

Prime Heritages of Ethno-Bureaucratic Corruption in Africa: Ripped Curtain Sagas

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Abstract: Present-day literature has extensively discussed bureaucratic corruption from different perspectives. However, there is a scarcity of literature that explores the broader narratives of bureaucratic corruption driven by self-interest and ethnic agendas. This paper aims to examine the prevalence of high-level bureaucratic corruption in Africa, specifically highlighting the role of ethnicism as a significant development barrier that negatively impacts social equality and service provision. By analysing relevant literature and considering various viewpoints, this paper presents publicly available data from magazines, newspapers, scholarly books, journal articles, and reports to demonstrate the corrupt practices of "elites" who are characterised as "militarists," "autocrats," and pseudo-democrats. The evidence suggests that the persistence of high-level bureaucratic corruption is primarily attributed to the prevalence of "neo-patronage-clientelism" and power dynamics based on ethnic supremacy. Moreover, it illustrates how the distorted power structure dominated by ethnic interests serves the narrow political and military elite, enabling them to exploit the country's resources within their inner circle. The paper argues that ethnic-bureaucratic corruption is

equally prevalent and challenging, exacerbated by ethnic nostalgia. However, it concludes that bureaucratic corruption, coupled with ethnic divisions, has given rise to conflicts that pose a significant threat to the existence of African society. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current research and literature concerning concerns related to bureaucratic corruption.

Keywords: African society, autocrats, bureaucratic corruption, ethno-bureaucratic, public choice theory.

1. Introduction

The commission of unlawful acts for personal gain by a bureaucrat or elected official constitutes corruption (Banerjee et al., 2012). This can occur, for example, when a bureaucrat openly solicits payment from an individual in exchange for carrying out a simple but often illegal activity, such as providing a resident card to someone to enable them to vote in a district where they do not reside. It can also involve a bureaucracy deliberately withholding a service, such as a new vehicle license, until the applicant pays a bribe. Jared (2022) argues that corruption disproportionately benefits the wealthy and well-connected, accounting for a substantial portion of government expenditures. In many cases, corruption in a country goes unpunished due to vague and ineffective regulations. Additionally, even when robust legislation is in place, law enforcement agencies often partake in corrupt practices and, therefore, lack the motivation to effectively combat corruption.

While considerable efforts have been devoted to understanding bureaucratic corruption broadly, its specific effects concerning ethnicisation and self-aggrandisement indulgence are minimal at best (Gans-Morse et al., 2018). This often manifests itself in unprosecuted grand theft. Scholars frequently overlook the ethnic context, which encompasses prevailing incentives for self-centred behaviour, individualistic expectations, and ethnic understandings of bureaucratic corruption. Consequently, there is a growing critique of the perceived inefficacy of purely legal and institutional interventions that focus on the opportunities, motivations, and risks associated with bureaucratic corruption. Ionescu et al. (2012) examined the benefits of openness and transparency in combating public sector

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corruption, the bureaucratisation of service activities, and the shortcomings of bureaucratic systems in delivering public services. The collective findings provide compelling evidence of the interconnections among public bureaucratic frameworks, the characteristics and limitations of public bureaucracy, the decision-making processes within public bureaucracies, and the consequences of unethical conduct.

As stated by Uneke (2010), corruption refers to the abuse of authority and public office for personal gain, driven by greed and an unrestrained desire for wealth and resources. Within the context of sub-Saharan countries, Matukata (2015) argues that political incumbents have transformed public service, administration, and corporate business into affairs dominated by family members and individuals from specific regional, ethnic, and tribal backgrounds. This phenomenon, known as personal and dynastic leadership, has been acknowledged by Adebayo (2013) and Bond and Manaya (2002).

Under such circumstances, autocrats, dictators, and authoritarians have established political dynasties, which have paved the way for the emergence of this type of governance. Matukata (2015) suggests that these leaders take such actions to preserve the benefits associated with political power. Mbeki (2011) provides illustrative examples, including Ali Ben Bongo (Gabon), Faure Gnassingbe (Togo), Gamal Mubarak (Egypt), Karim Wade (Senegal), and Muhoozi K Museveni (Uganda), who rose to prominence in politics and business through covert political manoeuvring facilitated by their influential fathers. These leaders continue to sustain and expand their families' dominance through the misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds.

Within the specific African contexts, where individual acts of bureaucratic corruption have become normalised, existing research indicates that such corruption is viewed as either a necessary evil or simply the standard procedure (Mwesigwa, 2021; Awortwi & Helmsing, 2014; Nystrand, 2014). This observation suggests that bureaucratic corruption is widely accepted within groups with ethnic affiliations. Failure to conform to certain normalised behaviours associated with bureaucratic corruption can lead to high costs for these groups. In some cases, practices related to bureaucratic corruption may be bolstered by deeply ingrained individualistic fantasies linked to ethnic or tribal folklore (Onyango, 2023; Uguru & Ibeogu, 2014; Jávora & Jancsics, 2013). Thus, it can be argued that certain manifestations of bureaucratic corruption are deeply rooted in ethnic groups, leading to their reinforcement and normalisation on an individual level as a result of ethnicisation.

