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Original Article

Organizational-Based Conflict and Its Consequences to the Provision of Quality Water and Sanitation in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Organisational-based conflict affects almost every aspect of an organisation, ranging from employee motivation, employee output, and the rate of staff turnover. When such conflict is mismanaged or neglected, it hinders organisational performance, and the reverse is true. This study aimed to review the consequences of organisational-based conflict on service delivery in Uganda. Issues surrounding the distribution of power and resources between local governments and the central government remain contentious, with local leaders frequently protesting perceived overwriting by the central authorities in matters related to development and resource allocation, a perception, which translates into full-blown central-local conflict. Also, competition for limited resources frequently leads to conflicts among various departments, ministries, and agencies seeking the same allocations. We particularly focused on three forms of conflict, namely political, resource-based, and role. Obtainable literature suggests a high prevalence for each of the three, even if their consequence to service appear to manifest differently at different levels. Specifically, resource-based conflicts are not solely driven by scarcity but are significantly influenced by governance practices and perceptions of equity in service delivery; political conflict is characterized by disruptions, governance adaptability, inequality, and the power of social cohesion, which affect water and sanitation service delivery; and, role conflict generates friction within teams, negatively affecting collaboration and communication because when team members are unclear about their roles, it leads to coordination issues, thereby creating inefficiencies that further impair the service delivery process. Increased organisational awareness about the causes and consequences of conflict can enhance conflict mitigation strategies in local governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Organisational-based conflict affects almost every aspect of an organisation, ranging from employee motivation, employee output, and the rate of staff turnover. Organisational-based conflict within district local governments can significantly hinder service delivery, thus making it an essential area of study for both scholars and practitioners (Banaszak, 2022). These conflicts stem from various sources, including differences in values among individuals, competition for resources, communication barriers, and contrasting interests among stakeholders (Aguirre, 2023). This study focuses on exploring the effects of organisation-based conflict on service delivery in Uganda.

The global landscape of the Cold War was primarily characterised by the ideological clash between the capitalist bloc, spearheaded by the United States, and the communist bloc, led by the Soviet Union (Westad, 2020). Consistent with Zaretsky (2021), this period catalysed the formation of numerous international organisations, shaped significantly by these geopolitical tensions. The United Nations (UN), established in 1945 with the objective of promoting peace and security, often found itself paralysed by the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council (Zaretsky, 2021). This limitation led to contentious debates regarding intervention, particularly during humanitarian crises such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars (Cohen, 2021). Throughout this era, various conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America were often extensions of the Cold War rivalry, with the USA and USSR providing support to opposing factions.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States emerged as the sole superpower, which precipitated a series of conflicts rooted in global governance concerns influenced by American policies (Ikenberry, 2019). This was exemplified by NATO's interventions in the Balkans and the Middle East, including the Gulf War (Zurcher, 2021). During this time, according to Neuman (2021), the UN's role began to shift, as it increasingly focused on humanitarian interventions, as seen in Somalia and Rwanda. However, the effectiveness and authority of the UN continued to be contested, particularly when permanent Security Council members acted unilaterally, as was the case during the Iraq War in 2003. Simultaneously, economic reforms in China initiated in the late 1970's prompted its rapid emergence as a global power (Zhang, 2021). This rise created heightened tensions, especially in areas of trade, technology, and military might. These dynamics, as asserted by Chen (2020), culminated in a trade war between the USA and China that began in 2018, marked by tariffs and disputes over trade policies within global organisations like the World Trade Organization (WTO). This conflict highlighted a significant ideological divide between neoliberal economic policies and state-led capitalism.

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According to Muwanga (2021), Uganda, after gaining its independence from the British colonial rule in 1962, continued to face political tensions, particularly among different ethnic groups and political factions. Early leaders like Milton Obote confronted internal strife within parliament related to resource distribution and power dynamics (Baker, 2020). His decision to dissolve the federal system in 1966 in favour of a unitary state heightened conflicts with traditional leaders and regional governments, particularly in Buganda. Following Idi Amin's coup, widespread human rights abuses and deepened organisational conflicts emerged, as many civil servants were purged along ethnic and political lines, leading to a weakened bureaucratic structure (Olinga, 2022). Resistance from various factions, including former military leaders and dissidents, further fuelled power struggles. After the National Resistance Movement (NRM) gained power under Yoweri Museveni in 1986, an initial period of reconciliation ensued (Lwanga, 2022). However, socio-economic policies implemented by the government led to mounting tensions, particularly around resource management within the cabinet. The 1980's were marked by armed confrontations with groups such as the Uganda People's Army and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), driven by unresolved political grievances and local governance issues (Tumushabe, 2021).

