Corrupt elites, administrative cadres and public service in Africa: Islands of vanity

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Abstract

Undermining growth and governance in Africa are persistent corruption issues and inefficient public service delivery. It is still unclear how corrupt elites, administrative cadres, and public service are intricately related, despite a wealth of studies. This study investigates the relationships that corrupt elites, administrative cadres and public service delivery have in Africa, focusing on how these "islands of vanity" obstruct efficient government and progress. The elite theory is adopted by the paper to accomplish the latter purpose. The study employed a qualitative methodology and uses secondary data and examined previously published books, articles, reports and papers to find themes and patterns. The study demonstrates how the provision of public services is jeopardized by corrupt elites and administrative cadres who participate in rent-seeking activities, patronage networks, and bureaucratic corruption. These "islands of vanity" impede growth, erode institutions, and maintain inequality. To avoid repeating the mistakes and inefficiencies of the past, the paper suggests public service delivery changes that encourage the hiring and deployment of moral leaders and administrative cadres to make effective and efficient use of both current and projected public resources meant for effective service delivery. By highlighting the vital role of moral elites and administrative cadres and the requirement for contextualized solutions, this research advances knowledge of corruption and governance in Africa. Future studies should examine how global governance frameworks and outside actors affect Africa's efforts to combat corruption and enhance the provision of public services amid questionable practices of dishonest administrative cadres and elites.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The provision of public service in Africa is in jeopardy due to persistent corruption that is supported by dishonest officials and elites (Mlambo et al., 2022). With the "islands of vanity," these oversaw a convoluted web of questionable transactions that influenced Africa's growth path. By positioning private gain ahead of public duty, the continent's chances for long-term development and growth are compromised by what they do (Gowon-Adelabu et al., 2018). The outcomes are governance crisis, social injustices, environmental degradation, reduced trust in institutions, lack of accountability, inefficient allocation of resources, brain drain and talent flights, economic losses, poor infrastructure, and perpetuation of poverty (Amadi & Ekekwe, 2014; Tenamwenye, 2014; Sebale & Sebola, 2014; Lawal et al., 2013). With corruption undermining social values and human dignity throughout the continent, Africa finds itself at a crossroads (Mlambo, 2023). Her existence, the

future of her people, international cooperation, peace, and security on a regional and global level are all at risk due to the severe development barriers that have been created by the dishonest actions of the elites and administrative cadres (Mlambo et al., 2019; TI, 2015).

Accountability, openness, and the rule of law have not been advanced by its incompetent institutions, which has allowed impunity to thrive (Swanepoel, 2021). This has enabled the corruption and wrongdoings of African administrative cadres and elites to plan the shameful departure of Africans. Mercilessly, the corrupt elites are involved in the theft of public monies for their benefit, depriving vital services of funding, influencing legislative choices to further one's interests at the expense of the general welfare, assigning unfit people to important roles, and jeopardizing the provision of services (Agbiboa, 2014). Ruthlessly, administrative cadres are involved in bribery, extortion, and other corrupt activities; they

also neglect to take accountability for their actions, decisions, and results as well as the policies, programs, and projects they are tasked with implementing (Shava & Chamisa, 2018). In the quagmire, it is perhaps mythical to dream of the achievement of sustainable development goal (SDG) and African Union Agenda 63 in the ambits of corrupt elites and administrative cadres (Mehlape, 2018; Goodfellow, 2017). Bareebe (2020) correctly notes Africa's low level of trust in institutions and the government has raised worries about the use of influence and power by the elite class and administrative cadres to sway laws and policies for their benefit. As administrative cadres and corrupt elites utilize institutions to achieve their goals, the public interest is compromised. It is even more depressing when these crooked administrators and elites eliminate and subdue any potential competitors to maintain their power.

Mafukata's (2015) research delves into the origins, progression and characteristics of corruption throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Nineteen key informant participants were chosen from eleven Sub-Saharan African countries and their opinions and public perspectives were sought out through key informant interviews. It was discovered that, despite the numerous anti-corruption initiatives put in place by stakeholders to combat it, corruption is a myth, has permeated the area's culture and is currently the most challenging socioeconomic issue to address. The study revealed that further support is necessary for law enforcement initiatives against corruption to be successful in eliminating corruption in the area. Along the same line, Asomah (2019) makes the case, based on primary and secondary data, that opportunities rooted in monopoly power, avarice and lacklustre deterrent systems are the fundamental causes of great corruption, such as political corruption in Ghana. Thus, persistent failures by political leadership to adequately fortify public-sector accountability frameworks, curtail avarice and limit political power are the main causes of unchecked political corruption.

Igbokwe-Ibeto (2019) examined the opportunities and challenges at the intersection of African bureaucracy and public administration. He used descriptive techniques and a qualitative study approach to have a better understanding of the structure and personality of public administration and bureaucracy in Africa. He discovered that the capacity of African bureaucracy to provide public managers with intellectual leadership is eroding. The excessive reliance on discretion by field bureaucrats frequently irritates the public and leads to mediocre service delivery a place where corruption thrives.

Fagbadebo (2019) examines the relationship between leadership and accountability in a few African countries to determine the extent of the pervasiveness of the governance crisis. He found that rather than fighting for independence from the effects of colonialism, African politicians are more like political predators. African politicians are more concerned with personal welfare than investigating the state's ability to advance the public interest, taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of the citizens. Cases of misconduct and corruption in the leadership are dismissed, which fosters an unparalleled culture of incompetence in the leadership with impunity preparing the way for dishonest bureaucrats and oligarchs to launder their dirty laundry.

In his study, Beyers (2016) claims that the complex dynamics of competition among elites for resources, power and influence as well as informal alliances and coalitions that support corruption are the reasons why corruption and inefficient public service continue throughout Africa. He adds that to further their agendas, elites sway institutions. In a related investigation, Ukwandu and Jarbandhan (2016) pointed out that elites exploit their position of power to obtain support, bestow favours, and uphold allegiance, making it difficult for institutions to control them. He goes on to suggest that elites put self-enrichment over the interests of the public and work to maintain power, prestige, and influence by exchanging resources, services, or protection for loyalty, votes, or influence. To that end, in their research, Muwanga et al., (2020) submit that elite dynamics and corruption threaten service equality, quality, and access; corrupt practices and mediocre service delivery disproportionately impact vulnerable people; and citizens lose faith in institutions, leaders, and government.

In the oceans of literature on corruption in Africa, there is a dearth of knowledge highlighting the unsightly visages of dishonest elites and administrative cadres, and none of it seems to emphasize their seriousness in the African context. It would be prudent to close this gap, and this study achieves just that. The objective of this research is to examine the intricate connections that exist among African public service, administrative cadres, and corrupt elites. Understanding the complex links between corrupt elites and administrative cadres and public service is therefore essential to addressing the development issues facing Africa. In this line, several African-specific tactics are essential for understanding inside such a domain is suitable (Sheely, 2015).

This study provides an important new understanding of analyzing the effects of administrative cadres' inefficiencies and elite capture on the provision of public services. revealing the complex connections that underpin progress and sustain inequality between corrupt elites, administrative cadres, and public service. Policymakers, practitioners, and academics working to address Africa's governance crisis and advance sustainable development will find this study's examination of corruption dynamics and institutional

deficiencies, as well as their effects on development, to be highly insightful. The study can help advance accountability, openness and efficient governance. Public services can reach disadvantaged groups and encourage inclusive growth by addressing elite capture and administrative inefficiencies. Policies can be strengthened and good governance can be encouraged by using the findings to inform reforms. The intricate connections between public service, administrative cadres, and corrupt elites in Africa are made more understandable by this study. The literature on African development, corruption, and governance is enhanced by the theoretical and empirical insights that are provided.

Using relevant theories, concepts and prior research, the study tackles the literature review in its second half. In part three, the methodology is discussed. Section 4 provides a fitting perspective of corruption in Africa. Section five examines the study of corrupt elites throughout Africa. Section Six presents and interprets the issues surrounding administrative cadres and corruption. The delivery of public services in Africa is covered in Section Seven. A few case studies are presented in Section 8 to highlight the detrimental effects that elites and administrative cadres have on the provision of public services in Africa. Corruption in Public Service in Africa: Islands of Vanity is the subject of Section 9. Section 10 summarizes and evaluates the research findings. Section 11 encompasses the Conclusion, offering a synopsis, conclusions, and suggestions for forthcoming studies and policies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Conceptual review
Corruption

Latin word is where the word "corruption" originated: Corruptus, which means "to spoil" or "to destroy," is the past participle of corrumpere. Cor-, which means "all together" or "completely," and Rumpere, which means "to break" or "to destroy," are combined to form Corrumpere. Used interchangeably with words like "moral decay or degeneration," "bribery or dishonesty," "perversion or distortion of original meaning or intent," and "decay or destruction of physical objects". The term "corruption" has a complicated and dynamic etymology that reflects shifts in society's norms, values, and perceptions of what constitutes immoral action. In a broader sense, corruption is defined as the act of changing or distorting something from its original or intended state to a worse state (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2002). Over time, power abuse, fraud, and unethical behaviour have all been included in the definition of corruption. Regardless of perception, corruption has always existed in all societies and cultures throughout human history (Bhandari, 2023). Corruption affected both ancient and modern civilizations. Ancient civilizations like Greece and Rome were not exempt. Fraud and moral decline were considered corruption in ancient Rome. During the Medieval Ages, moral and spiritual degradation was included in corruption. Likewise, in the modern day, corruption encompasses a range of dishonest practices, fraud, and power abuse. In essence, it includes breaking moral principles, social norms, and legal requirements. Many different things can happen to it, such as bribery, embezzlement, cronyism, nepotism, petty, political, administrative, money laundering, extortion, fraud, collusion, and conflicts of interest.

Corrupt elites

The term "corrupt elites" is a compound word made up of the words "corrupt" and "elite." The word "corrupt" is derived from the Latin word "corruptus," which means "spoiled, adulterated or debased." The term "elites" describes a small group of individuals who hold power, wealth and influence in a society (Bottomore, 1993). Elites can be found in a variety of fields, such as politics, the economy, the military and culture. Corrupt elites are individuals who abuse their privileges and power to amass wealth and privilege at the expense of the broader public (Huntington, 1968). To keep their position of authority and influence, they frequently partake in illicit or immoral practices, including bribery, embezzlement and nepotism (Makgala & Botlhomilwe, 2017).

Since independence, corrupt elites have remained a common feature of many African countries (Ayittey, 2005). Many of the development issues facing the continent, such as poverty, inequality, and bad governance, have been attributed to them (Mkandawire, 2007). In Africa, corrupt leaders frequently display particular traits. They frequently create patronage networks by using their influence and power to grant contracts, jobs, and other advantages to their devoted followers (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). To amass riches and influence, they frequently blend conventional and contemporary forms of authority (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). They habitually seize the state and its resources by using their influence and authority, which results in a lack of openness and responsibility (Hellman & Kaufmann, 2001). Since they are seldom made to answer for their deeds, they often enjoy impunity (O'Donovan, 2007). Most importantly, there are terrible, far-reaching effects of corrupt elites in Africa, such as the wealthy and powerful elites recurrently amassing riches at the expense of the masses, resulting in poverty and inequality (Mkandawire, 2007). They repeatedly erode the foundation of effective governance, resulting in a breakdown of the rule of law, accountability, and openness. Since they repress opposition and exploit their influence to hold onto power, they regularly cause instability and conflict.

Administrative cadres

The word "frame" or "structure" in French is where the word "cadre" comes from. A small number of officers who serve as a unit's core are referred to as cadres in the military, where the idea originated. The term "administrative cadre" refers to a group of highly skilled individuals who serve as the backbone of a government or organization. Administrative cadres are essential to development and governance in the African environment, but they have also been connected to corruption, nepotism, and favouritism (Werbner, 2014). When a group of skilled workers is referred to as a cadre in the context of administration, they are the core members of a government or organization (Harper, 2020). They usually possess the necessary skills and training for which they are accountable for carrying out decisions and policies. Since they give the organization continuity and stability, they serve as the foundation of the administrative system. In Africa, the administration and progress of countries greatly depend on their administrative cadres. Unfortunately, the administrative cadres in many African countries are not chosen based on merit but rather are frequently made up of people who are loyal to the president or ruling party (Bannon, 2007).

Theoretical framework

Political leaders and administrative cadres often have tight ties, which can result in the misuse of authority and resources (Mbaku, 2007). Senior civil servants, bureaucrats, technocrats and government officials make up the majority of the administrative cadres in Africa. These cadres are controlled and influenced by corrupt elites (Afolabi, 2019). A wide spectrum of elites, including lawmakers, government employees, and political leaders, are accountable for the widespread corruption in Africa (Chipkin, 2013). These individuals not only encourage but also eventually benefit from corrupt activities. This makes corruption more apparent, especially for those in administrative positions who oversee public resources, implement policies and programs, deliver basic services (such as infrastructure, health care, and education), and interact with stakeholders and citizens (Bannon, 2007). The emphasis on economy, efficiency and effectiveness in African governance frameworks is combined with a focus on long-term sustainability, citizen involvement and participation as well as environmental, social and economic integration. Even while there has been potential to support inclusive governance, such as decentralization and local governance, citizen participation and engagement, technology-enabled governance, and regional and international cooperation, these have not yet been fulfilled. In Africa, institutional flaws, corruption, resource scarcity, and traditional and cultural governance frameworks undermine participation, accountability, transparency, and the rule of law (Malipula, 2024).