.Given the present conditions of ethnicisation, it is crucial to reevaluate the definition of bureaucratic corruption. Consequently, there has been an increasing interest in investigating the potential benefits of a deeper understanding of ethnic influences for anti-bureaucratic corruption measures (Yustia & Arifin, 2023; Smith, 2016). Specifically, researchers aim to explore the elements that, due to their connection to quasi-rational forces like ethnicity or tribalism, drive bureaucratic corruption in ways that deviate from incentives for collective rational choice. Moreover, scholars seek to understand how these factors contribute to the widespread and entrenched nature of such practices across various countries.

Unfortunately, the available knowledge on bureaucratic corruption in Africa remains skewed, as it primarily focuses on the public, state-centric, official, micro, and bureaucratic aspects while neglecting the private, societal, unofficial, macro, and informal dimensions. Consequently, scholars and public affairs professionals have often overlooked the informal side of ethno-bureaucratic corruption, which has a more profound impact on the state than public-recognised bureaucratic corruption. African states and society at large have been confronting alarming and unprecedented incidents of bureaucratic corruption since the early years after independence. This trend, rooted in the inefficiencies of administration since colonial times, poses a severe threat. Consequently, innovative solutions are necessary, and this endeavour is dedicated to exploring such approaches.

This work focuses on the vested interests served by high-level bureaucratic corruption in Africa. It argues that a framework of "neo-" patron-clientelism and a skewed power structure that enables institutional and social manipulation have fostered bureaucratic corruption among the ruling ethnic elite and have permeated all levels of the state bureaucracy. The analysis of bureaucratic corruption manifestations and their associated costs in Africa will be explored in the following three sections. The final section offers advice to policymakers in Africa on how to address patronage and ethnic-based bureaucratic corruption.

The paper consists of three additional sections. Section 2 examines the origin, underlying causes, and effects of ethno-bureaucratic corruption. This form of corruption, which acts as a social, political, and economic barrier to equality, has a disastrous impact on African society. Section 3 delves into the theoretical implications of bureaucratic corruption in promoting anti-ethnic diversities. Finally, Section 4 provides a comprehensive overview and discussion, concluding the paper.

2. Research Methodology

Utilising a retrospective literature analysis technique for qualitative research, this paper delves into the problem of ethno-bureaucratic corruption through a thorough exploration and explanation of secondary sources and current literature. As Cresswell (2013) asserts, qualitative research is conducted not only to explore a problem or issue but also to obtain a comprehensive, in-depth understanding of it. The paper extensively utilises various secondary data sources, such as academic publications, periodicals, newspapers, journal articles, and reports, to examine and clarify the issue of ethnic-bureaucratic corruption in Africa, as well as to formulate pertinent conclusions and suggestions. The narrative analysis method is employed to analyse the data, aiming to capture the rich, tangible details of the acquired information. This technique presents data analysis in the form of a tale, explaining the data using the terminology and conceptions of the subjects under investigation (Cresswell, 2013).

2.1 Theoretical framework

The rational choice theory, also known as public choice theory, serves as the theoretical framework for this paper. It posits that individuals are inherently self-interested and will only engage in relationships or transactions if the benefits outweigh the costs. The theory assumes that people act in their own self-interest rather than for the collective good of society. This thesis argues that public employees employ various tactics, such as document forgery, under- and overestimations, accepting bribes, and embezzling from state funds, in order to further their own interests. According to Zey (1992, p.2), the central argument of rational choice theory is that "social interaction is an economic transaction guided by rational choices based on a rigorous calculus approach." Therefore, individuals influenced by neoclassical economic theory and its rational derivatives are seen as self-interested and motivated by personal gain. Consequently, it is necessary to develop effective systems to monitor human behaviour, particularly among those in positions of power who hold the trust of the public (Coleman, 1990). Given that the rational choice theory explains the actions of individuals who exploit their authority and power for personal gain, it was chosen as the basis for this study. This theory sheds light on why certain public servants betray the public's trust by engaging in dishonest activities that hinder overall national progress and development.

3. The Origin and Index of Ethno-Bureaucratic Corruption in Africa

The enigma of ethno-bureaucratic corruption in Africa has garnered significant attention in recent times, triggering extensive public discourse. Specifically, this pertains to the emerging phenomenon of bureaucratic corruption that is deeply rooted in ethnicisation. The pervasiveness of bureaucratic corruption in Africa seems to be influenced by various factors such as rapid social and economic development, strong family and ethnic ties, the establishment of new institutions, and occasional divergence in views regarding acceptable public conduct. An enabling environment for bureaucratic

corruption may also include the government's monopoly on economic activity, widespread poverty and socioeconomic inequality, lenient political attitudes, scepticism surrounding the legitimacy of government bodies, and institutionalised maladministration.