According to Amone (2021), throughout the late 1990's and early 2000's, rampant corruption within the Ugandan government generated significant public discontent. Conflicts between parliament members arose over anti-corruption measures and budget allocations, as various levels of governance clashed over control of resources (Nambooze, 2022). Disputes over funding for crucial services like health and education often marginalise rural communities, resulting in public outcry (Kangave, 2020). In recent years, scandals involving the mismanagement of funds and aid allocations have led to a highly politicised atmosphere within parliament, amplifying tensions between the executive and legislative branches, especially during corruption inquiries. While Uganda's decentralisation policy has introduced elements of democratisation, it has also incited conflict within local government structures. Issues surrounding the distribution of power and resources between local councils and the central government remain contentious, with local leaders frequently protesting perceived overreach by the central authorities in matters related to development and resource allocation (Mushemeza, 2021). The interplay of these tensions reflects the ongoing struggle within Ugandan governance, as the quest for autonomy continues to clash with centralised control.

The theoretical foundation of this study will be rooted in Resource-Based Theory (RBT), also known as the Resource-Based View (RBV), which was developed by Barney in the 1990s. RBT posits that the allocation of resources is critical to determining the overall performance and effectiveness of service delivery. When departments vie for the same resources, conflicts may arise, leading to inefficiencies and dissatisfaction among stakeholders (Barney, 2021). Serving as a managerial framework, RBT helps identify the strategic resources an organisation can harness to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 2021). At the core of RBT is the notion that an organisation's resources and capabilities are essential for attaining competitive superiority and enhanced performance. This theoretical approach is particularly relevant for examining organisation-based conflict and service delivery within district local governments, where processes surrounding resource allocation, management, and utilisation significantly influence governance and the effectiveness of public services (Agyemang, 2015).

In the context of local governments, competition for limited resources frequently leads to conflicts among various departments seeking the same allocations (Agyemang, 2015). Additionally, these local governments often depend on external

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resources such as funding, personnel, and technology, which can intensify disputes over access and control. The resource dependency perspective highlights that a lack of critical resources can escalate conflicts and impede effective service delivery (Jansen, 2018). RBT is particularly suited to this study as it underscores the importance of unique capabilities such as skilled personnel, advanced technologies, and efficient organisational processes in fostering optimal service outcomes. As a result, district local governments that strategically harness their distinctive resources are more likely to improve the quality and efficiency of public services.

Statement of the Problem

The findings from the Uganda Bureau of Standards (UBOS, 2017) revealed that out of 46,228 households in one district (Alebtong) located in northern Uganda, only 1,349 (2.9%) had access to piped water, while 13,812 (29.9%) relied on boreholes. Alarmingly, there were 6,587 households (14.2%) without any toilet facilities, and only 13,176 households (28.5%) had proper waste disposal systems. Despite governmental efforts aimed at enhancing the living conditions of residents, service delivery in the district remains inadequate, largely due to organisational conflicts stemming from miscommunication, role ambiguity, competition for resources, cultural differences, and power struggles among stakeholders (Yusuf, 2023). In order to address the above gap, we review the dimensions of organisational conflict that are partly responsible for declining service delivery in the country. The review is expected to be valuable to policymakers and organisational leaders, offering insights that can help shape more effective conflict management strategies. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to improved governance and enhanced quality of life for Ugandans.

Purpose and Questions of the Study

Using a secondary literature review, this study examined the effect of organisational-based conflicts on service delivery in Uganda. Particularly, we answered the following questions: [i] What is the consequence of Resource-Based conflict on the provision of quality water and sanitation in Uganda? [ii] What consequences do political conflicts have on the provision of quality water and sanitation in Uganda? And [iii] What consequence does role conflict have on the provision of quality water and sanitation in Uganda?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Sourcing

This study adopted a systematic literature review utilising the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses methodology (Moher et al., 2010). As contended by Kitchenham (2004), the strengths of a Systematic literature review lie in its potential to interrogate obtainable literature to deal with vital research questions. Additionally, the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses' methodology have been recommended for being a structured process entailing identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion to facilitate the efficient collection of relevant data (Moher et al. 2010).