While it is true that Historical Institutionalism (HI), which emphasizes institutional evolution and path dependence, Sociological Institutionalism (SI), which examines institutional norms, values, and cultural context, and Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI), which emphasizes individual self-interest and institutional design (Pan et al., 2023), can all contribute to comprehend the knowledge of corruption by creating opportunities and incentives for corrupt behaviour, impacting service delivery and effectiveness, ensuring transparency and responsiveness, and influencing the ethos and behaviour of public servants, they are not relevant to the current study. This can be attributed to taking into account the legacies of tradition, colonialism, and post-colonization, as well as analyzing the relationships between formal and informal institutions. Even more so, modernization theory of development that contends that as economic progress propels social and political development—corrupt practices being viewed as a product of underdevelopment and criticized for neglecting power dynamics and elite capture—is not relevant to the current study because it disregards the corruption that enables elites to hold onto their privilege and power, implies that the only road to progress is through Western-style modernization, ignoring African settings, and assumes that economic prosperity inevitably leads to social and political development, ignoring the effects of corruption (Ukwandu, 2017).

Additionally, the dependency theory, which contends that outside forces like globalization and colonialism are to blame for underdevelopment, dependency on outside forces is viewed as the root cause of corruption, and criticism that it oversimplifies intricate relationships is unimportant. This is due to its disregard for internal dynamics, which reduces corruption to the effect of outside forces. It ignores the deliberate corruption that elites support for their benefit. It also paints a wide picture of the variety of African experiences (Emeh, 2013). Even more unimportant is the human development theory, which emphasizes social fairness and inclusive institutions while focusing on human capacities and well-being. It also views corruption as a barrier to human development. This is factual because it ignores some corruption dynamics in favour of focusing on the welfare of people as a whole. It neglects to take into account how elites subjugate institutions. It also ignores how corruption is made possible by power disparities (Becherair & Tahtane, 2017). In a similar vein, the three theories of development-modernization, dependency and human development-all emphasize the importance of corruption in the

results of development, contend that power structures and elite capture must be taken into account and highlight social justice and inclusive institutions are necessary to combat corruption, but this study falls short in these areas (Matunhu, 2012). The reason the trio fails is that they do not make corruption their main focus, they are not adapted to African contexts, and they do not take into consideration the active role that administrative cadres and elites play in sustaining corruption. The elite theory remains in place in their stead.

As opposed to the several theories mentioned previously, the elite theory places more emphasis on the part that power and elite agency play in sustaining corruption. It fits in better with African environments, where a small number of people or organizations frequently hold the majority of the authority (Kyarem et al., 2020). It clarifies the prevalent occurrence in Africa of elites manipulating policies and institutions for their benefit. It takes into account how corruption in Africa is affected by unofficial institutions including customs and cultural norms. By concentrating on the behaviours and intentions of the elite and administrative cadres, it offers a more complex explanation of corruption (Bolarinwa & Osuji, 2022). Different levels of corruption in African countries can be explained by it, in contrast to more general theories of development. It demonstrates how elites exploit corruption as a means of retaining privilege and power. In actuality, it provides a more thorough framework that integrates aspects of politics, economics, and culture to comprehend corruption.

Elites in Africa frequently use their positions for personal gain, making elite theory especially pertinent to explaining corruption in the region. Thus, for these reasons, among others, elite theory is a better fit to explain corruption in Africa than historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism. Its emphasis on the dynamics of power between elites and non-elites is especially pertinent to Africa, where a small number of people or groups frequently hold the majority of the world's power (Odubajo & Alabi, 2014). It describes the common practice in Africa of elites maintaining their position of power through patronage and clientelistic networks. Neopatrimonialism, a prevalent system in Africa where elites utilize public resources for personal benefit, is taken into consideration. It takes into account the unofficial institutions—such as customs and cultural norms—that influence the behaviour of the elite in Africa. Acknowledging the distinct historical, cultural, and political backgrounds of African nations, it enables contextualization. Knowledge of corruption in Africa requires a knowledge of the agency and behaviours of elites, which is the emphasis of this work. Furthermore, rather than seeing corruption as the sole outcome of institutional flaws, it sees it as a tactic employed by

elites to hold onto their privilege and power. Also, the theory of elites holds that a limited number of people referred to as elites, hold the majority of the power and influence over decisions and policies. The core ideas of the elite theory are that a limited number of people hold power, that elites work together to preserve power and privilege, that elites put their interests ahead of the public interest, and that elites employ a variety of strategies to sway choices and public policy (Gerlich, 2021). It is pertinent to corruption in Africa because African leaders exploit public resources for private benefit, obfuscating the boundaries between public and private interests, and because elites trade resources for support and allegiance, so fostering corruption (Tsako, 2020).

Empirical review

In Africa, corruption is still a major and enduring issue that hurts institutional trust, economic growth and inequality. Africa is known for its high levels of corruption; according to Mbaku (2007), many of the continent's nations rank highly in this regard. Because there is little accountability and weak institutions, corruption still exists (Okonkwo, 2015). Africa's elites, according to Chabal and Daloz (1999), exploit chaos and corruption to hold onto power. According to Sebale & Sebola (2014), "cadre deployment" clearly leads to subpar productivity, nepotism, and subpar service delivery. Public services are frequently jeopardized by corruption, which results in inefficient service delivery (Langseth 2017), which is demonstrated by delays and bottlenecks, insufficient or subpar services, and unequal access to services. According to Muhumuza (2016), this has resulted in a decrease in the availability of essential services. Examples of these include inadequate medical supplies and facilities in the healthcare sector; inadequate resources and unqualified teachers in the education sector; and contaminated water and inadequate facilities in the water and sanitation sectors.

Igbokwe-Ibeto (2019) employed a qualitative study design and descriptive methods to investigate the characteristics and nature of public administration and bureaucracy in Africa. He aimed to investigate the relationship between African bureaucracy and public administration makes it exploratory as well. He contends that African bureaucracy is eroding and losing its capacity to provide public managers with intellectual leadership. Field bureaucrats rely excessively on discretion, which frequently irritates the public and leads to subpar service delivery.

Sheely (2015) used a randomized experiment in Kenya to investigate the relationship between elite capture and mobilization in participatory institutions. An environmental organization encouraged members of the therapy group to participate in a local government

planning meeting. The impact of mobilization on citizen engagement was substantial. Notwithstanding this result, there was no rise in the adoption of the organization's favored initiatives or citizen requests as a result of mobilization. Rather, the intervention modifies the kind of disparities shown in the final distributions, suggesting that elite control over the planning institutions is flexible enough to accommodate higher levels of engagement and mobilization.

The intricate interplay between structural, systematic and governance factors- such as resource limitations, inadequate infrastructure and capacity challenges- and political interference, corruption and lack of accountability- as well as historical legacies of apartheid and socioeconomic disparities- was recognized and examined by Mamokhere (2022). Document analysis is used in the study's qualitative research methodology to collect data. The main themes and patterns that appeared in the data were found by applying thematic content analysis to the study of the data. To understand the elements influencing service delivery, the he makes use of the public choice and new public management theories. The results show that issues with service delivery in South African municipalities are mostly caused by internal conflicts, political instability, urbanization, corruption and political-administrative meddling.

The efficiency of KwaZulu-Natal local government's cadre deployment policies was evaluated by Zuku et al., (2022). A comprehensive assessment of the literature was conducted to include a range of sources that offered details on the practice of cadre deployment. The research employed a qualitative design, utilizing interviews to collect data from 14 participants who were specifically chosen based on their backgrounds, expertise, and roles within the KwaZulu-Natal local government. The primary issues stemming from the cadre deployment practice were identified by interviewees as factionalism, political meddling, and internal strife in addition to declining service delivery. The investigation also verified that the KwaZulu-Natal political parties experienced dominating factionalism as a result of the deployment of cadres through nomination lists, which allegedly resulted in the political killings of a few prominent figures in the region.

The role that church leaders and state political players played in the entrenchment of corruption in the Nigerian state was investigated by Ani et al. in 2019. This paper follows a historical trajectory and argues that the political class in Nigeria took unfair advantage of the structural flaws and gaps in the state structure, which allowed them to exercise absolute power and commit various corrupt acts without repercussions. One by one, the political elite plundered the state coffers, sacrificing the socioeconomic advancement of the entire country. The masses lost hope in the state when it was unable to improve their condition in life. In their frustration, they turned to the church, particularly the Pentecostal tradition, which offered them hope, miracles, and better lifestyles. The church led the general public to think that illnesses, poverty, and other calamities they suffered were caused by demonic powers or spiritual assaults.

In light of the widespread corruption that faces the world today, the questions are: Is enough being done to combat it, or are the corrupt forces too strong to be overcome? In an attempt to investigate potential responses to these inquiries, Dorasamy and Kikasu (2023) look at the case of South Africa. The uneven political, economic, and social interests of globalization, however, may make international efforts to combat corruption in Africa ineffective. But in order to establish and maintain incentives for ethical behaviour in the administration of public affairs, the AU, along with every African nation, should build a robust structure, efforts, policies, and resources, and provide anti-corruption agencies the authority they need. To reduce corruption in Africa, people must be aware of the issue and take appropriate action. They must also be committed to upholding social values, policies, and strategic plans that are founded on the principles of honesty, integrity, and transparency in the service of improving service delivery.

Fagbadebo (2019) examined the relationship between leadership and accountability in a few African counties to comprehend the nature of the widespread governance dilemma. The study makes the case that African politicians are less liberation fighters against the effects of colonialism and more political predators. African politicians are more focused on their welfare and take advantage of the citizens' susceptibility than investigating the state's capabilities to advance the public interest. Cases of misconduct and corruption in the leadership are dismissed, which fosters an unprecedented culture of impunity for leadership deficiencies.

A burst of intellectual insight was provided by Oshewolo and Durowaiye (2013), who dissect the conceptual framework of elite corruption while also revealing its myriad facets within the African setting. They use the rent-seeking theory to accomplish the latter objective. The idea not only uncovers the elites' plot to keep people in poverty, but it also explains how they plan to accomplish so. They contend that the rent-seeking actions of state managers are the root cause of the seriousness of the situation in Africa. Elites' persistent dispersal of wealth, or the flow of public money into the private sphere, has proven expensive and detrimental. It is concerning that the transfer happens with such undiminished power. The "market" for elite corruption is fruitfully expanding as progress is rapidly declining. Collective subjugation by the

uncaring rulers has left the masses—who ought to gain from public decision-making—as the victims. While the South African public sector has a strong legislative framework and strategies to combat corruption, Manyaka and Nkuna (2014) argued that there are still obstacles that allow unethical, fraudulent, and/ or corrupt activities to flourish. These include weaker application of the legislation and oversight mechanisms, a lack of political will, political deployments, and the absence of meritocratic systems.

Tsheola and Molefe (2019) investigate theories of the state to address the factors that contribute to the phenomena of despotism, autocracy, corruption, and state violence—all of which are mistakenly believed to be characteristics of African states. The argument posits that the explanation for the ups and downs of post-independence Africa can be found in theories of the state, which explain how the state agency fails to maintain social integration, consensus, and shared conditions of production while trying to assert its raison d'être. In contrast to despotic autocracy, which involves the tyrannical rule of the state by an all-powerful and supreme government, elites, families, or individuals that hold virtually absolute power and authority, they conclude that the architecture of this phenomenon in Africa involves the structural and operational vicissitudes of state apparatuses.

Adebanwi and Obadare (2011) examined how Nigeria's anti-corruption campaign was developed under the civilian government from 1999 to 2008. In three important ways, they synthesize the knowledge that has already been published in the literature. They demonstrate how political intrigue and intra-elite animosity frequently combine to pose the biggest challenges to anti-corruption initiatives in democratizing environments like Nigeria. They contend that anti-corruption initiatives that are not supported by further drastic institutional reforms are vulnerable to the broader endemic (systemic) crisis, which in the first place made the anti-corruption campaign necessary.

Karusigarira (2021) concentrated on comprehending intricate phenomena related to government like state corruption. He maintained that one important aspect of African governmentality is corruption. The hegemonic pursuit and creation of the state in Africa is accompanied by social struggles that are expressed via widespread predation and selfishness. The basis upon which the state-making process in this region of the world was/is conceivable includes an awareness of state corruption. Then, it can be as legitimate that the state's output reflects the state's formation if the act of creating the state is inherently an organized crime. Mlambo (2023) investigated the relationship between the deployment of cadres, corruption, municipal stability, and service delivery. He demonstrates how the deployment of cadres has not helped people at the local

level due to several factors, including inept people, a lack of credentials, corruption, tender greed, comrade beneficiaries, and a lack of managerial vision in local government.

The lack of effective governance and development in West African and Southern African countries is a result of the narrow and narrowing characteristics that now dominate the processes and structures of leadership crises. Moti (2019) takes a particularistic approach to addressing these issues. The study posits that there is an institutionalized culture of subordination of the political sphere to the economic sphere throughout the sub-regions, resulting in an economy that is mostly driven by the state and has a patron-clientele dynamic between the state and the economy. After gaining independence, these sub-regions' leading industries—minerals, cocoa, and petroleum—may have been largely responsible for the emergence of an assertive middle class that was independent enough to support responsible governance and an assertive economic class that was powerful enough to propel domestic development. The business class had little to no influence over the direction of economic policy, however, as successive governments in the nations that make up these sub-regions over-exploited these sectors. This further eroded the sharp edges of democratic values left by the fallen colonial fathers and solidified a neo-patrimonial fusion of political and economic elites.

The impact of the ANC policy of cadre development on South African governance and service delivery was investigated by Mlambo et al., (2022). They maintained that cadre deployment plays a role in the dysfunction of public institutions that are required to provide services to the public; as a result, riots, protests, and unnecessary spending, particularly at the local government level, have been the result. When it comes to collective growth, this leads to participatory exclusion. A qualitative research methodology was used and to collect the necessary data, a study of the literature was conducted. The quest for consistent service delivery and effective governance in South Africa's public sector is contingent upon the availability of qualified personnel with the necessary capabilities, according to the findings. It was discovered that the use of cadres fosters an environment of impunity and lack of accountability, which weakens public functioning and contributes to the breakdown of governance and service delivery. These findings will have a significant impact on the nation's efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve inclusive development.

