PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract. The democratic transition on the African continent has been accompanied by problems of poor governance, poor administration, third terms and centralized power, electoral administration conundrums, and corruption. This paper examines the overarching problems in Africa, including electoral challenges, the third term and centralization of power, societal, social, and economic governance, and the death of ethics. This is a desktop study, also known as a conceptual study, that is based on Asante's Afrocentricity Theory, which provides pedagogical thinking about power, dominance, racism, and the need to escape victimization. The findings of the article reveal that many African countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria, face significant challenges due to poor governance and maladministration. The paper concludes by stating that to address the challenge of poor governance and maladministration in African countries, a multifaceted approach is necessary. One potential innovative solution is to increase transparency and accountability in government institutions using technology and data-driven decision-making. This could involve the implementation of digital systems for monitoring and reporting on government activities as well as the creation of independent oversight committees to ensure public officials are held accountable for their actions.

Keywords: *African Continent, Challenges, Maladministration, Public Administration, Poor Governance.*

Rezumat. Tranziția democratică de pe continentul african a fost însoțită de probleme de guvernare proastă, administrare proastă, mandate terțe și putere centralizată, dificultăți de administrare electorală și corupție. Lucrarea examinează problemele generale din Africa, inclusiv provocările electorale, al treilea mandat și centralizarea puterii, guvernanța societală, socială și economică, dispariția eticii. Acesta este un studiu desktop, cunoscut și ca studiu conceptual, care se bazează pe teoria Afrocentricității lui Asante. Această teorie oferă o gândire pedagogică despre putere, dominație, rasism și nevoia de a scăpa de victimizare. Concluziile articolului arată că multe țări africane, inclusiv Africa de Sud, Zimbabwe, Uganda

şi Nigeria se confruntă cu provocări semnificative din cauza guvernării proaste şi a administrării defectuoase. Lucrarea se încheie prin a afirma, că pentru a aborda provocarea guvernării proaste şi a administrării defectuoase în ţările africane, este necesară o abordare cu mai multe faţete. O posibilă soluţie inovatoare este creşterea transparenţei şi a răspunderii în instituţiile guvernamentale folosind tehnologia şi luarea deciziilor bazate pe date. Aceasta ar putea implica implementarea sistemelor digitale pentru monitorizarea şi raportarea activităţilor guvernamentale, precum şi crearea de comitete independente de supraveghere pentru a se asigura că oficialii publici sunt traşi la răspundere pentru acţiunile lor.

Cuvinte cheie: *Continent African, provocări, administrare defectuoasă, administraţie publică, guvernare slabă.*

1. Introduction

Since the continent of Africa underwent a democratic transition, issues of poor governance, bad administration, and corruption have gained significant attention in the media and public discourse. These challenges and shortcomings are now playing a significant role in political affairs and obstruct the search for a better life in the African continent. Institutions in the public sector engage in a variety of forms of fraud and corruption, which may be found in practically everyday activities and transactions. [1] states that Africa is plagued by historical paradoxes and contradictions and is frequently characterized as being underdeveloped and backward, despite having produced highly regarded intellectuals and politicians who have achieved prominence in global politics and top international organizations. As has been said several times, an administrative culture serves as a bridge between individuals, communities, and groups, and must be continually maintained, particularly if modern society, administration, and government are to become more relevant and socially beneficial [2]. The necessity to achieve and maintain favourable socioeconomic results that might trigger structural change processes is one of the biggest and most pressing issues facing the African continent [3].

Governance is a comprehensive concept that encompasses how the state and society interact to guarantee respect for human rights, participation and voice, effective and efficient administration, and the ability to provide services. Governance is not simply about decentralization [4]. For Africa to withstand the worldwide criticism of its political and economic incapacity by partners in the global community, effective governance mechanisms directly related to its nature and origin are required [5]. Economic growth and the social uplift of the underprivileged and disadvantaged sectors of society are said to require good governance as a necessary component [2]. Misgovernance is rampantly prevalent everywhere, especially in poor countries. With South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria as case studies, this paper will mostly examine public administration and governance in Africa. The article's other objectives include exploring the complexity of governance and public administration to develop potential proposals for paving the way for an Africa where bad governance and maladministration will be a thing of the past.

