

Research Article

Corruption in Africa: Initiatives, Challenges, and the Road Map to Success

Saphy Lal Bullu* 

Public Law Department, The Open University of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

Corruption has existed for as long as humankind's history, and it's not a new phenomenon; it has been identified as the greatest obstacle to the world's economic and social development, undermining and weakening the entire structure established to combat it. Its high impacts include undermining the rule of law and its accountability by diminishing the public trust in any country; various initiatives were taken in Africa, including the establishment of legal instruments, enactment of the existing statutes, policies, protocols, and even conventions to make sure that corrupt acts are eliminated if not controlled. Anti-corruption initiatives are the focus of this article's writer, as they remain one of Africa's major challenges. According to the findings, the prevalence of corruption in African governments is rooted in cultural norms and political conditions, and can be exacerbated by a sense of entitlement among the population. The current phenomenon of corruption in Africa is demonstrated by analysing and assessing secondary data collected using qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches that can be analysed and evaluated to explain the current phenomenon of corruption in Africa. Such a method gathers information from various key instruments, including case notes, legal instruments, and agencies established to identify trends and measure the scale of the problem. Ultimately, this article aims to provide valuable insights that explore challenges to fight against corruption.

Keywords

Corruption, Corrupt Acts, Legal Structure, Corrupt Activities, Corrupt Practice

1. Introduction

African countries, including Tanzania, receive a clear report from international organisations, including the World Bank's Control of Corruption Index. [1] Transparency International, [2] and the Corruption Perception Index [3] (to mention a few). Nevertheless, certain factors continue to impede governmental efforts to combat this issue. Due to these reports, the African government has made efforts to date, including the introduction of various modalities involving a range of interventions designed to strengthen the fight against corruption. [4] Tanzania and other African countries have

noticed that the context and specific nature of corruption in a given society have not been sufficiently considered. [5] Measures have been established, but they are not yet suitable.

Since the 1990s, corruption has been widely studied across law, social science, and the humanities to understand its challenges, conditions, consequences, and impact on economic development. Establishing reliable, context-specific methods to control corruption remains crucial. Despite extensive research on corruption globally, studies suggest that corruption in Africa has been largely overlooked and is per-

*Correspondence: Saphy Lal Bullu (saphy.bullu@out.ac.tz)

Received: 6 November 2025; **Accepted:** 20 November 2025; **Published:** 26 February 2026



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ceived to be increasing. This highlights the growing need for countries like Tanzania to strengthen their legal frameworks in both the private and public sectors to effectively control or eliminate corrupt practices. The following section summaries perceptions, theories, and fundamental roots of corruption, from past to present, to inform future strategies for success.

2. Fundamental Roots, Theories, and Perceptions of Corruption in Africa

The initial step in recommending a successful roadmap to eradicate acts of corruption in Africa is to demonstrate the fundamental roots, theories, and perceptions to date. Corruption, an enduring fixture of human history, possesses deep-seated roots that perpetuate its existence. Its prevalence suggests underlying motivations and widespread complicity in environments where corruption becomes normalised. To date, it is perceived that the economic and social development in Africa continues to face major obstacles due to corruption. [6] Fundamentally, the existence of corrupt activities in any country automatically undermines good governance in any state by diminishing public trust. [7] The World Bank Opinion [8] insists that ‘worldwide, corruption is perceived as a cross-cutting problem that constrains the development efforts of many countries’, including Tanzania. [9] On the other hand, Transparency International (TI) [10] views corruption as one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world since it undermines good governance, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of funds, harms private sector development and particularly hurts the poor. The TI report [10] further explores the perception of corruption in African countries (including Tanzania), which is supported by the serious global corruption problem highlighted by various CPI reports. It is evident that the CPI report [11] report, none of the African countries is achieving a perfect score. A significant number of countries are situated below the middle of the scale. Switching from one or two ranks and returning to the same rank is easy for Tanzania and other selected countries. This position of corruption does not come abruptly from nowhere; it is clear that legal loopholes and a lack of personal will in both the private and public sectors facilitate domestic and cross-border corruption and call for our intensified efforts to combat the impunity of the corrupt. [12] That incident indicates the global pandemic corruption in the countries’ public sector. Corruption, particularly at high levels of political organisation, is a grave concern with far-reaching consequences. It occurs when state representatives exploit their positions of power to create and impose obstacles, thereby solidifying their supremacy, status, and wealth. This corruption undermines the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability essential for a well-functioning society. By prioritising personal gain over the public good, corrupt officials erode public trust, distort policy decisions, and hinder economic development. The

entrenchment of such practices can lead to systemic instability and perpetuate cycles of inequality, making it imperative to implement robust mechanisms for the prevention, detection, and prosecution of corruption at all levels. In Elaine's opinion, corruption occurs whenever money is involved at the level where it happens. [13].

