



# Assessing the Impact of Self-Determination on Community Livelihood Quality in Uganda

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of self-determination on community livelihood quality in Uganda, focusing on key elements such as competence, relatedness, and motivation. Self-determination enables communities to take charge of their social, economic, and cultural development, yet many Ugandan communities face barriers such as limited resources and restrictive governance that hinder this autonomy. Community Livelihood Quality, defined by access to resources like education, healthcare, and financial stability, is essential for sustainable community resilience. Using a cross-sectional design and a mixed-methods approach, this study surveyed a sample of 338 respondents from Kabaale township, Buseruka sub-County, Hoima District, Uganda. Quantitative data analysis revealed a positive moderate correlation ( $r=0.680$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) between self-determination and community livelihood quality, suggesting that communities with higher levels of autonomy show improved livelihood indicators. Factor analysis identified motivation as the most influential component of self-determination, followed by competence and relatedness, emphasizing the role of individual skills, social ties, and external support in community development. The findings suggest that while self-determination has a significant effect on community livelihood quality, its influence is more impactful when complemented by other supportive factors. Empowering communities through skills training, fostering collaboration, and enhancing motivational support can improve community engagement and sustain long-term development outcomes. These insights are essential for policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders seeking strategies to build sustainable livelihoods through community-driven approaches in Uganda.

**Keywords:** Self-Determination, Community Livelihood Quality, Uganda

## 1. Introduction

Self-determination is the fundamental ability for individuals and communities to make informed choices and govern their lives autonomously. Rooted in the principles of psychological well-being, it is recognized as a crucial aspect of human rights, empowering communities to steer their own social, economic, and cultural development (Walker & Scrine, 2014; Tsey et al., 2016). In the context of community empowerment, self-determination encompasses autonomy in decision-making, freedom from external control, and the capability to set and achieve community-specific goals (Conde, 2018). Despite its importance, communities often face significant barriers to self-determination, including limited resources, restrictive governance structures, and challenges in accurately assessing local environmental and economic conditions, which can hinder effective decision-making (Tapsell & Woods, 2019).

Quality of community livelihoods represents the ability of communities to secure essential resources such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare, ensuring that their daily needs and broader well-being are met. A quality livelihood enables communities to engage in sustainable, meaningful activities that support resilience and adaptability, particularly in the face of economic, social, or environmental challenges (Krantz, 2001; DFID, 1999). However, many communities in Uganda struggle with inadequate means to achieve sustainable livelihoods, often due to insufficient knowledge of the indicators that measure livelihood quality, such as health standards, educational access, and economic stability (Acheampong, Sayer, & Macgregor, 2018). In addressing these challenges, it becomes essential for communities to strengthen their capacities in areas that improve quality of life, promote economic security, and reduce vulnerability (Loison, 2015).

This study aims to assess how self-determination influences community livelihood quality in Uganda, with a specific focus on competence, relatedness and motivations within communities. By examining the links between self-determination (measured through competence, relatedness and motivations) and livelihood quality indicators, such as education, health, water and sanitation, and financial assets, the research seeks to provide insights into strategies that enhance community self-sufficiency. Findings from this study will inform policymakers, development organizations, and community leaders on fostering self-determination as a pathway to sustainable livelihoods and improved socioeconomic conditions in Uganda.

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## 2. The Impact of Self-Determination on Community Livelihood Quality

Deci and Ryan's (2014) framework of self-determination emphasizes three fundamental components: competence, relatedness, and motivation, which are essential to contributing to the community's ability to achieve and maintain quality livelihoods.

