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Original article

Training skills, development, and employee performance in Sembabule District Local Government: a cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

Background:
The study aims to assess Training skills, development, and employee performance in Sembabule District Local Government.

Methodology:
The study adopted a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional research design using a mixed-methods approach. conducted in Sembabule District Local Government in the Central Region of Uganda. The study population consisted of 200 employees. The study used purposive sampling for key informants, a census of small units, and simple random sampling for the larger departments.

Results:
Of the 124 questionnaires distributed, 103 were returned and usable, a response rate of 83.1%. Seven. Two-thirds of the respondents were men (64.1%), and most were aged 25 to 44 years (64.1%). 23.9% of responses agreed, 40.6% were neutral, and 35.5% disagreed, so respondents were more likely to be unsure or negative than positive. Only 14.8% of responses agreed that they met the performance standard described, 40.9% were neutral, and 44.3% disagreed.
Training and skills development had a positive and significant relationship with employee performance ($r = .383$, $p < .001$), so the first null hypothesis was rejected. Respondents who had attended training in the last two years rated their performance higher than those who had not (2.74 compared with 2.47; $t = 2.68$, $p = .009$, a medium effect, $d = 0.53$), and they also reported better training provision (2.98 compared with 2.69; $p = .023$)

Conclusions:
There is a significant positive relationship between training and skills development and employee performance in Sembabule District Local Government, and the null hypothesis H01 was rejected.

Recommendations:
The Human Resource Department and heads of department should base nominations on appraisal gaps and individual development plans, and should require a post-training action plan and a review by the supervisor within an agreed period, since training had the strongest relationship with performance, but follow-up was rated poorly.

Keywords: *Training and skills development, Employee performance, Sembabule District Local Government, Human resource development.*
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Background of the Study
Employee development in the public service was later guided by the Uganda Public Service Training Policy of 2006 (Ministry of Public Service [MoPS], 2006), while the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders, revised in 2010 and again in 2021, set out the rules on performance management and staff appraisal (Section A-n) and on staff training and development (Section J) (MoPS, 2021).
Employee development is provided through in-service training, workshops and seminars, study leave and sponsorship for further education, and supervision and coaching by heads of department. The district's training budget for FY 2024/25 was UGX 85,000,000, and the annual training plan records that 285 staff attended at least one training activity during the financial year. Between 2021 and 2025, 42 staff were granted study leave or sponsorship for further studies (SDLG Human Resource Department, 2025).
At the global level, Arthur, Bennett, Edens and Bell (2003) carried out a meta-analysis of organisational training studies and found that training had medium to large positive effects on learning, on-the-job behaviour and results, with effectiveness depending on how well the delivery method matched the skill being trained. Tharenou, Saks and Moore (2007) reviewed studies of training at the organisational level and found that training was positively related to human resource outcomes such as employee skills and attitudes and to organisational performance, but only weakly to financial outcomes, suggesting that training works mainly through what it changes in employees.
In Africa, Somuah et al. (2024) surveyed non-teaching staff of public universities in Ghana and found a positive and

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significant relationship between training practices and job performance, with self-efficacy strengthening the relationship and perceived organisational politics weakening it. This suggests that the benefit of training depends on the work environment in which skills are applied.

In Uganda, Asiki and Picho (2015) used a case study design in Yumbe District Local Government, with 179 of 218 questionnaires returned (82%), and found that the management of training programmes (needs assessment, design and evaluation) explained only 26% of the variation in performance. Okello and Kumakech (2022), in a cross-sectional correlational study of 227 of 520 staff in Amolatar District Local Government, found that both on-the-job training (coefficient = 0.429, $p < 0.01$) and off-the-job training (0.369, $p < 0.01$) had significant positive effects on employee performance. Natamba, Nduhura, Christiana and Wilcky (2022), in a cross-sectional study of 175 purposively and randomly selected respondents in Kanungu District Local Government, found a positive and significant relationship between staff training and employee performance and recommended training needs assessment before training. Kinshaba (2024) also examined employee training and organisational performance in Kanungu District Local Government. Mwanje and Bakashaba (2023), using a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey of 120 participants in Kikuube District Local Government, found a significant relationship between training and local government performance. Kaheeru et al. (2024), in a cross-sectional study of 80 employees in Kasese District, found that induction training ($\beta = 0.657$), on-the-job training ($\beta = 0.175$), and off-the-job training ($\beta = 0.682$) significantly predicted organisational performance. The study aims to assess Training skills, development, and employee performance in Sebabule District Local Government.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional research design using a mixed-methods approach. The descriptive design was used to describe existing employee development practices and the level of employee performance. The correlational design was used to determine whether, and to what extent, training and skills development, professional education and continuous learning, and mentorship and coaching are related to employee performance, without establishing causality. The design is cross-sectional because questionnaire and interview data were collected at one point in time, although the documentary review covered records for 2021–2025.

Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire and through a documentary review of human resource and performance records, from which department-level rates were computed. Qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews to explain how employee development is implemented, how targets are set and appraised, and how resources and working conditions affect performance.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Sembabule District Local Government in the Central Region of Uganda. The district headquarters are in Sembabule Town Council, about 176 km southwest of Kampala by road through Masaka, and the town lies about 50 km northwest of Masaka City. It borders seven districts: Mubende, Gomba, Bukomansimbi, Lwengo, Lyantonde, Kiruhura and Kazo. It is made up of two counties, Mawogola and Lwemiyaga. Mawogola County includes Lwebitakuli, Lugusulu, Mateete and Mijwala sub-counties and Sembabule and Mateete town councils, while Lwemiyaga County includes Lwemiyaga and Ntuusi sub-counties. The district lies in the cattle corridor of Uganda and had a population of 305,971 at the 2024 census (UBOS, 2024). The district was selected because its reports show declining employee performance and because no study of employee development and performance has been conducted there.

Study Population

The study population consisted of 200 employees in post at Sembabule District Local Government, including administrative, technical, and support staff in the departments and units listed in Table 1 (SDLG Human Resource Department, 2025). The 200 employees were identified from the Sembabule District Employee Establishment provided by the District Human Resource Department (SDLG Human Resource Department, 2025), which lists the employees in post in the departments and units. Staff of the Works and Technical Services Department were included because it is one of the departments with the lowest output completion rates in the district.