Asomah (2019) contended that opportunities based on monopoly power, greed and a lack of effective deterrent procedures are the primary causes of great corruption, such as political corruption in Ghana. Thus, persistent political leadership failure

to adequately fortify public-sector accountability frameworks, curtail avarice, and limit political power is the main cause of unchecked political corruption. Major players, in particular the political leadership, should critically examine the legal system, power structures, and deterrent mechanisms to assist combat political corruption. This will help eliminate chances for political corruption by implementing effective checks and balances, surveillance, and sanctions.

Why do people support corrupt regimes is a topic that is sometimes overlooked in the present literature on political corruption but Manzetti and Wilson (2007) explore it. They contend that people are more likely to embrace a corrupt leader from whom they anticipate material rewards if they live in nations with weak government institutions and strong patron-client ties. The authors discover statistical evidence supporting the idea, which also aligns with some of the recent works on clientelism and institutional evolution, through a cross-national analysis of citizens in 14 different nations.

In their study, Mathonsi et al., (2022) investigated the potential, opportunities and problems that come with professionalizing the public sector in South Africa. What they contend is that the public sector in South Africa lacks talent, skills, and a strong ethical foundation. Nationwide demonstrations against the delivery of services have resulted from this. The study method used in this report was qualitative. Their goal was to increase knowledge on professionalizing the public sector in South Africa by reviewing recent literature. The necessity to professionalize the public sector to guarantee effective public service delivery was found to have arisen from problems like cadre deployment, a lack of investments in skill development, and corruption in the public sector.

Levitshy and Way (2012) investigated the factors that contribute to party-based authoritarian governments' resilience in times of crisis. The latest research on authoritarianism indicates that by giving institutionalized access to the fruits of power, ruling parties strengthen elite cohesion and, in turn, the longevity of their regimes. However, they contend that although elite cooperation may be guaranteed by access to power and rewards under regular circumstances, it frequently breaks down in times of crisis. Rather, in party-based authoritarian regimes, the identities, norms, and organizational structures that are created during extended, violent, and ideologically-driven conflict are a vital source of cohesion as well as longevity. When a crisis threatens the party's hold on power, origins in violent conflict can be crucial in keeping unity and discipline because they increase the cost of defection and provide leaders access to additional, non-material resources. So, the most resilient regimes are those in which the dominant parties blend the systems of patronage distribution with the firm identities, bonds of solidarity, and discipline engendered by violent beginnings.

Secondary data was used by Bidandi et al., (2022) to assess the nature, effects and attributes of predatory governance. The features of the literature on predatory governance in Africa and East Asia are then reviewed, with a focus on Uganda and Indonesia. The analysis illustrates how politicians use public institutions and resources for their own gain, excluding the people or taxpayers who support these kinds of policies. These demonstrate how much a regime can impact public policy, whether politically or otherwise, leading to the development of inequality, poverty, unemployment, and poor governance. Because of this, they claim that predatory governance is predicated on the notion that the state typically has limited ability to defend citizens' rights and that elites typically rule the political and socioeconomic spheres through force, corruption, or armed conflict. Research demonstrates that predatory governance has an impact on a nation's economic results and, among other things, causes corruption, violence, nepotism, poverty, unemployment, and a reduction in the space available for democracy.

The NRM's strategies from 2010 to 2020 are closely examined by Muwanga et al., (2020). They examine elite tactics that are employed both "top down," via increased use of forceful coercion and legal and administrative manoeuvres, and "bottom up," via efforts to gain support from young people living in metropolitan areas and gain access to groups that operate in the unofficial transportation industry. While there has been some success with this changing toolkit of techniques in certain locations and periods, resistance has persisted. Overall, attempts to solidify the capital's political domination have consistently failed, but opposition to the regime's authority has also not been able to impair it over time.

With the use of a conceptual-analytical examination of pertinent secondary data, Malipula (2024) clarifies the causes of Tanzania's susceptibility to political bureaucratic corruption, explains its effects and suggests mitigation actions. He argues that the main causes of political-bureaucratic corruption are weak political and bureaucratic institutions as well as the institutional safeguards put in place to combat the immorality of these elites. Such institutional fragility undermines development efforts, sparks neo-patrimonial social division, and undermines the legitimacy of the organizations tasked with combating it.

Gaps in Current Research

Seldom do qualitative research studies look at elite capture and corruption in specific African contexts. These days, research often oversimplifies corruption and misses its complex dynamics and

causes. Research on how mid-level authorities support or oppose corruption is lacking. Research tends to focus on the effects of corruption on the economy, sometimes ignoring the ramifications for citizens and public services. the preponderance of quantitative techniques; the social and political dimensions of corruption are rarely the subject of thorough qualitative investigation. Research often ignores the ways that elite capture and corruption are employed to maintain and exercise power.

Studying corruption in Africa has methodological flaws, such as the predominance of quantitative surveys over in-depth qualitative insights, and inadequate analysis of regional backgrounds, customs, and power structures. The lack of research on the historical development of corruption makes it difficult to comprehend its dynamics. state corruption is overemphasized, with the roles of non-state players being ignored. The connection between power and social institutions and corruption is poorly understood. Research on corruption frequently ignores regional and global linkages in favour of concentrating on specific nations. uncommon fusion of qualitative and quantitative methods, restricting all-encompassing comprehension. Policymakers, practitioners, and local communities have not been fully involved in the design and execution of research projects. It is common to ignore the social and cultural roots of corruption. The practical significance of research discoveries is hampered by their frequent inaccessibility to larger audiences.

The patterns and tendencies of corruption, despite gaps in the available evidence, are astounding. In daily life, bribery and extortion are rampant, especially when dealing with governmental officials. widespread embezzlement and cronyism among powerful authorities and businesspeople. Those in positions of authority encourage corruption to hold onto their positions of authority and amass fortune, election tampering, manipulation, and purchase of votes. Loyalty and personal connections foster corruption. The management and use of natural resources are associated with corruption. There are regional differences in the patterns of corruption, with certain nations exhibiting higher levels than others. Despite efforts to address it, corruption is still a concern. new developments like online corruption and cybercrime. It is difficult to combat corruption since it frequently includes intricate networks and relationships.

3. METHODOLOGY

To comprehend the intricate connections between public service delivery in Africa, administrative cadres, corrupt elites, an analysis of secondary data is essential. Finding themes and patterns will be helpful for this research. Realizing the impact of persistent problems on

the provision of public services, such as rent-seeking behaviour and bureaucratic corruption (Bayart, 1993), analyzing the body of research on certain nations or areas, such as South Africa or Nigeria (Smith, 2007), to highlight the relationships between administrative cadre behaviour and corruption. Finding similarities and contrasts across different African contexts—for example, the influence of the colonial past or the function of patronage networks—drains best practices and points in need of change (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Mamdani, 1996). Secondary data sources can create a thorough understanding of the underlying causes of corruption, its effects on the provision of public services, and how to address it while enhancing governance in Africa by examining secondary data.

To have a better grasp of the phenomenon, it only used the data that was already available. It required examining and evaluating previously gathered information from other people. This strategy works well for our research because it enables us to draw from the body of knowledge already gathered, offering a thorough and sophisticated grasp of the problem. It made use of academic books and monographs written by well-known authors and publishers, policy documents, speeches, and official statements from pertinent stakeholders, as well as peer-reviewed journals and conference papers from reliable sources, and documents from international organizations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Using these selection criteria, I made sure the data was relevant and of high quality: information must be closely linked to the goals and subject of the study; Information from reliable sources, including government papers and scholarly journals; Data gathered utilizing reliable methodological techniques and published within the last ten years to guarantee current relevance. Ultimately, I used a mix of discourse, content and theme analysis to scrutinize the secondary data. Thematic analysis assisted in identifying recurring themes and ideas. The vocabulary and tone employed by writers and stakeholders were made clear by the content analysis. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, revealed the underlying beliefs and power structures.

4. COMPREHENDING CORRUPTION IN AFRICA: A MULTIFACETED ISSUE

In Africa, corruption is a multidimensional and intricate problem that takes many different forms in different settings. It is necessary to understand how historical legacies like as slavery, colonialism, and apartheid produced power disparities and paved the way for corruption. The boundaries between proper and improper behaviour can become hazy when one appreciates cultural and social norms, particularly the customs of gift-giving and patronage.

Recognizing that authoritarianism, weak institutions, and unstable economies all contribute to the creation of corrupt conditions in political and economic systems. Understanding how complicity or ignorance may sustain corruption through foreign investment, aid, trade, and globalization. Understanding the local contexts and dynamics: a variety of elements, such as conflict, natural resources, or social structures, have an impact on corruption in different countries, regions, and communities. Being aware of how elites are captured and how power is maintained, as corruption frequently plays a role in this. Corruption is made possible by weak laws, lax enforcement, and a lack of accountability, among other institutional weaknesses that are evaluated. Understanding human factors: one's corrupt behaviour is driven by personal greed, opportunism, and survival tactics. The effect on development because Corruption aggravates inequality, erodes trust, and impedes economic growth. Additionally, as corruption changes and responds to shifting circumstances and anti-corruption initiatives, resilience and adaptation are essential traits.

Colonialism ravaged Africa throughout the 15th and 20th centuries, establishing a culture of reliance in which indigenous elites were subservient to foreign forces (Ake, 1996). Its ruthless promotion of resource exploitation and extraction resulted in institutional fragility and underdevelopment. African nations acquired the institutional legacies of colonialism upon gaining their independence in the middle of the 20th century, including networks of patronage and the concentration of power (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Nationalist movements battled to change these institutions, frequently sustaining neo-patrimonial practices. Neopatrimonialism in post-independence Africa greatly aided in the continuation of corruption. As defined by (Bratton & van de Walle, 1994), "Neopatrimonialism is a system where politicians use state resources to maintain power and reward loyalists." According to Bayart (1993), "Corruption in neo-patrimonial systems is not a deviation from the norm, but the norm itself." The inference was that corruption was made easier by colonialism and neopatrimonialism. Corrupt practices were made possible by centralized power, patronage networks, and weak institutions. Good governance and growth were hampered by the entrenched corruption. Indeed, "Corruption is not just a matter of individual morality, but a structural feature of neo-patrimonial systems." (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Unfortunately, "The legacy of colonialism and neopatrimonialism continues to shape the trajectory of corruption in Africa." (Ake, 1996).

A sophisticated network of ties and coalitions between influential people and organizations exists throughout Africa, allowing them to hold onto power and support corruption. Elites from the corporate, military, and political spheres get together to form close-knit networks. favours, resources, and protection are traded to keep power and allegiance. reliance on clients to obtain opportunities, resources, and services. partiality in politics and business towards allies and friends. giving family members priority while making decisions and scheduling appointments. Corrupt activities like embezzlement and bribery are made easier by elite networks. Social and economic inequality are sustained via patronage systems. Elites shield one another from judgment and penalties. Patronage systems are detrimental to democratic processes and institutions. By encouraging intimate ties between influential people and groups, which result in partiality and unfair advantages, elite networks and patronage structures continue to support corruption.

Cronyism is one of the primary causes of corruption because it fosters an atmosphere in which favoritism and personal ties take precedence over qualifications (Tytko et al., 2020). This allows the wealthy to plunder public funds for their gain while staying safe in their networks of patronage. Patronage systems perpetuate inequality by creating a privileged class that maintains power and wealth through corrupt means." (Scott, 1972). They provide a veil of secrecy and protection for corrupt activities, making it difficult to detect and prosecute embezzlement (Tanzi, 1997). They keep a culture of impunity alive by shielding elites from criticism and punishment. Elite networks and patronage systems create a culture of untouchability, where those in power are above the law (Orock, 2015) restricting access to resources and opportunities, thereby sustaining social and economic inequality. " Throughout Africa, the situations as "Patrimony is the lifeblood of corruption," observes Tanzi (1998). The culprits are identified by Wedeman (2003) as "Elite networks are the backbone of corrupt systems." As stated by Scott (1972), "Clientelism is a key mechanism for maintaining power and control."

5. CORRUPT ELITES IN AFRICA

In Africa, there are a lot of elites who feed the cycle of favoritism, corruption and bad governance. The thirst for wealth, power, and influence is one trait shared by corrupt elites in Africa (Bayart, 1993). To retain power, they frequently put their interests ahead of that of the public, resorting to pressure and manipulation (Chabal, 2009). Corrupt elites in Africa include those who hold high-ranking political positions and frequently use them for personal gain (Stiglitz, 2012); business executives and entrepreneurs who take advantage of their connections to make money (Shaxson, 2011); and traditional leaders such as chiefs and monarchs who misuse their power (Mamdani, 1996). A variety of corrupt practices, such as theft, nepotism and patronage are practiced by corrupt elites (Harnois &

Gagnon, 2023). The far-reaching effects of this conduct include the delivery of public services inefficiently and ineffectively (Hyden, 2006); the expansion of wealth and social inequality (Stiglitz, 2012); the deterioration of institutional confidence and the escalation of social unrest (Chabal, 2009). This study uses the presidents of Sani Abacha of Nigeria, Jacob Juma of South Africa, and Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as examples to highlight the perils associated with corrupt elites.