This introduction is the first of seven sections that make up this paper. The statement problem is presented in the second section, which is then followed by the theoretical framework and research methodology used in this paper. A review of related literature is discussed in the fifth section. The sixth section explains the recommendations. The paper concludes and suggests that by embracing and adopting Afrocentricity, the African public

sector will be in good hands, free from colonialism, racism, and victimization of whistle-blowers who strive to promote good governance.

1.1 Problem Statement

Africa lacks the high governance standards required of foreign societies [6] state that "poor governance" is the opposite of "good governance" and is characterised by corruption, lack of accountability, and indifference to the interests of the people-qualities with which most African leaders today do not wish to be identified. One could argue that Africa is currently experiencing an ethical crisis. For example, have highlighted that the lack of accountability, unethical behaviour, and corrupt practices have so permeated Africa and even established standards of behaviour that it is appropriate to speak of an ethical crisis in Africa's public service [7, 8]. The ethical decay in public service has sparked a sort of resurgence of interest in ethics in governance, particularly in nations where a lack of accountability, unethical behaviour, and corrupt practices have become pervasive and even institutionalized norms of behaviour in Africa to the extent that one may conveniently speak of an ethical crisis in African public service [8]. "Poor governance and leadership failures on the African landscape have often been premised on lack of or weak governance instruments and systems, ineffective leadership exposure and experiences, external influences and interferences, cultural multiplicity, among others" [9, p. 291]. The functioning of the public sector in Africa has long been hampered by ethical behaviour and accountability in the governance structure [10].

More than half (55%) of all citizens in African nations believe that corruption rose in the last 12 months, while just 23% believe it decreased, according to a study by [11] on the Global Corruption Barometer Africa. It is astonishing to learn that many African countries struggle with bad governance and administrative issues, despite several government rules and measures being in place to stop unethical behaviour and encourage responsible behaviour. According to the survey on the Global Corruption Barometer Africa, two-thirds of people are afraid of being punished if they disclose corruption. Despite this, 53% of the residents polled believe that regular citizens can make a difference in the battle against corruption [11]. This paper highlights the unavoidable discussion around the continuous decline of ethics, good governance, and good administration, particularly in public institutions which ultimately leads to poor service delivery and failed development states. This article is guided by the following hypothesis and research objectives below:

- **Specific hypothesis of the study.** Poor governance and mismanagement are the primary causes of the overarching problems in Africa, including electoral challenges, the third term and centralization of power, societal, social, and economic governance, and the death of ethics. By examining public administration and governance in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria, it is possible to develop proposals that can pave the way for an Africa free of poor governance and maladministration.
- **Purpose and objectives of the research.** The purpose of this paper is to assess the overarching problems in Africa, which include the following: Electoral challenges, the third term and centralization of power, societal, social, and economic governance, and the death of ethics Mismanagement is prevalent everywhere, especially in poor countries. Using South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria as case studies, this article primarily examines public administration and governance in Africa. Another overarching aim of the article is to examine the complexities of governance and public administration to develop possible proposals that pave the way for an Africa where poor governance and maladministration are a thing of the past.

1.2 Theoretical Framework – Afrocentricity Theory

The "Afrocentric theory" serves as the theoretical basis for the analysis of the effectiveness and impact of African public administration in this paper. It is often assumed that this theory is primarily African. The adoption of its principles and guidelines by this study was guided by its analytical categories of grounding, orientation, and perspective [12]. It is instructive to note that this theory differs from the popular political theories of idealism, Marxism, and realism, which is said to be predominantly Western in origin [12, 13]. Despite the above differences, this theory also includes the progressive views of all traditional political theories in the studied area [14,15]. The argument is based on the fact that South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe are among the few African nations that have problems with unethical behaviour by public officials and elected leaders. Africa as a whole is now experiencing the ethical decline that began in the South African public administration [16, 17].

