Effects of Motivation on Employees' Turnover in Selected Cities of Eastern Uganda: A Study of Mbale and Jinja City Councils

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of employee motivation on turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils of Eastern Uganda. A cross-sectional research design was used, involving surveys and interviews. The study had a sample size of 310 respondents and both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using questionnaires and interview guide. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and thematic analyses. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22 was used to analyse quantitative data. The findings established employee motivation has a significant negative effects on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. This meant that higher levels of employee motivation help to decrease staff turnover. The study recommended that City Councils should implement motivational programs that recognize and reward employees' efforts and achievements. There is also need to creating a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, respect and inclusion is vital. Additionally, providing opportunities for meaningful work, where employees can see the effects of their contributions, can also boost motivation.

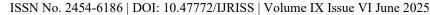**Keywords**: Motivation, employees' turnover, City Councils

INTRODUCTION

Globally, employee turnover has become a pressing concern for both private and public organizations, with motivation emerging as a critical determinant in employees' decisions to stay or leave. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023), high turnover rates have disrupted organizational continuity and inflated recruitment and training costs across major urban centers worldwide. Studies have shown that cities with competitive labor markets such as New York, London, and Tokyo suffer significant economic losses due to insufficient motivation strategies leading to high employee exits (Armstrong & Taylor, 2022). Factors such as lack of recognition, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate compensation packages are commonly cited as reasons for employee dissatisfaction and subsequent turnover.

In Africa, urban areas are particularly affected by poor motivational frameworks, which have contributed to increasing turnover rates, especially in the public sector. Cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Johannesburg have faced challenges in retaining skilled personnel due to limited financial incentives, poor working conditions, and lack of intrinsic motivators like employee involvement and appreciation (Ncube & Musingafi, 2022). This challenge is exacerbated by brain drain and stiff competition for talent in the corporate and non-governmental sectors, leaving urban local authorities unable to maintain a stable and motivated workforce.

In East Africa, including countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, high turnover in urban local governments and city councils has been attributed to inadequate employee motivation strategies. For instance, in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, turnover rates have exceeded 20% in some departments due to poor remuneration and lack of career development plans (Omondi & Wekesa, 2023). The inability of city councils to prioritize motivational needs has led to a decline in public service delivery and loss of institutional memory, thereby affecting urban development goals.

In Uganda, urban areas have experienced growing employee turnover, particularly in city councils and

municipalities. Despite government reforms aimed at enhancing human resource management, motivation remains low among public sector workers due to delayed promotions, uncompetitive salaries, and weak recognition systems. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023), turnover in urban public institutions reached approximately 18.5%, with higher rates in strategic departments such as health and engineering. These exits have resulted in service delivery inefficiencies and compromised accountability in urban governance.

In Mbale and Jinja districts two of Uganda's major cities employee turnover has been particularly pronounced in recent years. City Council records indicate that poor motivation has significantly contributed to staff attrition, especially among technical staff and middle managers. In Jinja City Council, a 2024 internal audit report revealed that over 30% of employees left within a two-year period due to dissatisfaction with pay, lack of recognition, and limited training opportunities. Similarly, in Mbale City Council, exit interviews conducted between 2022 and 2024 cited poor motivation as the primary reason for leaving with over 25% of employees reporting lack of appreciation and career stagnation as key demotivators (Mbale City Human Resource Report, 2024). These figures reflect a serious human resource crisis that not only affects employee morale but also hampers effective policy implementation and urban service delivery. The problem of staff turnover significantly threatens sustainable urban governance. Without addressing the motivation gap, city authorities in Uganda may continue to lose skilled personnel, undermining the efficiency and performance of public service institutions. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of motivation on employee turnover in cities, focusing on Mbale and Jinja districts, to provide data-driven solutions for urban workforce retention.

Statement of the problem

Ideally, urban local governments should maintain a motivated and stable workforce for efficient service delivery (Armstrong & Taylor, 2022). Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is crucial for employee retention and job satisfaction (ILO, 2023). However, in Mbale and Jinja City Councils, motivation practices are inadequate, resulting in persistent employees' dissatisfaction (Mbale & Jinja HR Reports, 2024). This has led to high turnover rates, with Jinja recording over 30% and Mbale 25% between 2022–2024 (UBOS, 2023). Key sectors like health, education, and planning are most affected, weakening service delivery (Omondi & Wekesa, 2023). Interventions such as salary adjustments and training have not addressed the underlying motivation gaps (Ncube & Musingafi, 2022). The absence of comprehensive motivation strategies persists. If not resolved, service delivery wiould continue to deteriorate, and urban development would stall. This study investigated the effects of employee motivation on turnover in the selected two city councils.

Objective of the study

To establish the effects of employee motivation on turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils of Eastern Uganda.
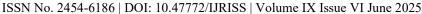
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Job Embeddedness Theory and Two-Factor Theory as explained below;

Job Embeddedness Theory

Job Embeddedness Theory, developed by Mitchell *et al*., (2001), provides an explanation of why employees remain in their jobs beyond traditional job satisfaction metrics. The theory introduces three key constructs links, fit, and sacrifice that collectively influence an employee's decision to stay or leave. Links represent the personal and professional connections an employee has within the workplace and community. Fit captures the alignment between an employee's values and the organization's culture and job role. Sacrifice refers to what an employee would potentially lose such as friendships, benefits, or status if they left the organization. The assumption here is that stronger embeddedness in these three dimensions makes employees more likely to stay, even if they are not entirely satisfied with their job.