The Nigerian government of former President Sani Abacha (1993-1998) was famous for its widespread corruption and heinous violations of human rights, making it one of the most violent and corrupt dictatorships in Africa (Isaac, 2010). Widespread cronyism, nepotism, and embezzlement characterized Abacha's rule. Through dishonest oil transactions, contract scams, and other illegal ways, the president and his friends plundered the nation's coffers and amassed enormous fortunes (Human Rights Watch, 1999). The corruption of the regime was so pervasive that it came to symbolize Abacha's reign. Human rights violations committed by the Abacha administration were very well-known and these included: detainees were often tortured by security agents, frequently to coerce confessions or silence critics. After being taken into custody or arrested by security personnel, a large number of Nigerians disappeared and were never seen again (Rasak, 2012). Summary killings were carried out by security personnel, frequently under the pretext of preventing crime or putting an end to opposition. The government restricted press, assembly, and speech rights among other civil liberties (Ugoani, 2018). Nigeria had numerous negative effects under Abacha's rule, including Economic progress being hampered by corruption and poor management, which kept poverty and inequality alive. Social unrest and protests were sparked by widespread discontent, which was exacerbated by corruption and violations of human rights. Due to the damage done to Nigeria's image, sanctions and international isolation resulted. The devastating effects of corrupt elites and administrative cadres in Africa are exemplified by Sani Abacha's government in Nigeria. Nigeria's economy, society, and international standing were severely damaged by the corruption and violations of human rights committed by his government. To stop such abuses of power and advance sustainable development in Africa, this case study emphasizes the importance of accountability, openness, and sound governance (Falode, 2018; Agbiboa, 2014, 2013).

An egregious example of corrupt elites and state capture in Africa is the Gupta family's influence on former President Jacob Zuma's administration in South Africa (2009-2018) (Makhura, 2021). The family's close ties to Zuma and his cronies gave them considerable influence, which fuelled rampant corruption and the disintegration of democratic institutions (Rapanyane & Ngoepe, 2020). Indian immigrants to South Africa in the 1990s, the Gupta family, amassed their commercial empire in dubious ways, such as using their connection with Zuma to gain advantageous government contracts and sway policy (Mlambo, 2019). Through an intricate web of dummy firms and offshore accounts, they are accused of money laundering. The Gupta family's power resulted in state capture, which was typified by Zuma appointing Gupta cronies to important roles, such as executive of state-owned enterprises and cabinet ministers; the Guptas influenced policy decisions, frequently for the benefit of their commercial interests (Rapanyane, 2022; Saunderson-Meyer, 2018). To obtain permits and contracts, they allegedly bought off officials. The state capture of the Gupta family had far-reaching effects; corruption and mismanagement caused investor confidence to decline and the economy to stagnate; the Gupta family's influence weakened the independence of institutions like the media, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies; and state capture stoked public unrest and prompted calls for Zuma's resignation (Mlambo et al., 2023). The perils of state capture and corrupt elites in Africa are best shown by the Gupta family's influence on Zuma's administration in South Africa. To stop the misuse of power and advance sustainable development, this case study emphasizes the necessity of strong democratic institutions, accountability, and openness (Pillay et al., 2023).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Joseph Kabila's rule from 2001 to 2019 was characterized by widespread corruption, patronage and violations of human rights, which fuelled an ongoing cycle of instability and underdevelopment (Yigzaw, 2019; Rupiya, 2018). Under Kabila's rule, billions of dollars in embezzled state funds went missing. Kabila was able to stay in power by using a network of loyalists and rewarding them with well-paying jobs and contracts (Tshimanga, 2021). To stay in power, the government tampered with state institutions such as the electoral commission and the judiciary. Millions were uprooted as a result of conflict and state-sponsored violence; captives endured torture, including rape and beatings; security forces carried out summary killings, frequently targeting activists and sympathizers of the opposition (Keyes, 2022). One of the many terrible effects of Kabila' administration was stasis in the economy. Economic growth was hampered by corruption and poor management, which prolonged poverty. The general unhappiness that sparked protests and violence was fuelled by corruption and violations of human rights (Bakamana, 2021). As a result of the regime's activities, neighbouring countries saw increased instability in the region. The corrupt elites and administrative cadres that plague Africa are best illustrated by Kabila's administration in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (Matti, 2010). The present case study underscores the necessity of strong institutions, openness, and responsibility in averting power abuse and advancing sustainable development. Human rights advocacy and corruption prevention in the DRC require the backing of the international community. In conclusion, the integrity of progress and stability in Africa is undermined by corrupt elites who feed the cycle of patronage, corruption, and bad governance (Yannick, 2015).

6. ADMINISTRATIVE CADRES AND CORRUPTION

The persons and organizations in charge of implementing government directives and programs are known as administrative cadres (Wu & Christensen, 2021). It is these cadres that enable efficient public administration, governance, and service delivery. These are experienced bureaucrats who execute orders from higher up. They are in charge of government ministries, divisions, and offices. They are employees who assist, including clerical, technical, and specialist personnel. The public services, policy implementation, human resource management, record keeping, data management, and public financial management fall under their purview. Administrative cadres in Africa are charged for carrying out government policies and programs, managing public resources and personnel, providing basic services to citizens, and counseling policymakers on implementation and governance (Hoffman, 2013). Administrative cadres can make blunders despite performing these noble tasks. Administrative cadres are crucial to the provision of public services because they carry out plans and programs (United Nations, 2019). Yet as Therkildsen (2001) notes, in addition to inefficient bureaucracies, a lack of accountability, and inadequate infrastructure, their operations are often hampered by rent-seeking behavior and bureaucratic corruption, which maintains self-interest over the public good (Hyden, 2013). These issues impair the delivery of public services and aggravate social and economic inequality (World Bank, 2018).

Administrative cadres in charge of executing plans and programs frequently encourage corruption in the public sector in Africa. This is caused by them abusing their positions to serve their interests rather than the public interest (Bayart, 1993); exchanging resources and favours for support and allegiance; undermining meritocracy and accountability; and creating opportunities for corruption through complex and opaque procedures (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Corruption undermines the provision of public services, aggravating social and economic inequalities. Therkildsen (2001) notes that "corruption is a major obstacle to effective public administration and service delivery in Africa." Administrative cadres are in charge

of carrying out policies and programs. They are in charge of public servants and assets. They are also in charge of providing the necessities for people. They counsel policymakers on implementation and governance. The authority of administrative cadres might lead to corruption and misuse of power while carrying out these duties. Administrative cadres who abuse their positions to further their own interests may skew the way policies are implemented. Patronage and partiality can undermine merit-based decisions. A deficiency of efficient oversight and accountability mechanisms might also facilitate corrupt activities. Naturally, Khan (2005) states that "administrative cadres are the gatekeepers of public resources, and their actions can either prevent or perpetuate corruption." (Langseth, 2017) claims that "the discretionary power of administrative cadres can be a breeding ground for corruption if not checked." Tanzi (1998) argues that "rent-seeking behaviour by administrative cadres undermines the effectiveness of public service delivery and reinforces corrupt systems." However, as the World Bank (2018) notes, "Ensuring good governance and preventing corruption requires a competent and impartial administrative cadre."

Weber (1922) cautioned in his groundbreaking book that if bureaucratic institutions are allowed to flourish, corruption may result. In practice, African bureaucracies frequently display these traits, allowing corrupt elites and administrative cadres to take advantage of their positions for personal gain. He contended that bureaucratic systems can concentrate power in the hands of a few, creating opportunities for abuse; bureaucrats may prioritize loyalty to their superiors over the interests of the public, fostering a culture of corruption. Understanding Weber's cautions can aid in developing tactics to stop bureaucratic corruption and promote accountability in African public services.

A study by Riggs (1964) has shown that corruption may be sustained by administrative cadres in underdeveloped countries. He believed that "prismatic" cultures, in which traditional and modern institutions coexist and corruption is fostered, were common in developing countries. Administrative cadres who are responsible for implementing policies sometimes have personal interests at odds with the public interest when it comes to using their positions. An inadequate system of supervision and control among administrative cadres allows corruption to occur. The prismatic societies in which African administrative cadres sometimes operate permit them to exploit their positions for personal gain, perpetuating corruption and undermining the delivery of public services. It is beneficial to understand Riggs' viewpoint to enhance accountability and end corruption in African public services.

Langseth (2017) considered at how reforming the civil service can help lower corruption in Africa.

Establishing merit-based employment practices, he claimed, can reduce nepotism and favoritism. Improved professionalization and training can lead to an increase in transparency and accountability. Corrupt practices can be minimized through the use of performance management systems. Decision-making and power decentralization can reduce the concentration of authority and the probability of corruption. Putting these ideas into reality could help African countries improve public services, reduce corruption, and strengthen their civil servants.

The relationship between administrative cadres and corruption in emerging countries was examined by Khan (2005). It was revealed to him that corrupt practices and patronage are often fostered by informal networks created by upper management. Administrative cadres have the potential to behave in a rent-seeking way, abusing their positions for personal gain. Inadequate oversight and feeble establishments enable corrupt actions. Corruption dynamics are influenced by a variety of local contextual factors, including social and political systems. In developing countries, especially those in Africa, administrative cadres, corruption, and contextual factors interact in a complex way that Khan's research clarifies. Understanding these elements can assist direct strategies to improve good governance and fight corruption.

Tanzi (1998) emphasized that transparent and accountable procedures for administrative cadres are necessary to end corruption. He argued that strict norms and guidelines might reduce discretion and opportunities for corruption. Covert corrupt practices can be stopped by implementing transparency in administrative decision-making and procedure. Improving oversight committees and auditing practices as accountability mechanisms aids in detecting and preventing corruption. A strong civil society and a free press can expose corrupt practices and hold administrative cadres accountable. Tanzi's views emphasize how crucial transparency and accountability are in the fight against corruption in the African public sector. By implementing these tactics, Africa may promote good government and reduce corruption.

The World Bank (2018) emphasized the need for strong administrative cadres to reduce corruption and ensure good governance in Africa. The study demonstrated how a lack of institutional capacity and skilled staff can exacerbate corrupt practices and poor administrative frameworks. Failing to promote and hire individuals based on merit may lead to corrupt and underqualified officials. Inadequate training and capacity building may impair an administrative cadre's ability to perform effectively. Effective management and powerful leadership are necessary to promote transparency, accountability, and honesty. According to a World Bank study, Africa has to invest in building robust administrative frameworks to fight corruption, promote good governance, and achieve sustainable development.

Admittedly, Langseth (2017) feels that bureaucratic corruption and corrupt elites frequently undermine the integrity of administrative cadres, which are the foundation of public service delivery. But as Mkhize et al., (2024) highlighted, corruption in the provision of public services remains the main barrier to Africa's growth, sustaining poverty and inequality. Khan (2005) emphasized that "Rent-seeking behavior by administrative cadres undermines the effectiveness of public service delivery and reinforces corrupt systems." An analogous complaint is made by the World Bank (2018), which states that "Bureaucratic corruption is a key challenge to public service delivery in Africa, requiring urgent attention and reform."

When it comes to carrying out policies and providing public services, administrative cadres made up of bureaucrats and public officials are essential. Their acts, therefore, have the potential to exacerbate corruption and erode public confidence in government. The foundation of public administration is made up of administrative cadres, who are in charge of resource management, policy implementation, and service delivery. They play a vital role in guaranteeing efficient government and the provision of public services. By misappropriating public funds for their benefit (Tanzi, 1998), giving preferential treatment to family and friends in hiring and contract negotiations (Klitgaard, 1988), and taking bribes in exchange for preferential treatment (Rose-Ackerman, 1999), administrative cadres can be linked to corruption. Although administrative cadres are not naturally corrupt, conditions like a lack of sufficient oversight and accountability procedures (Hyden, 2006) and a willingness to tolerate corruption and favouritism (Chabal, 2009) can have an impact on their behaviour.

Nigeria and South Africa are the two most prominent case studies of administrative cadre corruption in Africa. The degree of corruption in Nigeria's public service was made evident in 2019 when the Office of the Accountant General became entangled in a ₦2 billion embezzlement controversy (Onuigbo & Eme, 2015). This instance demonstrates how administrative cadres undermine good government and support corruption. Money intended for salary and pension payments was transferred into personal accounts (Lewis, 2021). A complicated network of conspirators, including bank personnel and government officials, were involved in the hoax. Wide-ranging ramifications of this scandal include the embezzlement further undermining public confidence in government agencies, the ₦2 billion that was taken might have been utilized to pay for crucial public services, and the case highlights flaws in Nigeria's financial management framework. This occurrence shows

how administrative cadres can misuse their positions for personal benefit, underscoring the necessity for swift reform of Nigeria's financial management systems, the need to stop and identify corruption and the requirement that officials be held accountable for their actions. Africa's administrative cadres continue to engage in corrupt practices, as evidenced by the ₦2 billion embezzlement scandal at Nigeria's Office of the Accountant-General. To stop these kinds of things from happening, this case study validates the urgent need for change and more accountability in public service.

Widespread misconduct inside the South African Revenue Service (SARS) was revealed in the Public Protector's report of 2019, underscoring the chronic corruption in South Africa's public sector (Maile & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023). This controversy highlights how administrative cadres sabotage good governance and encourage corruption. As to the report, there was a breach in SARS's information technology system that made fraud and corruption possible, senior positions were filled without following the correct processes, and contracts were given to organizations and individuals with connections (Thusi et al., 2023). The corruption in this scandal has serious ramifications for the state, SARS, and the public at large. It has also made SARS's reputation worse and jeopardized its ability to properly collect taxes. The public's trust in SARS and government institutions has been further damaged. This episode shows how administrative cadres can misuse their positions for personal benefit, underscoring the need for immediate reform of SARS's governance and management cultures, the need to prevent and detect corruption and the requirement that officials be held accountable for their activities (Dumisa & Amao, 2015). A clear reminder of the unscrupulous behaviours that African administrative cadres continue is the SARS corruption crisis.

7. PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN AFRICA

Africa's public service delivery is a complicated and diverse problem that is impacted by many factors, such as insufficient funding, corrupt practices and ineffective administrative frameworks. In Africa, corruption poses a serious barrier to the efficient provision of public services. Leys (1965) asserts that unscrupulous elites frequently sustain corruption in Africa by abusing their position of authority and influence to take advantage of public resources for private benefit. This issue has been documented in some African nations, such as Nigeria, where insufficient healthcare services have resulted from public sector corruption (Smith, 2007). In South Africa, unequal access to high-quality education has been caused by corruption in the education sector, which has perpetuated inequality (Panday, 2012). Similar delays in service delivery have been caused by public sector

corruption in Kenya, which has irritated the populace (Barkan, 2012).

Public service delivery in Africa is further hampered by ineffective administrative systems. Service delivery is delayed in Africa because bureaucratic procedures are frequently laborious and lengthy, claims Hyden (2013). For instance, Tanzania's public sector is devoid of accountability and is marked by inefficiency, which results in subpar healthcare services (Mtega, 2014). Sufficient Materials and Growing Capacity To deliver public services effectively, there must be enough resources and capacity building. However, a lot of African nations struggle with a lack of resources, such as sufficient capital and highly qualified workers.

Inadequate funding, inefficiency and corruption are just a few of the issues that African public service delivery must contend with. Embezzlement, bribery, and nepotism, together with bureaucratic red tape, sluggish service delivery, and a lack of accountability, all impede the provision of public services in Africa. Delivery of public services is hampered by corruption because it diverts funds intended for such services. The public loses faith in government institutions as a result of corruption. Effective service delivery is hampered by corruption. Effective public service delivery in Africa is severely hampered by corruption. The prevention and detection of corruption, the holding of officials responsible for their acts, and the immediate reform of public service delivery systems are all necessary to combat corruption. instances of corruption failing to provide citizens with appropriate services may be found throughout Africa, with Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya serving as prominent instances.

Nigeria's health problems have been made worse by the public health sector's corruption, which has led to insufficient healthcare services. This phenomenon serves as a clear illustration of how corrupt officials and elites threaten the provision of public services in Africa (Okunola et al., 2019). Due to unethical procurement methods, money intended for healthcare services has been diverted for personal gain, resulting in a shortage of necessary medications and equipment and dilapidated healthcare facilities as a result of maintenance monies embezzled (Ibietan, 2019). The effects of corruption in the public health system are extensive, ranging from high death rates to poor health outcomes caused by insufficient healthcare services. Corruption weakens public confidence in the medical system. Corruption makes the already limited resources for healthcare more difficult to come by. Corruption in Nigeria's health system is a sign of a larger issue: a breakdown in accountability and governance. Strong oversight procedures are needed to stop and identify corruption to combat it. Authorities need to answer for their deeds. For efficient service delivery, the public health system urgently requires change. The Nigerian

healthcare system suffers greatly as a result of public health sector corruption. This case study emphasizes how urgent action is required in Africa to combat corruption and guarantee the provision of efficient public services (Okafor, 2018).

Public safety has been seriously jeopardized by corruption in South Africa's police force, which has undermined the very institution that is supposed to safeguard the people (Kaizer, 2022). Police officers are now more likely to ask for payments from citizens than to enforce the law due to corruption inside the force. Corruption-ridden officials protect criminal organizations from punishment. Instead of focusing on public safety, police resources are being diverted for personal gain. The ramifications of police corruption are extensive, as it seriously undermines public confidence in law enforcement. Criminal conduct is emboldened by corruption, endangering public safety (Tshishonga, 2014). A culture of impunity is sustained by corruption, which erodes the effectiveness of law enforcement. The police force in South Africa is corrupt, which is a sign of larger problems with governance. Strong oversight procedures are necessary to combat corruption and to stop and identify it. Officers need to be made to answer for their acts. To regain its efficacy and integrity, the police force urgently requires change. Public safety is severely impacted by corruption in South Africa's police force (Gumede, 2015). This case study emphasizes how urgent action is required in Africa to combat corruption and guarantee the provision of efficient public services.

Kenya's human capital development has been undermined by low learning outcomes caused by corruption in the country's education system. Because of corruption in the education industry, funds meant for non-existent schools have been diverted from accredited schools. Instructors are not showing up for work, taking their wages without doing their jobs (Onyango, 2024). Cheating by students jeopardizes the integrity of national exams. There are numerous negative effects of corruption in the education sector, one of which is that it lowers educational standards and results in subpar academic achievement. Resources for vital education services are diverted by corruption. The public's confidence in the educational system is seriously eroded. A sign of more serious governance issues is corruption in Kenya's education system (Mbugua & Njoroge, 2018). It takes strong monitoring procedures to stop and identify corruption to combat it. For their conduct, officials must be held responsible. To regain its efficacy and integrity, the school system urgently requires reform. The loss of human capital development is a direct result of corruption in Kenya's education system. To combat corruption and guarantee efficient public service delivery throughout Africa, this case study emphasizes the urgency of

taking immediate action.

8. COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Abundant case studies show how corrupt administrative cadres and elites have weakened the provision of public services, exacerbated inequality, and established corruption in several African countries. The most recurring themes among them are the collusion of corrupt elites and administrative cadres to impede the provision of public services and sustain corruption. Poverty and inequality result from the manipulation of state institutions for private benefit. In important industries like oil, procurement, and natural resources, corruption is pervasive. However, these country case studies demonstrate the damaging effects of corrupt administrative cadres and elites throughout Africa, underscoring the urgent need for reforms aimed at addressing the underlying causes of corruption and advancing good governance. This "Islands of Vanity" study emphasizes how critical it is to comprehend the intricate connections that exist in Africa between public service, administrative cadres, and corrupt elites.

Nigeria's Corruption in the Oil and Gas Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

With severe consequences for the country's development, Nigeria's oil and gas industry has been beset by corruption, which has sustained clientelism and favoritism. Through the use of their positions to bestow favours and incentives on devoted friends and allies, corrupt elites and administrative cadres have controlled the oil and gas industry for their own personal gain (Mbaku, 2007). Lewis (2011) argues that this has led to the emergence of a culture that prioritizes loyalty and dependency over meritocracy and accountability. By using intricate networks of shell corporations and bank accounts, they have embezzled billions of dollars from the oil and gas industry (Okonkwo, 2016). They took oil corporations' bribes in return for advantageous contracts and permits (Ibrahim, 2017). Ignoring talent, they have elevated devoted cronies and followers to important roles in the oil and gas industry (Egwu, 2017). In the oil and gas industry, patronage and clientelism have been sustained by the activities of dishonest elites and administrative cadres, resulting in a system where loyalty and connections are valued over merit and responsibility (Mbaku, 2007). There are extensive ramifications from corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Significant income losses due to corruption are estimated to have occurred between 1960 and 2008 at a cost of over $400 billion (Okonkwo, 2016). Because a small elite gain at the expense of the masses, corruption has perpetuated poverty and inequality (Ibrahim, 2017). Environmental standards have been compromised by corruption, resulting in oil spills and environmental deterioration (Egwu, 2017). Since the oil and gas industry dominates the economy, corruption has impeded the growth of

other industries (Lewis, 2011)

South Africa's State Capture: Corrupt relationships between Political Elites and Administrative cadres

In South Africa, the term "state capture" describes how unscrupulous elites and administrative cadres manipulate state institutions and resources for their benefit (Pauw, 2017). Undermining democracy and progress, this tendency has been sustained by corrupt links between administrative cadres and political elites (Moyane, 2018). Political leaders and administrative cadres have corrupt links that include in return for making good decisions, administrative cadres get bribes from political elites (Pauw, 2017). Loyal friends and associates of political elites are appointed to important positions in state institutions (Moyane, 2018). In return for their allegiance and support, administrative cadres receive gifts and favours from political elites (Tshabalala, 2019). The effects of state capture on South Africa are extensive. State capture threatens democratic processes and erodes public confidence in state institutions (Pauw, 2017). Economic disparity is sustained via state capture, whereby corrupt elites and administrative cadres reap benefits at the expense of the majority (Moyane, 2018). Because state institutions are exploited for private advantage, state capture results in institutional deterioration (Tshabalala, 2019). Environmental deterioration has resulted from state capture when unscrupulous elites put their interests ahead of sustainable development (Marquard, 2006). Social injustice is sustained by state capture since marginalized communities are not included in decision-making processes (Habib, 2013).

Kenya's Corruption in the Agricultural Sector: Perpetuating Embezzlement and Nepotism

The agricultural industry in Kenya is plagued by widespread corruption that feeds nepotism and theft and harms the country's progress. Bounty, embezzlement, and nepotism are only a few of the wrongdoings that occur in Kenya's agriculture industry when there is corruption (Kamau, 2018). Corruption is made possible by the intricate web of connections that exist in this industry between farmers, government representatives, and other stakeholders (Njoroge, 2019). Under corruption in the agriculture industry, government officials and other players steal money intended for farmers and install their devoted friends and allies in important positions, hence perpetuating nepotism and embezzlement (Kamau, 2018). There are extensive ramifications from corruption in Kenya's agriculture industry. Due to farmers' lack of access to markets and resources, corruption threatens food security (Hope, 2024). Economic disparity is sustained by corruption since it favours a few elites at the expense of the majority (Dorinet et al., 2021). Corruption impedes the agricultural sector's growth, hence sustaining poverty and underdevelopment (Kiplagat,

2017).

Egypt's Corruption in the Mubarak Regime: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

Widespread corruption under the Mubarak government, which ruled Egypt from 1981 to 2011 (Abdelbaki, 2017), sustained clientelism and patronage and had a significant negative impact on the country's progress. Under the Mubarak administration, corruption took several forms, such as nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery (Abdelrahman, 2017). Corruption was made possible by the intricate networks of connections that existed between government officials, corporate elites, and other stakeholders under the dictatorship (Soliman, 2011).Under the Mubarak administration, corruption fuelled a culture of patronage and clientelism in which powerful businesspeople and government officials gave favours and incentives to devoted allies and followers (Khasyiin, 2019). Instead of fostering a culture of accountability and meritocracy, this fostered a culture of reliance and allegiance (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2014). Corruption throughout the Mubarak administration had far-reaching effects. Economic development was hampered by corruption because growth opportunities were lost and resources were misallocated (Hassan, 2015). Because a small elite gained at the expense of the majority, corruption continued social inequality (Yingling & Arafa, 2013). Political instability was exacerbated by corruption as the regime's legitimacy was undermined and resistance increased (Henderson & Ganguly, 2015).

Democratic Republic of Congo's Corruption in the Mining Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has an abundance of natural resources, especially minerals, but corruption in the mining industry has sustained clientelism and patronage, impeding growth and enriching a small elite (Rusembuka, 2015). Various forms of wrongdoing, such as bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, are involved in corruption in the DRC's mining sector (Global Witness, 2017). A complicated web of relationships between government officials, mining firms, and other stakeholders characterizes this sector, providing chances for corruption (CENADEP, 2018). Patronage and clientelism are maintained via corruption in the mining industry, whereby mining corporations and government representatives give rewards and privileges to devoted allies and supporters (Anderson, 2023). Instead of promoting accountability and meritocracy, this fosters a culture of reliance and allegiance (CENADEP, 2018). There are extensive ramifications from corruption in the DRC's mining industry. An estimated $1 billion or more is lost in revenue each year as a result of corruption (Global Witness, 2017). Environmental regulations are compromised by corruption, which has negative social and environmental effects (Titeca & Edmond, 2019).

Corruption impedes the mining industry's growth, hence sustaining poverty and underdevelopment (Kennes, 2017).

Ghana's Corruption in the Gold Mining Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

With serious ramifications for the growth of the country, corruption in Ghana's gold mining industry has sustained clientelism and patronage. In Ghana's gold mining industry, corruption takes several forms, such as embezzlement, nepotism, and bribery (Ayamga, 2018). A complicated web of relationships between government officials, mining firms, and other stakeholders characterizes this industry, providing chances for corruption (Crawford & Botchwey, 2017). Because government officials and mining firms give rewards and privileges to their faithful friends and allies, corruption in the gold mining industry reinforces patronage and clientelism (Ampaw et al., 2023). This fosters a culture of reliance and allegiance as opposed to accountability and meritocracy (Akabzaa, 2017). The ramifications of corruption within Ghana's gold mining industry are extensive. Significant income losses are caused by corruption; they are estimated to be worth over $1 billion yearly (Dupuy, 2017). Corruption weakens environmental laws, which has negative effects on society and the environment (Hausermann & Ferring, 2018). Corruption impedes the mining industry's growth, hence sustaining poverty and underdevelopment (Hilson, 2016).

Tunisia's Corruption in the Ben Ali Regime: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

From 1987 to 2011, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's reign in Tunisia was characterized by pervasive corruption, cronyism and clientelism (Baumann, 2017). The nation's politics, economics, and society were all significantly impacted by these actions. The Ben Ali government was rife with corruption. The president and his family dominated a wide range of industries, including as banking, transportation, and telecommunications (Hibou, 2006). As a result, crony capitalism developed, giving lucrative contracts and preferential treatment to individuals who were connected to the dictatorship. Under Ben Ali's leadership, Tunisia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score dramatically decreased, according to Transparency International, indicating rising levels of corruption (Transparency International, 2020). The corruption of the dictatorship stretched beyond the realm of business to include law enforcement, the judiciary, and other public institutions. The survival strategy of the Ben Ali government depended heavily on patronage and clientelism. To reward devoted supporters with employment, privileges, and other rewards, the president and his associates exploited their influence (Cavatorta & Haugbølle, 2012). In return, the regime built a network of devoted and supportive clients who relied on it for their well-being. Proximity to the president earned government contracts and favourable treatment in the commercial sector, which was part of the regime's patronage system (Bellin, 2002). Development and economic growth were hampered as a result of the absence of competition and innovation. Tunisia suffered greatly as a result of the Ben Ali regime's corruption, favoritism and clientelism. The poor allocation of resources caused by crony capitalism and corruption hindered economic growth and development (World Bank, 2011). Authoritarianism was sustained by the regime's patronage system, which weakened democratic institutions and procedures (Brumberg, 2003). Social inequality was made worse by corruption and clientelism as people with ties to the dictatorship amassed riches and power (Meddeb, 2011). The corruption, clientelism and favoritism of the Ben Ali government had disastrous long-term effects on Tunisia. The establishment of an anti-corruption agency and the advancement of accountability and openness have been among the measures taken to address these problems during the nation's democratic transition since 2011 (INLUCC, 2020). Still, a lot of work needs to be done to guarantee a more just and equal society and to remove the legacy of corruption.