Amoral elites rule the majority of African states. "Social transformation theory" also known as Afrocentricity theory, is a relevant theoretical framework that has a good chance of analysing African concerns, including the moral behaviour of presidents and political officeholders of African governments. The study is based on Asante's book, Afrocentricity: the theory of social transformation, published in 1980 and 2003, which elaborates on the Afrocentricity theory. "It provides insightful ideas about power, domination, racism and the desire to escape oppression," according to Afrocentricity Ideology. Based on Afrocentrism ideology, it can be noted that some of these African leaders continue to hold governing and autonomous public offices without evolving. Colonialism, the abuse of power, and the domination of African government institutions in key positions must be overcome according to the Afrocentric worldview. Overcoming neo-colonialism and victimhood will reduce the unethical behaviour of elected politicians and other state officials. Therefore, it is possible to promote excellent governance that will ultimately lead to successful public service delivery [18]. Based on the principles and rationale described above, this idea has proven to be relevant and useful for this paper. The idea aims to decolonize the functioning of African countries by promoting good governance and corruption-free states [19].

2. Materials and Methods

The study employs a qualitative research approach and descriptive secondary sources to explore the challenges facing public administration and governance in Africa. The literature review is crucial in this process as it enables the analysis of various ideas, theories, policies, and practices, making connections between them to answer research questions and achieve the objectives of the study [20]. Additionally, reviewing the literature helped compile data for further analysis [21].

The data collected was analyzed using thematic data analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and representing patterns in data. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its adaptability, simplicity, and independence from specific theories. This approach allows for a comprehensive and in-depth explanation of research data [22]. Thematic analysis involves six stages, including familiarizing with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and writing themes [22, 23].

The inductive approach used in this study, which utilizes thematic analysis to generate themes, allows research findings to emerge from the raw data's common or notable themes without the constraints imposed by structured approaches [24]. Overall, the study's methods

provide a systematic and rigorous approach to investigating the understanding of a theme or the meaning of an idea related to public administration and governance in Africa.

3. Results
3.1 Governance and Public Administration from Africa's Perspective

There is no clear definition or established definition for the term "governance." Although it is usually used as a general term, its widespread application underpins the functions of three social actors: the state, the market, and civil society. The goal of good governance is to create an atmosphere in which all citizens, regardless of class, caste, or gender, can realize their full potential [2, 4]. Governance is the process by which authority is used to manage a nation's economic and social resources for development. The World Bank's emphasis is on "good governance" [25]. This governance, with the adjective "good," includes four key elements: sound public sector management (efficiency), accountability and free flow of information (transparency), and a legal framework for development (justice, human rights, and civil liberties) [4, p.28].

Governance is the act or manner of exercising control or authority over the subject's actions, such as through a set of rules [26]. This definition by defining governance as "the work and listening of citizens in managing public resources and responding to the needs and expectations of citizens as individuals, interest groups, and society as a whole" [27]. All stakeholders, including people, must actively participate and engage in policy processes to be considered in governance [17]. People-centred governance is a term used in conjunction with this concept and can be defined as a partnership between government and society in which consultation is a major concern [28].

To support the arguments presented in this article, it is important to expand the conversation to include effective governance. Good governance is the efficient management of public affairs rather than the creation of a system of laws recognized as legitimate to promote and improve social ideals demanded by both individuals and organizations [12, 16]. Good governance is "a process of decision-making at the political and administrative levels of government to implement policies that improve the quality of life for all members of the community and enhance service delivery". Transparency, equity, equality, effective accountability, responsiveness, and public engagement are all aspects of good governance.