Data Search

Data for this study was largely sourced from Taylor and Francis, a database selected owing to its growing reputation and suitability (Zhu & Liu, 2020), hence, an effective systematic literature review. While this study intended to focus on contemporary scholarship, no limitations were identified regarding the time frame. Nonetheless, the review zeroed in on Open Access peer-reviewed journals that are published in English. Below is the search string used in the database.

("Organisational-based conflict*" OR "OBC*" OR "Organisational conflict*" OR "Issues of conflict in Organisations*") AND ("service delivery") AND ("Uganda")

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Data Screening

The obtained dataset underwent a collaborative screening process that incorporated reviewing the title, reading the abstract, and finally examining the conclusive issues. The process aimed to isolate articles that did not contribute to achieving the study's questions. By reading the titles, some articles were eliminated, as the review of abstracts led to the removal of more articles. These articles were eliminated or removed because they failed to align with the keywords that guided the screening process. The remaining articles were then read for consistency in the content *vis-à-vis* the research questions.

Data Analysis

In addressing the research questions, the authors took a collaborative coding process using a shared Excel worksheet. This method shows the emerging thematic analysis framework (Göçoğlu & Demirkol, 2024), and its significance is in reaching constructive conclusions from the review. The central factors influencing data extraction revolved around assessing the consequences of organisational conflicts (resource-based, political and role) on water and sanitation service delivery in Uganda with a view to influencing policy and practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resource-Based Conflict and Water and Sanitation Service Delivery

Resource-based conflicts emerge as a significant challenge in various regions across the globe, primarily fuelled by competition for scarce resources such as water, land, minerals, and fossil fuels (Kahl, 2022). These conflicts are often intensified by underlying factors, including population growth, climate change, and economic disparities (Gleditsch, 2022). Recent studies have extensively noted that while the mere availability of resources plays a crucial role in igniting conflicts, other factors, particularly the governance and management of these resources, are equally influential (Dahl, 2023). This multifaceted nature of conflicts typically displays in various forms, including social unrest, political instability, and outright violence, underscoring the urgency for effective conflict management strategies. Consequently, at the core of achieving societal stability is the efficient delivery of water and sanitation services, especially in regions where resource scarcity leads to heightened competition among communities, as noted by O'Sullivan (2022). Literature indicates that perceived inequities in water and sanitation service distribution, particularly when correlated with the availability of crucial resources, can significantly aggravate social tensions and, ultimately, contribute to regional conflicts (Sebola, 2023). Consistent with Renner (2023), water and sanitation service delivery encompass a broad spectrum of essential services, including healthcare, education, infrastructure, and public utilities. The effective management of these water and sanitation services is vital for mitigating potential conflicts arising from competition over limited resources.

Recent studies have sought to elucidate the link between participatory resource management and conflict resolution. For example, Ojendal (2021) conducted a study focusing on how participation in resource management affects conflict resolution processes in local communities. The findings revealed that inclusive governance frameworks can play a pivotal role in reducing resource-related tensions and improving overall water and sanitation service delivery outcomes. This research emphasises the idea that when communities feel included in decision-making processes regarding resource use, their grievances and conflicts may be alleviated.

In a related context, Golewski (2022) examined the connections between environmental changes, resource conflicts, and water and sanitation service delivery. The study argued that environmental degradation not only exacerbates competition for resources but also undermines the quality of water

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and sanitation services. Golewski (2022) emphasised the necessity of adopting sustainable practices to enhance community services and reduce the potential for conflict, thereby linking environmental stewardship with social stability and water and sanitation service efficacy. Further, the effect of inequality on water and sanitation service provision and conflict dynamics further complicates the discourse. Tuan (2023) posited that perceived inequalities in both resource allocation and water and sanitation service availability significantly exacerbate conflicts. His work highlighted that equitable service provision can serve as a powerful conflict prevention mechanism, suggesting a direct correlation between perceived fairness in water and sanitation service delivery and community stability.