Zambia's Corruption in the Mining Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

The mining industry in Zambia is plagued by the widespread problem of corruption that feeds clientelism and favoritism and hurts the country's progress (Villar & Papyrakis, 2017). Bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism are just a few of the ways corruption manifests itself in the mining industry (Transparency International, 2020). Mining firms frequently use dishonest methods to get concessions, licenses, and preferential treatment from government representatives (McNamara, 2023). Patronage, in which persons in positions of authority give privileges and favors to devoted followers, is sustained by this corruption (Aurélien et al., 2022). Clientelism in the mining industry produces a network of clients who are reliant on the ruling class for their survival and who provide their support and allegiance in return (Rakner, 2017). This has very serious ramifications. Patronage and corruption impede economic growth and development by causing inefficient resource allocation (World Bank, 2019). Corruption weakens environmental laws, which causes pollution and environmental deterioration (Kambani & Masase, 2019). Clientelism and corruption make social inequality worse by allowing members of the governing class to amass riches and influence (Oxfam, 2018).

Uganda's Corruption in the Oil and Gas Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism.

The oil and gas industry in Uganda, which plays a vital role in the country's economy, is beset

by issues of corruption, favoritism and clientelism (Mbabazi et al., 2020b; Vokes, 2012). These actions support inequality and environmental degradation by undermining the sector's ability to spur economic growth and development. In the oil and gas industry, corruption can take many different forms, such as nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery (Mosbacher, 2013). Businesses frequently use dishonest tactics to get permits, concessions, and preferential treatment from public servants (Ogwang et al., 2019; Van Alstine et al., 2014). Patronage is sustained by this corruption, since individuals in positions of authority give advantages and privileges to devoted followers (Hickey & Izama, 2017). The practice of clientelism in the oil and gas industry generates a network of dependent customers who provide loyalty and support to the ruling class in exchange for their well-being (Kjær et al., 2021). Serious ramifications follow from this. Economic growth and progress are hindered by poor resource allocation caused by corruption and patronage (Ogwang & Vanclay, 2019). Regulations pertaining to the environment are compromised by corruption, which results in pollution and environmental problems (Sturesson & Zobel, 2015). As individuals associated with the governing class amass wealth and power, corruption and clientelism intensify social inequality (Mbabazi et al., 2020a). There are still issues despite reform initiatives. Ineffective institutions make regulation and supervision ineffective (Bybee & Johannes, 2014). Corruption and secrecy are sustained by limited access to knowledge.

Cameroon's Corruption in the Logging and Timber Sector: Perpetuating Patronage and Clientelism

The logging and forestry industry in Cameroon, which makes a substantial economic contribution to the country, is beset by corruption, clientelism and patronage (Alemagi, 2011). The sector's ability to promote sustainable economic growth and development is weakened by these practices, which also exacerbate social inequality and environmental degradation. In the logging and forestry industry, corruption can take many different forms, such as nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery (Alemagi & Kozak, 2010). Businesses frequently use dishonest tactics to get export licenses, logging concessions, and preferential treatment from government representatives (Ngaba et al., 2023). Patronage is sustained by this corruption, since individuals in positions of authority give advantages and privileges to devoted followers (Meyfroidt & Lambin, 2022). Clientelism in the logging and wood industry produces a network of customers who are loyal to and supportive of the ruling class, relying on them for their well-being (Ackom et al., 2013). This has very serious ramifications. Corruption erodes the effectiveness of environmental laws, which results in over-logging, deforestation, and habitat degradation (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Clientelism and corruption make social

inequality worse by allowing members of the governing class to amass riches and influence (Piabuo et al., 2021). Patronage and corruption impede economic growth and development by causing inefficient resource allocation (Nana et al., 2021). Reform initiatives, notwithstanding, problems endure. Effective regulation and oversight are hampered by institutional deficiencies (Cheo, 2015). Information scarcity fosters corruption and secrecy (Muh et al., 2018).

9. ISLANDS OF VANITY: CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC SERVICE IN AFRICA

The phrase "Islands of vanity" describes places where people cannot access or use public services, frequently as a result of corruption and inefficiency. Development is hampered and inequality is maintained by these "islands". Osaghae (2002) asserts that unscrupulous elites frequently establish "islands of vanity" by putting their interests ahead of the needs of the populace. For instance, there are health disparities in Nigeria because certain areas do not have access to sanitary conditions or clean water (Oyedele, 2015). Essentially, "Islands of vanity" are the corrupt, self-serving structures that African elites and administrative cadres built, undermining the provision of public services. These "islands" serve the interests of the public interest second to personal gain, which encourages corruption and inefficiency. "Islands of vanity" are defined by leaders and cadres who put their interests ahead of those of the public; bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism are pervasive; public services are jeopardized; and resources are misapplied. "Islands of vanity" are created by corrupt elites and administrative cadres who cultivate connections to hold onto privilege and power, take advantage of public service for personal benefit, and manipulate institutions to further their preferences. "Islands of vanity" have terrible repercussions, compromising service delivery with corruption and inefficiency. Institutional trust is seriously undermined. Poverty is sustained and economic development is hampered by corruption. Essentially, investment has been discouraged, economic diversification has been hampered and sustainable growth has been impeded by corruption and bad governance. Social cohesion and stability are at risk due to the failure to confront poverty and inequality, which has resulted in social and economic marginalization.

Delivery of services is significantly impacted by "islands of vanity" established by dishonest elites and administrative cadres in Africa, which breeds corruption and inefficiency. "Islands of vanity" cause resource diversion: Corruption takes funds away from vital public services (Tanzi, 1998). Inadequate service delivery is a result of corruption and inefficiency (Hyden, 2006). Insufficient responsibility: "Islands of vanity" sustain

a climate of impunity, eroding responsibility (Chabal, 2009). The corruption that is sustained by "islands of vanity" results in: The act of embezzling public funds for personal benefit is carried out by corrupt elites and cadres (Eme et al., 2014). Corruption erodes the basis of fair competition, which breeds favouritism and bribery (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2017). A nepotistic system that undermines meritocracy is perpetuated by "islands of vanity" (Mkhwebane, 2019). Wide-ranging effects of the "island of vanity" on public service delivery include corruption's detrimental effects on economic growth and the persistence of poverty (Mkandawire, 2015).

Analysts estimate that developing nations—including most of Africa—lose $1.26 trillion annually due to tax evasion, theft, and corruption (Keulder, 2021). This amount is sufficient to raise 1.4 billion people out of poverty for six years (Fleming, 2019). Development experts assert that attaining the other SDGs will be nearly difficult until we manage corruption (Rubio & Andvig, 2019). Still, corruption incidents make headlines nearly every day, both in Africa and worldwide. South Africa still grapples with the aftermath of Jacob Zuma's state capture (Alberts, 2020; Arun, 2020). Namibians are preparing for one of the most high-profile legal proceedings in the country's history, featuring two ministers charged and detained in the #Fishrot corruption scandal (Zenda, 2020; Iceland Review, 2020). Corruption allegations regarding COVID-19 pandemic relief are flooding in Somalia (Dhaysane, 2020), Kenya (Malalo, 2020), Nigeria (Financial Times, 2020) and Zimbabwe (Chingono, 2020).

With far-reaching effects on the government and development of the continent, corruption is still a persistent and entrenched problem in Africa. It has a high rate of corruption, which has an impact on many facets of life, including commercial and economic prospects as well as access to essential services like healthcare and education (Dzordzormenyoh et al., 2022). With 43% of respondents saying they had paid a bribe to obtain governmental services, the Afrobarometer poll from 2020 emphasizes the severity of the issue (Keulder, 2021). This number is concerning since it shows that almost half of Africans must participate in unethical behavior in order to receive basic services. Corruption in Africa is largely sustained by corrupt elites and administrative cadres (Amadi & Ekekwe, 2014). These people seize control of state institutions and sway public policy to further their agendas. They establish and uphold intricate networks of clientelism and patronage, which impede the provision of public services and encourage corruption (Anciano, 2017). Ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and a lack of responsiveness to the requirements of the populace are common characteristics of public service delivery in Africa (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2016). Delivery of public services is hampered by corruption because corrupt officials steal money intended for services or demand bribes. This exacerbates poverty and inequality by resulting in insufficient access to necessary services. The government and development of Africa are severely hampered by corruption (Ibrahim et al., 2015). It causes people to lose faith in public institutions and the government, which results in disenchantment and disengagement (Modise & Modise, 2023). Market distortion, investment dissuasion, and slower economic growth are all caused by corruption (Lucarelli et al., 2024). Because people unable to pay bribes are prevented from accessing basic services, corruption makes poverty and inequality worse (Peiffer & Rose, 2016).

The multidimensional problem of corruption in Africa is caused by a complex interaction of elements, such as cultural norms, a lack of transparency, and weak institutions (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2014). Corrupt practices are mostly caused by weak institutions in Africa (Persson et al., 2013). A corrupt elite may easily manipulate institutions like the legislative, executive branch, and court system since they are frequently inefficient and unproductive. Because of this flaw, officials can behave without consequence or concern for the law, which fosters corruption. Another important element causing corruption in Africa is a lack of transparency (Asongu, 2013). Corrupt practices can flourish in an environment where transactions and decision-making processes in government are opaque (Koeswayo et al., 2024). Accountability requires transparency; in the absence of it, dishonest officials can conceal their wrongdoings (Vian, 2020). Fallah and Benmamoun (2021) assert that cultural norms are a crucial factor in the continuation of corruption in Africa. Corruption is accepted and even encouraged in some African communities under specific conditions. Because corruption is so embedded in societal norms, it presents a difficult environment for anti-corruption initiatives. These elements are abused by corrupt officials and elites to hold onto their privilege and authority (Naidoo et al., 2024). They seize control of official institutions, sway public opinion, and pilfer money intended for public services by using their influence. These acts erode public service delivery and encourage corruption.

The effects of corruption on Africa's economy are serious. Appiah et al., (2019) argue that corruption impedes investment, distorts markets, and slows economic progress. Because money is taken from vital public services and placed in private wallets, it results in the misallocation of resources (Owusu-Nantwi & Owusu-Nantwi, 2023). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020) states that it worsens poverty and inequality by preventing access to basic services for people who cannot afford bribes. It weakens democratic principles including accountability,

openness, and the rule of law (Korniienko et al., 2020). causes disenchantment and disengagement by undermining public confidence in public institutions and the government (Njangang et al., 2024). It compromises the provision of public services, making it more difficult for people to obtain necessities like healthcare and education (Tella, 2013). Social upheaval may result from citizens' frustration with the absence of openness and accountability (Budhram, 2013). It results in a lack of accountability and transparency by undermining the efficacy of institutions (Kelsall, 2018). Eshun and Baah (2020) state that this permits elites to influence public policy for their benefit as opposed to the good of the people.

The outcome of corruption in Africa is ineffectiveness, which is a prevalent feature of public service along with inefficiency and a lack of response to social demands (Sebake, 2020; Kayode et al., 2013). Resources are frequently squandered as a result of corruption, poor management, and a lack of accountability (Matallah, 2020). Long wait times for citizens to receive basic services, like healthcare and education, are caused by inefficient public services (Pitcher & Askew, 2020). Additionally, the poor quality of these services often results in citizen discontent and mistrust (Bratton & Chang, 2020). The public interest is frequently subordinated to the personal interests of corrupt leaders and administrative cadres, which results in resource misallocation and the maintenance of an atmosphere of impunity (Eke, 2016). Because of this, there is a gap between the requirements of the populace and the provision of public services, which exacerbates social injustice, poverty, and inequality (Breen & Gillanders, 2024). Inadequate institutional capacity, which includes a lack of infrastructure, resources, and expertise, exacerbates inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in public service (Baez-Camargo et al., 2020). This makes it more difficult for government agencies to meet the requirements of the populace, which breeds mistrust and widespread dissatisfaction (Mbate, 2018).

As Budhram and Geldenhuys (2018) point out, several issues affect the quality of public service in Africa, such as low resources, inadequate training, and mistrust. The effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery are significantly impacted by these issues, which in turn has an impact on residents' well-being. Inadequate training and activities aimed at enhancing capacity impede public workers' ability to do their jobs efficiently (Bojang, 2017). Inadequate resources, such as limited money, antiquated infrastructure, and restricted access to technology, worsen this (Tawiah et al., 2024). Public institutions thus find it difficult to meet the needs of the populace, which breeds general discontent and mistrust (Muhammad et al., 2023). Because public servants are not held responsible for

their acts, corruption and indifference result (Sewordor, 2022). People become disillusioned and mistrustful of public authorities since they frequently fail to respond to their requirements (Mironga, 2022).