The institutions have developed specific roots that cause corruption to thrive, including poverty, political instability, the accumulation of wealth, and insufficient reimbursements, as discussed above. Various authors, including Langseth and his colleagues, [14] assume that corruption is caused by poverty; it would be difficult to comprehend why industrialised nations are plagued by scandals, with few of them involving individuals who could be classified as poor. To ensure its existence, there must be an external factor that facilitates it. Likewise, there are many questions to ask ourselves about the effects of corruption. The answer to the question below is sufficient to understand the impact of corruption worldwide. What are the effects of corrupt activities on society and globally?

Political and economic opportunities can affect how corruption is portrayed in a country. If the former is greater, individuals will enter politics to gain money, leading to a higher level of corruption. The promotion of corruption is often linked to the presence of foreign business. The less developed political parties are, the more corrupt they become. [15] Moreover, public officials often have moral deficiencies when they cannot receive adequate reimbursements, such as wages, salaries, and fringe benefits, causing them to engage in self-remuneration activities at work to meet their subsistence needs. As well, Afonso and Pinho [16] asserted that better wages and salaries cannot stop corrupt individuals from acting dishonestly, and low wages and salaries cannot compel corrupt individuals to act with integrity. In the African context, the pressure from extended families can lead civil servants to engage in corrupt and nepotistic practices, particularly when the government delays the payment of salaries and benefits. Similarly, Bayley [17] emphasises that ‘if civil service compensation packages, especially when compared to those of their counterparts in the private sector, are relatively low, civil servants might seek employment outside the public sector to earn competitive returns on their labour services’; also, the author asserts that ‘only individuals who genuinely desire to serve the national interest might be convinced to remain in the public sector and carry out their duties if they believe that they could supplement their income through engagement in corrupt activities. As well, O’Connell [18] expresses concern about the ongoing political instability in modern African countries, suggesting that it is a situation that must be endured. He argues that cultural attitudes and practices become altered or distorted when they clash with specific colonial legacies in the emergence of Indigenous political leaders. Furthermore, O’Connell maintains that ‘apart from post-independence power struggles among emergent political leaders and the threat to government stability and economic problems that

new countries contend with, African political leadership has been unable to make efficient arrangements to deal with the challenges that statehood presents. According to such connotations, it is clear that political instability also plays a major role in facilitating the existence of corrupt activities worldwide. Political instability is a factor that leads to corruption. Any country with an unstable political climate can create an atmosphere of job insecurity, uncertainty, and anarchy in government institutions. [19] As such, it could tempt government leaders and civil servants to engage in corrupt activities to amass wealth quickly in anticipation of a sudden change in their employment status. [20].

3. Understanding and Perception of Corruption

Understanding and perception of corruption encompass a complex interplay of various factors, including cultural, social, and individual beliefs that shape how corruption is viewed within different societies. This multifaceted phenomenon involves not only the recognition of corrupt practices but also how these practices are rationalised, tolerated, or accepted in various contexts, which in turn influences public trust in institutions and governance. [13] The perception of corruption can vary significantly from one community to another, reflecting the historical, economic, and political landscapes that define each society. [18] Furthermore, this understanding incorporates the nuances of moral and ethical considerations, as individuals and groups navigate their own experiences and observations of corruption. [21] These perspectives can lead to a spectrum of reactions, ranging from condemnation to complacency, ultimately shaping the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts and the overall health of democratic processes. The exploration of these perceptions reveals critical insights into societal values and the challenges faced in combating corruption, underscoring the need for context-sensitive approaches to foster greater integrity and accountability in governance.