The theory assumes that turnover decisions are influenced by both organizational and non-organizational factors, recognizing that embeddedness extends beyond the boundaries of the workplace. For example, even when job s

atisfaction is low, employees might still stay if they feel a deep connection to their colleagues, the community, or if the personal cost of leaving is too high. Proponents like Ng and Feldman (2010) argue that Job Embeddedness Theory offers a broader and more realistic understanding of retention, particularly by incorporating external, community and family dimensions. However, opponents such as Maertz and Griffeth (2004) critique the theory for overlooking career mobility and underestimating emotional dissatisfaction, noting that some employees may still resign to pursue personal growth or escape a toxic environment.

Furthermore, they point out the difficulty in quantifying embeddedness due to its subjective and multifaceted nature. In practice, Job Embeddedness Theory is valuable in explaining employee turnover, especially in local governments. Research by Jolly & Self (2020) shows how HR practices can influence embeddedness by promoting diversity, inclusiveness, and psychological safety. Local government institutions that cultivate strong interpersonal connections, ensure value alignment, and highlight the costs of leaving such as loss of community reputation or supportive work relationships tend to reduce turnover rates. For instance, embedding employees through mentorship programs, participatory decision-making, and meaningful roles aligns with the theory's premise and leads to greater retention. Thus, Job Embeddedness Theory offers a compelling framework for human resource managers in the public sector to design strategies that go beyond salary to improve employee stability.

Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959)

Two-Factor Theory, developed by Frederick Herzberg and colleagues in 1959, distinguishes between two categories of job-related factors: hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors include external aspects like salary, company policy, supervision, and working conditions. These elements do not inherently motivate employees but can lead to dissatisfaction if absent or poorly managed. On the other hand, motivators such as recognition, responsibility, personal growth, achievement and the nature of the work itself are intrinsic and foster higher job satisfaction and commitment when present. The theory assumes that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from different causes and must be addressed separately.
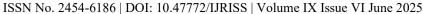
According to proponents like Stello (2011) and Wang & Yi (2021), the theory helps HR practitioners distinguish between what prevents dissatisfaction and what genuinely motivates employees. In contexts such as Mbale and Jinja City Councils, it is particularly useful in framing HR practices to reduce turnover. For instance, if a council offers career advancement opportunities and recognizes employee achievements (motivators), but fails to ensure a safe work environment or competitive compensation (hygiene factors), employees may still leave due to dissatisfaction. Critics of the theory, such as Ertürk (2020) and Yao *et al*., (2019), argue that its binary classification oversimplifies human motivation and fails to account for individual differences or external environmental factors.

Despite its limitations, Two-Factor Theory remains relevant in explaining employee turnover, particularly when applied to human resource management in local governments. The theory suggests that to retain employees, councils must go beyond mere compensation and ensure that employees feel motivated through meaningful and engaging work. For example, in city councils facing high turnover, HR managers can utilize this theory to audit workplace policies: addressing hygiene factors to prevent dissatisfaction and enhancing motivators to boost satisfaction.

However, the theory would be more robust if expanded to incorporate personality traits, cultural contexts, and employee expectations, as different individuals may perceive the same factor differently. Nonetheless, it offers a practical framework for designing HR interventions aimed at both reducing dissatisfaction and promoting motivation, thus minimizing turnover in public institutions.

Motivation and Employees' Turnover in City Councils

The effects of employee motivation on turnover is a well-researched area, with recent studies continuing to shed light on the complex dynamics between these two factors. Motivation, often conceptualized through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, plays a critical role in determining an employee's commitment to an organization. High levels of motivation typically correlate with lower turnover intentions, as motivated employees are more likely

to experience job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For instance, a study by Herzberg et al. (2017) revisited the classic two-factor theory of motivation, focusing on its application in modern organizational settings. Through a survey of 500 employees across various industries in Germany, the study found that e mployees who perceived high intrinsic motivation such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility reported significantly lower turnover intentions. This finding reinforces the importance of job enrichment and meaningful work as key elements in retaining employees.

Therefore, contrasting the above perspective, Choi and Lee (2018) conducted research in South Korea's banking sector and found that extrinsic motivators, particularly financial incentives, played a more dominant role in reducing turnover. Their study, which utilized a large-scale quantitative approach with 1,000 participants, showe d that competitive pay and bonuses were the primary factors influencing employee retention, especially among younger employees. This finding suggests that in certain sectors or demographic groups, extrinsic rewards may outweigh intrinsic factors in preventing turnover, highlighting the importance of a tailored approach to motivati on strategies.

Moreover, the research by Deci et al. (2019) adds another layer of complexity by exploring the role of self-determination theory (SDT) in understanding the motivation-turnover relationship. Conducted in the education sector in the United States, their study found that employees who experienced higher levels of autono my, competence, and relatedness at work were less likely to leave their jobs. This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews, and revealed that when these psychological needs were satisfied, employees were intrinsically motivated to stay, even in the face of external challenges. This aligns with SDT's assertion that fulfilling basic psychological needs is crucial for sustained motivation and low turnover. Furthermore, a study by Van der Kolk *et al.,* (2018) in the Netherlands' public sector suggested that the relations hip between motivation and turnover is also influenced by organizational justice. Their research found that perceptions of fairness in reward distribution, decision-making processes, and interpersonal treatment significantly impacted both motivation and turnover intentions. Employees who felt fairly treated were more motivated and less likely to leave, even if their extrinsic rewards were not the highest. This study, employing a cross-sectional survey of 800 public sector employees, underscores the importance of fairness and justice as mediators in the motivation-turnover equation.

