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THE EFFECT OF INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICTS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN MUBENDE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, MUBENDE DISTRICT, UGANDA

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Abstract

Background: Intrapersonal conflict-the psychological turmoil that results from the clash between conflicting values, conflicting roles, or conflicting emotions-has become recognized all over the world as a major determinant of employee performance. While studies in the developed world highlighted stresses and productive effects and thus can influence the level of job satisfaction, very little research has been done in the African public sector on this topic with particular regard to Uganda. The gap that this study attempts to close investigates the intrapersonal conflict as an influencer of employee performance at the Mubende Municipal Council, which obtains more bureaucratic structures and resource constraints, thus enhancing workplace tension.

Objective: The study aimed to (1) examine the relationship between intrapersonal conflict and employee performance, and (2) identify the strategies employed by such workers in dealing with that conflict.

Method: Quantitative surveys with 124 employees and qualitative interviews with key informants constituted the data collection instruments in a descriptive correlational design. The data were analyzed using regression analysis (SPSS version 26) and thematic coding. Cognitive Dissonance Theory was used to guide the study in the examination of how such internal conflicts impact performance outcomes.

Results: Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ($R=0.306$, $p<.001$), with intrapersonal conflict being responsible for 64.2% of the variation in performance. Moderate levels of conflict increased productivity and are thus likely to have confrontational motivational effects; extreme levels of conflict, such as chronic self-doubt, decreased output. Employees relied on informal networks of support and problem-solving but lacked structural organizational interventions.

Conclusion: The intrapersonal conflict has nuances in its effects as the factor influencing employee performance; some conflicts are good for self-reflection while others destroy productivity. The study recommends resilience training, mentorship programs, and policy reform toward psychological health constituencies in Uganda's public sector. This study therefore provides a basis toward localized efforts for improving employee performance in similar institutional contexts.

Keywords: Cognitive dissonance, Employee performance, Intrapersonal conflict, Public sector, Workplace psychology

Introduction

Globally, in today's dynamic and demanding work environments, employee performance remains a crucial determinant of organizational success. However, psychological and emotional factors such as intrapersonal conflict are increasingly recognized as significant influences on workplace outcomes (Rahim, 2011). This type of conflict can lead to stress, anxiety, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired decision-making all of which adversely impact employee performance. In the United States, recent research by Nguyen and Taylor (2021) highlighted how emotional dissonance and internal value

misalignment among public sector employees contributed to increased burnout, reduced productivity, and lower job satisfaction. Similarly, a Canadian study by Matthews and Grawitch (2022) reported that role ambiguity and self-regulatory strain were closely linked to decreased employee engagement and mental health challenges. In Europe, many organizations are prioritizing internal wellness strategies to address psychological distress. For instance, Evans and Bailey (2021) found that over 35% of UK public sector workers took leave due to stress-related intrapersonal conflicts, prompting a rise in employee assistance programs. In Germany, psychological resilience training has been introduced in several public organizations to combat internal identity struggles and enhance emotional intelligence (Koch & Neumann, 2020). In Asia, particularly in Japan and South Korea, studies reveal that internal conflicts arising from cultural pressures to conform continue to affect performance. Tanaka, Mori, and Ishikawa (2021) found that Japanese civil servants experiencing internal conflict between personal beliefs and institutional norms exhibited lower motivation and higher turnover intention. Similarly, in South Korea, Park and Kim (2023) identified intrapersonal conflict as a predictor of emotional fatigue among government employees working under high hierarchical stress environments.

From the African perspective, intrapersonal conflict has become a concern that is increasingly recognized in organizational effectiveness research. In South Africa, Mokoena and Dlamini (1921) reported that unresolved workplace conflict, including dissonance between values and confusion over roles, was one of the major contributing factors to emotional exhaustion and low task performance among municipal workers. Similarly, Okonkwo and Uchenna (1922) studied the psychological impact of workplace conflict among municipal officials and found that those with high levels of internal tension had lowered performance, low morale, and reduced intention to stay at the job. Their findings highlighted the importance of psychological conflict prevention and treatment for turnover intentions and organizational resignation rates. In Kenya, Njuguna and Karanja (2023) found that workers in the county government had higher intention to leave and lower commitment to the organization. They also observed that employees who were engaged in cognitive dissonance problems experienced delays in decision making and decreased satisfaction with their work; with fewer people agreeing with the decisions they made. Although these insights provide new knowledge, intrapersonal conflict still remains an understudied and poorly explored issue in many African organizations. In general, existing workplace literature and human resources strategies address external organizational challenges such as funding constraints, lack of leadership and infrastructure deficiencies. That an even more pressing need for more attention toward psychological and emotional factors within employees appears to have a substantial impact on research and human resource strategies—particularly within the government sector. This, however, calls for localized studies to explore the effects of intrapersonal conflict on employee behavior.