Public and governance are two distinct concepts that together make up public administration. He goes on to state that the term "public" refers to the government, focusing on the activities of these entities. The word "administration," on the other hand, comes from the Latin verb "administrare," which means to serve, direct, govern, care for, or attend to. Government policies are implemented through public administration, which is also an academic field that studies this process and trains future public employees [29]. "Public administration is a combination of theory and practice that aims to promote a better understanding of government and its relationship with the society it governs. It also aims to encourage public policy to be more responsive to social needs and to introduce management practices on the part of the public bureaucracy that is substantially attuned to effectiveness, efficiency, and, increasingly, to the deeper human needs of citizen [30, p.21].

3.2 State of Affairs in Africa

In line with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) study conducted in the 2021 on Peace and Security Council, it is argued that Africa suffers from the following problems, especially governance challenges in elections, third terms and centralized power, social,

social and economic governance. For this reason, this section examines the issues along with corruption to highlight the challenges that Africa as a whole face and is slowly losing the battle against these ills. The state of public affairs in Africa is no longer pleasing, and it can be argued that these challenges should not only be addressed in public lectures at universities and political rallies, without creating a good image. Africa needs to move from a continent of debate to a continent of solutions and satisfactory management of governance and public affairs challenges. Hereunder are some of the challenges:

- ***Electoral Governance Challenges***

The promise of political competition that preceded the third democratic wave in Africa has fostered the pursuit of electoral democracy and a political culture characterized by respect for the rules of the game in elections in an open and democratic society. It goes on to say that this expectation is undermined by the existence of electoral violence, which undermines the legitimacy and integrity of electoral democracy. The electoral process in many of Africa's 'new' democracies is characterized by violence [31, 32]. It is further argued that recent manifestations of electoral violence have reached unprecedented levels and have changed in form and character, negatively affecting democratic stability and consolidation. Electoral violence has some dire consequences in Africa's new democracies [32, p.68]. Nigeria is probably the most depressing of the selected examples. The 2007 elections were undoubtedly the most cynical example of the country's ruling elite's disenchantment with the electorate [3]. The tendency to manipulate the political playing field by changing electoral laws is also evident in other countries. The ISS study further states that electoral reforms have distorted the political playing field and led the opposition to boycott elections. Once in power, ruling parties take over government institutions such as electoral commissions and corrupt government institutions through nepotism and patronage [33-35]. Electoral authorities in the Southern African regions face constraints such as limited independence, unclear mandate, and insufficient resources, which undermine the legitimacy of an election [36, 37].

- ***Third terms and Centralised Power***

Overall, there is a growing tendency in Africa for incumbents to introduce constitutional amendments that allow them to serve a third term and, in some cases, increase the power of the executive. According to [35] agree that some African heads of state have managed to circumvent the restrictions by seeking more than two terms. The tendency to hold onto power has not abated in Africa but has escalated. According to [34] state that some are openly lifting the two-term limit through amendments to the state constitution. It is common knowledge that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was re-elected in an election that many consider fraudulent. "In Africa, there are two opposing trends aimed at (a) keeping leaders in power and (b) signaling an end to conditions that allow individuals to remain in power indefinitely" [33, p.10]. The trend that favours long or lifetime leadership is the consolidation of political power in the hands of a ruling party. Based on [34] agrees that African leaders cling tenaciously to power, sometimes declaring themselves presidents for life without receiving the mandate of the people they lead.

- ***Societal, Social and Economic Governance***

The problems of governance on the continent revolve around the management of states, resulting from the inability of many heads of state to properly manage the economy, diversity, and political inclusion. African countries have inconsistently pursued economic policies that are not good for their economies [5]. This leads to a loss of public trust in

government institutions and their ability to perform basic functions, especially service delivery. According to [5] argues that Africa's socio-economic emancipation is still not assured almost five decades after the abolition of colonial administration. This is despite the fact that the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, in his 1994 address to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), identified economic development, poverty eradication, the nature and quality of governance, peace, stability, democracy, cooperation and development as challenges facing Africa [5, 38].