Moodley (2018) examined the factors that influence employee motivation and their impact on employee turnover at the Engineering Supplies Company in Durban. Data was collected using quantitative research methods, with a questionnaire as the research instrument. The study revealed that employees were motivated by both financial and non-financial factors. However, the overall motivation levels among employees were found to be low to average, which contributed to disciplinary issues and high labor turnover. The study further indicated that when employees were demotivated, the organization's performance suffered.

Conversely, it was found that adequately motivated employees could lead to significant improvements in organizational performance. Nonetheless, the above study did not mention the factors such as relationship with managers, recognition and appreciation and participatory decision making which all enhances employee's moral e to performance work and reduce turnover which this study addressed.

Ochen and Onen (2022) examined the factors influencing employee motivation in Ugandan local government authorities. The findings revealed that employees in Ugandan local governments report being moderately motivated and enthusiastic about their work. The researchers identified several key contributors to this moderate level of motivation, including adequate compensation, opportunities for career growth, and effective leadership. However, they also noted that lack of recognition, heavy workloads and poor working conditions hindered motivation for some employees. While, Deressa and Zeru (2019) investigated how employee motivation affects corporate performance and examined the link between reward systems and corporate outcomes. Their findings demonstrated that ethical conduct within the company and the connection between incentives and corporate perf ormance positively influence corporate results. Additionally, Deressa and Zeru (2019) highlighted that effectively motivating employees significantly boosts organizational performance and helps to reduce employee turnover rates.

Additionally, Actor *et al.,* (2021) explored the connection between employee motivation and organizational

effectiveness, finding a positive correlation between the two. Their study revealed that higher employee motivation leads to lower turnover and greater organizational success. They emphasized that organizations should develop rules, policies, and structures that support employees in their work and recognize their achievements. Similarly, Manzoor *et al.,* (2021) investigated the impact of employee motivation on organizational performance. They found that a well-designed employee motivation system can boost morale, enhance productivity, improve product quality, and foster organizational cohesion. Their research analyzed various motivation theories and strategies aimed at encouraging employees to enhance their job performance. Nonetheless, several existing issues negatively affect the successful implementation of employees' motivation systems. It has been suggested that there are various strategies to improve employee performance within an organization, such as promoting diversity and effective leadership. Therefore, managers should focus on enhancing their professional skills, fostering a positive organizational culture, employing a range of motivational techniques, prioritizing employee training and career development, offering comprehensive benefits, establishing effective communication channels, creating a fair compensation system, and developing a robust performance evaluation system.

Birungi (2023) states that limited formal appreciation programs and inconsistent performance feedback reduced feelings of value and motivation. When employees are not acknowledged, there is increased turnover intentions. Respondents reported wanting more structured recognition of goals achieved and periodic appraisal discussions to identify areas for improvement. Employees who perceive low levels of recognition and infrequent feedback are more inclined to pursue new roles with stronger affirmation practices. Feeling valued through recognition and feedback can influence employee retention (Twinomujuni, 2019). Additionally, informal, non-standardized appreciation programs and sporadic performance evaluations reduced sentiments of importance and incentivization.

In a study conducted by Tumwebaze (2020) on the relationship between recognition, feedback, and employee turnover in Kiruhura District, it was found that both recognition and constructive feedback play significant roles in retaining employees. The research revealed that employees who frequently received recognition for their achievements and timely, constructive feedback were more likely to feel valued and committed to their organization, thereby reducing their intentions to leave. Conversely, the lack of recognition and inadequate feedback mechanisms contributed to increased turnover rates, as employees felt underappreciated and disconnected from their roles.

Additionally, Anguyo and Nakate (2021) investigated the relationship between job characteristics and employee motivation in Ugandan local governments. The survey of 248 local authority employees found that perceptions of task significance, or the degree to which one's work is seen as important and impactful, had a strong positive correlation with employee motivation and job satisfaction. The researcher attributed this to the nature of public service roles in local government, where employees often have a strong sense of duty to the community and see their work as contributing to the greater good. This intrinsic motivation stemming from the perception of meaningful, impactful work helps foster a sense of personal fulfillment and accomplishment among local government staff.

Tumuhairwe (2018) examined how recognition impacts employee turnover in local governments in Western Uganda using questionnaires and interviews administered to 300 employees. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between recognition and turnover intentions. Employees reported that feeling valued through both financial and non-financial rewards increased their morale and commitment to remain with their organizations. In addition, Tumusiime (2018) explored recognition practices and retention levels among 150 employees of Mbarara district local government. The results established that acknowledgment of good work through means such as appreciation letters had a strong positive effect on employee retention by enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study advised local governments to prioritize implementing formal recognition initiatives.

The studies by Tumuhairwe (2018) and Tumusiime (2018) both highlight the positive impact of recognition on employee retention, particularly in local governments in Western Uganda. However, these studies left unexplored several key areas, including the role of cultural and demographic factors in shaping how recognition is perceived and valued by employees. Additionally, they do not investigate the potential effects of recognition on different levels of employees, such as how recognition impacts frontline workers versus managerial staff.