Amidst allegations of nepotism and corruption, Tangri and Mwenda (2001) exposed a series of scandals that tainted Uganda's privatisation efforts. They unravelled instances of misconduct and manipulation by regime legislators and well-connected individuals during the privatisation endeavours of the 1990s. Furthermore, Harris et al. (2023) contend that bureaucrats who secure their positions through personal connections or receive inadequate compensation for a secure livelihood are more inclined to align themselves with private interests and engage in corrupt practices.

Drawing on empirical evidence, Martin and Raffler (2021) proposed an innovative theory to explain the reasons behind voter abstention. Utilising survey trials involving nearly 9,000 Ugandan individuals and local government representatives, they tested the theory's predictions. The findings suggested that when politicians are perceived to possess greater power than bureaucrats, citizens and officials hold them more accountable. The distribution of accountability subsequently impacts electoral outcomes. In cases where citizens perceive bureaucrats as being responsible for government performance, they are less likely to anticipate that the incumbent's vote share will be affected.

Central to the allocation, distribution, and management of public resources are public authorities, who occupy a pivotal role in the genesis, dissemination, and persistence of bureaucratic corruption (Colunga & Meza, 2021). For example, Okuku (2002) highlights that resource allocation in Uganda has been biased in favour of specific ethnic groups since 1986. Astonishingly, these very same ethnic groups are known to engage in pervasive bureaucratic corruption with impunity. Rather than facing repercussions, they often receive promotions or higher assignments, enabling their corrupt practices to persist (Asea, 2018).

A primary factor contributing to bureaucratic corruption is the inadequate compensation provided to government workers by the state. As one expert stated, "When payoff levels are high or the likelihood of recognition and fines low, this predicts that the wage important to kill debasement is high." This low wage leads government employees to seek alternative means to increase their pay, often resorting to dishonest practices, which are most commonly observed in their monthly paychecks. For example, one consequence of receiving poor pay is the need for government workers to take on additional jobs. It is crucial to acknowledge the causation of bureaucratic corruption, as it contributes to the erosion of employees' ethical mindset. Moreover, the underappreciation of job benefits, along with advantages such as allowances (Kwon, 2012), further exacerbates corruption at the bureaucratic level, as argued by Gans-Morse et al. (2018).

Greed also plays a significant role in bureaucratic corruption. Individuals in positions of power, particularly in Africa, exploit their authority to engage in corrupt practices. Even well-paid individuals or those who are already wealthy may embezzle public funds due to their insatiable desire for personal enrichment. Some individuals are driven by the need to maintain luxurious lifestyles (Oluka & Ssennoga, 2008). In line with other developing countries, Africa's political economy is characterised by extreme inequality, leading those who benefit from political patronage to keep the impoverished unaware of their dire circumstances. Dahlström et al. (2013) found that excessive discretion, particularly in policy and budget management, rather than low pay, is the root cause of high levels of bureaucratic corruption. Research by Dahlström et al. (2013) and Duvanova (2014) supports the notion that high levels of corruption are also a result of high intention combined with a weak rule of law.

Moreover, public attitudes and perceptions significantly contribute to bureaucratic corruption. Society continues to admire individuals who have amassed wealth through corrupt means, with little concern for the source of their riches. This deeply ingrained mindset hampers efforts to build a

corruption-free society, as corruption is often viewed as a legitimate means of political support (Larok, 2012). Moralists assert that corrupt practices are not a consequence of the rule of law but rather a reflection of societal norms that prioritise gift-giving and kinship ties. Additionally, studies by Brierley (2020) and Charron et al. (2016) demonstrate that a flawed meritocracy system, coupled with a strained relationship between bureaucrats and politicians, further contributes to bureaucratic corruption.

Ahmadi et al. (2019) employed questionnaires as a research tool to identify the factors that contribute to official corruption in Iran. The results indicated that out of the 25 factors listed in the research hypotheses, nine were found to be the most significant in their association with official corruption in governmental organisations. These factors included the prioritisation of relationships over regulations, the practice of recruiting personnel based on personal connections, the frequent replacement of government officials, the presence of restrictions and a lack of political freedom, the absence of clear and transparent rules, the control exercised by vested interests, the prevalence of extreme values, low incomes relative to inflation, and high expenses.

Although there are other contributing factors, Brodrick and Okorodudu (2020) argue that the widening income gaps are the primary drivers of the increasing prevalence of bureaucratic corruption in developing nations. Some of these factors include incorrect beliefs and values, ethnic considerations, a weak legal system, an inadequate reward system, favouritism, a lack of openness and transparency in public service, the consolidation of political power by religious institutions, the weakness of enforcement mechanisms, and concerns regarding retirement and job security. However, the main cause of low salaries prevents employees from meeting their basic needs both during their employment and in retirement.