- *Corruption*

Corruption is a major obstacle to the development of a strong African state. Many scholars believe that while corruption exists in developed countries, the way it is pronounced in Africa has led to the word "corruption becoming synonymous with Africa" [39, p.165]. In Africa, corruption is evident and has culminated in a series of high-profile scandals [3]. The public sector in Africa has become a "huge business" rather than a "great service." A politician or public servant from Africa who has accumulated wealth now has a positive image [3, 5]. The success of a particular politician and public official in society is determined by competition to steal public resources. Africa's economic, political, and social growth is hindered by corruption [11]. It is also a significant impediment to economic development, effective governance, and fundamental freedoms, including the ability of citizens to hold governments accountable.

4. Discussion

This section thematically provides an analysis of the governance and administration challenges for the four countries notably namely; South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.

- *South Africa*

The African National Congress (ANC)-led government is popular with the people, but it consistently disappoints them with inadequate performance [40]. One of the ruling party's biggest problems is its lack of complacency toward the law. The South African government has been embroiled in scandals involving unethical behavior, particularly with regard to the introduction of public procurement for COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE). The ANC has launched a party-wide investigation into allegations of corruption, and all provincial offices and executives are required to submit a list of all individuals accused of or threatened with wrongdoing. The ANC has come under scrutiny in recent months for several corruption allegations related to the COVID-19 deal, which has angered South Africans. The Special Investigative Unit is now investigating government contracts worth more than R5 billion that may have been awarded to government officials or where due diligence was not done. The SIU is also investigating government employees who stole food intended for the neediest, proving that corruption investigations are not limited to contracting fraud. In one such case, the Sunday Times reported that a politician involved in the Gauteng Department of Health PSA scam made money by reselling equipment to the government.

- *Zimbabwe*

The first explanatory and controversial view places land at the centre of the Zimbabwe dilemma and claims that everything else is just a symptom [41]. For this view, the failure to address the land problem at Lancaster House is one of the keys to understanding what has gone so horribly wrong in Zimbabwe. The so-called "Black Friday" the November 14, 1997, crash of the Zimbabwean dollar triggered by several factors, including contagion from the

Asian crisis (via the South African Channel) and the government's failure to budget for severance payments to war veterans, marked the beginning of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe [42]. The civil society movement for a new constitution in the late 1990s, promoted by the National Constitutional Assembly, was the first to link poor governance as the main cause of the problem in Zimbabwe. Poor governance in Zimbabwe was believed to include the deterioration of the rule of law, grand corruption, fiscal and monetary mismanagement, politically motivated violence and intimidation of opposition parties and civil society activists, draconian laws-particularly regarding public security and the media-flawed elections that led to predetermined outcomes in which the ruling party always won, and a host of other governance-related problems [41, p.212, 53]. In previous elections, ZANU-PF violated the civil and political rights of the opposition [43].

• *Uganda*

In Uganda, lack of professional ethics and accountability are two critical factors that hinder efficient and effective public service performance [44]. The civil service in Uganda is not yet developed to the point where it can perform its duties to the satisfaction of stakeholders [45]. The Uganda Civil Service is short of staff, equipment and vehicles are in poor condition, and there is virtually a silent struggle to provide basic services. The civil service is still castigated as sluggish, corrupt, inaccessible, and stiff, and thus inattentive to the demands of citizens [45]. The Uganda Electoral Commission (EC) reviews of the popular elections of 2011 and 2016 reveal serious irregularities, such as a lack of diplomatic participation, abuse of incumbency, commercialization of politics, lack of campaign finance regulations, and the absence of a political code of conduct [46].