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Table 1: Study population, sample size and sampling techniques

Category of respondents	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Sampling technique	Data collection method
Chief Administrative Officer	1	1	Purposive	Interview
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer	1	1	Purposive	Interview
Human Resource Officers	6	6	Purposive	Interview
District Planning Unit staff	2	2	Census	Questionnaire
Procurement Unit staff	2	2	Census	Questionnaire
Education Department staff (headquarters)	6	6	Census	Questionnaire
Water Department staff	2	2	Census	Questionnaire
Natural Resources Department staff	8	8	Census	Questionnaire
Trade and Local Economic Development staff	3	3	Census	Questionnaire
Finance Department staff	25	15	Simple random	Questionnaire
Health Department staff	32	19	Simple random	Questionnaire
Works and Technical Services staff	17	10	Simple random	Questionnaire
Production and Marketing staff	43	26	Simple random	Questionnaire
Community Development Officers	23	14	Simple random	Questionnaire
Administrative support staff	29	17	Simple random	Questionnaire
Total	**200**	**132**		**8 interviews; 124 questionnaires**

Source: Sembabule District Human Resource Department (2025); Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Sample Size

The sample size of 132 respondents was determined from the population of 200 employees using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table (Appendix VI) and confirmed with their formula:

$s = X^2NP(1 - P) \div [d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)]$

where s is the required sample size, N the population size, X^2 the chi-square value for one degree of freedom at the 95% confidence level (3.841), P the population proportion (assumed to be 0.50), and d the degree of accuracy (0.05). For N = 200:

$s = (3.841 \times 200 \times 0.25) \div [(0.0025 \times 199) + (3.841 \times 0.25)] = 192.05 \div 1.4578 = 131.7 \approx 132$

The sample was not distributed proportionately across all categories. The eight key informants (CAO, Deputy CAO and six Human Resource Officers) and all staff of six small units (Planning, Procurement, Education headquarters, Water, Natural Resources and Trade and LED, totalling 23 staff) were included in full, because they are too few for a random fraction to represent them. Together these account for 31 respondents. The remaining 101 places were allocated proportionately to the six larger categories (169 staff) using $n_i = N_i \times 101 \div 169$, which gives a sampling fraction of about 60% in each (for example, Finance: $25 \times 101 \div 169 = 14.9 \approx 15$).

Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive sampling for key informants, a census of small units, and simple random sampling for the larger departments.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the eight key informants: the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, and the six Human Resource Officers. These officers are responsible for staff development, performance planning and appraisal, and the introduction of the Balanced Scorecard in the district, and were therefore expected to provide detailed information that other employees could not. All eight were invited for interview, and none was given the questionnaire. Seven were interviewed: the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and five of the six Human Resource Officers.

Census of Small Units

All staff of the Planning Unit (2), Procurement Unit (2), Education Department headquarters (6), Water Department (2), Natural Resources Department (8) and Trade and LED (3) were included. Sampling about 60% of units with two to eight staff would have left one to five respondents per unit

and could have excluded some units entirely, so including everyone ensured that all departments were represented.

Simple Random Sampling

Simple random sampling was used in the six larger categories: Finance, Health, Works and Technical Services, Production and Marketing, Community Development, and administrative support staff. The researcher obtained the staff list of each category from the Human Resource Department as the sampling frame, numbered each employee, and selected the required number using computer-generated random numbers, giving each employee an equal chance of selection.

Data Collection Methods

The study used three methods: questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review.

Questionnaire Method

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was administered to the 124 respondents selected from the census and random sampling categories (132 sample less the 8 key informants). It contained closed-ended and five-point Likert-scale items on training and skills development, professional education and continuous learning, mentorship and coaching, and employee performance. A filter question before Section D identified respondents without an assigned mentor, who skipped the items that require one (D2, D3, D4 and D11). Of the 124 questionnaires distributed, 103 were returned and usable, a response rate of 83.1%.

Interview Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven of the eight key informants to obtain in-depth information on how training, professional education, mentorship and coaching are implemented; how targets are set and appraised under the performance plan and the Balanced Scorecard; and how resources and working conditions affect employee performance.

Documentary Review

Documentary review was used to obtain record-based rates for each department and year from 2021 to 2025, using the checklist and the data extraction. Table 2 defines each rate and its source. Only department-level figures were extracted; no individual employee's name or appraisal result was recorded.

Table 2: Definition and sources of record-based rates

Rate	Computation (per department and year)	Source document
Training participation rate (%)	Staff who attended at least one training activity ÷ staff in post at the start of the year × 100	Training register, training reports and attendance lists
Study leave / sponsorship.	Number of staff granted study leave or sponsorship (also ÷ staff in post × 100)	Study leave approval records; personal files.
Mentor/coach coverage (%)	Staff with an assigned mentor or coach ÷ staff in post × 100	Mentorship register or HR records (recorded as not available if none exists)
Target achievement rate (%)	Targets achieved ÷ targets set in performance plans or Balanced Scorecards × 100	Performance appraisal reports; departmental performance reports
Timeliness rate (%)	Outputs submitted by the due date ÷ outputs due × 100	Quarterly and departmental reports; submission registers
Mean appraisal score	Sum of appraisal scores ÷ number of staff appraised	Appraisal reports (compared only within the same appraisal tool)
Absenteeism rate (%)	Working days lost through absence ÷ scheduled working days × 100	Attendance registers; HCM attendance records

Source: Researcher (2026).

Data Collection Instruments

Four instruments were used to collect the data. First, the questionnaire was the main instrument for the quantitative data. Section A collected the respondent's characteristics (gender, age, marital status, education, department, staff category, years of service, employment status, training in the last two years, and whether the respondent had an assigned mentor). Sections B to E measured the study variables on a five-point Likert scale: training and skills development (B1–B13), professional education and continuous learning (C1–C10), mentorship and coaching (D1–D12, with a filter question for respondents without a mentor), and employee performance (E1–E15).

Second, the interview guide contained 13 open-ended questions for the key informants on the availability, fairness, and relevance of training, support for further education, continuous learning, barriers to development, mentorship and coaching, supervision, determinants of performance, target setting and the Balanced Scorecard transition, and measures for improvement.

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Third, the documentary review checklist listed the records to be examined: staff establishment lists, training plans, budgets and registers, study leave and sponsorship records, any mentorship register, performance plans and appraisal reports, Balanced Scorecard records, departmental performance reports and attendance registers. Fourth, the data extraction form was used to record the department-level rates from these records for each year from 2021 to 2025.