The development of corruption first appeared in legislation where the state of affairs is involved. [22] In the past, individuals perceived corruption as a common norm and labelled it as an institutional theory. Since it turned to institutional theory, various forms have been demonstrated, including coercive, mimetic, and normative. Corruption theories, as evidenced by demonstrations, have evolved into an institutional understanding of the phenomenon. This perspective differs significantly from individual-centric approaches to quid pro quo exchanges, wherein corrupt acts are seen as direct swaps of favours or resources. An institutional understanding of the phenomenon has developed from a series of comprehensive demonstrations that illustrate the evolution of corruption theories over time. [23] These demonstrations not only highlight the various factors that contribute to corrupt practices, such as the interplay between individual motivation

and systemic vulnerabilities, but also delve into the changing dynamics of accountability and governance. This exploration examines how political, social, and economic contexts influence corruption in diverse environments, shedding light on the intricate relationships between power structures and unethical behaviour institutions. [24] By analysing historical precedents, case studies, and theoretical frameworks, this understanding emphasises the complexity of corruption as a multifaceted issue that requires nuanced approaches to effectively address and mitigate its impact on society. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of fostering transparency, enhancing institutional integrity, and promoting civic engagement as essential strategies in combating corruption, thereby advocating for a holistic perspective that encompasses both preventive measures and responsive actions to ensure a more equitable and just governance landscape.

4. Findings

The key distinction lies in the focus on systemic factors and organisational structures, rather than solely on individual behaviours or isolated instances of corruption. Thus, the development of corruption theories has led to a nuanced institutional viewpoint that offers a more comprehensive framework for analysing and addressing corruption, moving beyond simplistic explanations based on individual transactions or generalised institutional weaknesses often observed in developing contexts. Identifying alternatives for the functions that corruption serves should be the focus of reforms. Institutional corruption, Dennis [25] argues, does not rely on the existence of corrupt motives in its perpetrators, and it is not exclusive to political institutions. Many consequences in societies, including economic, social, and political ones, are caused by the greatest levels of corruption. It is a common cause that corruption, in all its varied manifestations, is like cancer, remorselessly eating away at the moral fibre of society and causing incalculable harm to the social development efforts of those involved. Even though it is a global issue, the negative consequences are most evident in countries with weak democratic foundations. Similarly, Mbaio [26] states that corruption confines a government's capacity to address vital problems and may even threaten the overall efficiency of society; similarly, Johnston [27] says that 'the significance and impact of corruption vary considerably across the world'. The distinction between corrupt activities is often based on their nature, such as 'petty corruption' and 'grand corruption', 'passive corruption' and 'active corruption', and 'passive bribery' and 'active bribery'. Amazingly, each set appears to have nearly the same meaning and actions. [28] These forms address the action of anyone who, directly or indirectly, solicits or accepts advantages for themselves or a third party. In criminal law, these terms are commonly used to differentiate between a specific corrupt act and an unsuccessful or incomplete offence. Active corruption is a term that encompasses all instances where a bribe was paid or accepted. For example, in

the case of *R v Mramba B. P and Two Others*, [29] the established counts failed to address situations when a bribe was offered but declined or solicited but not received. To date, such a position makes the government's actions and the inconsistencies between current laws and established institutions identical. [30] Also, the purpose of anti-corruption measures is undermined by problems such as insufficient punishment for those found guilty of corruption, failure to conduct criminal investigations or act through criminal courts, and failure to submit the final investigation report to the president. [31] Such a situation indicates clearly that African countries do not provide deterrent sanctions to prevent persons who are in the service of the Community from engaging in corruption and corrupt practices. [32].

Based on such information, the aforementioned statements argue that legal systems in African countries are inadequate for eliminating and controlling corruption, despite the enactment of anti-corruption legislation by their governments. Such flaws are complemented by the weak legal mechanism and a lack of coordination to combat corruption. The world is facing inequality and populism in societies, and that aspect facilitates the growth of corrupt activities since people see that gap as a major factor in contributing to equal access to power, and private gaps influence. [31] Similarly, Mbaku [33] emphasises that 'corruption has increased as bureaucrats have continued to engage in opportunistic activities to garner the resources that they need, not necessarily to meet their obligations to members of kinship groups, but to support an appetite for extravagant and conspicuous consumption developed'. Mbaku[32] further says 'that these opportunistic and parasitic state custodians have turned their government positions into instruments of plunder and hence, while corruption has significantly enriched them, it has imposed severe social, political and economic costs on the rest of society'. Also, it has been observed that the most devastating acts of corruption include the diversion and outright theft of public funds, as well as the harm caused by companies and individuals who pay bribes to bypass health and safety regulations designed to protect the public. [34] For instance, Mobutu Sese Seko, former president of Zaire (now Congo DRC), looted an estimated US\$5 billion from the national treasury by the time he was ousted in 1997, an amount equivalent to the country's entire external debt at the time. As well, the former president of Indonesia, Mohamed Suharto, and the Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos, are accused of embezzling vast amounts of money in this case. The possibility and drawbacks of corrupt behaviour can be reduced by establishing a system of norms and sanctions.