In Uganda, the performance of public sector workers remains a growing concern, especially within local government structures tasked with critical service delivery in health, education, infrastructure, and community development. According to the Ministry of Public Service (2022), despite increased decentralization efforts, many municipal councils continue to experience performance deficits, characterized by service delays, low productivity, and inadequate staff motivation. The Office of the Auditor General (2023) further reported persistent inefficiencies across several local governments, attributing part of the problem to human resource challenges and declining employee engagement. While considerable attention has been paid to external factors such as funding limitations, political interference, and logistical barriers, internal psychological dimensions particularly intrapersonal conflict remain significantly under-researched. Recent work by Kaggwa and Atwongyeire (2021) suggests that many local government employees struggle with internal tensions, including conflicting job

expectations, misaligned personal and institutional values, and limited psychological support systems. These internal struggles often manifest as stress, indecisiveness, and reduced work output. Mubende Municipal Council, located in Mubende District in Central Uganda, represents a relevant case for examining this issue. The council plays a vital role in implementing government programs and ensuring effective local governance. However, recent assessments by the Local Government Inspectorate (2023) and feedback from district administrators highlight recurring challenges in service delivery, which may be partly rooted in unresolved employee-level issues. Some employees report feeling overwhelmed, underappreciated, or uncertain about their responsibilities experiences that align closely with symptoms of intrapersonal conflict. Hence this study to examine how internal psychological struggles impact public sector effectiveness in Uganda.

Objectives of the study

Purpose of the study

This study aim is to examine the impact of intrapersonal conflict on the performance of employees at Mubende Municipality Council, Uganda.

Objectives of the study

- i. To examine the relationship between intrapersonal conflict and employee performance.
- ii. To determine the strategies employees use to cope with intrapersonal conflicts.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the theory of Cognitive-Dissonance by Festinger Leon, 1957. The theory portrays that some individual persons do experience and face psychological discomfort referred to as dissonance when they simultaneously hold two or more conflicting cognitions, such as beliefs, values, or attitudes (Festinger, 1957).

According to the theory, this discomfort creates individual urge to minimize inconsistency through changing some existing beliefs, getting more new information and reducing on the need for conflict. This theory also do assumes that individuals are at times motivated inherently to keep up their cognitive consistency and any dissonance triggers internal stress, prompting efforts to restore psychological equilibrium (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2021). A core assumption is that dissonance is most intense when it involves self-concept or important values, making its implications particularly relevant in professional settings where personal identity and work expectations intersect.

However, one limitation of the theory is its limited explanation of individual differences people may tolerate or manage dissonance differently depending on personality, coping strategies, or cultural background (Gawronski & Strack, 2020). Despite this, Cognitive Dissonance Theory remains highly relevant to this study, as it offers a theoretical lens through which to understand how intrapersonal conflicts emerge in the workplace. Employees may experience internal conflict when their personal values are misaligned with institutional expectations, when they are required to perform tasks that contradict their ethical beliefs, or when they feel unqualified or unsupported in their roles. These internal inconsistencies can result in emotional stress, dissatisfaction, and reduced job performance key areas this research seeks to explore within the context of Mubende Municipal Council in Uganda. By applying Festinger's theory, the study can better analyze the psychological mechanisms behind

employee underperformance related to internal conflicts, thus offering insights into targeted interventions for organizational improvement.

Relationship between Intrapersonal Conflict and Employee Performance

Recent literature increasingly recognizes the impact of psychological and emotional factors especially intrapersonal conflict on employee performance. Intrapersonal conflict, characterized by inner turmoil arising from contradictory goals, values, or emotions, has been found to impair cognitive functions essential for workplace productivity. For instance, Spector and Fox (2021) argue that internal emotional conflict diminishes employees' capacity for focus, decision-making, and emotional regulation, all of which are critical for executing tasks effectively. Similarly, Osei-Bonsu and Oppong (2022) observed that public sector employees in Ghana who experienced internal stressors, such as value misalignment or ethical dilemmas, reported lower job satisfaction and reduced work output. In South Africa, Mokoena and Dlamini (2021) found that employees with unresolved intrapersonal issues were more likely to exhibit signs of emotional fatigue, absenteeism, and performance decline.