Measurement of Variables

The independent variable, employee development, was measured through three dimensions: training and skills development (Section B, items B1–B13, and the training participation rate);

The dependent variable, individual employee performance, was measured through Section E (15 items), with every item mapped to one theme: productivity (E1–E3, with the target achievement rate), quality of work (E4–E8), efficiency (E9–E12, with the timeliness rate), and reliability (E13–E15, with the absenteeism rate). The mean appraisal score was used as an overall record-based indicator.

Because the district moved from the earlier performance plan and appraisal forms to the Balanced Scorecard during the study period, the two tools use different scoring scales. Mean appraisal scores were therefore compared only across years that used the same tool. Rates computed from counts, such as target achievement and absenteeism, were compared across all years.

All questionnaire items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean scores were interpreted as 1.00–1.80 very low, 1.81–2.60 low, 2.61–3.40 moderate, 3.41–4.20 high, and 4.21–5.00 very high.

Data Collection Procedure

i. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the School of Graduate Studies and Research after approval of the proposal.
ii. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Team University Research Ethics Committee (Ref/REC/004/26) and the study was registered with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology.
iii. The letter and clearance were presented to the Chief Administrative Officer to request permission to collect data and to access human resource and performance records.
iv. The instruments were pre-tested in a neighbouring district local government and revised as necessary.
v. Staff lists were obtained from the Human Resource Department, the population figures were confirmed, and respondents selected accordingly. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent.
vi. Questionnaires were distributed to the selected employees in their departments and sub-counties and collected after an agreed period; 103 of the 124 distributed were returned and usable.
vii. Interviews were scheduled with the key informants and conducted at their offices; seven of the eight were completed.
viii. Records were reviewed at the Human Resource Department, and department-level rates were entered in the data extraction form.
ix. All data were checked for completeness and accuracy before analysis.

Validity of Research Instruments

Validity was ensured through expert judgement and the Content Validity Index (CVI). The questionnaire and interview guide were given to three experts in research methods and human resource management, who rated each item as relevant or not relevant to the construct it was meant to measure. The CVI was computed as the number of items rated relevant divided by the total number of items. A CVI of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, and items rated not relevant were revised or removed. The CVI obtained was 0.92, which is above the acceptable threshold.

Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability was assessed in a pilot study with 12 employees of a neighbouring district local government (Gomba) who were not part of the study sample. Cronbach's alpha was computed for each section (B, E) from the pilot data, and a coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable. The pilot Cronbach's alpha was 0.88, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. Cronbach's alpha was also recomputed on the data from the 103 respondents in the main study, and the values are reported.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were coded, entered, and analysed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) described respondents' characteristics, employee development practices and employee performance. The record-based rates were presented in tables and a chart showing district trends from 2021 to 2025.

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between each dimension of employee development and employee performance, and multiple linear regression was used to establish their combined relationship and the dimension that contributed most. Each null hypothesis was rejected where $p < 0.05$. Correlation strength was interpreted as 0.00–0.19 very weak, 0.20–0.39 weak, 0.40–0.59 moderate, 0.60–0.79 strong, and 0.80–1.00 very strong (Evans, 1996). Before regression, normality (Shapiro–Wilk), linearity, independence of errors (Durbin–Watson), homoscedasticity (Breusch–Pagan), and multicollinearity (variance inflation factor below 10) were checked (Field, 2013). Because mentorship scores were not normally distributed, Spearman rank correlations, heteroscedasticity-robust (HC3) standard errors, and bootstrap confidence intervals were also computed as sensitivity checks. Differences in performance between groups of respondents were tested with independent-samples t tests and one-way analysis of variance with Tukey post hoc comparisons, and effect sizes

(Cohen's d, eta squared, R^2 and f^2) were reported (Cohen, 1988).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview data were analysed thematically. Responses were transcribed, coded, and grouped into themes according to the study objectives. The findings are presented in narrative form, with selected anonymised quotations identified by informant code (KI01–KI07), to explain the quantitative results and the record-based rates.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent: Respondents were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was voluntary; respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty, and written or verbal consent was obtained before any questionnaire or interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Names and positions of respondents were not disclosed. Records were used only to compute department-level rates, and no individual employee's appraisal results or personal information were recorded. Data were stored securely and used only for academic purposes.

Avoidance of harm: Questions avoided intrusive topics, and respondents were not pressed to provide information they were uncomfortable sharing.

Permission: Permission to conduct the study and to access records was sought from the Chief Administrative Officer using the university's introductory letter.

Ethical clearance: The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Team University Research Ethics Committee (Ref/REC/004/26) before data collection, and the study was registered with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology before data collection. Data were handled in line with the Data Protection and Privacy Act, 2019.

Integrity: The researcher reported data honestly and acknowledged all sources.

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Results

Response Rate

Table 3: Response rate by category of respondents

Category of respondents	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Responses	Response rate (%)	Method
Chief Administrative Officer	1	1	1	100.0	Interview
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer	1	1	1	100.0	Interview
Human Resource Officers	6	6	5	83.3	Interview
District Planning Unit staff	2	2	2	100.0	Questionnaire
Procurement Unit staff	2	2	2	100.0	Questionnaire
Education Department staff (headquarters)	6	6	5	83.3	Questionnaire
Water Department staff	2	2	1	50.0	Questionnaire
Natural Resources Department staff	8	8	5	62.5	Questionnaire
Trade and Local Economic Development staff	3	3	2	66.7	Questionnaire
Finance Department staff	25	15	13	86.7	Questionnaire
Health Department staff	32	19	16	84.2	Questionnaire
Works and Technical Services staff	17	10	8	80.0	Questionnaire
Production and Marketing staff	43	26	25	96.2	Questionnaire
Community Development Officers	23	14	12	85.7	Questionnaire
Administrative support staff	29	17	12	70.6	Questionnaire
Questionnaires (all categories)	**192**	**124**	**103**	**83.1**	**Questionnaire**
Interviews (all key informants)	**8**	**8**	**7**	**87.5**	**Interview**
Total	**200**	**132**	**110**	**83.3**	**7 interviews; 103 questionnaires**

Source: Field data (2026).