The development of information and communication technologies has a significant impact on corruption. ICT's transformation into a new platform leads to changes and makes it easy for individuals to engage in illegal activities in various ways. On the flip side, digital technology has had a significant effect on communication and telecommunication. Electronic communication is a viable option for both offers

and acceptance because of the limited space provided by legislation. Wrede [31] articulates further that the idea is that new technologies, such as cryptocurrencies and artificial intelligence, offer new avenues for corrupt behaviour. In addition, Durnell *et al* [35] assert that the enormous amount of personal information stored online can be misused if given to the wrong individuals, and illegal financial transactions are predicted to increase, facilitated by information communication technology networks. Similarly, Marais [36] says that 'while advanced digital technology is now available to forensic investigators to help them uncover and prosecute corruption across Africa, the fight is being hampered by a lack of supporting frameworks, law enforcement capacity and skills, in some cases, increasing administrative hurdles imposed by data protection laws. However, the primary African instruments do not require member states to implement effective measures for transforming technologies to combat corruption, which can manifest in various forms. The arguments and debates articulated above illuminate several critical factors in the intricate challenges and dilemmas associated with fighting corruption in developing countries. In this context, governments are tasked with the vital responsibility of formulating and implementing effective solutions that not only address immediate concerns but also foster long-term integrity and transparency within their institutions.

5. Conclusion

It has been proven that the spread of corruption in African governments has its origins in the long run through the culture, norms, and political conditions, and is often aggravated by people's attitude of strong entitlement. Traditional institutions and anti-corruption reforms still exist in African countries, and create obstacles towards their implementation through the creation of independent agencies due to the absence of appropriate provisions and the lack of coordination between the existing legislation and the established institutions.

Although African governments have been shown to need adequate and reliable legal mechanisms, as they can aid in implementing effective legal structures to eradicate and control corruption. Moral decay in any society reflects high levels of crime, disdain for authority and the rule of law, and the decline of crucial institutions like the family. The culture of entitlement, widely prevalent in our community, has led individuals to search for an elusive moral justification for engaging in criminal activity. Additionally, it has been noted that there is a need to identify comprehensive issues, including those factors contributing to the nourishment of corruption, and possible solutions to be developed with ruthless action against transgressions. Furthermore, it has been observed that African countries cannot eliminate and control corrupt activities and are faced with challenges due to the weaknesses of established legal instruments. A loophole exists for wrongdoers to escape from offences when criminalising corrupt acts, as demonstrated.

6. A Roadmap to Success/ Recommendations

To ensure that the fight against corruption on the African continent is serious, it is important to take these things into account since the gap is seen as a major factor in promoting equal access to power, which is why it facilitates the growth of corrupt activities. In the event that eradicating corruption is of serious importance, the legal instruments mentioned above should ensure political stability in their member states. Corrupt activities are caused by the instability of political systems in many African countries, which leads to job insecurity, uncertainty, and anarchy in government institutions. The development of technology results in the creation of new routes with good intentions. Nonetheless, a few individuals with corrupt behaviour take this development as an opportunity to engage in corrupt acts. Success can only be achieved by taking into account the following:

- 1) The African Union Convention [37] should ensure that each state member adopts established provisions with powers and mandates to control, prevent, and eliminate corrupt activities;
- 2) The Southern Africa Developing Countries Protocol [38] should include the aspect of ICT development in its legal instruments, and require its member states to adopt all relevant provisions to simplify the process of curbing corruption activities to individuals, public officials, and the private sector.
- 3) The Economic Community of West African States Protocol [39] should emphasise to its member states the need for equal and sufficient reimbursement for public officials to minimise the gap and reduce the level of inequality and populism in societies.
- 4) The African Union Convention, the Southern Africa Development Countries Protocol, and the Economic Community of West African States Protocol should emphasise to their member states the need to continuously adopt and enforce their legal instruments to align with the advancement of technology.

Abbreviations

CPI	Corruption Index Perception
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ICT	Information Communication Technology
R	Republic
S	State
TI	Transparency International
US\$	United States Dollar

Author Contributions

Saphy Lal Bullu is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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