In a study conducted by Ahmadi et al. (2023) in Iran, the entire population of managers and staff members (1,100 participants) of the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade was included to investigate the factors that influence organisation-related corruption in bureaucratic health. Within the mining sector of the Ministry, effective supervision, meritocratic appointment processes, and employee accountability were identified as the main variables that affect administrative efficiency and thereby contribute to its decline. Additional findings revealed that a fair and trusting organisational environment, job satisfaction among staff members, dedication to the company, a just system of rewards and penalties, provision of food assistance to staff members, and a lack of accountability among coworkers were also influential factors. The misappropriation of public finances and abuse of authority by government officials were significant contributors to resource misallocation in developing countries. Notably, Mazhar and Iftikhar (2021) found in their research that bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies had both ethical implications and detrimental effects on private firms at the microeconomic level.

Using the University of Port Harcourt as a case study, Nwodin (2021) conducted an investigation into the recruitment of staff and the presence of corruption within the bureaucratic processes within the Nigerian university system. The research findings indicate that bureaucratic corruption is a prevalent factor that permeates the Nigerian education system. The manipulation of the hiring process is evident, resulting in substandard service delivery, which is reflected in the low global ranking of Nigerian universities. The study recommends the implementation of a fair, equitable, and competitive recruitment policy within the Nigerian university system, as well as the strengthening of anti-corruption measures, to promote the establishment of a competitive, just, fair, and rational recruitment process.

In many instances, non-related factors such as qualifications or competence do not determine the selection and appointment of civil service positions in Africa. Rather, appointments are often influenced by nepotism, personal relationships, and political affiliation. A highly politicised civil service fosters a culture of dishonest employees who prioritise their political agendas over public

interests. Presently, a significant proportion of African bureaucrats owe their positions to corrupt practices. In Africa, securing employment based on merit and competence is an arduous task comparable to castrating a lion. Prospective employees are typically required to offer bribes of at least \$2,650 or more or seek the assistance of influential bureaucrats in expediting the hiring process. Even when seeking a transfer within the civil service, bribes are expected, with the amount varying from \$503 and higher, depending on the desired agency.

Empirical research demonstrates that the likelihood of wealthy individuals engaging in bribery is four times greater in Peru compared to Uganda, where they are only 1.2% more likely to do so in order to access healthcare services (Haunt & Laszlo, 2012). Meon and Weill (2010) conducted a cross-country analysis of developing nations, supporting the "grease the wheels" hypothesis, and concluded that corruption has a lesser impact on efficiency in countries with ineffective institutions. Haunt and Laszlo (2012) found that affluent individuals in Uganda willingly incur the cost of bribery to expedite document processing and avoid purposeful delays. These studies argue that although accepting bribes creates unfavourable incentives and perpetuates inefficiency in public service delivery, the decision to participate in corruption is often motivated by an individual's assessment of the trade-offs involved. Attaining entry necessitates either engagement in corrupt practices or affiliation with the ruling ethnic group. The failure to secure a position in public service serves as a catalyst for individual bureaucratic corruption, particularly for individuals belonging to non-ethnic groups, as they are compelled to bribe officials. Consequently, the populace perceives "greasing the wheels" as a viable strategy to facilitate access to public services or carry out tasks. For instance, it is customary in Africa to provide a bribe, known as "toa kitu kidogo," in order to utilise public services (Franz, 2012). Individuals should allocate additional funds for the "cost of doing business," encompassing everything from encountering traffic stops to collecting packages at customs windows (Franz, 2012). In these scenarios, street-level bureaucrats are the primary beneficiaries of corruption. Furthermore, a bureaucrat may actually favour an unwieldy and inefficient bureaucracy, as it fosters dishonest behaviour and obstructs the acquisition of services.

The erosion of moral standards within the public service sector contributes to bureaucratic corruption (Asea, 2018). The prevailing sentiment among crafty Africans is that "because everyone is immersed in corruption, no one possesses the moral authority to condemn another." Corrupt officials exploit this perspective as a diversionary tactic to deflect attention from those striving to combat corruption. Fisher (2012) argues that this notion unjustly tarnishes the reputation of Africans who lead honourable and virtuous lives. It has been postulated that corruption arises from the stark contrast between the high cost of living and the meagre salaries received by public servants. The combination of economic crises, rising living standards, and low wages compels authorities to callously deceive their fellow citizens (Fisher, 2012). Brodrick and Okorodudu (2020) examined the influence of employee compensation in public and civil services on the prevalence of bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria. The research revealed that the underpayment of government workers, fear of retirement, and the delayed disbursement of pensions and gratuities facilitate bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria. Consequently, the study proposed that one effective approach to curbing the surge in bureaucratic corruption would be for governments to commit to timely payment of retirees' benefits and offer substantial compensation.