Of the 124 questionnaires distributed, 103 were returned and usable, a response rate of 83.1%. Seven of the eight key informants were interviewed (87.5%): the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, and five of the six Human Resource Officers. Altogether, 110 of the 132 sampled respondents took part (83.3%). A response rate above 70% is generally regarded as adequate for survey analysis, and every category of respondents was represented, although the Water Department (1 of 2) and the Natural Resources Department (5 of 8) had the lowest return rates. The findings therefore reflect the views of most of the intended respondents.

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Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4: Characteristics of the respondents (n = 103)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	64.1
	Female	37	35.9
Age group (years)	Below 25	5	4.9
	25–34	37	35.9
	35–44	29	28.2
	45–54	23	22.3
	55 and above	9	8.7
Marital status	Single	26	25.2
	Married	64	62.1
	Divorced	10	9.7
	Widowed	3	2.9
Highest education	Certificate	12	11.7
	Diploma	26	25.2
	Bachelor's degree	49	47.6
	Master's degree	14	13.6
	Other	2	1.9
Staff category	Head of department/unit	11	10.7
	Middle-level staff	37	35.9
	Lower-level staff	44	42.7
	Support staff	11	10.7
Years of service in the District	Less than 1	6	5.8
	1–5	31	30.1
	6–10	36	35.0
	11–15	14	13.6
	Above 15	16	15.5
Employment status	Permanent	94	91.3
	Contract	9	8.7
Trained in the last two years	Yes	53	51.5
	No	50	48.5
Has an assigned mentor	Yes	31	30.1
	No	72	69.9
Total		**103**	**100.0**

Source: Field data (2026).

Table 4 shows that two-thirds of the respondents were men (64.1%) and that most were aged 25 to 44 years (64.1%). Nearly half held a bachelor's degree (47.6%) and a further quarter a diploma (25.2%), so the respondents were sufficiently educated to understand and respond to the questionnaire. Lower-level staff were the largest category (42.7%), followed by middle-level staff (35.9%), and 91.3% were permanent employees. About two-thirds had served in the District for six years or more (64.1%), which gives confidence that they could speak about the District's development practices. Only about half (51.5%) had attended training in the last two years, and only 30.1% had an assigned mentor, which is itself an indication of limited coverage of employee development.

By department, Production and Marketing contributed the most respondents (25), followed by Health (16), Finance (13), Community Development (12), administrative support staff (12), Works and Technical Services (8), Education,

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Natural Resources (5 each), Planning, Procurement and Trade and LED (2 each) and Water (1).

Reliability of the Instruments

Table 5: Reliability of the questionnaire sections (Cronbach's alpha)

Section/scale	Items	n	Alpha	Interpretation
A. Training and skills development	13	103	.892	Good
C. Employee performance	15	103	.859	Good
Productivity (E1–E3)	3	103	.632	Questionable
Quality of work (E4–E8)	5	103	.665	Questionable
Efficiency (E9–E12)	4	103	.527	Poor
Reliability (E13–E15)	3	103	.562	Poor

Source: Field data (2026).

Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was 0.892 for training and skills development, 0.821 for professional education and continuous learning, 0.867 for the eight mentorship items answered by every respondent (0.927 for all twelve items among the 31 respondents who had a mentor), and 0.859 for employee performance. All are above the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978), so the four sections were internally consistent. The four performance sub-scales had lower coefficients (productivity 0.632, quality of work 0.665, efficiency 0.527, and reliability 0.562), which is expected for scales of only three to five items, but it means that results for individual sub-scales should be read with caution, and the overall performance score is the more dependable measure. The Content Validity Index was 0.92, and Cronbach's alpha in the pilot study was 0.88, so the instrument was both valid and reliable.

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Descriptive Findings on the Study Variables

Training and skills development

Table 6: Responses on training and skills development (n = 103)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Level
B1	The District provides adequate training opportunities for employees.	2.79	1.01	23.3	37.9	Moderate
B2	Training programmes are regularly conducted in my department.	2.97	1.00	28.2	31.1	Moderate
B3	Training needs are properly identified before programmes are implemented.	2.87	0.88	24.3	31.1	Moderate
B4	The training I receive is relevant to my job responsibilities.	2.79	0.90	21.4	35.0	Moderate
B5	Training improves my ability to perform my duties effectively.	2.77	0.81	17.5	37.9	Moderate
B6	The District uses fair criteria when selecting staff for training.	2.71	0.95	15.5	37.9	Moderate
B7	I have equal opportunity to attend training programmes.	2.93	0.92	26.2	29.1	Moderate
B8	In-service training enhances my technical skills.	2.89	0.96	28.2	32.0	Moderate
B9	Workshops and seminars help me understand new policies and procedures.	2.87	0.91	23.3	32.0	Moderate
B10	The District supports staff participation in external training programmes.	2.83	1.00	27.2	39.8	Moderate
B11	Training schedules are communicated in advance to allow preparation.	2.78	1.03	22.3	37.9	Moderate
B12	The training environment is conducive to effective learning.	2.86	1.05	26.2	37.9	Moderate
B13	There is follow-up after training to ensure skills are applied.	2.82	1.06	27.2	41.7	Moderate
	Overall score: Section B	**2.84**	**0.63**	**23.9**	**35.5**	**Moderate**

Source: Field data (2026). Agree = agree or strongly agree; Disagree = disagree or strongly disagree.

Training and skills development was rated moderate overall (mean = 2.84, SD = 0.63). Across the thirteen items, 23.9% of responses agreed, 40.6% were neutral, and 35.5% disagreed, so respondents were more likely to be unsure or negative than positive. All items fell within the moderate band (2.71–2.97). The highest-rated statements were that training programmes are regularly conducted in the department (B2, mean = 2.97) and that employees have an equal opportunity to attend (B7, 2.93), while the lowest-rated were that the District uses fair criteria in selecting staff for training (B6, 2.71, with only 15.5% agreeing) and that training improves the respondent's ability to perform (B5, 2.77). The relatively low agreement on B6 and on follow-up after training (B13, 2.82, with 41.7% disagreeing, the highest of any training item) shows that, although training is held, many employees doubt the fairness of selection and see little follow-up to confirm that skills are applied.