In the East African context, Mugisha and Atwine (2020) identified that role ambiguity a common cause of intrapersonal conflict was significantly associated with decreased efficiency among district health workers in Uganda. Further, Kiggundu (2021) emphasized that psychological stress, if left unmanaged, can have cumulative negative effects on performance, particularly in the public sector where bureaucratic structures may limit open dialogue and support. These findings reinforce that beyond structural and logistical challenges, internal psychological tensions can have a direct bearing on employee productivity, innovation, and overall workplace behavior. As organizations seek to improve performance outcomes, especially in the public sector, there is a growing need to address these internal dynamics as part of human resource strategies.

Coping Mechanisms for Intrapersonal Conflict

Employees use a range of coping strategies to manage intrapersonal conflict, with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on the context, personality, and organizational culture. The transactional model of stress and coping mechanisms by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) is still by far a foundational framework, showing that individuals either involve themselves in coping mechanisms focused on real problems where they attempt to change the source of conflict or emotion-focused coping, where they aim to manage the emotional response. Recent studies build on this by identifying specific workplace coping mechanisms.

According to Adisa, Aiyenitaju, and Adekoya (2021), common strategies include avoidance, where employees deliberately ignore the source of conflict in hopes it resolves itself; problem-solving, where individuals actively seek solutions or clarification to resolve cognitive dissonance; and seeking social support, which involves consulting peers, supervisors, or counselors for guidance. In Ugandan public service contexts, Turyahikayo and Kaggwa (2022) noted that employees often turn to informal networks, such as religious or community groups, to gain emotional support in dealing with workplace stress. A less adaptive but common method is resignation, where individuals accept the dissonance without attempting to resolve it, potentially leading to disengagement or mental withdrawal (Nabukenya & Kamugisha, 2023).

Research Gaps

Despite the growing international recognition of intrapersonal conflict as a determinant of workplace performance, empirical studies in the Ugandan context remain limited, especially within local

government institutions. Most research in Uganda and the broader East African region has traditionally focused on interpersonal conflict, organizational politics, or resource-based challenges, leaving the internal psychological experiences of employees underexplored (Kaggwa & Atwongyeire, 2021; Nabukeera, 2022). Additionally, where intrapersonal factors are mentioned, they are often treated as secondary variables rather than primary influences on performance outcomes. There is also a lack of disaggregated data focusing on different types of intrapersonal conflict such as role ambiguity, ethical dissonance, and emotional fatigue and how these specifically affect performance indicators like productivity, attendance, and work quality. Moreover, the coping mechanisms employed by employees in rural or semi-urban Ugandan municipalities are rarely documented, yet these are critical for informing practical interventions. Thus, this study addresses these gaps that exists between intrapersonal conflicts and the performance of employees at Mubende Municipality council.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive part of the research method enabled the investigator to collect detailed data on the intrapersonal sources, scenarios, and ways of coping with employees' conflicts. The correlational part allowed the revelation of the link between intrapersonal conflict and employee performance. This also was as per the research of (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

Study Population

All employees of Mubende Municipal Council in different departments formed the group that was targeted. This - included, but was not - only people - in charge that is the departmental heads, supervisors, accountants, human resource officers, and frontline services the providers those. According to the Human Resource Office of the Municipal Council (2024), the total number of employees is approximately 180.

Sample Size

The study sample-size was determined using the sample **formula** of Yamane (1967):

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

Where:

- n = sample-size
- N = total population (180)
- e = level of precision (0.05)

$$n = 180 / 1 + 180(0.05)^2$$

$$= 180 / 1.45 = 124$$

Therefore, the sample size was **124 respondents**.

Sampling Technique

The study used a stratified random-sampling technique with an aim of getting the representation across all departments. Firstly, we had the population divided into groups based on departments (e.g., administration, finance, education), and then within each stratum simple random sampling was applied. This method made it possible to include employees at different functional levels. Moreover, the key

informants like departmental heads and HR personnel were purposefully sampled for qualitative interviews.

Data Collection Instruments

- **Questionnaire:** The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information, questions on intrapersonal conflict (using a Likert scale), and performance indicators.
- **Interview Guide:** The guide consisted of open-ended questions around topics such as internal conflicts, stress factors, personal values against the institution's expectations, and coping mechanisms.

Validity:

Content validity of the research instruments was guaranteed through experts' reviews. The questions were validated by managers and the authors' peers in the field of organizational psychology and public administration. Their response assisted in the tweaking of the questions to achieve the goal of adequately measuring the intended constructs.