Furthermore, there was a gap in understanding how recognition interacted with other factors, such as career development opportunities or work-life balance in influencing employee retention.

Similarly, Ego (2019) examined the degree of motivation, nurses' perceptions of job motivation, and the impact of these factors on staff turnover at public hospitals in Hawassa. The majority of nurses (64.1%) were found to view motivation as a motivator. Getting future encouragement, acknowledgment, and money were the three primary ways that the nurses described motivation. The effects of nurses' motivation were observed to include improved work performance, job satisfaction, positive team dynamics, patient satisfaction, and job attachment.
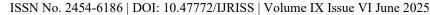
Moreso, Kyaligonza and Namyalo (2020) examined the factors influencing job satisfaction among local government employees in Uganda. Their survey of 301 staff members across several local authorities found that perceptions of task identity, or the degree to which one's work is seen as a complete and identifiable piece of work, was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. However, Kyaligonza and Namyalo also noted that certain organizational and management factors, such as inadequate resources, poor communication, and lack of recognit ion, can undermine this sense of personal accomplishment for some employees. Personal satisfaction and enjoyment in work tasks are crucial factors in enhancing employee retention.

A study by Tusabe and Bisikwa (2022) showed that when employees find their work tasks fulfilling and enjoyable, they are more likely to develop organizational commitment. This intrinsic motivation fosters a sense of purpose and accomplishment, which not only boosts morale but also reduces the likelihood of employees seeking opportunities elsewhere. As a result, organizations that promote a work environment where employees can find personal satisfaction in their tasks are more likely to retain their workforce. Tumuhairwe (2020) also highlights the significant role of personal satisfaction and enjoyment in work tasks in reducing turnover intentions. Her research found that employees who derive pleasure and fulfillment from their daily responsibilities are more inclined to stay with their organizations. She argues that when employees enjoy their work, they are more engaged, productive, and committed to the organization's goals. This engagement creates positive feedback loop where satisfied employees contribute to a supportive work culture, further enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

Moreover, Namusisi and Kakooza (2019) demonstrated how personal satisfaction in work tasks often leads to increased creativity, innovation, and overall job performance. When employees feel that their work is meaningful and aligned with their personal values and interests, they are more likely to invest effort and take initiative in their roles. This proactive approach not only benefits the organization by driving performance but also reinforces employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the company. Therefore, organizations that prioritize aligning work tasks with employees' strengths and passions are more likely to cultivate a stable and committed workforce. However, the above studies above did not investigate the potential influence of work-life balance and career dev elopment opportunities on job satisfaction and employee retention. These factors are crucial as they can signif icantly affect employees' overall well-being and long-term commitment to an organization. Future research should examine how work-life balance and access to career advancement opportunities interact with job satisfaction and retention in local government settings.

In a study done by Abanga (2022) examining the impact of motivation on employee retention within Ugandan local governments, including Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Mbarara and Gulu. The surveys assessed factors relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as turnover intentions and the results of the analysis showed that higher levels of motivational factors like empowerment, recognition, development opportunities and fair compensation were negatively correlated with thoughts of leaving one's job. Specifically, when employees felt more autonomously motivated by their work, they were less likely to want to quit. These findings align with previous research demonstrating the important role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational practices in reducing turnover in the public sector workplace. Overall, well-designed motivation programs appear integral to retaining important talent within Ugandan municipal administrations (Abanga, 2022).

Working conditions are a fundamental determinant of employee turnover, significantly influencing job satisfaction, morale, and overall well-being. Employees exposed to substandard working conditions, such as inadequate facilities, excessive workloads, or unsafe environments often experience diminished job satisfaction, which in turn heightens their intentions to leave the organization. In contrast, favorable working conditions that

enhance comfort, ensure safety, and support work-life balance are associated with increased job satisfaction and higher employee retention rates. Thus, the quality of working conditions is crucial in shaping employees' commitment to their roles and their likelihood of remaining with the organization (Schulte, 2021). Furthermore, Muwanga and Byaruhanga (2022) explored the impact of safety conditions on employee retention in industrial settings. Their findings revealed that employees who perceived their workplace as safe and secure were more committed to their jobs and less likely to consider leaving. On the other hand, poor safety practices, such as inadequate hazard controls or lack of emergency preparedness, increased turnover intentions as employees prioritized their health and safety over job stability. The study underscored the need for organizations to invest in robust safety protocols and regular risk assessments to foster a sense of security among employees.

Additionally, Amanya and Tumusiime (2023) examined the influence of work-life balance on employee turnover in service industries. They found that employees who enjoyed flexible working hours, remote work options, and support for personal commitments were more satisfied with their jobs and exhibited lower turnover intentions. This research highlights the growing importance of work-life balance in modern work environments, as employees increasingly seek roles that allow them to balance professional responsibilities with personal life. Organizations that fail to accommodate these needs risk higher turnover rates as employees leave for employers who offer more supportive working conditions. Personal accomplishments play an important role in motivating employees and influencing retention. When employees feel a sense of achievement in their work, it boosts their job satisfaction levels. A recent study by Twinomujuni and Birungi (2021) showed that personal accomplishments have a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions. The researchers found that employees who felt they had achieved meaningful results in their roles were less likely to want to leave their organization. This is because accomplishment contributes to heightened self-esteem and feeling of value.