Moreover, Barrow (2023) explored the effects of natural resource governance on social services within sub-Saharan Africa. The findings pointed to the importance of robust governance frameworks surrounding natural resources, which not only mitigate conflicts but also enhance the efficiency of water and sanitation service delivery. Barrow proposed that integrated management strategies are essential to foster both sustainability and stability, emphasising the intertwined nature of resource governance and water and sanitation service efficacy. Finally, Zimmerman (2023) addressed the necessity of integrating conflict resolution strategies into service design. His study advocated that incorporating strategies aimed at conflict resolution into the framework of water and sanitation service delivery can lead to improved outcomes in regions prone to conflict. By explicitly recognising the potential for conflict in water and sanitation service design, stakeholders can proactively address tensions and foster environments conducive to cooperation rather than competition.

To sum it up, the literature reviewed emphasises that resource-based conflicts are not solely driven by scarcity but are significantly influenced by governance practices and perceptions of equity in water and sanitation service delivery. To effectively address these conflicts, a multifaceted approach that incorporates inclusive governance, sustainable resource management, and equitable water and sanitation service provision is essential (Vanderheiden, 2022). Furthermore, integrating conflict resolution strategies into water and sanitation service frameworks may enhance their effectiveness, contributing to long-term societal stability.

Political Conflict and Water and Sanitation Service Delivery

The interplay between political conflict and water and sanitation service delivery has increasingly captured the attention of scholars, particularly within the realms of fragile states, post-conflict reconstruction, and urban governance. This literature review synthesises recent findings that illustrate how political instability adversely impacts the provision of water and sanitation services, revealing the complexities of governance in times of turmoil. A significant body of research has focused on the ramifications of political conflicts for water and sanitation service delivery, with numerous studies highlighting the substantial disruptions caused by such instability. For instance, Mahmud (2022) established a direct correlation between the intensity of political violence and the deterioration of healthcare services in conflict-affected regions. By utilising a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study reveals that health facilities not only become targets of violence but also suffer from acute resource shortages, often exacerbated by the diversion of funds intended for public health. This intersection of violence and resource allocation illustrates the cascading effects of conflict on essential services, emphasising the urgent need for resilient healthcare systems in vulnerable contexts.

Another critical dimension of this discourse is the role of governance structures in shaping service delivery amidst political unrest. Jackson (2021) investigated how decentralised governance models

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can potentially mitigate the adverse effects of conflict on water and sanitation service delivery. His findings suggest that local governance frameworks, when supported by international aid and the participation of local civil society organisations, tend to provide more reliable and accessible services (Mwesigwa, Bogere & Ogwal, 2022; Mwesigwa, 2021; Mwesigwa & Mubangizi, 2015). This points to the value of adaptive governance in conflict-prone areas, where local structures can respond more effectively to the needs of their communities, thus fostering resilience in service provision.

Post-conflict scenarios present their own unique set of challenges that further complicate service delivery. In a comprehensive study conducted by Chen et al. (2023), the authors explore how reconstruction efforts can be better calibrated to align with community needs, an approach essential for enhancing public trust and improving water and sanitation service efficacy. They advocate for participatory service design, emphasising the importance of incorporating local voices into decision-making processes. This highlights that even in the aftermath of conflict, the legitimacy of governance institutions remains a crucial determinant of water and sanitation service delivery outcomes, underscoring the need for inclusive approaches to rebuilding trust and capacity.

Research has also illuminated the issue of inequality in water and sanitation service delivery during conflicts. (El-Khoury, 2023), examined how socio-economic disparities are amplified in times of political turmoil, resulting in unequal access to fundamental services such as water and sanitation. His findings reveal that marginalised populations often suffer disproportionately during conflicts, leading to calls for targeted interventions that ensure equitable water and sanitation service provision. This line of inquiry underscores the critical importance of tailoring service delivery strategies to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups, emphasising equity as a cornerstone of effective governance amidst crisis. Besides, the role of social cohesion in enhancing water and sanitation service delivery during political conflicts has gained recognition among scholars Patel (2023). Drawing on field research across various conflict-prone nations, posits that communities with strong levels of social capital are better equipped to engage in collective action for advocating improved water and sanitation service provision. His analysis suggests that fostering social ties within communities can facilitate more effective mobilisation for water and sanitation services, ultimately leading to better outcomes in unstable environments. This insight highlights the potential of leveraging community networks to bolster governance and ensure sustained water and sanitation service delivery, even in the face of ongoing challenges.