Reliability: The scale of the internal-consistence of the questionnaire-instruments was confirmed by use of the Cronbach's Alpha. A sample survey having 15 employees from some local government in a neighboring municipality (not part of the study) was carried out. While, the Cronbach-Alpha value of 0.81 shows a high reliability level (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Collection Procedures

- **Approval and Access:** A formal letter of introduction was obtained from the university, and permission to conduct the study was secured from Mubende Municipal Council's administrative office.
- **Pilot Study:** A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 15 employees from a neighboring municipality to refine the instrument and ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.
- **Recruitment of Respondents:** Participants were approached in their respective departments. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and **informed consent** was obtained before participation.
- **Administration of Questionnaires:** Questionnaires were self-administered during working hours with the help of departmental focal persons. Respondents were given 2–3 days to complete the forms, after which the researcher collected them.
- **Conducting Interviews:** Key informant interviews were conducted in-person and audio-recorded (with consent) to ensure data accuracy. Interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.
- **Data Security:** All collected data were stored securely in a password-protected computer, and hard copies were locked in a file cabinet. Only the researcher had access to the data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software, version 26. To describe the demographic characteristics and participant responses, descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were employed. The relationship between intrapersonal conflict and employee performance was explored using Pearson's correlation analysis, while regression analysis was applied to assess the strength and direction of this relationship.

For the qualitative data collected through interviews, a thematic analysis approach was utilized. The responses were transcribed, systematically coded, and categorized into recurring themes, including the origins of intrapersonal conflict, methods of coping, and its impact on job performance. Representative quotes were incorporated to highlight and support the identified themes.

Results

Influence of Intrapersonal Conflicts on Organizational Performance at Mubende Municipal Council

This section examines the relationship between the independent variable (intrapersonal conflicts) and the dependent variable (organizational performance). The analysis utilized mean scores, standard deviations, and ranking methods to interpret the data. In addition, qualitative findings were integrated with responses from the closed-ended questionnaires for a more comprehensive understanding. The findings revealed that intrapersonal conflicts had a considerable impact on organizational performance, with an average mean score of 3.71, indicating a high effect. Further analysis of the individual components of intrapersonal conflict is presented in the following sections.

Table 1: Influence of Intrapersonal Conflicts on Organizational Performance at Mubende Municipal Council

Intrapersonal Conflicts and Organizational Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation	Rank
Personal challenges negatively impact productivity at Mubende Municipal Council	4.15	0.69	Very High	1
A number of employees experience reduced self-confidence, which affects their performance levels	3.71	0.77	High	2
Some staff members are unclear about their roles or expectations at the workplace	3.55	0.79	High	3
Certain employees feel inadequate in executing their responsibilities	3.41	0.85	Low	4
Average Mean & SD	3.71	0.78	High	
Overall Mean & SD	3.71	0.78	High	

Source: Primary data analyzed by the researcher (2025).

Based on the data presented in the table, intrapersonal conflicts were generally rated positively, with an overall mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 0.78. This indicates that the majority of respondents recognized intrapersonal conflict as a key factor influencing employee performance at Mubende Municipal Council. A significant proportion agreed that personal challenges—such as poor habits—contributed to reduced workplace productivity ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.69$). Furthermore, many respondents concurred that employees lacked adequate mentorship for making sound life decisions ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.77$). A notable number also acknowledged that some staff members struggle with personal decision-making ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.79$). Lastly, the lowest-rated item suggested that some workers demonstrated a limited sense of maturity in handling tasks ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.85$). These findings suggest that intrapersonal conflicts significantly impact organizational performance at Mubende Municipal Council.

One department head at Mubende Municipal Council remarked thatsome employees struggle with internal personal issues that are not necessarily related to conflicts with colleagues. These issues are often hard to identify unless the individuals voluntarily approach the human resources department to discuss them(Interview with Respondent 1).

Another respondent explained that..... intrapersonal conflict originates within an individual and can occur when a person feels uncertain about their responsibilities or what is expected of them. Such internal struggles can stem from role ambiguity and may ultimately affect employee performance in a negative way..... (Interview with Respondent 2).

Determining a relationship:

Objective One: Assessing the Impact of Intrapersonal Conflicts on Employee Performance at Mubende Municipal Council

Regression Analysis: Relationship between Intrapersonal Conflicts and Employee Performance

Table 4.2: Regression Summary on the Link between Intrapersonal Conflicts and Employee Performance at Mubende Municipal Council

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.306 ^a	.642	.091	0.42811

^a Predictors: (Constant), Intrapersonal Conflicts

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression results in Table 4.2 show that intrapersonal conflicts explain approximately 64.2% of the variations in employee performance, as shown by the R Square value. The adjusted R Square value of 0.091 suggests that positive changes in intrapersonal conflict levels are associated with improvements in employee performance at Mubende Municipal Council.

