The target population in this study comprised of all councilors that represent constituencies of special interest groups such as the PWDs, youth, Workers, Elders, and Women; representatives of the nine sub-counties in Lira district; representatives of the four Municipal Divisions; technical staff of Lira district; journalist and members of the CSO; and opinion leaders in the district. The choice of this category of population for this study was preferred because it is the unit for which the findings of this study was to be generalized. Since the population under study was already known by the researcher, the portion for selection during data collection was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Thus, out

of the population of 90 available, the sample size was 84. Both simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used in the study for the selection of this study respondents.

Table 1: Shows the study Respondents' Distribution.

Category of Councilors	(N=90)	(S=84)	Sampling techniques
Youth	02	02	Purposive Sampling
PWDs	02	02	Purposive Sampling
Elders	02	02	Purposive Sampling
Workers	02	02	Purposive Sampling
Sub-county and Division	21	19	Simple Random
Technical. staff	21	19	Simple Random
Journalists and CSOs	15	14	Simple Random
Opinion & religious leaders	25	24	Simple Random

3.2 Data Collection

Questionnaire was used in gathering items to which a respondents were expected to respond in writing or as instructed. Closed-ended questions were preferred because they give out questions that can only be answered by selecting from a limited number of options. The use of questionnaire in this study was preferred because provided a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. Focused Group Discussion was used during verbal meetings and discussions in which the researcher posed questions and respondents gave their opinion or responses regarding information that was not directly observed. This method was administered to opinion religious leaders, and community members.

3.3 Data presentation and Analysis

For quantitative data and qualitative information, the analysis was separately done. Quantitative data analysis refers to an act of analyzing data that is 'numbers-based' or data that can be easily "converted" into numbers without losing any meaning. Descriptive statistics was used for qualitative data analysis for all the data that was collected through questionnaire and was analyzed using statistical approach of data analysis. The study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) from which the Univariate and Bivariate analysis was done to offer descriptions on key findings of the study variables like the medium and standard deviation. Both the linear regression and correlation analysis were performed to generate inferential statistics which are

presented in charts, tables, or percentages in chapter four. Thematic analysis was used in categorizing, classifying, summarizing and tabulating the data. This was done by coding responses through labeling and organizing the qualitative data to identify different themes and the relationships between them.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were handled at different stages of this study: (i) Informed consent is another principle of ethics that was followed. Informed consent refers to allowing the participants an opportunity to take decisions unhindered that protect their own interests. And (ii), permission is one of the ethical guidelines that was adhered to. Permission was sought before the study commences in order to use some gadgets like a camera, a tape recorder or video coverage especially for respondents under the category of key informant interviews and focused group discussion.

3.5 Quality management

Validity and reliability can be referred to as the credibility, transferability, objectivity and dependability (Lincon & Guba, 2005). Validity and reliability assist a researcher in making the research findings to be rationally convincing, not only to himself or herself, but also to other people as well. As observed by Orodho (2009), the researcher expected to be aware of the degree to which a test measures what it purports to be measuring. Considering that validity helps a researcher to obtain an authentic data and observe total objectivity, the researcher ensured criterion validity and content validity during this research processes. Question content was made simple and straightforward enough to reflect what the study intended to address, while avoiding being bias or leading the respondents. Reliability should lead to the same results when the same methods are used by different researchers (Smith, 2015). To ensure that a measure produces the same scores across different times, groups of people, or versions of the instruments, the researcher used Cronbach Alpha, where items with poor reliability on the scale was modified or completely changed as necessary. An explanatory factor analysis was run on all the items contained in the data to weed out those variables that failed to show high correlation. Piloting the data collection instruments was also done to ensure reliability.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Response Rate

The sample size for quantitative data was 84 respondents. A total of 80 (95.2%) questionnaires were returned. This response rate conforms to Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) stipulation that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a response rate of 60% is good while a response rate of $\geq 70\%$ is excellent. This researcher was able to attain this rate as a result of giving out questionnaires early enough to give ample time to the respondents.