In Africa, corrupt elites have long taken advantage of their position of authority and clout to seize control of governmental institutions and sway public policy in their favour (Yanguas, 2017; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). The effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery are significantly impacted by this phenomenon, which in turn affects people's well-being. State capture is the process by which dishonest elites utilize their power to dominate important institutions, sway policy decisions, and allocate resources (Mafukata, 2015). This may result in an inefficient use of resources, which would keep poverty and inequality alive (Garcia-Zamor, 2015). One characteristic of corrupt elites in Africa is their manipulation of public policy for their benefit (Cabral, 2011). To do this, policies that serve particular interests rather than the general public may be created (De Kadt & Lieberman, 2020). Empowered they subvert development and good governance by capturing state institutions and influencing public policy for their benefit (Bangura et al., 2022). State institutions are taken over by corrupt elites through a variety of means. They create networks of patronage, elevating partisans to important roles and rewarding them with assets and benefits (Yeh, 2011). They have clientelistic relationships in which they trade resources and favors for allegiance and political support (Ali et al., 2020). They seize control of governmental institutions and manipulate laws and processes to suit their agendas (Mogalakwe & Nyamnjoh, 2017). They influence public policy to further their agendas, even going so far as to pervert laws for their gain as opposed to the good of the public (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019). Ninsin (2019) claims that they take over regulatory bodies, which impairs oversight and enforcement. They misallocate public finances, sending them to their self-serving programs and endeavors (D'Arcy, 2015).

Corrupt elites' takeover of state institutions and sway over public policy have a detrimental impact on the provision of public services. For example, it puts their interests ahead of the demands of the general public, which results in ineffective service delivery (Wiegratz, 2019). They designate incompetent officials, which causes citizens to become disenchanted and distrustful (Bratton & Chang, 2020). They subvert systems of accountability, which permits them to behave without consequence (Bruce, 2014). Corrupt elites' activities have dire repercussions for the general public, including diminished access to basic services like healthcare and education (Richards & Eboibi, 2021). Because resources are redirected to further their interests, they make poverty and inequality worse (Venter, 2016). People become disillusioned and disengaged as a result of the

erosion of public faith in the government and public institutions (Nguemegne, 2011).

In Africa, patronage networks and clientelism are major ways that administrative cadres contribute to the continuation of corruption and the degradation of public service delivery (Gürakar & Bircan, 2018).). In addition to allowing administrative cadres to profit from their positions, these networks and practices allow corrupt elites to hold onto power and influence. In patronage networks, individuals and groups trade favors, resources, and influence, frequently based on close bonds or loyalty (Paik & Baum, 2014). This may result in misallocating funds, appointing unfit employees, and influencing public policy. By placing supporters in important positions and building a network of patronage and loyalty, administrative cadres impede public service delivery and prolong corruption (Panizza et al., 2019). By providing resources and benefits in exchange for loyalty, they foster a culture of clientelism and patronage (Dawson, 2014). Fikri (2017) asserts that they undermine accountability and supervision by safeguarding the interests of corrupt elites. To retain power and loyalty, administrative cadres select friends and supporters for important positions regardless of merit, which leads to corruption through patronage (Obong'o, 2013). To preserve patronage networks, they frequently give contracts and tenders—often at exorbitant prices—to devoted customers and supporters (Leonard et al., 2010). To preserve their authority and sway over their clients, they manage who has access to resources like money, knowledge, and services (Croucamp & Malan, 2018). They trade political allegiance and support for jobs, promotions, and career progress (Heinemann-Grüder, 2011). They shield dishonest clients from punishment, enabling them to go on with their dishonest activities (Pitcher & Askew, 2020). They undermine the provision of public services by manipulating rules and processes to their own and their clients' advantage (Abheseka, 2019). They steal money meant for public services and use it for other purposes.

Giving citizens products and services in return for their allegiance or political support is known as clientelism (Simson, 2019). This has the potential to foster a culture of reliance in which people look to administrative hierarchy rather than the government to obtain basic services. Clientelism produces a power dynamic in which those in positions of authority provide services and benefits in return for political support and allegiance (Nugroho & Windyastuti, 2021). Through clientelism, administrative cadres corrupt by: Allocating resources and favours: In exchange for political allegiance, backing, and personal benefit, administrative cadres utilize their positions to bestow favours, resources, and services (Phiri, 2022). They trade perks like contracts, jobs, and service access for

patronage and political support (Motswaledi & Maseng, 2024). To hold onto their power and influence, they establish patronage networks where they regulate access to goods and services (Levitsky & Way, 2012). They misappropriate money meant for public services and use it to support clientelist connections and patronage networks (Demerew, 2022). They undermine the provision of public services by manipulating laws and regulations to their own and their clients' advantage (Osei, 2015). They shield dishonest clients from punishment, enabling them to carry on (Swanepoel, 2021).

Africa faces a great deal of corruption, as evidenced by the continent's high standing on international corruption indices (Farooque et al., 2010). Public service delivery is hampered by corruption, which also impedes economic growth and the persistence of poverty and inequality (Hope, 2024). Corruption can take many different forms in Africa, such as nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery (Koyuncu & Ünver, 2017). High-ranking politicians and political figures who are corrupt elites utilize their positions to amass wealth and power (Imiera, 2020). They establish networks of patronage, trading resources, and favors in return for allegiance and political backing (Omoteso & Ishola Mobolaji, 2014). Corrupt elites have been associated with state capture in Africa, as they use policies and institutions to further their own interests (Sedgo & Omgba, 2023). Corrupt practices are often sustained by administrative cadres, which include public workers and other officials (Asomah, 2019). They solicit bribes, embezzle money, and participate in other corrupt activities using their positions (Lewis, 2021). Administrative cadres have been connected to minor corruption in Africa, as they demand bribes for services that are considered basic (Swanepoel, 2021). Because funds are taken away from vital services to support clientelist and patronage networks, corruption jeopardizes the delivery of public services (Hassan, 2018). This worsens poverty and inequality by lowering the standard of services. Basak (2024) has established a connection between corruption and subpar infrastructure development, limited education, and poor health results in Africa.

10. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results and analysis of this investigation are presented in this section. The investigation identifies prevalent patterns and tendencies in corrupt activities, such as nepotism, clientelism, and patronage, which support the continued authority of dishonest bureaucrats and elites. The results also demonstrate the terrible effects of dishonest elites on the provision of public services, including the misallocation of funds, the ineffective provision of services, and the decline in public confidence in institutions. Based on actual data from several African nations, the analysis highlights the widespread corruption and its significant impact on public

service delivery. The results and analysis highlight the necessity for immediate changes to address these issues by offering a thorough understanding of the intricate relationships between corrupt elites, administrative cadres, and the provision of public services. Common Patterns and Trends in Corrupt Practices and Impact of Corrupt Elites on Public Service Delivery make up the two subsections that make up this section. Subsection one examines the many forms of corruption, whereas subsection two examines how corrupt practices impact the delivery of public services. Because of the study and its results, the recommendations in the following section have solid support.

Typical Corrupt Practice Patterns and Trends

In Africa, patronage and clientelism are widespread patterns and tendencies in corrupt behaviors that sustain the authority of corrupt elites and administrative cadres (Van de Walle, 2013). These activities entail the sharing of power, resources, and favors between people and organizations; these exchanges are frequently motivated by loyalty or close personal ties (Mabweazara et al., 2020). Patronage networks are widespread in Africa, where strong people or organizations give wealth and safety to devoted followers (Mueller, 2018). Because loyalty is valued over merit and responsibility by people in positions of authority, these networks support corruption (McCauley, 2013). Clientelism is also pervasive, in which people depend on close relationships with influential people or groups to obtain essential services (Klaus et al., 2023). This fosters a culture of reliance in which people put their own interests ahead of those of the public (Gray & Whitfield, 2014). Patronage and clientelism have been connected to an array of corrupt practices in Africa, such as embezzlement, nepotism, and bribery (Mişcoiu & Kakdeu, 2023). These actions damage public service delivery, exacerbate inequality and poverty, and weaken public confidence in institutions (Croucamp, P. A., & Malan, L. (2018).

The authority of corrupt elites and administrative cadres is sustained in Africa by widespread patterns and trends in corrupt activities such as nepotism and embezzlement (Masenya, 2017). Resource allocation away from vital public services is caused by embezzlement, which is the theft of public monies by those in positions of authority (Theron, 2018). Giving friends or family members positions of authority is a practice known as nepotism, which sustains corrupt elites and patronage networks (Senu, 2020). Nepotism and embezzlement have been connected to bribery, fraud, and abuse of office in Africa (Hopper, 2017). Inefficient service delivery, resource misallocation, and a decline in public confidence in institutions are only a few of the disastrous effects of these practices on the provision of public services (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002). Weak internal controls, a lack of transparency,

and insufficient oversight systems are common factors that encourage embezzlement (Amoah & Steyn, 2023). Embezzlement has been documented throughout Africa in several fields, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (Van den Bersselaar & Decker, 2011). Conversely, nepotism strengthens corrupt elites and sustains networks of patronage (Kimani et al., 2021). Nepotism in Africa has been associated with bad governance, corruption, and political instability (Agbor, 2019).

The influence of corrupt elites and administrative cadres is sustained in Africa via bribery and extortion, which are widespread patterns and trends in corrupt activities (Agbiboa, 2015). Bribery damages public confidence and skews decision-making processes. It is the offering or acceptance of something of value in return for an illegal benefit (Amagnya, 2022). Extortion, or the use of threats or intimidation to obtain money or favours, feeds the corrupt elites and maintains a culture of fear (Onyango, 2022). Bribery and extortion have been connected to a number of corruption-related practices in Africa, such as nepotism, embezzlement, and misuse of authority (Stevens & Newenham-Kahindi, 2021). These actions have disastrous effects on the provision of public services, such as resource misallocation, ineffective service delivery, and a decline in institutional trust (Law, 2015). A lack of openness, insufficient oversight systems, and lax internal controls can all contribute to bribery (Dumbili & Sofadekan, 2016). Bribery in several African areas, such as infrastructure development, healthcare, and education, has been documented (Ngumbi, 2020). On the other side, extortion supports corrupt elites and promotes a culture of fear (Coker et al., 2012). Partisanship, corruption, and bad governance have all been connected to extortion in Africa (Bowen et al., 2015).

State capture, a phenomenon in which dishonest leaders and administrative cadres use and misuse state institutions for personal advantage, is a common pattern and trend in corrupt practices in Africa (German et al., 2013). This phenomenon distorts public policy, encourages corruption, and threatens democratic government (Strazzari, 2014). State capture in Africa has been connected to bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, among other forms of corruption (Fulufhelo & Kedibone, 2018). State capture is a tactic used by corrupt elites and administrative cadres to amass riches, hold onto power, and preserve privileges (Zinnbauer & Berrisford, 2021). State takeover is often enabled by weak institutions, a lack of transparency, and inadequate accountability measures (Innes, 2016). Several African businesses have seen reports of state capture, including energy, banking, and procurement (Fidelis, 2021).

Prebendalism, or the use of administrative cadres and corrupt elites' positions for personal gain, is a common pattern and tendency in corrupt

actions in Africa. (Joseph, 2013). This phenomenon distorts public policy, hinders the provision of public services, and encourages corruption (Kelsall, 2018). Prebendalism in Africa has been connected to bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, among other types of corruption (Okeke & Ikechukwu, 2014). Prebendalism is a tactic used by public officials to amass riches, hold onto power, and preserve privileges (Tsuwa & Amough, 2018). Prebendalism is often fostered by weak institutions, deficient oversight mechanisms, and a lack of openness (Frahm, 2018). In several domains, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, prebendalism has been observed across Africa (Owen, 2013).

In Africa, there is a prevalent pattern and tendency known as "neopatrimonialism," in which political figures take advantage of public funds to reward loyal supporters and maintain their positions of authority (Therkildsen, 2017). In addition to impeding the delivery of public services and promoting corruption, this phenomenon undermines public policy (Guliyev, 2011). Therkildsen (2014) has linked neopatrimonialism in Africa to many forms of corruption, including nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery. Political leaders employ neopatrimonialism as a strategy to accumulate wealth, maintain their position of authority, and protect advantages (Gobewole, 2020). Neopatrimonialism is frequently aided by insufficient supervision mechanisms, a lack of openness, and frail institutions (Cammack & Kelsall, 2011). In several industries, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, neopatrimonialism in Africa has been observed (Kiser & Sacks, 2011).

In Africa, corrupt elites and administrative cadres frequently engage in corrupt practices, with kickbacks being one such pattern or tendency. Kickbacks are a sort of bribery in which the intermediary gets paid a portion of the sale's earnings (Demas, 2010). This phenomenon distorts public policy, hinders the provision of public services, and encourages corruption (Brazys & Kotsadam, 2020). Kickbacks and other types of corruption in Africa, such as bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, have been connected (Olujobi, 2021). Kickbacks are a tactic used by corrupt elites and administrative cadres to amass wealth, hold onto power, and preserve privileges (Okeyim et al., 2013). Kickbacks are often sparked by weak institutions, a lack of openness, and inadequate supervision mechanisms (O'Hara, 2014). Kickbacks have been reported in several African areas, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (Delavallade, 2012).

A prevalent trend in corrupt practices in Africa is cronyism, which occurs when powerful individuals in the administrative and elite spheres favor their friends and acquaintances in matters of business and politics (Kırşanlı, 2023). Public policy is distorted,

corruption is sustained, and public service delivery is undermined by this occurrence (Albert et al., 2021). Bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism are only a few of the corruption-related practices in Africa where cronyism has been connected (Oberoi, 2014). To amass riches, hold onto power, and preserve advantages, corrupt elites and administrative cadres utilize cronyism (Klein et al., 2022). Inadequate control systems, a lack of transparency, and weak institutions are common causes of cronyism (Bach, 2011). Cronyism in Africa has been documented in several fields, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (Talvitie, 2017).