• *Nigeria*

The problem in Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership [47]. According to [48], corruption and bribery are serious impediments to national growth and a scourge of Nigerian public administration. As a result of the perceived, imagined, or actual crises of marginalization, deprivation, insecurity and the inability of the Nigerian state to provide for the welfare of its people, the modern Nigerian state faces calls for restructuring [48]. Widespread poverty, high unemployment, technological inertia, poor capacity utilization, inadequate and deteriorating social and physical infrastructure, high incidence of diseases, and high crime rate are just some of the problems plaguing Nigeria [49, 50]. Nigerian society is deeply ravaged by corruption, which is currently one of the greatest obstacles to the country's progress [51, 52, 53]. On Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index, Nigeria scored 24 on a scale from 0 ("highly corrupt") to 100 ("very clean"). When ranked by score, Nigeria ranked 150th among the 180 countries in the Index, where the country ranked last is perceived to have the most corrupt public sector [54]

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper examined the challenges facing African countries in the areas of public administration and governance, paying particular attention to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria. The paper argues that the situation in these African countries is primarily affected by corruption, problems with electoral administration, third terms and centralized power, social, societal, and economic governance, and political interference. Political interference is considered one of the factors affecting the functioning and governance of these African states. As a result, these African states fail to effectively implement their constitutional mandates and national development plans. Based on the

issues raised and supplemented here, recommendations are made for reforming and improving public administration in Africa. Public administration and governance are essential components of effective and efficient government. In African countries, these areas have been a subject of continuous debate, given the challenges and complexities surrounding them.

The author(s) of this paper argues that to address the challenge of poor governance and maladministration in African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nigeria, a multifaceted approach is necessary. One potential solution is to increase transparency and accountability in government institutions through the use of technology and data-driven decision-making. This could involve the implementation of digital systems for monitoring and reporting on government activities, as well as the creation of independent oversight committees to ensure that public officials are held accountable for their actions. Another solution is to prioritize education and training programs for public officials and civil servants, to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively and ethically. This could include training in areas such as financial management, procurement processes, and anti-corruption measures. Collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and private sector entities could also help to bring about innovative solutions to governance challenges. By working together to identify and address key issues, these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths and resources to create sustainable solutions that promote good governance and support economic growth in these countries.

Public administration and governance in Africa are facing significant challenges. However, by implementing the recommended solutions, African countries can overcome these challenges and build effective and efficient public administration and governance systems that will promote economic development and improve the lives of citizens. To improve public administration and governance in Africa, the author(s) recommend the following:

- African countries should invest in human resource development and capacity building to improve service delivery and enhance the efficiency of public administration and governance.
- African countries should promote citizen participation in public administration and governance by creating more opportunities for citizens to engage in decision-making processes and promoting transparency and accountability.
- Ethical standards for African states should be clear. Leaders of independent institutions need to know the basic principles and standards they should apply in their work and where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour lie. A concise, well-publicized statement of the key ethical standards and principles that guide the civil service, such as in the form of a code of conduct, can achieve this by creating a common understanding in government and the broader community. The authors, therefore, urge public servants to always be guided by ethical principles in the performance of their functions.
- The decision-making process should be transparent and open to public scrutiny.
- Ethical seminars and pedagogy should be held to decolonize individuals' ethical behaviour and reinforce ethical values and norms.
- To ensure the efficiency of the administration of African states, the separation of powers should be clearly and politically reconsidered. Separation of powers should be enshrined in legislation to limit interference.

- Public administration and governance reforms would be necessary to counter the gradual death of good governance and fair public administration in Africa.
- Before anyone assumes public office, they should undergo a personality test and disclose any conflicts of interest and inclinations.
- Accountability should also have consequences (consequentialism).
- To reform public administration and governance in Africa, the author(s) recommends a regular review of policies, procedures, practices, and institutions that influence ethical behaviour in public service.
- Encourage government action to maintain high standards of conduct and combat corruption in Africa's public sector.
- Incorporate the ethical dimension into management approaches to ensure that management practices are consistent with African public service values and principles.
- By embracing the Afrocentricity theory, the African public sector will be in safe hands, away from colonization, racism, and whistle-blower victimization.
- In combating corruption, African countries should develop and implement effective anti-corruption strategies and policies to address the problem of corruption and nepotism in public administration and governance.

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