In summary, the literature reveals a manifold relationship between political conflict and water and sanitation service delivery, characterised by disruptions, governance adaptability, inequality, and the power of social cohesion. As scholars continue to explore this intersection, it becomes increasingly evident that a nuanced understanding of these dynamics is critical for informing policy and practice aimed at rebuilding resilient and equitable water and sanitation service delivery systems in affected contexts.

Role Conflict and Water and Sanitation Service Delivery

Role conflict is a significant phenomenon that arises when individuals encounter competing demands from different roles, leading to psychological tension and stress (Rizzo, 2023). This conflict is particularly consequential in water and sanitation service-oriented industries, where it can adversely affect water and sanitation service delivery, employee satisfaction, and overall organisational performance (Ashforth, 2023). Understanding the intricacies of role conflict is essential for organisations seeking to optimise both employee well-being and water and sanitation service quality. According to Karatepe (2018), role conflict is

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categorised into two distinct types: intra-role conflict and inter-role conflict. Intra-role conflict occurs when individuals face conflicting expectations within a single role. For instance, a customer water and sanitation service representative may find themselves torn between achieving sales targets and ensuring customer satisfaction (Zadeh, 2020). On the other hand, inter-role conflict arises when the expectations from different roles clash, such as the challenge of balancing work responsibilities with family obligations (Allen, 2019). The presence of these conflicts creates a complex work environment that undermines employee morale and productivity.

Consequently, research by Singhal (2021) emphasised the detrimental effects of role conflict on water and sanitation service delivery, revealing that it often leads to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and diminished water and sanitation service quality. Employees grappling with high levels of role conflict are more prone to delivering subpar water and sanitation service, ultimately resulting in customer dissatisfaction. In this light, organisations can take proactive steps to mitigate the adverse effects of role conflict by establishing clear role definitions and support systems. Furthermore, training programs focused on enhancing role clarity and conflict resolution skills have demonstrated a positive impact on employee performance and customer satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2021).

Moreover, the emotional dimensions of role conflict cannot be overlooked. A study by Crandall (2020) highlights how role conflict significantly impacts employee emotions, particularly in water and sanitation service provision. The research indicates that employees experiencing role conflict often experience increased emotional dissonance, which can detrimentally affect their interactions with customers. This underscores the relevance of the concept of emotional labour; conflicting role demands can exacerbate emotional stress, thereby impairing water and sanitation service effectiveness. Complementing this, Saks (2019) found that role conflict leads to decreased employee engagement, which is directly correlated with water and sanitation service quality. Engaged employees are more likely to exceed expectations in water and sanitation service delivery, whereas those burdened by role conflict may withdraw and contribute only minimal effort.

In addition to individual performance, the ramifications of role conflict extend to overall job performance. Research conducted by Saks (2019) revealed that role conflict can significantly hinder employees' abilities to perform their duties effectively, leading to a decline in water and sanitation service quality. When employees are uncertain about their responsibilities, it becomes increasingly difficult to deliver consistent and high-quality water and sanitation services. Furthermore, Bowen (2021) reported that high levels of role conflict contribute to increased turnover rates, as employees often seek out work environments where they feel supported and understood. This turnover disrupts water and sanitation service continuity and can have detrimental effects on customer satisfaction. The implications of role conflict also extend to team dynamics within water and sanitation service-oriented workplaces. Schuler (2020) found that role conflict generates friction within teams, negatively affecting collaboration and communication. When team members are unclear about their roles, it leads to coordination issues, thereby creating inefficiencies that further impair the water and sanitation service delivery process. In this context, Raja (2023) concluded that the employee-customer relationship is vital in water and sanitation service-oriented industries. Role conflicts can hinder employees from providing consistent and high-quality customer interactions, ultimately impacting customer loyalty and the organisation's reputation.

CONCLUSIONS

Role conflict is a multifaceted issue that can significantly affect various aspects of water and

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sanitation service-oriented workplaces. By addressing the complexities associated with both intra-role and inter-role conflicts, organisations can foster a more supportive environment that enhances employee satisfaction and ultimately improves water and sanitation service delivery. It can be stated that increased organisational awareness about the causes and consequences of conflict can enhance conflict mitigation strategies in local governance.

Recommendations

From this review, we draw three recommendations, namely:

- There is a need for continuous awareness enhancement about the causes and consequences of organisational-based conflict.
- There is also a need to strengthen the relationships between ministries, agencies, departments, and local governments.
- The central government should take it upon itself to pursue a diplomatic relationship with local governments in every undertaking.

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