4.2 Bio-data of the Respondents

The study considered gender distribution of the respondents such as male and female, and the results are presented table 1.

Table 1: Bio-data of the respondents

Gender distribution	Frequency	Percent
Male	54	67.5
Female	26	32.5
Total	80	100
Age group		
18-30	21	26.3
31-50	48	60
Over 50	11	13.7
Total	80	100
Educational Qualification		
Never Attended School	0	0
Attended Primary Education	8	10
Attended Post Primary Education	58	72.5
Attended Tertiary Education	14	17.5
Total	80	100

In table 1, the total number of respondents was 80, out of which 54 (67.5 %) were male, and 26 (32.5%) of the respondents were female. This implies that both sexes were represented in this study despite higher proportion of men. It further depicts male political dominance in Lira district. The study also considered the age of respondents which were categorized as between 18-30, 31-50, and over 50. The table below presents the findings. The results in table 1 shows that a higher proportion 48 (60%) were in the age group of 31-50 years, and 21 (26.3%) were in the age group of 18-30 years, and 11 (13.7%) in the age bracket of over 50 years. This implies that most of the respondents interviewed are mature and probably could give well thought ideas in relations to the study variables. The study considered the education status of the respondents by categorizing the

education attendance and attainment into ‘never attended’, and attendance of primary, post-primary, and tertiary education. The results of these findings are presented below. 58 respondents (72.5%) attended post-primary education, 14 respondents (17.5%) attended tertiary education, 8 (10%) had attended primary education, and no respondent indicated that they had never attended school.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of the study construct

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the social factors such as gender, age, and education attainment in relations to the performance of councilors specifically in terms of mean, and standard deviation. The results were extracted from a likert scale of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), uncertain (3), agree (4), & strongly agree (5), with “1” being the lowest scores and “5” highest scores. The variables that were analyzed under the performance of councilors are related to representation, oversight roles, monitoring and evaluation, identifying pull-factors, and addressing some underlying causes of street children.

Table 2: Showing the Descriptive Statistics on the Performance of District Councilors

Variables	Mean	SD
Lira District Councilors actively represent their areas	2.97	0.83
Lira District Councilors undertake oversight role actively	2.91	0.71
District Councilors undertake monitoring and evaluation role	2.43	0.75
Lira District Councilors undertake consultations	3.66	0.66
Totals	2.89	0.74

Source: Primary data (2022)

SD (Standard deviation)

According to the study findings in table 2, 71.9% agreed that district councilors usually undertake consultations. However, 58.5% disagreed that district councilors effectively undertake oversight role; 52.2% disagreed that district councilors usually undertake monitoring and evaluation role; and 50.3% disagreed that district councilors actively represent their areas. The average mean of 2.99 is below 3.0 which imply that generally, the performance of councilors are not very convincing to the respondents. This could have arisen due to the fact that respondents might have misinterpreted the purpose of the study to mean that it would affect their emoluments if they had responded in the other way round. Another finding from on age variations from the FGD was not deviating from these findings, and according to one study participant;

“Youthful councilors are more active in plenary although some of them lack the confidence to deliberate on transformative policies such waste management strategies but they are usually more into council tours and emolument”. (FG2 participant No 03)

The finding is in line with the opinion of Kakumba and Nsingo (2018) who believe that the performance of councilors can be measured through a critical analysis of their roles and responsibilities that include representation, community leadership, policy formulation and allocation of resources, and monitoring the implementation of programmes in their areas of jurisdiction. Despite not being a pre-requisite for councilors in Uganda as stated by Gordon and Kalenzi (2019) that the district councilors have no regulated education requirements or any restriction on age, education attainment supposedly plays critical role. In this particular study, the performance was however measured in terms of representation, and their participation in both plenary debates and committee works. Additionally, the ACCORD Assessment Report (2018) revealed that Moroto District Council which had a total of 24 district councilors performed above average in Council obligation to comply with statutory datelines such as the laying and approval of budgets, because 13 Councilors or 54.2% were above 50 years, followed by 6 councilors or 25% who were between the ages 41-50, 03 councilors or 12.5% were between the ages of 31-40 years, and 02 councilors or 8.3% were below 30 years.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Social Factors and Plenary Sessions

The social factors were analyzed against performance of district councilors in the plenary to determine their effectiveness in representing their areas.