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Employee performance

Table 7: Self-reported employee performance (n = 103)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Level
E1	I complete my assigned tasks within the required time.	2.58	0.93	13.6	43.7	Low
E2	I consistently meet work deadlines and performance targets.	2.55	0.85	13.6	51.5	Low
E3	I handle a high volume of work effectively within a given period.	2.53	0.92	13.6	47.6	Low
	Sub-scale score: Productivity	**2.56**	**0.68**	**13.6**	**47.6**	**Low**
E4	My work output meets the expected standards of the District.	2.55	0.94	15.5	50.5	Low
E5	My work is accurate and free from frequent errors.	2.67	0.91	19.4	41.7	Moderate
E6	I pay close attention to detail when performing my duties.	2.63	0.89	15.5	40.8	Moderate
E7	I rarely need to redo tasks due to mistakes.	2.50	0.94	13.6	51.5	Low
E8	I consistently deliver high-quality results in my work.	2.57	0.92	13.6	42.7	Low
	Sub-scale score: Quality of work	**2.59**	**0.60**	**15.5**	**45.4**	**Low**
E9	I use time and resources efficiently when performing my duties.	2.57	0.77	10.7	46.6	Low
E10	I complete tasks quickly without compromising quality.	2.58	0.91	14.6	44.7	Low
E11	I make effective use of available tools and systems to improve performance.	2.68	0.91	16.5	43.7	Moderate
E12	I avoid wasting resources while carrying out my duties.	2.71	0.84	15.5	35.9	Moderate
	Sub-scale score: Efficiency	**2.64**	**0.55**	**14.3**	**42.7**	**Moderate**
E13	I am reliable in completing tasks assigned to me.	2.69	0.86	14.6	36.9	Moderate
E14	I report to work regularly and on time.	2.58	0.86	14.6	46.6	Low
E15	My performance remains consistent over time, even under pressure.	2.73	0.94	17.5	39.8	Moderate
	Sub-scale score: Reliability	**2.67**	**0.65**	**15.5**	**41.1**	**Moderate**
	Overall score: Section E	**2.61**	**0.52**	**14.8**	**44.3**	**Moderate**

Source: Field data (2026).

Employee performance had a mean of 2.61 (SD = 0.52), which is on the boundary between the low and moderate bands. Only 14.8% of responses agreed that they met the performance standard described, 40.9% were neutral, and 44.3% disagreed. By sub-scale, productivity (2.56) and quality of work (2.59) were low, while efficiency (2.64) and reliability (2.67) were moderate; the differences between sub-scales are small. The highest-rated statements were that performance remains consistent over time (E15, 2.73) and that resources are not wasted (E12, 2.71); the lowest were that the respondent rarely needs to redo tasks (E7, 2.50) and that the respondent consistently meets deadlines and targets (E2, 2.55, with 51.5% disagreeing). Because employees rated themselves, these scores are probably an optimistic estimate; even so, fewer than one in five agreed with any performance statement, which is consistent with the declining record-based rates.

Summary of the study variables

Table 8: Summary of the study variables (n = 103)

Variable	Mean	SD	Level	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Shapiro–Wilk p
Training and skills development	2.84	0.63	Moderate	23.9	40.6	35.5	.745
Employee performance	2.61	0.52	Moderate	14.8	40.9	44.3	.748

Source: Field data (2026). Percentages are of all item responses in the section.

Table 8 shows that training and skills development were the best-rated dimension and mentorship and coaching the weakest. Scores for training, professional education, and performance were approximately normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk $p > 0.05$), but the mentorship score departed from normality ($p = 0.005$), so rank-based checks were added to the correlation analysis.

Record-Based Trends in Employee Development and Performance, 2021–2025

Table 9: District-level employee development and performance indicators, 2021–2025

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Training participation rate (%)	20.0	23.0	25.0	27.0	29.2
Training budget (UGX million)	52	60	68	78	85
Study leave and sponsorship approvals	6	7	8	9	12
Target achievement rate (%)	76	73	70	64	58
Output completion timeliness (%)	78	75	72	65	58
Headquarters absenteeism (%)	10	11	12	15	18
Mean appraisal score and tool	3.2 (PS Form 5)	3.1 (PS Form 5)	3.0 (PS Form 5)	Transition year	2.8 (BSC)

Source: Sembabule District Human Resource Department records and performance reports (2021–2025). BSC = Balanced Scorecard. Appraisal scores from different tools are not directly comparable.

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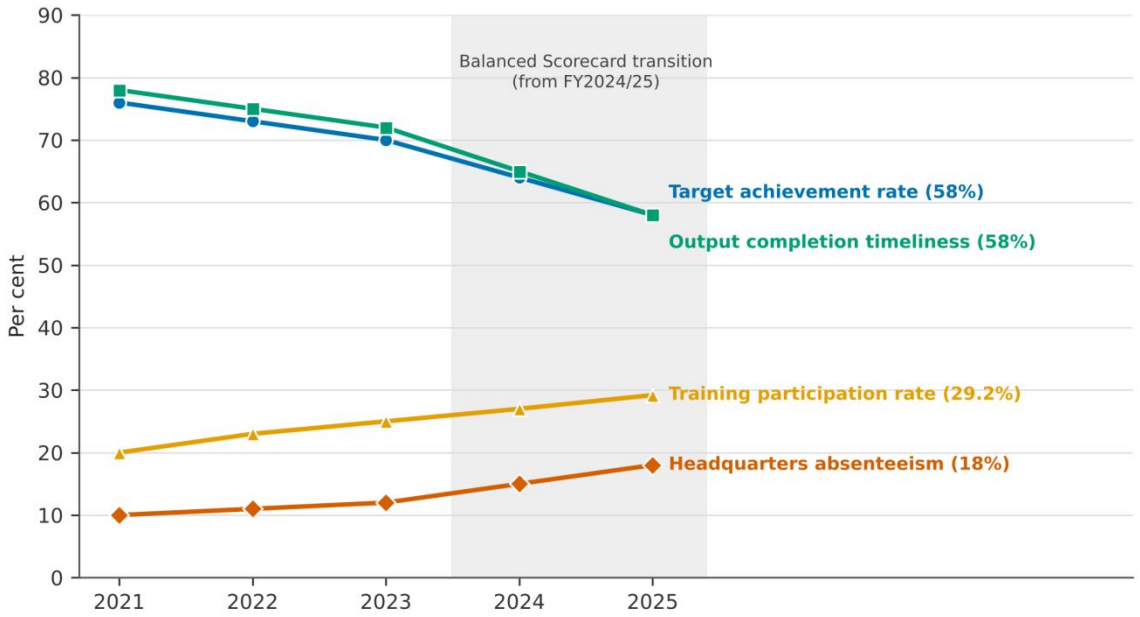

Figure 1: District trends in training participation, target achievement, timeliness and absenteeism, 2021–2025

Source: Sembabule District records (2021–2025). The shaded band marks the transition to the Balanced Scorecard.