In developing countries, such as those in Africa, bureaucratic corruption can thrive as a result of various factors (Harris et al., 2023a; Harris et al., 2020). One such factor pertains to the government's role in development, which, in certain cases, encourages corrupt practices. More specifically, the extent of government intervention in the domestic economy and the opportunities it presents for corruption contribute to the existence of bureaucratic corruption. Additionally, the characteristics of the political system and its leadership, particularly their stability and responsiveness to evolving public demands, somewhat influence the prevalence of bureaucratic corruption. Relatively unstable political climates exacerbate tenure insecurity, thus motivating bureaucrats to seek personal gain

rather than prioritise the promotion and safeguarding of public welfare. Moreover, although socioeconomic issues like poverty and inequality operate externally, they directly impact governmental bureaucracies and the conduct of their administrators.

Furthermore, cultural practices and conventions within society, such as loyalty based on kinship, constitute integral components of informal organisations. They affect public perceptions of the government and its bureaucratic machinery and also influence administrative behaviour to some extent. Equally significant are organisational factors like administrative control and accountability systems, which create favourable conditions for bureaucratic corruption to thrive. Additionally, financial and human resource constraints faced by both anti-corruption agencies and the judicial system make it exceedingly challenging to address complex corruption cases. Furthermore, the judicial system exacerbates this issue by allowing repeated postponements, delays, and prolonged proceedings (Maira, 2013). Research by Duvanova (2014) indicates that, at high levels of bureaucratic discretion, state regulatory involvement does not significantly impact the business environment. Bureaucratic discretion is identified as a critical institutional factor that influences the effect of regulatory policies on the business climate. Conversely, low levels of bureaucratic discretion highlight the link between minimal regulatory burdens and a business-friendly economic atmosphere.

Khisa (2013) examines the emergence, spread, and maintenance of what he terms the "informal state" in Uganda - a unique structure of power organisation and dissemination that both centralises and disperses the state apparatus. He argues that Uganda's "informal state" is the result of three main factors: the country's experience with widespread political instability and insecurity in the 1970s and 1980s following independence; the new (post-1986) group of rulers' embrace of militarism as an ideology, along with the imperative of maintaining political power; and the country's receipt of foreign aid as payment for adopting neoliberal economic reforms. He demonstrates how the "informal state" system sustains itself and legitimises its control by upholding elements of legal-rational state institutions, granting authority to various constituencies, and expanding the network of patrons through the establishment of numerous agencies. This environment, as it turns out, provides fertile ground for corrupt bureaucracy.

Arwolo (2022) investigates the contribution of ethnicity to corruption, the effects of ethnicity on corruption, and the challenges in combating it. His findings provide evidence that corruption is deeply entrenched in the numerous ethnic groups of Nigeria, posing a major obstacle to efforts aimed at eradicating it. Yanguas (2017) raises the question, "Why do some African states seem stuck in a cycle of corruption and institutional weakness?" His research reveals that Uganda implemented high-profile reforms to secure donor funding as long as these reforms did not threaten the authority of the ruling coalition.

Hickey et al. (2021) explore how the dynamics of political settlements and organisational leadership influence public sector performance in Uganda. Contrary to expectations of a broader state-building initiative, they find that Uganda's "pockets of effectiveness" (POEs) are increasingly tied to the politics of regime survival. They conclude that given the current dynamics of the political settlement, Uganda's prospects for pursuing an ambitious state-building project are slim, as the politics of regime survival continue to take precedence over other considerations regarding the public sector.

In an effort to provide analysts and researchers with better tools for modelling these phenomena and generating new theoretical insights, Harnois and Gagnon (2023) attempt to incorporate multiple perspectives on corruption. They argue that there is growing concern about the disregard shown by global governance toward the crimes committed by certain leaders who are "destroying a country and getting away with it," as some countries become increasingly entrenched in a state of perpetual corruption while the majority of political elites escape prosecution with impunity. As an alternative, several regimes exploit aid primarily for their own enrichment and to consolidate power, if possible.

In Akinola and Uzodike's (2014) research, they critically evaluate allegations of collusion and the instrumental use of strategic positions to advance political objectives or impede efforts to combat corruption. This study sheds light on the challenges in suppressing the incentives that give rise to corruption and the vulnerability of anti-corruption organisations to pressure from influential political figures. These phenomena can be attributed to the patrimonial nature of most political systems in developing nations.