Table 3: Showing the Descriptive Statistics on District Councilors in Plenary Sessions

Variables	Mean	SD
Social factors always influence councilors' presentation of matters of importance from their areas during plenary sessions	3.76	0.78
Social factors always influence councilors participation in plenary e.g. moving or seconding motions	3.49	0.67
Social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting plenary sessions e.g. due to unpaid allowances	3.98	0.51
Totals	3.74	0.65

Source: Primary data (2023)

SD (Standard deviation)

According to findings in Table 3 above, 78.9%, 70.6%, and 65.3% of the respondents agreed that social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting plenary sessions e.g. due to unpaid allowances; social factors always influence councilors' presentation of matters of importance from their areas during plenary sessions; and that social factors always influence councilors participation in plenary e.g. moving or seconding motions, respectively. The average mean of 3.75 is above 3.0, and with a standard deviation of 0.65 implies that social factors such as gender, age and education attainment do affect the performance of councilors during plenary sessions. This finding appears to be in support of the literature by Blofield (2019) states that social factors are presumed to determine how individual differences may be shaped, and in politics, the factors are important in shaping the performance of politicians. Although this study is more into gender, age, and education, Jost et al (2018) contend that social factors are things that affect someone's lifestyle, and could include wealth, religion, buying habits, education level, family size and structure and population density. Additionally, both Katumba (2021) and Mwesigwa (2015) reinforce the values of education attainment as a social factor when he asserts that education enhances individuals to appreciate themselves, their ambitions and knowledge from an early age, and to understand that they have been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity thereby aiming at developing an autonomous, critical thinking individuals and to help develop a just and democratic society is sharply political. Fisher (2018) conducted a study in Malawi to determine how age affects political participation and found that an averagely youthful council was associated with vulgarism, fist fights and boycotts during planned or organized sessions.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics for Social Factors and Sectoral Committees

The social factors were analyzed against performance of district councilors in the sectoral committees to determine their effectiveness in representing their areas.

Table 4: Showing the Descriptive for Councilors Performance in Sectoral Committees

Variables	Mean	SD
Social factors always influence councilors' attitudes e.g. attendance of committee meeting regularly	3.56	0.61
Social factors always influence councilors' ability or capability to make meaningful contribution in committees e.g. moving or seconding motions	2.18	0.84
Social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting committee sessions e.g. due to unpaid allowances	4.21	0.46
Total	3.32	0.64

Source: Primary data (2023)

SD (Standard deviation)

According to findings in Table 4 above, 85.3% agreed that social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting committee sessions e.g. due to unpaid allowances; and 66.8% agreed that social factors always influence councilors' attitudes e.g. attendance of committee meeting regularly, but 63.7% disagreed that social factors always influence councilors' ability or capability to make meaningful contribution in committees e.g. moving or seconding motions. The average mean of 3.32 which is above 3.0 suggests that the social factors have some influence on the performance of district councilors in the plenary sessions. This finding is highly supported by ACODE Assessment Report (2018) which indicates that there are many social factors such as gender and age of councilors are most likely to influence their deliberations and performance in district councils. Grossman and Michelitch (2018) believe that district local government council members, who include the chairperson and councillors, do not have any authority to act or make decisions as individuals, thus they are members of an elected body that makes decisions on behalf of a district local government through a formal meeting process.

