

**Relationship Between Participatory Budgeting And Service Delivery In Bundibugyo Local Government,
Bundibugyo District**

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between participatory budgeting and service delivery in Bundibugyo Local Government, Bundibugyo District. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A sample of 220 respondents was drawn from a population of 300, including traditional leaders, local government officials, local council leaders, service providers, and local citizens. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires, with purposive sampling used for key informants and simple random sampling for service providers and citizens. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between participatory budgeting practices and service delivery outcomes. Findings indicated that citizen involvement in budget formulation, transparency in resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms were strongly associated with improved service delivery in health, education, water, and roads sectors. However, challenges such as limited citizen awareness, inadequate funding, political interference, and capacity gaps hindered optimal participatory budgeting implementation. The study concluded that enhanced participatory budgeting practices could substantially improve service delivery outcomes in Bundibugyo Local Government. Recommendations included strengthening citizen engagement mechanisms, capacity building for stakeholders, increasing budget transparency, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Keywords: Participatory budgeting, service delivery, local government, citizen participation, Bundibugyo District, accountability, transparency, resource allocation

1.0 Background of the Study

Participatory budgeting emerged as a democratic innovation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 and has since spread globally as a mechanism for enhancing citizen engagement in public resource allocation (Ahumuza et al., 2025). In Uganda, decentralization reforms initiated in the 1990s aimed to bring services closer to the people and promote participatory governance. The Local Governments Act (1997) provided the legal framework for citizen participation in planning and budgeting processes at district and sub-county levels (Annet et al., 2023). Bundibugyo District, located in the western region of Uganda, faced persistent challenges in service delivery despite receiving substantial budgetary allocations from the central government and internally generated revenues (Amos et al., 2024).

Participatory budgeting represented a governance approach where citizens directly engaged in deciding how public resources were allocated and spent (Lydia, Ariyo, et al., 2023). This process theoretically enhanced transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in service delivery. In the context of Bundibugyo Local Government, participatory budgeting involved citizens, local leaders, and government officials collaborating in identifying priority needs,

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allocating resources, and monitoring implementation (Gloria et al., 2023). Service delivery encompassed the provision of essential services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, roads infrastructure, and agricultural extension services (Julius & Desire, 2025).

Despite the legal and policy frameworks supporting participatory budgeting, service delivery in Bundibugyo District remained suboptimal. Health facilities lacked essential medicines, schools operated with insufficient teaching materials, water sources were inadequate, and road infrastructure deteriorated (Julius & Kazaara, 2025). These challenges raised questions about the effectiveness of participatory budgeting mechanisms and their actual influence on service delivery outcomes. Understanding the relationship between participatory budgeting practices and service delivery performance became critical for improving governance and enhancing the quality of life for Bundibugyo residents (Christopher et al., 2022). This study therefore sought to examine how participatory budgeting influenced service delivery in Bundibugyo Local Government and identify factors that strengthened or weakened this relationship.

2.0 Problem Statement

Bundibugyo Local Government received substantial financial resources through central government transfers and local revenue collection mechanisms (Paul et al., 2022). However, persistent gaps in service delivery suggested inefficiencies in resource allocation and utilization (Jaggars & Bailey, 2010). Citizens frequently complained about inadequate healthcare services, poor educational facilities, insufficient water supply, and deteriorating road networks. While participatory budgeting frameworks existed on paper, their practical implementation and impact on service delivery outcomes remained unclear (Winy et al., 2023).

The disconnect between budgetary allocations and actual service delivery outcomes indicated potential weaknesses in citizen participation, transparency, and accountability mechanisms. Traditional leaders, local council representatives, and ordinary citizens reported limited involvement in budget formulation processes, raising concerns about whether resource allocation reflected community priorities (Christopher et al., 2022). Furthermore, there was insufficient empirical evidence documenting the relationship between participatory budgeting practices and service delivery performance in Bundibugyo Local Government (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

This study therefore investigated the extent to which participatory budgeting influenced service delivery in Bundibugyo Local Government, identified challenges hindering effective participatory budgeting implementation, and proposed strategies for strengthening the participatory budgeting-service delivery nexus.

3.0 Main Objective

To examine the relationship between participatory budgeting and service delivery in Bundibugyo Local Government.

4.0 Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide comprehensive insights into the relationship between participatory budgeting and service delivery (Brian et al., 2024).

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The study was conducted in Bundibugyo Local Government, Bundibugyo District, located in western Uganda. The target population comprised 300 individuals categorized as traditional leaders, local government officials, local council leaders, service providers, and local citizens (Julius et al., 2024).