Competence denotes the sets of skills, knowledge, and abilities available to individuals and communities that allow them to satisfy their basic requirements and improve the quality of their livelihoods (Rieckmann, 2018). The understanding of competence is hierarchical and can be defined at two levels: individual and the community. At individual level, competence depicts the extent to which personal skills, knowledge, and abilities are an integral part of the well-being of a community (Kultalahti et al. 2023; Maton, 2008). With adequate skills like literacy, financial management, and health awareness, individuals are in a better position to make decisions that can positively affect their livelihoods (Farooqi, et al., 2023; Addae, 2021; Chapman, Slaymaker & Young, 2003). This is because educated people tend to get good jobs, manage resources well, and venture into business activities that improve the economy of the society (Koe Hwee Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). Also, knowledge associated with health practices and the ability to attain education can promote healthier behaviors that reduce the incidence of diseases and enhance productivity (Prüss-Üstün et al., 2016; Hahn & Truman, 2015). Social competence is equally important; for instance, those with interdependence competencies can seek co-operation from others, share resources, and create networks to improve the existing communal support systems (Keller & Blakeslee, 2014; Tseng & Kuo, 2010). In a wider perspective, competence encompasses the collective capacities within communities or organizations that enable people to thrive. Collectively, when people show competence, they contribute to higher standards of living, better access to services, and improved overall livelihood quality in their communities, ultimately creating a more sustainable and prosperous environment for everyone (Franco, & Tracey, 2019; Warburton, 2018).

Relatedness is about the intrinsic human desire to feel connected, valued and be cared for by others which has an enormous impact on the way individuals engage within their communities. When relatedness is met, people feel a sense of belonging and trust within their community, leading to more cooperative behavior, mutual support, and enhanced social cohesion (Block, 2018; Dragolov et al., 2016). Such connection enhances individuals' motivation to engage in community functions, making them more likely to engage in sustainable practices, share resources, and contribute to community development (Block, 2018; Dragolov et al., 2016). It is in the case of such communities where individuals may engage in such activities as upholding the communal projects and caring of the community resources and pulling efforts in bettering the health as well education as well as economy of the community (Aiyer, 2015; Bublitz et al., 2019).

Motivation is a form of psychological mechanism that raises, commands, and keeps actions regarding a goal alive, from activities as simple as drinking water to complicated tasks like studying for knowledge (Ameeq & Hanif, 2019). Motivation has many attributes; including biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that initiate and channel behavior and they provide answers to why people undertake particular actions. It is the main trigger of human behavior and activity, for it goes beyond simply mobilizing action to the long-lasting aspects that implement and maintain action and movement with purpose, even though such motives are not openly expressed (Bokor, 2015). When individuals within a community are intrinsically motivated (doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction), they are more likely to engage in activities that contribute positively to community well-being, such as volunteering, participating in local decision-making, and supporting communal projects. Empirical studies have shown that intrinsic motivation promotes creativeness, persistence in problem-solving, and resilience as people derive joy and a sense of purpose out of their contributions (Qureshi et al., 2024; Aljumah, 2023; Morris et al., 2022; Dodds, Holmes & Novotny, 2022; Chaudhuri, 2020; Steele, McIntosh & Higgs, 2017). For example, a community member who feels personally committed to environmental conservation is more likely to engage in sustainable practices and encourage others to do the same, leading to long-term benefits for the entire community.

Even if the activity being performed is less intrinsically motivating (i.e., done for external reward or avoidance of punishment), extrinsic motivation can help, particularly when tied to incentives that are based on the goals of the community (Aljumah, 2023; Morris et al., 2022; Dodds, Holmes, & Novotny, 2022). For instance, a local government may provide incentives to communities that achieve certain health, education, or economic development milestones. Although extrinsic rewards can generate engagement early on, these incentives are hopefully designed to promote autonomy, competence and relatedness (Al Khalifa & Källström, 2019; Cooke, Fielding, & Louis, 2016). With a bit of motivation, the quality of community livelihood would go hand in hand and not only provide people a reason to be more committed to the people around them, but also make people better equipped to sustain positive changes over time. Communities where members feel motivated to contribute to collective goals generally see higher levels of social cohesion, economic resilience, and well-being (Chatterjee, Gassier & Myint, 2023; Ludin, Rohaizat & Arbon, 2019; Delhey & Dragolov, 2016). Moreover, those with motivation are more likely to uplift others in the community that leads to a chain reaction of people spreading motivation and skills in the communities (Grant & Shandell, 2022; Hull, Robertson & Mortimer, 2020). In summation, motivation enables individuals within the community to be proactive, share knowledge, and collaborate on common goals, which aids in quality of life and results in a resilient community structure that is able to adapt (Coy et al., 2021)