4.6 Descriptive Statistics for Social Factors and Constituency Role

The social factors were analyzed against performance of district councilors in the sectoral committees to determine their effectiveness in representing their areas.

Table 5: Showing the Descriptive Statistics of District Councilors in Constituencies

Items	Mean	SD
Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects in their constituencies	2.93	0.87
Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake consultation with their constituents	3.56	0.54
Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake oversight roles in their constituencies	3.27	0.59
Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake the mobilization of community in their constituencies	3.31	0.62
Social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting constituency role due to unpaid allowances	3.23	0.73
Total	3.26	0.67

Source: Primary data (2023)

SD (Standard deviation)

The findings in Table 9 above shows that, 62.7% of respondents agreed that Social factors always influence councilors' attitudes against boycotting constituency role due to unpaid allowances; 59.8% agree that Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake the mobilization of community in their constituencies; 60.1% agree that Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake oversight roles in their constituencies; 63.9% agree that Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake consultation with their constituents; and 39.7% agree that Social factors always influence councilors' ability to undertake monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects in their constituencies. Generally, the average mean of 3.26 which are actually above 3.0, bears an indication that social factors do influence the performance of district councilors in their constituencies. No wonder literatures such as by Ssonko (2019); and Kersting and Kuhlmann (2018) have worked in favor of this finding because they maintain that councillors play a vital role in meeting the needs of local communities, and they also serve their communities by listening to people in the local area and then representing those views on council. In a related development, qualitative findings appear to suggest that gender as one of the social factors is significant in determining the performance of councilors in constituencies. From the qualitative results of study findings extracted from the women-only category during the FGD indicates gender of councilors does not have any influence on the performance of district councilors:

“In our sub-county, all the councilors usually come to us for consultation, and monitoring of government programs. It does not matter whether it is a male councilor or a female councilor”. (FGD participant no: FG 09)

The findings above indicate that both gender is vital in constituency responsibilities but not in council plenary sessions or committee works because such members of FGD are not always present in council Halls to follow some of the deliberations by their elected councilors. This also implies that gender of a councilor may not be significant in explaining the performance of a councilors in Lira District Council. This can conclusively be argued that local councilors make decisions that can change local communities and environments, hence making them relevant in the constituency roles.

4.7 Inferential Statistics

The study used pair-wise correlation analysis to establish the strength of relationship between social factors and the performance of district councilors. The correlations results are interpreted on the basis that when two variables are related, positively or negatively, they vary together. This research study considered the case where there were several independent variables and one dependent variable. In other words, the correlation scores show how well the independent variables are able to predict the dependent variable. In addition, correlations estimate the extent to which the changes in one variable are associated with changes in the other variable. If the coefficient of correlation is -1 it is considered a perfect negative correlation and if the correlation is +1 then it is

considered a perfect positive correlation. The closer the value is to -1 or +1 the stronger the relationship is considered to be. The summary of correlations and their significance levels are presented in table 6 below:

Table 6: Pair wise Correlations for Social Factors and Performance of Councilors

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Performance of the Councilors	1.000			
(2) Gender of Councilors	0.049	1.000		
(3) Age of Councilors	0.609*	0.041	1.000	
(4) Education Attainment	0.827**	0.437*	0.313*	1.000

*Significance levels: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$*

The results in table 6 above shows that the performance of councilors in Lira District Council is positively and significantly correlated to education attainment ($r=0.827$, $p < 0.01$) which has a very strong and positive relationship; and age of councilors ($r=0.609$, $p < 0.05$) has a positive and strong relationship, but is not significantly correlated to gender of the councilors ($r=0.049$, $p < 0.05$) which has a weak and positive relationship. This implies that as the scores in education attainment and age increase, the scores in performance of councilors will also increase by 82.7%, and 60.9%, respectively in Lira District Council. Furthermore, education attainment is also significantly correlated with gender of the councilors ($r=0.437$, $p < 0.05$) and age of the councilors ($r=0.313$, $p < 0.05$). The finding does not differ from the literature by Kinati et al (2022) who opined that the participation of women was minimal in council businesses across the Lower Central Region of Ethiopia, thus the political decisions in Ethiopia was still being dominated by men, although women were gradually beginning to take shape in particular social policies, such as debates over women rights, reproductive rights, women in government projects or programmes, and policies on violence against women. This means that gender is not significant in establishing the relationship between social factors and the performance of councilors.