ANOVA: Effect of Intrapersonal Conflicts on Employee Performance

Table 4.3: ANOVA Results on the Relationship between Intrapersonal Conflicts and Employee Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.268	1	6.268	34.198	.000 ^b
Residual	60.482	330	0.183		
Total	66.750	331			

^a Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

^b Predictors: (Constant), Intrapersonal Conflicts

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4.3 reveals that intrapersonal conflict significantly impacts employee performance, as demonstrated by an F-statistic of 34.198 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the significance value is below the 0.05 threshold, the effect is statistically significant.

Table 4.4: Coefficient Table Showing the Relationship between Intrapersonal Conflicts and Employee Performance at Mubende Municipal Council

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	2.462	0.111	—	22.258
Intrapersonal Conflicts	0.242	0.041	0.306	5.848

^a Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The coefficients presented in Table 4.4 indicate that intrapersonal conflict significantly influences employee performance at Mubende Municipal Council. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.306 and the significance level ($p = 0.000$) demonstrate a statistically meaningful relationship. This suggests that effectively managing intrapersonal conflicts can contribute positively to employee performance. Consequently, the earlier assumption that intrapersonal conflicts do not significantly affect employee performance is rejected based on these findings.

Discussion

The study results indicate a significant relationship between intrapersonal conflicts and employee performance at Mubende Municipal Council. Regression analysis showed a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.306$), with intrapersonal conflicts accounting for 64.2% of the variance in employee performance. This substantial figure suggests that internal struggles—such as emotional distress or self-doubt—can directly influence work efficiency. These findings align with research by Khan, Mahmood, and Ayub (2020), who observed that unresolved internal issues can hinder decision-making speed, participation, and task execution. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2021) emphasized that emotional instability within individuals can lead to noticeable drops in productivity, especially in service-driven institutions.

ANOVA results also support this conclusion as the model has very significant F-value ($F = 34.198$, $p < .001$) indicating the independent variable, intrapersonal conflicts, significantly predicts the dependent variable of employee performance, as per the fit of the regression model applied.

The coefficients table gave very important insights into the nature of this relationship. For example, the unstandardized coefficient for intrapersonal conflicts ($B = .242$, $p < .001$) indicates that for every one unit increase in intrapersonal conflict, employee performance would be expected to increase by approximately .242 units, initially a counterintuitive finding. Thus, it implies that not all intrapersonal conflict is detrimental in nature; rather, a little bit of internal rumination and personal struggle may even impel employees to reassess, refocus, or challenge themselves positively reflecting in their output.

This interpretation coincides with those of Mwangi and Kamau (2019), who argued that moderate psychological tension can stimulate critical thinking and self-reflection, and thus increase productivity. This study established that people within controlled levels of internal conflict often report high goal orientation along with creativity.

This balanced understanding, however, is also supported by the breakdown of individual survey responses. Although the most important item said that personal issues significantly affect workplace productivity (Mean = 4.15, Very High), the other items indicate varying levels of internal conflict. Self-confidence (Mean = 3.71) and uncertainty about expectations (Mean = 3.55) were given "High" ratings, whereas inadequacy scored "Low" (mean = 3.41). Thus the intrapersonal conflicts exist, though they may not be viewed as having the same negative connotations by all: Whereas some employees view such conflicts as motivational challenges, others may see them as obstacles.

From a theoretical perspective, the data support the hypothesis of this study, which postulates that intrapersonal conflicts affect employee performance.

Conclusions

Intrapersonal conflicts have found their place in this study regarding their valuable relation with employee performance at Mubende Municipal Council. Results established the steep relation where current intrapersonal conflicts greatly affect employee performance but moderately positively correlates with such variables. Intriguingly, while addressing that intrapersonal conflicts are generally hindrances, it also shows exceptional instances where personal conflicts are catalysts for self-reflection and personal growth leading to greater productivity.

The study thus describes the complexity of intrapersonal conflict whereby not all internal struggles are necessarily harmful; moderate types of psychological tension can kick-start critical thinking and increase self-awareness and goal-directed behaviors. It can also be noted that detrimental internal conflicts such as deep insecurity could stagnate performance.

It is therefore essential for organizations to appreciate that intrapersonal conflict is not only a simple issue of feeling bad about oneself but also need to consider the development of strategies to address these various internal struggles. In so doing, and creating an environment that encourages constructive reflection and emotional resilience, organizations may actually turn to the positives of intrapersonal conflict for optimizing employee performance. Further findings may lead to enumerate specific types of intrapersonal conflict that cause either positive or negative outcomes hence balancing this proven complex relationship.

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