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## 3. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design and was descriptive in nature. The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches of research methods. Quantitative approach of research helped to investigate the relationship between the variables. The qualitative approach was used in this research so that relevant and accurate information could be obtained for purposes of attaining more supplementary data to complement the quantitative data. The study population constituted people living in Kabaale township, Buseruka sub-county. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2017), Kabaale township has a total population of 2802 people, who constitute community members (local population) and officials in leadership

positions in the political, social, economic and religious spheres. The study targeted local people from the township as its primary respondents and key informants constituted the political leaders, civil servants, religious leaders and other relevant officials in the area.

The sample population was attained based on Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample determination table; a total sample size of 338 respondents was selected to participate in the study, who included 325 primary respondents who constituted the local people and 13 key informants who constituted officials (political leaders, civil servants, religious leaders and other relevant officials) in the area. The 325 primary respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The study used the lottery method where numbers were allocated to the local people (in Kabaale township) using the available registers. The study selected all respondents with even numbers until the sample population was reached. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants for the study. Interviews were conducted with the local people and officials using a structured questionnaire and interview guide respectively. Relevant documents to the study were also reviewed. Quantitative data was analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences, to generate correlations to determine the relationship among the variables and regressions to determine the effect of self-determination on community livelihood quality. Self – determination was based on the model of Walker and Scrine (2014) which was measured using a 5 Likert scale ranging from strongly Agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis. Verbatim from the respondents were used to supplement the statistical analysis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The Relationship between Study Variables

Using Spearman's correlation Coefficient, the study sought to establish the relationship between the study variables. Table 4.1 below presents the Spearman's correlation matrix for the study variables.

**Table 4.1: Spearman's correlation matrix for the study variables**

| Study Variables  | Self Determination | Quality Community Livelihood |
|--|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Self Determination   | 1.000              | .680**                       |
| Community Livelihood Quality                                 | .680**             | 1.000                        |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                    |                              |

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Diagram 1:



The results in table 4.1 and diagram 1 above showed a significant positive moderate relationship between Self-Determination and Community Livelihood Quality ( $r=0.680$ ,  $P\text{-value}<0.01$ ). This implies that Self-Determination in terms of competence, relatedness and motivation leads to Community Livelihood Quality. The qualitative results showed similar results as shown below.

One Official from a Community Based Organization said that:

*"In my own understanding, self-determination refers to each person's ability to make choices and manage their own life. This ability plays an important role in well-being. Self-determination allows people to feel that they have control over their choices and lives. Therefore, it is important to understand that self-determination usually contributes to positive results in areas like employment, education, community living, and an improved quality of life".*

Another official from a Community Based Organization also said that:

*"We normally have community markets on specific days, for example, for animals, for agricultural produce, and for other products. What used to happen normally is that after the aftermath of these markets, the places were left very filthy. The authorities at the sub-county used to take long*

to respond to the garbage, in terms of its collection. In our community meetings, we decided that as a community, we come with our own brooms and other cleaning gadgets to clean the market places and ensure proper sanitation and hygiene. This decision was made without asking anyone’s opinion. We stayed focused on our goal and we have moved closer to the success we want of ensuring proper community sanitation and hygiene. This is the best example of self-determination I can share with you”.

**4.2 The Regression Analysis of Self-Determination and Community Livelihood Quality**

The regression analysis was used to examine the level to which Self-Determination determines Community Livelihood Quality. The results in table 4.2 were used to examine the degree to which Self-Determination can predict the dependent variable, Community Livelihood Quality.