Nakirijja and Oijun (2020) conducted an investigation into the attitudes of Ugandan citizens towards corruption, focusing on the variables that influence their likelihood of exposing and opposing corruption in their country. By analysing data obtained from a survey of 251 Ugandan civilians, this study uncovered that while people possess a low tolerance for corruption, they exhibit limited willingness to engage in anti-corruption initiatives. However, the insufficient number of corruption reports cannot be solely explained by this low tolerance. Notable factors influencing citizens' readiness to confront and report corruption include their awareness of corruption and their level of trust in the legal system, government, and civil society's anti-corruption efforts. Furthermore, a stronger inclination to confront and disclose corruption correlates with a lower tolerance for corruption and greater confidence in the government's anti-corruption policies and legislation. In the case of Uganda, Vokes (2016) argues that patronage has not only increased in magnitude but also complexity, underscoring the need to continually consider the multifaceted manifestations of "corruption." The bureaucrats prioritise private interests, such as obtaining positions of power, well-paying jobs, and opportunities for corruption, rather than the public's welfare, such as access to quality infrastructure, healthcare, education, energy, and clean water (Mbabazi, 2015). As a result, the government has established a dishonest political system (Mbabazi, 2015), characterised by ineffective leadership and a lack of accountability. Bureaucratic corruption is a prevalent strategy employed by African politicians, who often act as patrons to most bureaucrats in their quest for political office and influence, leading to the emergence of questionable figures (Oluka & Ssennonga, 2008). Ultimately, these leaders prioritise recovering the expenses incurred during their campaigns over defending the interests of the people they represent (Oluka & Ssennonga, 2008). Corruption and a lack of accountability are evident at every level of the political system, with examples such as issues with public procurement, financial mismanagement, vote buying, forgery of academic documents, and similar practices (Larok, 2012). Despite lacking profit-driven motives, public organisations are expected to provide the highest quality goods and services (Glaser, 2007). Paradoxically, the interests of affluent and influential bureaucrats often clash with those of their constituents.

Faller (2015) theoretically distinguishes between the public's perception of politicians and the political system as corrupt. Numerous Africans view their political system as highly corrupt, as indicated by findings from focus groups, original interviews, and public opinion surveys. For instance, Tangri and Mwenda (2006) examined how political elites manage and manipulate anti-corruption agencies, specifically focusing on cases where high-ranking state officials faced charges of corruption. They note that donors have long been hesitant to use their substantial financial support to pressure the government into addressing instances of misconduct by state officials. The study concludes that by providing significant aid to a corrupt and quasi-authoritarian government and remaining silent about abuses of power and corruption, donors have permitted Uganda's leaders to undermine the institutions that could hold them accountable for their misuse of public positions.

4. Crash of Bureaucratic Corruption in Africa

Macrae (1982) suggests that corrupt bureaucracy may be a rational choice. In other words, corruption is often a deeply ingrained approach to decision-making. In this context, Khun (2019) argues that individuals face a "Prisoner's Dilemma" - a conflict between collective and individual rationality. This is accurate when individuals fear being disadvantaged if they refuse to participate in corrupt

practices, especially when others in similar circumstances do not decline, resulting in significant consequences in the civic space.

Ekeh (1975) asserts that the civic public lacks morals in his extensive dissertation on colonialism and the two publics in Africa. He further explains that politics without morality is inherently harmful, and the amorality of the civic public partly contributes to the detrimental outcomes of African politics in the post-colonial era. When individuals subscribe to ethnocentrism, bureaucrats can act with impunity, particularly when influenced by Ekeh's concept of the two publics. Richard (1998) presents the "theory of prebendal politics" as a thought-provoking interpretation of Nigerian federalism, using the country's federal structure as an example. The thesis demonstrates that the component ethnic groups of Nigeria's federal society laid the foundations for the organisation, mobilisation, and legitimisation of ethno-clientelistic networks of patronage, corruption, and rent-seeking that characterised prebendalism. Richard (1998, p. 56) argues that prebendalism, which involves the individual, factional, and communal appropriation of public office, has transformed into a guiding principle of state policy through the novel Nigerian principle of "federal character." This principle mandates that the country's ethnic-regional diversity be reflected in all governmental appointments and disbursements.

Similarly, the disintegration of African countries into numerous state and local administrations has become a breeding ground for ethno-bureaucratic corruption, particularly in Nigeria. These subnational entities, which receive funding from the central government, provide multiple avenues through which individuals and groups can appropriate public power and resources. In reality, the African governmental structure primarily serves as a vehicle for intergovernmental allocation and ethno-political appropriation of financial resources. In summary, the system actively participates in prebendal neo-patrimonial politics and is part of a larger environment that enables ethno-bureaucratic corruption to thrive.

Several scholars have argued that the prevalence of individual acts and issues of incompetence can contribute to bureaucratic corruption. The choice to engage in dishonest behaviour is influenced by the individual's perception of the level of corruption within their surroundings (Fredericksson, 2014; Ionescu et al., 2012; Dwivedi, 1967). Furthermore, while bureaucratic corruption may not be problematic in and of itself, it can present an opportunity for ordinary citizens to swiftly accumulate wealth. At the level of political and bureaucratic elites, it may serve as a tool for informal ethnicisation that is crucial for the stability and survival of the governing system (Nkemdilim, 2020). Research indicates that authoritarian leaders rely on control over the creation and distribution of benefits derived from corrupt bureaucratic transactions to achieve and maintain power among key elites and constituencies (Caserta et al., 2022). Autocrats have strong incentives to engage in bureaucratic corruption, and their limited public accountability encourages the formation of alliances to distribute benefits to loyal supporters (Bareebe, 2020). Only recently have studies begun to explore the perspectives of those directly involved in corrupt bureaucratic practices (Vokes, 2016; Svend-Erik & Rakner, 2014).