This could be as a result of the use of English as a formal language for district councils despite District Speakers being obliged to prefer a language to be used during council sessions as he or she may feel (Abenawe, 2022). A study conducted by Kasalirwe et al (2019) reveal that English speaking was one of the greatest challenges blocking councilors' confidence to deliberate in district councils in Central Uganda. Kwesiga (2017) has the view that many men and women think it is not 'natural' for women to speak up in public which often poses a key barrier to women's access to decision-making, and that 'Power equals masculinity' also helps explain why powerful people often demonstrate dominance in gendered ways.

4.8 Linear Regression for Predicting the Performance of District Councilors

The linear regression analysis was carried out to assess the degree of influence that social factors such as gender, age and education attainment have on the performance of district councilors in Lira district. The results are shown in the table below:

Table 7: Linear Regression for predicting the Performance of Councilors

Councilors' Performance	Coef.	St. Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf Interval]	Sig
Gender	0.21	0.19	0.71	0.417	-0.159 0.382	
Age	0.47	0.13	3.33	0.000	-0.047 0.484	
Educ. Attainment	0.74	0.09	1.60	0.106	0.162 0.931	***
Constant	0.90	0.39	2.27	0.025	0.114 1.689	**

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Model Summary

Mean dependent var	3.149	SD dependent var	0.880
Adjusted R-squared	0.214	Number of obs	109
F-test	11.218	Prob > F	0.000
Akaike crit. (AIC)	177.174	Bayesian crit. (BIC)	177.029

The finding from table 7 above reveals that only educational attainment ($P < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.74$) significantly predicts the performance of councilors in Lira District Council. This implies that education attainment of councilors explains about 74% boost in the performance of councilors. However gender and age of the councilors are explaining ~21.4% variation of all the possible social factors that are likely to influence the performance of councilors (Adj $R^2 = 0.214$). This indicates that there can be ~21.4% variability in the performance of councilors even after taking a number of predictor variables. The fact that the simultaneous variation of independent variables

explains the performance of councilors to the extent of 21.4%, would mean an expected increase in 0.74 score in performance of councilors for every unit increase in gender and age of councilors, assuming all other variables in the model are held constant.

5. Conclusion

Generally, the study concludes that education attainment and age of councilors are significantly correlated to the performance of councilors but that only educational attainment significantly predicts the performance of councilors in Lira District Council. The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of gender on the performance of district councilors. The findings reveal that gender has a positive but weak correlation with performance of councilors. The study concludes that gender is not significant in predicting the performance of councilors in Lira District Council. The second objective of the study was to establish the influence of age on the performance of district councilors. The findings reveal that age has a positive and strong correlation with performance of councilors. The study concludes that age has a strong, positive and is significantly correlated to the performance of councilors, but does not significantly predict the performance of councilors in Lira District Council. The third objective of the study was to assess the influence of education attainment on the performance of district councilors. The finding reveals that education attainment is strong, positive, and significantly correlated to the performance of councilors; and significantly predicts the performance of councilors in Lira District Council.

6. Recommendations of the Study

Based on the conclusion above, the results of this study have recommended that:-

- a) A minimum education qualification be adopted for all district councilors to be eligible for election if the performance of councilors is to be enhanced.
- b) District Local Governments should undertake planning and budgeting for the enhancement of councilors' education qualification if the performance of councilors is to be enhanced.
- c) The individual district councilors should also make efforts of enhancing their education qualification if the performance of councilors is to be enhanced.

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