Table 9 and Figure 1 show that investment in employee development increased steadily between 2021 and 2025: the training budget rose from UGX 52 million to UGX 85 million (a rise of 63.5%), training participation rose from 20.0% to 29.2%, and study leave and sponsorship approvals doubled from 6 to 12 a year (42 over the five years). Over the same period, performance weakened. Target achievement fell from 76% to 58%, timeliness of output completion from 78% to 58%, and headquarters absenteeism rose from 10% to 18%. In 2025, absenteeism in remote sub-counties reached 38%, and 35% of outputs were submitted two to six weeks late. The mean appraisal score fell from 3.2 to 3.0 under PS Form 5, but the 2025 score of 2.8 was produced with the Balanced Scorecard and cannot be compared directly.

The records also indicate that no complete mentorship register exists; the Human Resource Department estimated that about 120 staff received informal coaching in FY 2024/25, which is consistent with the low mentorship ratings. Two features of the records limit how far they can be interpreted. First, the participation rates for 2021–2024 are based on a study frame of 188 to 200 staff, whereas the 2025 rate (285 staff attending) is based on the 975 filled posts, so the 2025 rate is not strictly comparable. Second, the department-level rates for the twelve departments moved in parallel across the years, each changing by the same amount as the district figure, which suggests that they were derived from district totals rather than recorded independently. The department-level rates were therefore not correlated with the survey scores, and the district-level indicators are presented as descriptive evidence only. They show that more training and funding were not accompanied by better performance, an observation that cannot be used to infer cause; it is consistent with the moderate relationships found in the survey and with the interview evidence that performance also depends on staffing, funds, transport and equipment.

Relationship between Employee Development and Employee Performance

Table 10: Pearson correlation matrix of the study variables (n = 103)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Training and skills development	1			
2. Employee performance	.383**	.265**	.209*	1

*Source: Field data (2026). * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).*

The three dimensions of employee development were largely independent of one another: training was not related to professional education ($r = -.055$, $p = .580$). Multicollinearity was therefore not a concern for the regression analysis.

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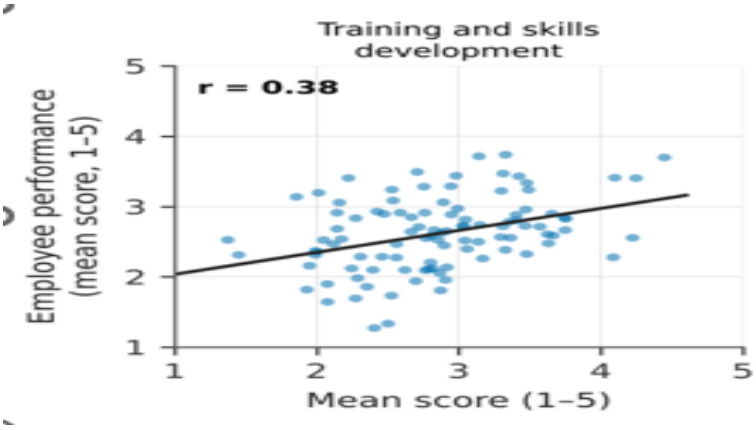

Figure 2: Employee performance plotted against training, professional education and mentorship scores

Source: Field data (2026). Lines show the least-squares fit for each dimension.

Tests of the hypotheses

Table 11: Correlations between the dimensions of employee development and employee performance (n = 103)

Null hypothesis	Pearson r	95% CI	p	Strength	Spearman ρ (p)	Decision
H01: Training and skills development and employee performance	.383	.205 to .537	< .001	Weak	.379 (< .001)	Reject

Source: Field data (2026). Strength interpreted using Evans (1996); decisions at the 0.05 level of significance.

H01. Training and skills development had a positive and significant relationship with employee performance ($r = .383$, $p < .001$), so the first null hypothesis was rejected. The relationship is weak by the bands adopted for this study (0.20–0.39) but is a medium-sized effect by Cohen's (1988) benchmark of 0.30, and training explained about 14.7% of the variation in performance on its own. The rank correlation agreed ($\rho = .379$, $p < .001$). Employees who scored higher on training reported higher performance.

Relationships with the sub-scales of performance

Table 12: Correlations between the dimensions of employee development and the sub-scales of performance (n = 103)

Performance sub-scale	Training and skills development
Productivity	.324**
Quality of work	.400**
Efficiency	.276**
Reliability	.256**

*Source: Field data (2026). * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.*

Training was significantly related to all four sub-scales, most strongly to quality of work ($r = 0.400$) and productivity ($r = 0.324$). Professional education was significantly related only to efficiency ($r = 0.270$) and reliability ($r = 0.290$), and mentorship only to efficiency ($r = 0.262$). Because the sub-scales had low reliability, these differences are suggestive and should not be over-interpreted.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The model was statistically significant, $F(3, 99) = 10.54$, $p < .001$, and explained 24.2% of the variance in employee

performance ($R^2 = 0.242$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.219$; standard error of the estimate = 0.458), a medium-to-large effect ($f^2 = 0.32$).

Table 13: Multiple regression of employee performance on the dimensions of employee development (n = 103)

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI for B	VIF
Constant	.876	.317		2.76	.007	.246 to 1.506	
Training and skills development	.301	.074	.369	4.08	< .001	.155 to .448	1.07

Source: Field data (2026). Dependent variable: employee performance. $R^2 = 0.242$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.219$; $F(3, 99) = 10.54$, $p < .001$.

Training and skills development ($\beta = 0.369$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors: holding the other dimensions constant, a one-point increase in the training score was associated with a 0.30-point increase in the performance score. Training contributed the most to the model. The prediction equation is: Performance = 0.876 + 0.301 (training). The assumptions of the model were checked. Multicollinearity was not a problem (all variance inflation factors ≤ 1.07), the errors were independent (Durbin–Watson = 2.18), and the residuals were normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk p = .626). No observation was unduly influential (maximum standardised residual = 2.37; maximum Cook's distance = .056). The Breusch–Pagan test was borderline (p = .052), so the model was re-estimated with heteroscedasticity-robust (HC3) standard errors; the conclusions did not change (training $p < .001$. Bootstrap 95% confidence intervals for the coefficients also excluded zero for training (0.164 to 0.442). The dimensions explained between 14.1% and 20.7% of the variance of the four performance sub-scales, and 75.8% of the variance in overall performance remained unexplained, which shows that factors outside employee development, such as staffing, funds, transport, equipment and working conditions, also matter.