Moreover, the negative consequences of bureaucratic corruption, such as marginalisation and avoidance of diversity, have resulted in prejudice and animosity becoming deeply embedded in African society. Bureaucratic corruption has posed a significant obstacle to the country's socioeconomic progress due to the devastating impact it has had on the communal fabric of African society. Corruption permeating the bureaucracy leads to the breakdown of public administration in various ways. Firstly, performance deteriorates as individuals adopt an approach focused on appearances rather than actual productivity, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. Secondly, it undermines morale and frustrates those individuals within the system who remain incorruptible. Thirdly, it increases the cost of sustaining the government apparatus. Corruption within the bureaucracy exacerbates poverty and hinders the efficient functioning of the system by

compromising the core values that administrators are expected to uphold, such as accountability, transparency, and impartiality. These challenges shed light on why Africa invests significant financial resources in its public services without achieving tangible results.

In the realm of administrative structures within Africa, both national and local government entities consistently grapple with a pervasive issue of silent bureaucratic corruption. This form of corruption, which mirrors the detrimental impact of other types of corruption, has been highlighted in a recent World Bank report (2013). Negatively affecting long-term development, the phenomenon encompasses acts of absenteeism within these governmental bodies (Badru, 2013). Despite efforts towards decentralisation, where resources are allocated to local governments, local authorities, or grassroots initiatives, the outcome has been rather disheartening. In the case of Ugandan local governments, particularly at the district level, the system has created additional layers of bureaucratic complexity. As a result, local government officials and bureaucrats have been able to misappropriate and embezzle public funds with relative ease. This progressive form of corruption, as Mbabazi (2015) describes it, is referred to as the "decentralisation of corruption," wherein payments are made for goods and services that are not actually provided, otherwise known as "air supply."

An examination of bureaucratic corruption in Africa has brought to light its detrimental impact on the region's ability to deliver essential services. In addition to compromising educational standards, bureaucratic corruption can hinder efforts to eradicate illiteracy (Reinikka & Svenson, 2005). Moreover, bureaucratic corruption has the potential to expedite arduous processes, facilitate political access for marginalised groups, and potentially yield more effective policies in practice compared to those emerging through legal channels. On the other hand, this form of corruption undermines public confidence and distorts institutional processes, often leading to the adoption of irrational decision-making criteria and engagement in illicit activities. Such consequences can prove disastrous for administrative effectiveness and the efficient provision of public services. In general, bureaucratic corruption has resulted in inefficiencies within public spending by diverting funds to easily bribed individuals, distorting the allocation of resources and the formulation of public policies (Hite, 2006). In essence, as highlighted by Mbabazi and Pyeong (2015), this phenomenon "distorts the entire decision-making process connected to public sector programs, thereby exacerbating the living conditions of the

impoverished." The indicators that most clearly illustrate the negative effects of bureaucratic corruption on service delivery include poor quality services, deteriorating infrastructure, and inadequate facilities despite significant investment (Badru, 2013). In a study conducted by Liberty (2019), the impact of bureaucratic corruption on healthcare services in certain local government districts in Nigeria's Borno state was examined. The findings revealed that while immunisations were consistently provided, healthcare facilities were inaccessible, and there was a shortage of medications. Additionally, Mbate (2018) explored the relationship between individuals' willingness to pay bribes for government services and their levels of economic, social, and political capital. The results demonstrated that instances of bribery increased in political networks but decreased in environments with strong social capital.

Both significant and minor instances of bureaucratic corruption within the public sector can have detrimental effects on the government's ability to deliver services, resulting in additional costs for citizens throughout the service delivery process. The government has the essential responsibility of ensuring a fair distribution of resources, but bureaucratic corruption undermines this role, leading to preferential treatment for individuals with influential connections and obstructing the economic mobility of others (Tanzi, 1998). Sustaining the integrity and security of these corrupt networks requires a high level of secrecy, diverting funds away from critical areas such as health and education, which directly impact the lives of the impoverished. Moreover, when ethnicity, tribalism,

friendship, and familial ties serve as the basis for evaluating and assessing individuals, incompetence and mediocrity are allowed to thrive, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. This fosters favouritism, nepotism, and racial discrimination in the form of preferential treatment, exemplified by biased reference letters and unequal employment opportunities.

Several scholars, namely Badru (2013) and Berkman (2013), argue that corruption in developing countries could potentially promote economic growth by facilitating bribery as a means to bypass burdensome regulations. However, extensive global research contends that corruption hinders economic growth, undermines social cohesion, and suppresses democratic processes (Uneke, 2010). Nevertheless, the political establishment and bureaucrats in Africa have ensured the continued prevalence of corruption in order to serve their own interests at the expense of the impoverished majority, receiving encouragement and support from certain segments of society and scholars (Badru, 2013). Wadho (2010) demonstrates that corruption is endogenously determined by model parameters. Corruption leads to an increase in the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers. It correlates with higher tax rates and distorts resource distribution, resulting in reduced welfare and output. Insufficient compensation arises when a significant portion of funds designated for civil servants' pay is diverted towards trivial expenses. Consequently, the public sector ends up underpaying staff, providing a fertile ground for bureaucratic corruption to thrive.