Influence peddling, or the act of using one's position or influence to get benefits or favors for oneself or others, is a prominent pattern and trend in corrupt practices in Africa and is typically carried out by corrupt elites and administrative cadres (Otusanya, 2012). Public policy is distorted, corruption is encouraged, and the delivery of public services is undermined by this phenomenon (Gheorghiu et al., 2021). Influencer marketing in Africa has been linked to several forms of corruption, including nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery (Okok & Ssentongo, 2020). Corrupt elites and administrative cadres employ influence peddling as a means of accumulating riches, maintaining control, and defending privileges (Mwesigwa, 2021). Asomah (2020) states that weak institutions, a lack of transparency, and inadequate accountability mechanisms frequently permit influence peddling to take place. Influencer peddling has been connected to several African businesses, including infrastructure development, healthcare, and education (Harnois & Gagnon, 2022).

The influence of corrupt elites and administrative cadres on the provision of public services

The delivery of public services in Africa is significantly impacted by corrupt elites and administrative cadres, leading to compromised service quality (Tsako, 2020). Corruption reduces public services' efficacy and efficiency, which results in subpar service delivery and a decline in public confidence (Von Holdt, 2019). The public interest is subordinated to personal gain by corrupt leaders and administrative cadres in Africa, which compromises the quality of services provided (Crook, 2010). This phenomenon is noticeable in some fields, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (Habib, 2010). Compromises in service quality have far-reaching effects, such as diminished economic growth, sustained inequality, and decreased public satisfaction (Sebola, 2014). African nations must use a multipronged strategy that includes bolstering institutions, encouraging accountability and openness, and empowering individuals to address these issues (Cantens, 2012).

Corrupt elites and administrative cadres have a major impact on public service delivery in Africa

through the unequal distribution of resources and services (Rosser et al., 2011). Because individuals in positions of power and influence are given preferential treatment and underprivileged communities are kept out, corruption keeps inequality alive (Mpehle, 2012). Corrupt elites and administrative cadres in Africa rig resource distribution, leading to an uneven distribution of basic amenities like infrastructure, healthcare, and education (Malipula, M. M. (2024). Dawson (2014) argues that this phenomenon prolongs poverty and inequality by exacerbating pre-existing social and economic disparities. Reduced social unrest, slower economic growth, and a drop in public trust are only a few of the many wide-ranging repercussions of unequal distribution (Sigman, 2022).

Accountability issues are a common consequence of corrupt elites and administrative cadres on public service delivery in Africa (Enang & Ozumba, 2024).When accountability systems are inadequate or non-existent, corruption flourishes and corrupt officials and elites can operate without consequence (Dasandi & Esteve, 2017). There is a lack of accountability and transparency in the provision of public services in Africa as a result of the manipulation and subversion of accountability systems by corrupt elites and administrative cadres (Harris, 2020). Because persons in charge of providing public services are not held accountable for their actions, this issue fosters corruption (Alexander et al., 2022). Wide-ranging effects of a lack of accountability include deteriorated service quality, a decline in public trust, and ongoing corruption (Usman, 2011).

By undermining trust, corrupt elites and administrative cadres have a significant detrimental impact on the provision of public services in Africa (D'Agoôt, 2020). Because corruption undermines people's faith in their government, people have less faith in public institutions and services (Kaiser & Wolters, 2013). The corrupt behaviors of corrupt elites and administrative cadres, such as embezzlement and bribery, threaten the delivery of public services in Africa (Botes, 2018). This problem promotes a vicious cycle of mistrust by making people doubt the government's ability to provide fundamental services (Karodia, 2014). Booysen (2018) highlights that the erosion of trust has far-reaching consequences, including decreased public involvement, cooperation, and conflict.

Administrative cadres and corrupt elites have a negative influence on public service delivery in Africa, which hinders development (Collord, 2022). Because corruption diverts cash from essential public services and development projects, it impedes economic progress and the battle against poverty (King & Hickey, 2017). Embezzlement and bribery are two corrupt practices of administrative cadres and elites that hinder development efforts in Africa (Munyangeyo, 2024). This issue contributes to the underdevelopment cycle due to

the misallocation of resources and project compromises (Akiba, 2020). Human development is slowed down, poverty increases, and economic growth is among the many consequences of undermining progress (Chavula, 2022).

Corrupt administrative cadres and elites have a significant negative influence on public service delivery in Africa, which lowers the quality of services provided (Okunola et al., 2019). Corruption reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of public services, which in turn lowers citizen satisfaction and leads to inferior service quality (Mubangizi & Tshishonga, 2013). In Africa, dishonest elites and administrative cadres prioritize their personal interests over the needs of the public, which results in poor service delivery (Makinde, 2022). Many industries, including infrastructure development, healthcare, and education, have seen this occurrence (Krüger, 2018). Long wait times, inadequate facilities, and underqualified employees are a few instances of low service quality (Jankielsohn, 2024). Wide-ranging consequences of poor service quality include sustained inequality, slowed economic growth, and diminished public trust (Opalo & Smith, 2021).

Administrative cadres and corrupt elites have a big impact on public service delivery in Africa because they prolong poverty (Besong, 2017). Corruption reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of public services, resulting in prolonged poverty and slower economic progress (Moti, 2019). Corrupt leaders and administrative cadres that prioritize their interests over the welfare of the populace are the main causes of poverty in Africa (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2019). The previously mentioned phenomenon can be observed in various fields, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure development (Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2018). Persistent poverty can be identified by restricted access to essential services, reduced work opportunities, and an increase in inequality (Krüger, 2018b). Eroding public confidence, weaker economic growth, and persistent inequality are only a few of the many detrimental repercussions of poverty perpetuation (Tshishonga, 2019).

Corrupt elites and administrative cadres are the primary contributors to corruption in Africa, a systemic issue (Lewis, 2021). The term "systemic corruption" describes immoral practices that are extensively recognized, deeply embedded, and incorporated into the provision of public services (Venter, 2016). In Africa, corrupt administrative cadres and elites take advantage of their power and influence to maintain and grow corrupt institutions (Chipkin, 2013). This tendency is seen in many industries, including infrastructure development, healthcare, and education (Hassan, 2018). The effectiveness and efficiency of governmental services can be jeopardized by systemic corruption, which includes nepotism, embezzlement,

and bribery (Lassou et al., 2021). Steady inequality, a drop in public trust, and slower economic growth are only a few of the many consequences of systemic corruption (Gans-Morse et al., 2018).

Elites in Africa prioritize their interests over the well-being of the populace, which encourages corruption and jeopardizes the delivery of public services (Muhumuza, 2016). There are several industries where this phenomenon is evident, including infrastructure construction, healthcare, and education (Newbury, 2016). To accumulate wealth and maintain their positions of authority, corrupt elites usually take advantage of the general people (Swanepoel, 2021). This concentration on personal gain, which manifests itself in nepotism, bribery, and embezzlement, undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental services (Fatile, 2012). Elites who put their interests first suffer long-term consequences like eroded public trust, slower economic growth, and persistent inequality (Koelble, 2017). African elites prioritize their interests over the welfare of the public, which encourages corruption and jeopardizes the delivery of public services (Makgala & Botlhomilwe, 2017).

Weak institutions throughout Africa promote corruption and make it more difficult to provide public services (Moti, 2019). Because they are unable to effectively monitor and control public services, weak institutions make it easier for corrupt elites and administrative cadres to take advantage of these gaps in authority and legitimacy (Lavhelani & Mamokhere, 2023). A lack of finance, ineffective enforcement practices, and inadequate legislative frameworks are only a few instances of Africa's poor institutions (Rudbeck et al., 2016). This weakness allows unscrupulous administrative leaders and cadres to engage in corrupt practices with impunity, including nepotism, bribery, and embezzlement (Munyangeyo, 2024). Weak institutions are linked to many negative consequences, such as persistent inequality, slower economic growth, and a decline in public confidence (Speight, 2014).

Africans are vulnerable to the detrimental effects of corruption and subpar public service delivery, which are encouraged by dishonest elites and administrative cadres (Onuoha & Onwuchekwa, 2017). Vulnerability manifests itself in a variety of ways, including decreased opportunities for employment, higher levels of inequality, and restricted access to essential services (Ojiji et al., 2021). The susceptibility of African citizens is exacerbated by weak institutions, inadequate resources, and inadequate legal frameworks (Banko & Onyekachi, 2020). Due to this vulnerability, people may continue to suffer from inequality and poverty at the hands of dishonest administrative cadres and elites (Gaynor, 2014).

11. CONCLUSION

The "islands of vanity" that corrupt elites and administrative cadres in Africa construct, as well as their effects on the provision of public services, have been the subject of this study. The results imply that these "islands" maintain public mistrust and poverty by fostering corruption, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness. The traits of "islands of vanity" are corruption, inefficiency, and self-interest. These "islands" undermine the provision of public services, prolong poverty, and erode public confidence. In these "islands", nepotism, corruption, and patronage networks are commonplace. The implications of "islands of vanity" established by unscrupulous elites and administrative cadres in Africa are dire for the provision of public services. In Africa, "islands of vanity" are a common occurrence that compromise the provision of public services and encourage corruption. Strong oversight procedures are needed to prevent and identify corruption in order to address this. To improve the delivery of public services in Africa, Olowu (2003) asserts that capacity building is essential. It is necessary to hold officials responsible for their conduct. Systems for delivering public services require immediate modification to regain their efficacy and integrity. Strong supervision procedures, accountability, openness, and reform are needed to address this. Future studies can delve deeper into this issue and guide practice and policy.

12. Recommendations

How public services are delivered in Africa is severely impacted by "islands of vanity" established by dishonest elites and bureaucratic cadres. To address this and restore efficacy and integrity, strong oversight procedures, accountability, and reform are needed. An integrated strategy is required to successfully handle the problems brought about by dishonest elites, bureaucratic hierarchies, and subpar public service delivery in Africa. To improve public service delivery, empower individuals, address historical and cultural factors, increase regional and global collaboration, strengthen institutions, encourage accountability and transparency, and support research and capacity building, the following recommendations are put forth. To begin with, fighting corruption and advancing good governance requires bolstering institutions. To do this, prosecution authority and parliamentary oversight should be reinforced, independent anti-corruption institutions should be established, and strong internal control and auditing procedures should be put in place. Transparency and accountability can also be increased by passing and upholding laws about the freedom of information, employing open data programs and public interaction platforms, and fortifying asset declaration and conflict of interest rules. To solve the problems caused by

administrative cadres, public service delivery reform is also necessary. To do this, it will be necessary to put in place mechanisms for complaints and appointment and promotion that are based on merit, as well as to establish citizen-centric service delivery models and procurement processes.

Promoting accountability and sound governance requires empowering the populace. Establishing independent media and monitoring bodies, putting in place civic education and awareness programs, and assisting civil society organizations and citizen engagement projects are some ways to accomplish this. To comprehend the underlying reasons for corruption and bad governance in Africa, historical and cultural considerations must also be made. To do this, it is necessary to strengthen customary and community-based accountability procedures, promote cultural values of integrity and responsibility, and acknowledge and rectify historical injustices and inequalities. To exchange best practices and lessons learned, pool resources and experience, and maximize competence, it is imperative to promote regional and global collaboration. Collaborating with international organizations and donors, exchanging best practices and lessons gained, and fortifying regional anti-corruption frameworks and cooperation are some ways to accomplish this. Ultimately, understanding the complexity of corruption and bad governance in Africa and developing practical remedies depend on funding research and developing expertise. Establishing academic and professional networks, supporting capacity-building initiatives for public officials and civil society, and sponsoring research on corruption and public service delivery are some ways to accomplish this.

A thorough policy framework is also required to successfully handle the issues presented by corrupt elites, administrative cadres, and subpar public service performance in Africa. To create and carry out anti-corruption policies, autonomous anti-corruption agencies, electronic governance, public-private partnerships, and support for civil society organizations, the following policy ideas are put forth. To start with, fighting corruption and advancing good governance requires the creation and execution of anti-corruption laws. To address the underlying causes of corruption, governments should enact comprehensive and well-defined anti-corruption laws, regulations, and policies. Regular reviews and updates are necessary to ensure the efficacy of these policies. To probe and prosecute corruption cases, it is imperative to establish autonomous bodies dedicated to combating corruption. To properly investigate and punish acts of corruption, these institutions should be given the autonomy, independence, and funding they need. Developing and carrying out anti-corruption strategies and initiatives

should also fall within their purview.

Electronic governance can contribute to a reduction in corruption by improving openness and accountability. Governments ought to acquire electronic governance tools that promote transparency, accountability, and public involvement. The design of these systems should place a high priority on streamlining bureaucracy, increasing productivity, and promoting public involvement. Developing public-private partnerships has the potential to enhance accountability and build sound governance. To encourage responsibility, openness, and sound governance, governments ought to collaborate with businesses in the private sector. These alliances ought to be set up to maximize funds, resources, and experience to support growth and lessen corruption. The last step in advancing accountability and sound government is to assist civil society organizations. To advance openness, accountability, and sound governance, governments ought to form alliances with civil society groups. The goal of these alliances should be to decrease corruption and advance development by maximizing funds, resources, and skills.

To summarize, tackling the issues presented by dishonest elites, bureaucratic hierarchies, and inadequate public service provision in Africa necessitates an all-encompassing strategy that fortifies establishments, advocates for openness and responsibility restructures public service provision, enables the populace, acknowledges historical and cultural elements, cultivates regional and global collaboration, and backs research and capacity development. These suggestions can help African nations enhance the lives of their people while fostering sustainable economic growth and development. Similarly, a comprehensive policy framework that creates and carries out anti-corruption policies institutes electronic governance, establishes independent anti-corruption agencies, promotes public-private partnerships and aids civil society organizations is needed to address the problems presented by corrupt elites, administrative cadres, and subpar public service delivery in Africa. The policy proposals outlined here can help African nations advance sustainable economies.

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