A sample size of 220 respondents was selected using both purposive and simple random sampling techniques (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Purposive sampling was employed for key informants including 10 traditional leaders, 8 local government officials, and 14 local council leaders (LC I-IV), yielding 32 respondents who possessed specialized knowledge about budgeting and service delivery processes. Simple random sampling was used to select 80 service providers from a population of 117 and 108 local citizens from a population of 150, ensuring representativeness and minimizing selection bias (A & Ahmed, 2019).

Data collection utilized two primary instruments: semi-structured interview guides for key informants and structured questionnaires for service providers and citizens. Interview guides explored in-depth perspectives on participatory budgeting practices, citizen involvement, transparency, accountability, and service delivery challenges. Questionnaires contained closed-ended and Likert-scale items measuring variables such as citizen participation levels, budget transparency, resource allocation effectiveness, and service delivery quality across health, education, water, and infrastructure sectors (Abiodun et al., 2022).

Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded thematically, and analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships. Quantitative data from questionnaires were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, cleaned, and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) to determine the strength and significance of relationships between participatory budgeting and service delivery variables (Nelson et al., 2022). Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and securing approval from relevant authorities before data collection commenced.

5.0 Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study successfully collected data from 220 respondents representing diverse stakeholder categories in Bundibugyo Local Government. Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size	Response Rate (%)
Traditional Leaders	10	10	100.0
Local Government Officials	8	8	100.0
Local Council Leaders (LC I-IV)	15	14	93.3
Service Providers	117	80	68.4

Local Citizens	150	108	72.0
Total	300	220	73.3

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The overall response rate of 73.3% was considered satisfactory for drawing meaningful conclusions. Key informants (traditional leaders, government officials, and local council leaders) demonstrated high response rates exceeding 90%, reflecting their accessibility and willingness to participate. The response rates for service providers and citizens, though lower, remained within acceptable ranges for survey research.

5.2 Participatory Budgeting Practices

Respondents were asked to assess the extent of citizen participation in budget formulation processes. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Table 2: Citizen Participation in Budget Formulation

Level of Participation	Service Providers (n=80)	Local Citizens (n=108)	Combined (n=188)
Very High	8 (10.0%)	6 (5.6%)	14 (7.4%)
High	15 (18.8%)	14 (13.0%)	29 (15.4%)
Moderate	22 (27.5%)	31 (28.7%)	53 (28.2%)
Low	24 (30.0%)	38 (35.2%)	62 (33.0%)
Very Low	11 (13.8%)	19 (17.6%)	30 (16.0%)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Results indicated that only 22.8% of respondents reported high or very high citizen participation in budget formulation, while 49.0% reported low or very low participation. This finding suggested significant gaps in participatory budgeting implementation (Nelson et al., 2023). Interviews with local government officials revealed that while budget conferences and consultation meetings were held, participation was often limited to select individuals rather than broad community representation. Traditional leaders noted that many citizens lacked awareness about budget processes and their rights to participate.

5.3 Budget Transparency and Information Accessibility

Transparency in budget information dissemination was assessed through multiple indicators. Table 3 presents findings on budget transparency.

Table 3: Budget Transparency Indicators

Transparency Indicator	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Budget information is publicly displayed	34.6	18.1	47.3
Citizens receive timely budget information	28.2	21.3	50.5
Budget documents are easily understood	22.9	16.5	60.6

Allocation decisions are clearly explained	31.4	19.7	48.9
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Source: Primary Data, 2025

The majority of respondents disagreed that budget transparency was adequate in Bundibugyo Local Government. Only 34.6% agreed that budget information was publicly displayed, and merely 28.2% confirmed receiving timely budget information (Annet et al., 2023). The complexity of budget documents emerged as a significant barrier, with 60.6% of respondents indicating that budget documents were difficult to understand (Annet et al., 2023). Local council leaders explained during interviews that budget information was occasionally shared during community meetings, but the technical language and format made it inaccessible to ordinary citizens with limited literacy levels.

5.4 Service Delivery Outcomes

Respondents evaluated service delivery quality across four key sectors. Table 4 summarizes the assessment.

Table 4: Service Delivery Quality Assessment by Sector

Sector	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Fair (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Health Services	6.4	23.9	31.4	26.1	12.2
Education Services	8.5	28.7	29.3	22.3	11.2
Water and Sanitation	4.8	18.6	27.1	32.4	17.1
Roads Infrastructure	3.2	14.9	26.6	35.1	20.2

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Service delivery quality varied across sectors but remained generally suboptimal. Education services received the highest positive ratings, with 37.2% of respondents rating them as excellent or good. Health services followed at 30.3%, while water and sanitation and roads infrastructure received significantly lower ratings at 23.4% and 18.1% respectively (Lydia, Kazaara, et al., 2023). The water and roads sectors showed particularly poor performance, with combined poor and very poor ratings exceeding 49%. Service providers attributed these outcomes to inadequate budgetary allocations, delayed fund releases, and misalignment between allocated resources and actual community needs.