Kirfi and Ajadi's (2013) analysis indicates that corrupt activities within the healthcare sector have led to the misallocation of funds meant for the purchase of medical equipment to individual pockets. Consequently, public health institutions suffer from inadequate quality of medical equipment. Thus, it is recommended that public service operations incorporate stewardship functions and establish enhanced management support systems. In a pioneering investigation utilising household survey data from a developing country, Islam and Wang-Sheng (2016) examine the impact of corruption on income. They find that bribery diminishes income, and larger bribes have a lingering negative effect on income even after adjusting for simultaneity bias. Luminita et al. (2012) posit that high levels of inequality contribute to low trust among different groups, which in turn fosters corruption. Petty corruption ensnares ordinary individuals in the web of dishonesty, ultimately disadvantaging the perpetrators themselves.

The effectiveness of anti-corruption campaigns in Uganda was examined by Asiimwe (2015) to determine the extent of their impact. The author identifies various obstacles that anti-corruption civil society organisations and campaigns encountered in their efforts to combat corruption. These obstacles included the relationship between corruption and compensation, limited capabilities of citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs), issues of sustainability, socio-political dynamics, opposition forces, and inadequate case resolutions. Consequently, addressing corruption in Uganda requires a comprehensive approach rather than a simple "quick-fix" technique. Asiimwe also notes that government size, ethnic fractionalisation, and bureaucratic excellence appear to have a significant positive influence on corruption, while factors such as press freedom, parliamentary scrutiny, and human development have a diminishing effect. Therefore, a "one size fits all" approach may not be sufficient to address corruption in Africa due to the varying outcomes.

The consequences of bureaucratic corruption can be severe. Numerous investigations have revealed a strong link between the perception of bureaucratic corruption and the inefficiency of service delivery. Banerjee and Mukherjee (2015) investigated the impact of introducing bureaucratic rivalry on corruption. Utilising the corruption incidence (CI) measure, they found that in an economy where corruption is tolerated, bureaucratic corruption is consistently higher in monopoly regimes compared to competitive ones. Pardo (2013, p.142) argues that "corruption may help to maintain social bonds and to engender new ones."

Mubangizi's (2020) study focused on corruption in South Africa and Uganda. The study highlighted that legislative frameworks prioritise the criminalisation of corruption over a human rights

perspective and its potential to combat corruption. The author advocates for a human rights-based approach that empowers ordinary individuals to hold public leaders and elected representatives accountable with transparency and responsibility. Singh (2022) suggests a holistic strategy to combat bureaucratic corruption, which includes increasing public awareness, establishing independent anti-corruption agencies, offering higher incentives to deter minor forms of corruption, and regular rotation of police officers to promote loyalty and integrity in law enforcement agencies. These comprehensive preventive measures are recommended to strengthen public support for government opposition groups and discourage corruption in deeply divided societies. Furthermore, it is advised to organise year-round events featuring lectures by prominent human rights and anti-corruption activists, local newspaper advertisements, radio and television jingles and commercials, distribution of T-shirts and signs, as well as active use of social media in major African cities and universities.

Beneath the gallows, Africans have been bereft of the efficacy of service delivery due to the pernicious influence of bureaucratic corruption (Okech, 2016). In fact, this phenomenon has become deeply entrenched, perpetuated by a history of inept and unscrupulous bureaucrats. Its pervasiveness has been acknowledged at all levels of government and across the entire continent. Yet, it has been demonstrated to distort incentives, undermine institutions, and consolidate power and wealth among undeserving individuals. Consequently, service delivery suffers tremendously when bureaucratic corruption undermines its fundamental principles. It is disheartening to observe that even newcomers to the public service bureaucracy are being groomed to participate in such corrupt practices (Beugre, 2010).

5. Conclusion

Despite the implementation of various anti-corruption initiatives, ethno-bureaucratic corruption remains pervasive. Existing literature from different regions provides evidence of the widespread embezzlement of public funds by bureaucrats, and the African context is no exception. Africa serves as a prominent example of how bureaucratic corruption hampers the continent's progress. Therefore, it is accurate to assert that anyone who denies the alarming increase in bureaucratic corruption in Africa is either ignorant, complicit, or resides outside of Africa. The significant level of bureaucratic corruption, coupled with strong ethnic motivations, has had a detrimental impact on the standard of living for African citizens. Development failures in Africa are primarily attributed to systemic bureaucratic corruption, which perpetuates a lack of accountability and transparency. This idea emphasises the profound influence of corruption on the lives of the African population. Lipset and Lenz (2000) argue that a corrupt bureaucracy directs government expenditures towards areas where bribery is possible, and this precisely describes the situation in African states.

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