Differences in Employee Performance by Respondents' Characteristics

Table 14: Mean employee performance score by respondents' characteristics (n = 103)

Characteristic	Mean performance (n)	Test	Statistic	p	Effect size
Trained in the last two years	Yes: 2.74 (n = 53); No: 2.47 (n = 50)	t test	t(94.7) = 2.68	.009	d = 0.53
Has an assigned mentor	Yes: 2.53 (n = 31); No: 2.65 (n = 72)	t test	t(51.6) = -1.05	.301	d = -0.23
Gender	Male: 2.66 (n = 66); Female: 2.52 (n = 37)	t test	t(88.7) = 1.42	.159	d = 0.27
Staff category	Head 2.50 (11); Middle 2.84 (37); Lower 2.42 (44); Support 2.69 (11)	ANOVA	F(3, 99) = 5.24	.002	$\eta^2 = 0.137$
Employment status	Permanent: 2.58 (n = 94); Contract: 2.89 (n = 9)	ANOVA	F(1, 101) = 2.92	.091	$\eta^2 = 0.028$
Age group	Below 25: 2.53; 25–34: 2.67; 35–44: 2.65; 45–54: 2.55; 55+: 2.44	ANOVA	F(4, 98) = 0.48	.754	$\eta^2 = 0.019$
Highest education	Certificate 2.68; Diploma 2.65; Bachelor's 2.62; Master's 2.42	ANOVA	F(3, 97) = 0.79	.501	$\eta^2 = 0.024$
Years of service	Under 1: 2.72; 1–5: 2.57; 6–10: 2.61; 11–15: 2.49; Over 15: 2.75	ANOVA	F(4, 98) = 0.61	.657	$\eta^2 = 0.024$

Source: Field data (2026). Under "Highest education", the two respondents with "Other" qualifications were excluded from the test.

Two characteristics were significantly related to performance. Respondents who had attended training in the last two years rated their performance higher than those who had not (2.74 compared with 2.47; t = 2.68, p = .009, a medium effect, d = 0.53), and they also reported better training provision (2.98 compared with 2.69; p = .023). Performance also differed by staff category ($F = 5.24$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .137$); the Tukey test showed that the only significant difference was between middle-level staff (2.84) and lower-level staff (2.42; p = .001), so lower-level staff,

who were the largest category, reported the weakest performance. Gender, age, education, years of service, employment status, and having an assigned mentor were not significantly related to performance. The mentorship score of respondents with a mentor (2.46) was also not significantly higher than that of those without (2.32; p = .426), which suggests that the mentorship that exists is not yet delivering clear benefits to those who receive it.

Findings from the Key Informant Interviews

Seven key informants were interviewed (codes KI01 to KI07): the Chief Administrative Officer (KI01), the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (KI02) and five Human Resource Officers responsible for administration (KI03), training and development (KI04), records (KI05), performance management (KI06) and recruitment and welfare (KI07). Thirteen questions were asked on the availability, fairness and relevance of training, support for further education, continuous learning, barriers, mentorship, supervision, the determinants of performance, the Balanced Scorecard transition and measures for improvement. The informants gave closely similar accounts of the District's practices, and the themes below summarise what they agreed on, followed by the particular point each stressed.

Theme 1: Training is available but rationed. Informants reported that training is offered through departmental training plans, ministry workshops and occasional partner-supported sessions, but that "the allocation is not sufficient for every employee, and frontline staff cannot always be released without affecting service delivery" (KI01). This agrees with the moderate questionnaire rating of training provision (B1, B2) and with the training budget of UGX 85 million in FY 2024/25.

Theme 2: Selection is reasonable in principle but not always seen as fair. Supervisors nominate employees on the basis of job relevance, urgency, previous training, and available funds. The informants acknowledged that "staff may perceive unequal access when selection decisions and reasons are not communicated or when the same officers are repeatedly nominated". This explains why fair selection criteria (B6) was the lowest-rated training item in the questionnaire.

Theme 3: Relevance depends on practice and follow-up. Technical training was seen as relevant when it addressed new procedures, reporting requirements, or professional standards, but "its value is reduced when sessions are too theoretical or when no workplace follow-up is arranged to confirm that the skill has been applied". This matches the low agreement on follow-up after training (B13) and the stronger relationship between training and the quality of work.

Theme 4: Support for further education is limited. Employees can apply for study leave where the programme is relevant and service coverage can be maintained, but "sponsorship and professional certification support are limited, so some employees pursue qualifications using personal resources or flexible study arrangements". Continuous learning takes place mainly through workshops, policy briefings, circulars and committee work; e-learning is constrained by connectivity, device access and data costs, particularly for field-based staff. These accounts are consistent with the low ratings in Section C and with the 42 study leave and sponsorship approvals recorded over five years.

Theme 5: Funding, workload and distance are the main barriers. Informants named limited funding, staff shortages, competing workloads, transport costs, late communication of training dates, and difficulty releasing staff from frontline duties. Remote staff were said to miss opportunities because of distance and connectivity, which agrees with the high absenteeism and late outputs recorded in remote sub-counties.

Theme 6: Mentorship is informal and uneven. All informants confirmed that the District has no fully formalised mentorship programme, assignment register or standard review process; guidance is provided informally by supervisors or experienced colleagues and "varies between departments". This is consistent with the low mentorship score, the fact that only 30.1% of respondents had a mentor, and the absence of a complete mentorship register in the records. Supervision that only checks whether an output has been submitted was said to leave staff repeating mistakes, whereas coaching that gives specific, timely feedback improves performance.

Theme 7: Development is only one determinant of performance. The informants stressed that performance is also influenced by staffing levels, clarity of targets, workload, operational funds, equipment, transport and timely approvals, which "can constrain even a trained and committed employee". Delayed releases, fuel shortages and long distances to remote sub-counties were said to reduce output "independently of an employee's knowledge or effort". They added that the District began moving to the Balanced Scorecard in FY 2024/25 and that implementation and orientation were still ongoing, so appraisal scores from different tools should not be directly compared. This supports the finding that the three dimensions together explain only about a quarter of the variation in performance.