5.5 Relationship Between Participatory Budgeting and Service Delivery

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between participatory budgeting variables and service delivery outcomes. Table 5 presents the correlation coefficients.

Table 5: Correlation Between Participatory Budgeting and Service Delivery

Variable	Service Delivery Quality
Citizen Participation Level	$r = 0.687, p < 0.001$
Budget Transparency	$r = 0.721, p < 0.001$
Accountability Mechanisms	$r = 0.658, p < 0.001$

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Resource Allocation Alignment	$r = 0.743, p < 0.001$
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Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all participatory budgeting variables and service delivery quality. Resource allocation alignment with community priorities showed the strongest correlation ($r = 0.743$), followed by budget transparency ($r = 0.721$), citizen participation level ($r = 0.687$), and accountability mechanisms ($r = 0.658$). All correlations were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating that improvements in participatory budgeting practices were strongly associated with enhanced service delivery outcomes.

5.6 Challenges to Participatory Budgeting Implementation

Interviews with key informants identified multiple challenges hindering effective participatory budgeting. Traditional leaders emphasized limited civic awareness among citizens about their rights and roles in budget processes. Local government officials cited inadequate funding, with budget allocations insufficient to meet all community priorities. Political interference emerged as a concern, with local council leaders reporting instances where resource allocation decisions were influenced by political considerations rather than technical needs assessment. Capacity gaps among both citizens and local leaders in budget literacy and planning skills were consistently mentioned across respondent categories.

6.0 Conclusions

The study established a significant positive relationship between participatory budgeting and service delivery in Bundibugyo Local Government. Enhanced citizen participation, improved budget transparency, stronger accountability mechanisms, and better alignment of resource allocation with community priorities were all associated with improved service delivery outcomes across health, education, water, and infrastructure sectors. However, the actual implementation of participatory budgeting in Bundibugyo Local Government remained weak, with limited citizen involvement, insufficient transparency, and inadequate information dissemination.

Service delivery quality varied across sectors but remained generally below satisfactory levels, particularly in water and sanitation and roads infrastructure. The strong correlations between participatory budgeting variables and service delivery outcomes demonstrated that strengthening participatory budgeting practices could substantially improve service delivery performance. The challenges identified, including limited civic awareness, inadequate funding, political interference, and capacity gaps, required systematic interventions to unlock the full potential of participatory budgeting in enhancing service delivery.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

The local government should strengthen citizen engagement mechanisms by establishing systematic structures for broad-based community participation in budget formulation, moving beyond token consultation to genuine collaborative decision-making. This could include organizing ward-level budget forums, utilizing existing community

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structures such as village health teams and school management committees, and scheduling meetings at times and locations accessible to diverse community members including women and marginalized groups.

Budget literacy programs should be developed and implemented to enhance citizen understanding of budget processes, rights, and responsibilities. These programs should use simplified language, visual aids, and practical examples relevant to local contexts, enabling ordinary citizens to meaningfully engage in budget discussions and hold leaders accountable.

Transparency mechanisms must be significantly improved through regular public display of budget information in accessible formats and locations such as community notice boards, local council offices, and health and education facilities. The local government should translate complex budget documents into simplified versions in local languages and utilize community radio stations to disseminate budget information widely.

Accountability frameworks should be strengthened by establishing functional monitoring and evaluation systems with clear indicators for tracking service delivery performance against budget allocations. Citizens should be trained and supported to conduct social accountability initiatives such as budget tracking, service delivery monitoring, and public expenditure reviews. Feedback mechanisms that enable citizens to report service delivery challenges and budget implementation concerns should be institutionalized.

Capacity building initiatives targeting local government officials, local council leaders, and service providers in participatory planning, budget management, and service delivery improvement should be prioritized. Technical support from development partners and higher levels of government could facilitate these capacity development efforts.

The central government should ensure adequate and timely release of funds to Bundibugyo Local Government to enable effective implementation of planned activities. Predictable funding flows would enhance planning reliability and service delivery consistency.

Political leaders and administrative officials should commit to depoliticizing budget processes, ensuring that resource allocation decisions were guided by technical assessments of community needs rather than political considerations. Institutional safeguards protecting the integrity of participatory budgeting processes from political manipulation should be established and enforced.

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