METHODS

The research adopted a cross-sectional study design, which was instrumental in collecting data from a wide and varied group of participants at a single point in time. This design proved to be particularly advantageous for examining the extent to which specific traits, conditions, or behaviors were present within the target population at the time of the study (Levin, 2017). The study was grounded in both ontological and epistemological philosophical assumptions, guiding the nature of reality and the approach to knowledge generation throughout the research process. The total population under investigation consisted of 1,384 individuals. To determine an appropriate and manageable number of participants, the researcher employed Slovin's formula (1960), expres sed as $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, resulting in a calculated sample size of 310 respondents. In selecting participants, the study utilized both simple random sampling and purposive sampling methods. Simple random sampling ensured that each member of the population had an equal chance of being included, thereby minimizing bias, while purposive sampling allowed the researchers to intentionally select individuals with specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. Despite distributing 310 questionnaires, only 297 were duly completed and returned, providing the quantitative data used for the analysis phase of the study.

STUDY FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study achieved a high response rate with 297 out of the 310 distributed questionnaires being completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 95.8%. This high level of participation was significant because it ensured the reliability and representativeness of the collected data. The response rate notably surpassed the benchmark set by Holbrook *et al*., (2021), who emphasized that a response rate below 54% tends to yield results that are minimally accurate and less dependable for generalization. Therefore, the 95.8% response rate not only in dicated strong engagement from participants but also enhanced the validity and credibility of the study findings . It demonstrated the effectiveness of the data collection approach and reinforced the strength of the conclusions drawn. This high participation was crucial for maintaining statistical rigor and reducing the risk of non-response bias.

Background Information of the Participants

The demographic characteristics of respondents was presented in Table 4.1 below;

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	190	64.0
	Female	107	36.0
	Total	**297**	**100**
Age bracket	23-35 years	53	17.8
	36-45 years	162	54.5
	46-55 years	54	18.3
	Above 56 years	28	9.4
	Total	**297**	**100**
Education level	High school	10	3.4
	Diploma	55	18.5
	Bachelors	207	69.7
	Masters	25	8.4
	Total	**297**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2024)

The study findings from Table 4.1 on gender distribution of participants shows that a majority are male, with 190(64.0%) while 107(36.0%) were females. This indicates a significant gender disparity among the respondents, with nearly twice as many males than females.

The age distribution is spread across four categories with the largest group aged 36-45 years, comprising 162(54.5%) followed by the 46-55 years age group with 54(18.3%) of the respondents, 23-35 years age group with 53(17.8%) and those above 56 years with 28(9.4%). This indicated that the majority of participants are in the mid-career stage of 36-45 years.

Regarding education levels, the majority of participants hold a Bachelor's degree, with 207 respondents accounting for 69.7%. Those with a Diploma follow at 55(18.5%), Master's degree holders at 25(8.4%) and High school graduates at 10(3.4%). This suggests that the respondent pool is relatively well-educated, with a significant majority holding higher education degrees.

In terms of marital status, a large majority of the respondents are married, with 240 participants making up 80.8% of the total. Participants who were single constituted 57(19.2%) of the participants and there were no participants in the 'Separated' category. This indicates that most participants are married, reflecting a possibly stable personal life context among the majority.

Objective: Effects of Employee Motivation on Employees' Turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja

The researcher established the effect of employee motivation on employees' turnover of Jinja and Mbale City Councils, descriptive analysis was used to present the findings as follows;

Table 4.2 presents descriptive statistics for Employee Motivation in Jinja and Mbale City Councils and the following were the results;

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics for Employee Motivation in Jinja and Mbale City Councils

Employee motivation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel motivated and enthusiastic about my work	44(14.8%)	67(22.6%)	0(0.0%)	111(37.4%)	75(25.2%)	3.41	1.410
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	23(7.7%)	46(15.4%)	0(0.0%)	130(43.8%)	98(33.0%)	3.79	1.260
There are opportunities for professional growth and development in my job	16(5.4%)	40(13.5%)	17(5.7%)	137(46.1%)	87(29.3%)	3.90	1.058
I feel my work is meaningful and makes a difference	40(13.5%)	71(23.9%)	0(0.0%)	116(39.0%)	70(23.6%)	3.41	1.410
Employees feel more motivated because they find personal satisfaction and enjoyment in their work tasks.	37(12.5%)	83(27.9%)	38(12.8%)	93(31.3%)	46(15.5%)	3.03	1.280
Employees are acknowledgingd for achievements through awards and public recognition	16(5.4%)	40(13.5%)	17(5.7%)	137(46.1%)	87(29.3%)	3.90	1.058
There is supportive and collaborative work environment that fosters motivation and engagement	37(12.5%)	83(27.9%)	38(12.8%)	93(31.3%)	46(15.5%)	3.03	1.280

Source: Primary data (2024)

The study findings from Table 4.2 indicated that the statement that "I feel motivated and enthusiastic about my work" was strongly agreed by 75(25.2%) of the participants strongly agreed, 111(37.4%) agreed, 67(22.6%) disagreed and 44(14.8%) strongly disagreed with the mean of 3.41 and the standard deviation of 1.410. The mean score suggests that, on average, employees are somewhat motivated and enthusiastic, yet the standard deviation indicated considerable variability in responses. This disparity suggests that while many employees feel motivated, a significant number do not share this feeling, highlighting potential areas for improvement in workplace motivation strategies.