Theme 8: Development works best when linked to an appraisal gap. According to the informants, training updates practical and technical skills, further education strengthens professional judgement and mentorship transfers institutional knowledge, but "the strongest results occur when learning is linked to an identified appraisal gap and the supervisor provides an opportunity to practise and review the new skill". The measures they proposed were to link appraisal gaps to individual development plans, publish clear training-selection criteria, keep a training-beneficiary register, formalise mentorship assignments, require post-training action plans and hold quarterly performance conversations.

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Table 15: Particular emphasis of each key informant

Code	Role	Particular emphasis
KI01	Chief Administrative Officer	Departmental plans and resources should be aligned with service-delivery priorities.
KI02	Deputy Chief Administrative Officer	A central human resource record is needed to identify employees who have not yet benefited from development.
KI03	Human Resource Officer (Administration)	The application of learning should be assessed rather than relying on certificates.
KI04	Human Resource Officer (Training and Development)	Relevance, staffing implications, and human resource rules should guide approval of training.
KI05	Human Resource Officer (Records)	A knowledge-sharing session should follow each course.
KI06	Human Resource Officer (Performance)	Barriers are more pronounced for staff at remote service points.
KI07	Human Resource Officer (Recruitment and Welfare)	A formal arrangement should define the mentor, the mentee, meetings, and follow-up.

Source: Key informant interviews (2026).

The informants were all drawn from management and human resource functions, so their accounts represent the employer's view; the views of frontline employees were captured only through the questionnaire.

Discussion of the Findings

Training and skills development and employee performance

The significant positive relationship between training and performance ($r = 0.383$; $\beta = 0.369$) agrees with the international meta-analyses reviewed in Chapter Two, which found that training has positive effects on on-the-job behaviour and results (Arthur, Bennett, Edens & Bell, 2003) and on human resource outcomes such as employee skills (Tharenou, Saks & Moore, 2007). It also agrees with Ugandan district studies that found a positive and significant relationship between training and employee performance in Amolatar (Okello & Kumakech, 2022), Kanungu (Natamba et al., 2022) and Kikuube (Mwanje & Bakashaba, 2023). The size of the relationship in Sembabule is smaller than the strong coefficients reported in Kasese (Kaheeru et al., 2024) and is closer to the 26% of variation explained in Yumbe (Asiki & Picho, 2015), where training explained 14.7% on its own and 24.2% in combination with the other dimensions. One possible reason is that in Sembabule, respondents rated selection criteria and follow-up poorly, and the interviews explained that training is rationed and not always followed by practice and review. Tharenou et al. (2007) similarly argued that training works mainly through what it changes in employees, so training that is not applied is expected to have a limited effect.

The stronger relationship of training with quality of work and productivity than with reliability is consistent with Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), which holds that skills and knowledge enable employees to reach challenging targets. The finding that employees trained in the last two years rated their performance higher (2.74 against 2.47) points in the same direction, although the design cannot show that training caused the difference.

Development and the decline in performance

The record-based data show that training participation, budget and study leave all increased between 2021 and 2025 while target achievement, timeliness and attendance deteriorated. The survey results help to interpret this apparent contradiction. Employee development is positively related to performance, but the relationship is modest, and three-quarters of the variation in performance is explained by other factors. The interviews identified these as funding, staffing, transport, equipment, workload, and the transition to the Balanced Scorecard. The evidence is also consistent with the interpretation that the quantity of training matters less than its relevance, fairness and follow-up. The study therefore supports the position of Goal Setting Theory that ability and feedback are necessary but not sufficient, and that resources and a supportive working environment are required for goals to translate into performance. It cannot show whether the decline would have been larger without the additional investment.

Conclusions

Training and skills development. There is a significant positive relationship between training and skills development and employee performance in Sembabule District Local Government, and the null hypothesis H01 was rejected. Training is the most important of the three dimensions, but its effect is limited by weak needs identification, perceived unfairness in selection, and the absence of follow-up.

Recommendations

1. Link training to identified performance gaps. The Human Resource Department and heads of department should base nominations on appraisal gaps and individual development plans, and should require a post-training action

plan and a review by the supervisor within an agreed period, since training had the strongest relationship with performance, but follow-up was rated poorly (B13).

2. Make selection for training and study leave transparent. The Chief Administrative Officer should approve and publish selection criteria, communicate reasons for nomination and non-nomination, and keep a central training-beneficiary register so that the 50 of 103 respondents not trained in the last two years, and lower-level staff, who reported the lowest performance, are prioritised.

Limitations of the Findings

The findings should be read with the following limitations. First, the study was conducted in one district at one point in time, so the results cannot be generalised to other local governments and cannot show causation. Second, employee performance was self-reported, and the same respondents rated both development and performance, which may inflate the correlations through common-method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Third, 103 respondents were analysed, and only 31 had a mentor, which limits the power of the mentorship analysis, and the sub-scales of performance had low reliability. Fourth, the interviews were with management and human resource officers only, and the informants gave closely similar accounts. Fifth, the department-level record rates moved in parallel, and the 2025 participation rate used a different denominator from earlier years, so the records were used descriptively. Finally, the results for professional education and mentorship were sensitive to the method used, as the rank correlations were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Areas for Further Research

Further studies could (i) use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs to test whether training and mentorship cause changes in performance; (ii) use individual appraisal scores or supervisor ratings, with permission, instead of self-reports; (iii) repeat the study in other districts and with a larger group of mentored employees; (iv) include the views of frontline staff and supervisors through interviews and focus groups; and (v) examine mediating factors such as self-efficacy, resources and organisational support, and the effect of the Balanced Scorecard once it has been fully implemented.

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List of abbreviations

BSC Balanced Scorecard
CAO Chief Administrative Officer
CVI Content Validity Index
HCM Human Capital Management (system)
HRO Human Resource Officer
LED Local Economic Development
MoPS Ministry of Public Service
REC Research Ethics Committee
SDLG Sembabule District Local Government
SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UBOS Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNCST Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

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Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest declared.

Author contributions

RN: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing-original draft.
EHK: Data curation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Supervision, Validation, Writing-review and editing.
All authors: Approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the work.

Data availability

Data are available upon request.

Informed consent

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

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