**Table 4.2: The Regression Model for Self-Determination and Community Livelihood Quality**

| Model   | Unstandardized Coefficients (B) | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | T     | Sig. |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------|------|
| (Constant)  | 5.018                           | 1.991      |                                  | 2.521 | .012 |
| Self-Determination                                      | .132                            | .092       | .075                             | 1.437 | .152 |
| <b>Dependent Variable: Quality Community Livelihood</b> |                                 |            |                                  |       |      |
| R   | .862                            |            |                                  |       |      |
| R Square  | .744                            |            |                                  |       |      |
| Adjusted R Square                                       | .741                            |            |                                  |       |      |
| Std. Error of the Estimate                              | 5.93205                         |            |                                  |       |      |
| F Statistic   | 310.194                         |            |                                  |       |      |
| Sig.  | <.001                           |            |                                  |       |      |

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Diagram 2:



The results in table 4.2 and diagram 2 above showed a linear relationship between Self-Determination and Community Livelihood Quality ( $r=.862$ ). Self-Determination is a predictor of Community Livelihood Quality ( $Beta =.075$ ,  $Sig.= .152$ ) and it can explain 74.1% of the observed variance in Community Livelihood Quality. The regression model was significant as observed from the level of significance ( $Sig. <.001$ ). This implied that increase in Self-Determination led to increase in Community Livelihood Quality.

**4.3 The Factor Analysis of Self-Determination**

The findings from Table 4.3 below present the factor analysis results of Self-Determination variables, identifying three key components—Competence, Relatedness, and Motivation—that contribute significantly to understanding the impact of Self-Determination on community livelihood quality in Uganda. Each component reflects distinct aspects of Self-Determination and the percentage of variance each explains within the overall construct.

**Table 4.3: Factor Analysis of Self-Determination**

| Variables | Competence | Relatedness | Motivation |
|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|
|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|

|   |        |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| I have capacity in executing my community duties.                                 | .820   |        |        |
| I have the abilities in contributing towards livelihood.                          | .735   |        |        |
| I have financial competence in conducting day to day duties.                      | .520   |        |        |
| I have cooperation with the people in the community                               |        | .431   |        |
| I am part of the mutual problem solving amongst the people in this community      |        | .767   |        |
| I am part of sharing of ideas of development amongst the people in the community  |        | .696   |        |
| I am motivated by the government development activities                           |        |        | .963   |
| I am supported by the people in development through community-based organizations |        |        | .838   |
| I support other people in solving their community challenges.                     |        |        | .874   |
| <b>Eigen Value</b>  | 2.075  | 1.894  | 2.674  |
| <b>Variance %</b>   | 69.161 | 63.137 | 89.150 |
| <b>Cumulative %</b>   | 69.161 | 63.137 | 89.150 |

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The findings in Table 4.3 above revealed that Competence emerged as a crucial component, explaining 69.161% of the variance in Self-Determination. This component highlights the extent to which individuals feel capable and equipped to perform their roles within the community. Items that loaded highly on this factor include the ability to execute community duties (.820), a strong capacity to contribute toward community livelihood (.735), and financial competence to manage daily responsibilities (.520). The high factor loadings indicate a strong relationship between these items and the component, suggesting that competence—especially in skill and financial ability—is essential for individuals to effectively contribute to and engage in improving community livelihood.

Relatedness accounted for 63.137% of the variance in Self-Determination, capturing the social dimension of Self-Determination within the community. Key indicators of this component include cooperation with community members (.431), participation in mutual problem-solving (.767), and involvement in the exchange of developmental ideas (.696). The factor loadings suggest that a sense of belonging and active involvement in collaborative efforts are vital for fostering a community-oriented approach to development. This component underscores the importance of social connections and shared purpose in strengthening community ties and enhancing overall community well-being.

Motivation was the most dominant component, explaining 89.150% of the variance in Self-Determination. This suggests that motivation plays a central role in driving individual engagement and collective action within the community. The items that loaded highly on this factor include motivation by government development activities (.963), support received from community-based organizations (.838), and supporting others in addressing community challenges (.874). The strong loadings reflect the critical influence of external motivation, such as government initiatives and community-based support, in encouraging individuals to actively participate in community development. This component indicates that motivational factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are foundational to fostering sustained commitment to improving community livelihood.

The factor analysis indicates that these three components—Competence, Relatedness, and Motivation—together provide a comprehensive view of Self-Determination, each contributing a substantial portion of variance to the overall construct. Competence (69.161%), Relatedness (63.137%), and Motivation (89.150%) collectively reflect the multifaceted nature of Self-Determination in the Ugandan community context. These components are critical as they emphasize not only the skills and social bonds required but also the motivational support necessary for enhancing the quality of community livelihood.