From the findings, it was revealed that 98(33.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment, 130(43.8%) of the participants agreed, 46(15.4%) disagreed and 23(7.7%) strongly disagreed (Mean=3.79, Std=1.260). This suggests that while many employees find meaning and satisfaction in their roles, a significant minority may not be deriving a feeling of accomplishment currently. This could impact motivation and engagement for those staff over time.

How is performance rated after motivation?

"The performance becomes very positive and improved." He said that employee motivation sometimes is internal and hence sometimes it is through some simple things that employees feel motivated and work becomes easy for example as for him, when the subordinates wanted uniforms for identification, he provided them and the resumed very happily and felt motivated thus strengthening these people in their work and lowering the rate of employee turnover in Jinja City" (Particpant JCC).

When a key informant from Mbale was asked the same question on how performance is rated after motivation, this is what he reported;

"The performance becomes very positive and improves significantly. He also noted that employee motivation can often stem from internal factors, and sometimes it's the small gestures that make a difference. For instance, when his subordinates requested uniforms for identification, he provided them. Consequently, the employees returned to work with renewed enthusiasm and motivation. This not only enhanced their productivity but also contributed to reducing employees' turnover in Mbale City" (Participant MCC).

A respondent was asked some of the motivational measure taken to limit employee turnover and this is what he reported;

"When asked about the measures, the key participant said there are several motivational measures crucial in fighting employees' turnover for example; timely pay, provision of Leaves like study leave, maternal leave, annual leave, etc, capacity building through invitation of experts to offer internal trainings to the employee" (Particpant JCC).

What are some of the motivational measure put in place to reduce on employees' turnover?

*He said some of these measures are first and foremost the location of the city which is much favorable to most employees in terms of accessibility to different things. Secondly is promotion, where Jinja City basically concentrates or first considers internal recruitment before they go external because they feel there are some of the staff who have acquired the necessary skills and are fit to be promoted to other levels. Thirdly, provision of a conducive environment through provision of Lunch for the employees, accommodation, and many other practices that ensure comfort for the employees at the work place. (*Particpant MCC).

The study findings indicate a strong perception among employees that there are opportunities for professional growth and development in their jobs, with a mean score of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 1.058, suggesting a high level of agreement. Specifically, 46.1% of the participants agreed and 29.3% strongly agreed with the statement, while only 5.4% disagreed and 13.5% were undecided. This positive outlook underscores a robust belief in the availability of career development opportunities within the organization. The relatively low standard deviation further indicates that this perception is widely shared among the workforce. These findings suggest that the organization is effectively supporting professional growth and development, which likely contributes to employee satisfaction and retention.

The responses to the statement "I feel my work is meaningful and makes a difference" provided a mean score of 3.41. This indicates that 116(39%) of the participants agreed and 70(23.6%) strongly agreed that their work meaningfully makes a difference, meaning that most staff feel their roles are purposeful. Additionally, 40(13.5%) respondents disagreed and 71(23.9%) disagreed that their work contributes value, suggesting over a third of employees may not completely see the relevance of their job functions.

This lack of perceived meaningfulness could negatively impact their motivation and job satisfaction over time. To address this, management may wish to examine how to make the contributions and impact of all roles more visible across departments, such as through clear communication of organizational goals and values, or initiatives that demonstrate to staff how their daily tasks aggregate to meaningful outcomes for service delivery. Ensuring employees understand the importance of their work could help bolster motivation levels company-wide.

From the findings, the mean score value to the statement on finding personal satisfaction and enjoyment in work

tasks was 3.03, indicating a neutral sentiment. However, upon closer examination, over 40% of the participants disagreed or were neutral that their work brings them pleasure and fulfillment. This suggests motivation levels may be lacking for almost half the workforce given the intrinsic drive that comes from enjoying one's duties. Moreover, only 31.3% agreed and 15.5% strongly agreed that their tasks were satisfying. To address this discrepancy, management should evaluate why certain roles fail to provide happiness and meaning to many staff.

A key informant was asked about how the human resource practices are understood to be the same in all City Councils and he said;

> *"Human resource practices vary in different organizations but those of Local Government do not differ because they are determined by one source and that is the Central Government through the Ministry of Public Service. Under the Ministry of Public service, the Public Service Commission is in charge of all recruitments and take on all the roles of hire and fire on behalf of Government".* (Particpant MCC).

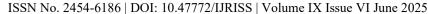**Descriptive statistics of employees' turnover in Mbale and jinja City Councils**

The researcher performed descriptive analysis of the employees' turnover in Mbale and jinja City Councils using frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation on a five point likert scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Undecided (UN), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and the following were the findings;

Table 4.3: Employees Turnover in Mbale and jinja City Councils

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel like leaving my work because am dissatisfied with it	111(37.4%)	75(25.2%)	0(0.0%)	44(14.8%)	67(22.6%)	2.60	1.62
There is increased absenteeism and employee's decision to leave	98(33.0%)	130(43.8%)	0(0.0%)	46(15.4%)	23(7.7%)	2.21	1.27
My desire to work for a long time is not fueled by the relevant authorities	87(29.3%)	137(46.1%)	17(5.7%)	40(13.5%)	16(5.4%)	2.20	1.16
Poor reviews are a red flag for potential turnover	40(13.5%)	71(23.9%)	0(0.0%)	116(39.0%)	70(23.6%)	3.36	1.41
As the workplace environment is favorable, I have a strong attachment to the district.	37(12.5%)	83(27.9%)	38(12.8%)	93(31.3%)	46(15.5%)	3.09	1.30
I do not often extend my workday to complete my tasks	16(5.4%)	40(13.5%)	17(5.7%)	137(46.1%)	87(29.3%)	3.81	1.14

Source: Field Data (2024)

The study findings on the statement "I feel like leaving my work because I am dissatisfied with it" has a mean score of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 1.62. The high percentage of responses indicating strong disagreement (37.4%) and disagreement (25.2%) shows that a significant portion of respondents do not feel dissatisfied enough

to consider leaving their jobs. However, there is still a notable minority who either agree (14.8%) or strongly agreed (22.6%) with the statement. The large standard deviation reflects considerable variability in responses, suggesting that while many are content, there is a diverse range of opinions regarding job satisfaction. This variability indicates that job dissatisfaction and its potential impact on turnover might not be uniformly experienced across the workforce.

Regarding the statement "There is increased absenteeism and employees' decision to leave," the mean score is 2.21 with a standard deviation of 1.27. The results show that the majority of respondents disagree (33.0%) or s trongly disagreed (43.8%) with the idea that absenteeism is rising and contributing to employees' decision to leave. The low mean score suggests a general perception that absenteeism is not a significant issue related to turnover.

The study findings on the statement "My desire to work for a long time is not fueled by the relevant authorities" has a mean score of 2.20 and a standard deviation of 1.16. This result suggests that a majority of respondents disagree (29.3%) or strongly disagree (46.1%) with the statement, implying that many feel supported or mo tivated by relevant authorities. The low mean score reflects a general lack of belief that authorities are failing to motivate long-term employment. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents have a fairly uniform view on the support from authorities, suggesting a general satisfaction with the motivation and support provided by relevant figures.

Regarding the statement "Poor reviews are a red flag for potential turnover," the mean score is 3.36 with a stand ard deviation of 1.41. This result shows a more moderate view, with a significant portion of respondents agreein g (39.0%) or strongly agreeing (23.6%) that poor reviews can signal potential turnover. This suggests that while not everyone sees poor reviews as a strong indicator of turnover, there is a notable belief among respondents that they could be indicative of future employee departures. The higher mean and standard deviation indicate more variability in responses, reflecting diverse opinions on the impact of reviews on turnover.

The statement "As the workplace environment is favorable, I have a strong attachment to the district" had a mean score of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 1.30. The mean indicated a moderate level of agreement with the statement, suggesting that many respondents feel a positive workplace environment contributes to their attachment to the district. The relatively high percentage of respondents agreeing (31.3%) and strongly agreeing (15.5%) supports this view. The standard deviation shows a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating that while many see a favorable workplace as a factor in their attachment, opinions on the strength of this relationship vary.

For the statement "I do not often extend my workday to complete my tasks," the mean score was 3.81 with a sta ndard deviation of 1.14. This high mean score indicated that a significant number of respondents agree (46.1%) or strongly agree (29.3%) that they do not frequently extend their workday. This suggests that many employees manage to complete their tasks within regular working hours, which could imply effective time management or a manageable workload. The low standard deviation reflects a relatively consistent view among respondents, showing general agreement on the typical workday structure.

Correlation results for Employee Motivation on Employees' Turnover

Table 4.4: Correlation between Employee Motivation on Employees' Turnover

		Employee motivation	Employees' turnover
Employee motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.199**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	297	297
Employees' turnover	Pearson Correlation	-.199**	1

Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
N	297	297	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship (r=-0.199, p=0.001) between employee motivation levels and employees' turnover. This indicates that as employee motivation increases, their likelihood to leave the organization decreases. The results suggest that low motivation among staff may be contributing to increased turnover. When employees feel more enthusiastic, accomplished and supported in their work, they are less prone to want to find a new job. This correlation highlights the importance for management to focus on strategies to boost motivation across all departments if they want to retain talented staff long-term. Initiatives to enhance growth, recognition, involvement and job satisfaction have the potential to both engaged workers more as well as reduce costly turnover resulting from preventable demotivation. Overall, the councils stand to benefit from prioritizing the drivers of employee motivation in order to curb voluntary departures within the workforce.

Regression analysis of Effects of Employee Motivation and Employees' Turnover

Table 4.5: Model summary on Effects of Employee Motivation on Employees' Turnover

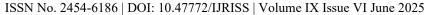| Model summary						
Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	-.199[a]	.039	.037	.583		
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.180	.283		11.234	.000
	Motivation	-.230	.070	-.199	-3.285	.001

The model summary model produced an R-square of .039. This meant that 3.9% changes of variations in employees' turnover is due to employee motivation while the remaining 96.1% are due to the other factors not pertinent to the specific objective of determining the effect of employees' motivation on turnover of Jinja City Council. The regression analysis results indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between employee motivation and the outcome variable. The unstandardized coefficient (B)=0.230, t=-3.285, p<0.001), suggesting that for each one-unit increase in employee motivation, the employees' turnover decreases by 0.230 units.