## 5. Discussion

There was a significant positive moderate relationship between Self-Determination and Community Livelihood Quality ( $r=0.680$ ,  $P\text{-value}<0.01$ ). Self-Determination encompasses components like Competence, Relatedness, and Motivation, which collectively foster an individual's sense of autonomy, connection, and purpose within their community. When people have the competence to execute community duties, they can effectively participate in the enhancement of their own development. This means that, when provided with opportunities to work, the people will easily absorb or take on those opportunities and these opportunities will generate income for them and therefore improve their livelihood. When communities are consulted or involved, they will take part in activities or projects geared towards their own development, they will also own these activities or projects and hence sustenance of these activities or projects will be guaranteed which will lead to Community Livelihood Quality. The motivation of communities to participate in their own development is built partly from having a sense of ownership and control of the available activities or projects or programs (Lachapelle, 2008). Cooperation among community members can expedite mobilization of resources, promotion of self-employment and livelihood diversification, and in linking the local community with other development actors (Aduagna, 2013).

The findings revealed that Self-Determination, as one of the key predictors of community livelihood quality, contributed to the community livelihood quality. With a standardized coefficient (Beta) of .075 and a non-significant p-value (Sig. = .152), Self-Determination has an effect on Community Livelihood Quality but it is more modest. This suggests that while Self-Determination is relevant, its influence may be indirect or dependent on other mediating factors in enhancing community livelihood quality. However, Self-Determination remains a vital component of community engagement, as it fosters motivation and commitment, which are essential for sustaining long-term development.

Although the direct impact of Self-Determination on livelihood quality was not statistically significant, these components like Competence, Relatedness, and Motivation are still important for sustaining engagement and long-term improvement in community initiatives. For instance, individuals with a higher sense of competence and motivation are more likely to actively participate in community projects, which could, in turn, enhance the overall quality of life within the community. The findings imply that, while Self-Determination alone may not drive significant changes in community livelihood quality, fostering a supportive environment that strengthens individuals' self-determination could still be beneficial. This can be achieved through initiatives that build skills, encourage collaboration, and provide motivational support, which might indirectly enhance community livelihood outcomes by increasing individual and collective commitment to community goals.

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## 6. Conclusion

Self-Determination plays a fundamental yet nuanced role in enhancing community livelihood quality, serving as a cornerstone for community engagement and personal investment in collective well-being. However, its effectiveness is often amplified when combined with broader community-driven strategies.

Quality Community Livelihoods are best achieved through robust, community-level action. When community members gain genuine trust—usually cultivated through participatory decision-making and clear accountability—they serve as crucial connectors, filtering and adapting externally supplied knowledge and resources while promoting indigenous expertise across areas such as education, health, water and sanitation, economic assets, savings, and social safety nets. By focusing on Self-Determination, communities' foster self-identity and shared responsibility, paving the way for greater ownership over their development, even when navigating external advice.

The success of a self-determined approach requires a unified community vision, clear priorities, and a strategic selection of programs to advance sustainable livelihoods. Yet, challenges remain, including unequal access to critical resources such as land and water, as well as limited infrastructure in schools, healthcare facilities, markets, and other essential services. Addressing these challenges is vital to fully realize the potential of Self-Determination in improving the quality of community livelihoods.

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## 7. Recommendations

There was a significant positive moderate relationship between Self-Determination and Quality Community Livelihood ( $r=0.680$ ,  $P\text{-value}<0.01$ ). Community competence, relatedness and motivation leads to Quality Community Livelihood. When people have the competence to execute community duties, they can effectively participate in the enhancement of their own development. This means that, when provided with opportunities to work, the people will easily absorb or take on those opportunities and these opportunities will generate income for them and therefore improve their livelihood. The study recommends the following;

- i. Appreciation and celebration of past successes. This strengthens people's confidence in their own capacities and inspires them to take action
- ii. Human investment: People are the most important local resource. Investment in skills training, knowledge acquisition and building consciousness of community is of long-lasting benefit to the community.
- iii. Continuous skills training: Continuous skills training is a necessary aspect of building up human resources.

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