This indicates that higher levels of employees' motivation are associated with a decrease in the employee turnover, which implies that as employees become more motivated, employed turnover decreases. The study hypothesized that employee motivation has no significant positive effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. However, the findings revealed a significant negative effects of employee motivation on employees' turnover in Mbale and Jinja City Councils. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that employee motivation is great driver in reducing employees' turnover in selected city councils.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Employee motivation and Employees' Turnover in Jinja and Mbarara City Councils

The study found that, on average, employees felt somewhat motivated and enthusiastic about their work, with a mean score of 3.41 on the statement "I feel motivated and enthusiastic about my work. The findings concurred with Ochen and Onen (2022) that revealed that employees in Ugandan local governments report being moderately motivated and enthusiastic about their work. This aligns with the current study's finding of considerable

variability in responses regarding employees' motivation and enthusiasm, as reflected in the high standard deviation of 1.410. Ochen and Onen's work indicates that while many local government workers in Uganda feel moderately motivated on average, there are still sizable portions who struggle with low morale and engagement due to workplace challenges.
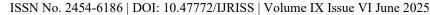
The finding with the mean score of 3.41 regarding employee motivation and enthusiasm aligns with Job Embeddedness Theory (JET) by highlighting the importance of organizational fit and links. A moderate level of motivation suggests that employees feel some connection to their work and the organization, which can enhance their embeddedness. This sense of enthusiasm may lead to a lower likelihood of turnover, as employees who feel motivated are more likely to perceive the benefits of staying outweigh the costs of leaving. JET posits that such positive feelings contribute to stronger ties within the workplace, ultimately fostering a more committed and engaged workforce. Therefore, enhancing motivation can be a strategic focus for improving employee retention in line with Job Embeddedness Theory.

The findings of the study regarding feelings of personal accomplishment, the mean score was 3.79, indicating that on average, employees feel their work gives them a sense of personal fulfillment. A study conducted by Kyaligonza and Namyalo in 2020 supports the finding that Ugandan local government employees generally feel a sense of personal accomplishment and fulfillment from their work, as indicated by the mean score of 3.79 in the current study. Kyaligonza and Namyalo (2020) found that perceptions of task identity, or the degree to which one's work is seen as a complete and identifiable piece of work, was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Specifically, they reported a mean score of 3.84 for the statement "I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction from the work I do."

The study found a strong perception among employees that there are ample opportunities for professional growth and development, with a mean score of 3.90. This suggests the organization is effectively supporting career development, which likely contributes to employee satisfaction and retention. The findings concurred with Bersin (2022) who stated that companies that invest in employee development see significant benefits including higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being. This is supported by other research finding a positive link between professional learning opportunities and employee loyalty (Sahibzada *et al.*, 2022). When employees feel their skills are continually growing, they are less likely to be attracted by other job prospects (Kumar & Jauhari, 2016).

Furthermore, regarding the meaningfulness of work, the mean score was 3.41, indicating that while most employees (around 62%) feel their work is meaningful and makes a difference, a sizable minority (around 37%) do not fully perceive the relevance of their roles. This lack of perceived meaningfulness could negatively impact motivation and job satisfaction, so management may wish to explore ways to make the contributions and impact of all roles more visible across the organization. The findings of this study indicated that as employee motivation increases, their likelihood to leave the organization decreases. The concurred with Actor et al., (2021) stated that more the employees are motivated to tasks accomplishment, the higher the reduced turnover and successes.

The study findings have significant implications beyond the two municipalities and can be applied to other city councils or local governments facing similar human resource challenges. Given that local governments across Uganda operate under a centralized framework guided by the Ministry of Public Service, the motivational strategies identified such as timely remuneration, career growth opportunities, recognition, internal promotions, conducive work environments, and capacity building can be feasibly replicated in other municipalities. The observed correlation and regression results, showing that increased motivation significantly reduces turnover, offer evidence-based justification for broader policy formulation. Municipalities with high turnover rates could adopt similar employee engagement measures to boost retention. Moreover, integrating low-cost yet high-impact interventions like providing work uniforms or facilitating internal training demonstrated success in both Jinja and Mbale, indicating their viability across varying resource settings. Policymakers at regional and national levels can use these findings to craft standardized motivational frameworks adaptable across diverse local contexts. Thus, the study not only offers a localized analysis but also presents scalable strategies that support equitable, inclusive, and sustainable public sector workforce development across Uganda and similar decentralized systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The study established the effects of employee motivation on turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. The researcher hypothesized that employee motivation has no significant positive effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. From the analysis of findings, it was clear that employee motivation has a significant negative effect on employees' turnover in City Councils of Mbale and Jinja. This meant that higher levels of employee motivation help to decrease staff turnover. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that employee motivation plays a crucial role in reducing turnover in the City Councils of Mbale and Jinja.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering that higher levels of employee motivation significantly reduce turnover, it is essential to focus on strategies that enhance motivation. City Councils should implement motivational programs that recognize and reward employees' efforts and achievements. Creating a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, respect and inclusion is vital. Providing opportunities for meaningful work, where employees can see the impact of their contributions, can also boost motivation. Additionally, involving employees in decision-making processes and giving them a sense of ownership over their work can enhance their commitment and loyalty to the organization. Regular feedback and open communication channels are crucial for addressing any issues that may demotivate employees, thereby reducing turnover.

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