

Research Article

Practice of Transparency and Accountability Principles in Land Administration Office in Borena Woreda, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

In this study, the principle of accountability and transparency in land administration office were assessed. For this study, primary and secondary sources provided all the data that was needed. For this research, the primary sources of data were observations, questionnaires, key informant interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). A systematic sampling procedure was used to choose the samples, and important informants were chosen on purposive sampling technique. Out of the entire target population, 184 sample customers and rural landowners were chosen, and 15 key informants were specifically chosen. Descriptive and inferential statistics, along with a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques, were utilized. The research findings indicated that the main obstacles to the implementation of transparency and accountability principles in land administration office were rent-seeking behavior, corruption, shortage of skilled labor, a lack of dedicated land administration officials, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation frameworks. 165 (91.7%) of sample respondents confirmed that the office was not open to its decisions on land allocation, registration and land acquisition especially through inheritance. The other findings also confirmed that Borena Woreda RLAU office has weak accountability system to maintain good governance due to the absence of periodic monitoring and evaluation system of officials and employees. "Naming and Shaming" of those involved in corruption in front of the public like in the religious and public institutions is recommended to reduce corruption and rent seeking behaviour in land sector. Finally, there should be a clear and praticable system developed by district land administration office to monitor and evaluate the performance of employers to take corrective measures on gaps identified.

Keywords

Land, Principles, Transparency, Accountability and Land Administration

1. Introduction

A vital resource, rural land continues to be a source of social, political, and economic strife worldwide. The regulatory framework, institutional arrangements, methods, and procedures that cover the selection, distribution, and management of land are collectively referred to as land

administration [1]. For the simple reason that those employed to manage land administration lack the necessary qualifications, i.e., they lack the necessary knowledge and expertise, Africa's land and land-related institutions are incompetent. Conflict over land continues to be a social, ethnic, cultural, religious,

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and political issue. Land rights have been the source of several conflicts and revolutions over many centuries [2].

The idea of good governance came about primarily as a result of the growing dangers associated with bad governance practices, which are defined by corruption, unaccountable governments, and a disregard for human rights. In these situations, urgent action was required. In recent decades, the phrase "good governance" has gained popularity and captured the interest of the general public in land sector [3].

Ethiopia is currently dealing with a number of social and economic issues as a result of its inadequate land governance. Weak land administration is detrimental to emerging nations, especially those where rural land is a vital component of their identity, a major source of income, and an important method of investing and accumulating wealth for future generations. Therefore, poor governance in the management of rural land causes issues with tenure security, high transaction costs, land disputes, landlessness, and unequal land distribution, as well as social instability, political instability, and social exclusion. It also reduces private sector investment and encourages land grabs, among other issues. It is nearly impossible to eradicate poverty and guarantee effective land administration and sustainable development in the absence of strong capacity, strong commitment from public servants, and the predominance of rent-seeking political economy. Accountability refers to the answerability of institutions or servants for their deeds and the outcomes that follow while enforcing land policies [4].

Urban land lease proclamation no 721/2011 and Rural land administration and use (RLAU) proclamations, such as Proclamation No. 133/2006 and the most recent revision, Proclamation No. 252/2009, are unique to the Amhara regional state. However, there is no defined goal or plan in place for implementing good governance principles in the management of land. Due to unclear land rules, shoddy institutions, and a lack of accountability and transparency in land administration, these can serve as possible entrance sites for corrupt activity [5]. In order to balance social, economic, and environmental challenges, land administration must apply good governance principles such justice, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and equity [5]. Nonetheless, there are still difficulties in putting good governance ideas into practice while managing rural land, particularly in Borena Woreda in the South Wollo zone of the Amhara region.

In addition to this idea, the researcher provides three arguments to demonstrate how sound governance practices have an impact on the management of rural land. First off, while farming is the main socioeconomic activity in rural communities, the amount of farmland is decreasing over time due to rising global land demand brought on by urbanization and population expansion. Second, one of the most crooked areas of governmental administration is land-related services. Thirdly, land on its own, which is seen as the main source of wealth, frequently serves as a medium of exchange and provides incentive for political disputes, power and economic

advantages, and self-interest. These problems serve as the main justifications (rationality) for the researcher's decision to begin the assessment of good governance practices in rural land administration.

For this reason, the goal of this study is to evaluate how well good governance principles are actually implemented at Borena Woreda's RLAU office in order to identify potential remedies to the current issues [6].

Regarding good governance, various studies have been carried out by various researchers in various fields and in various parts of Ethiopia. [7-9] evaluated the effectiveness of good governance in the local public sector's service delivery. The application of good governance principles to the rural land administration office's service delivery that is, how the office provides the public with transparent services has not been discussed in these studies. This study's primary goal is to evaluate the applicability of transparency and accountability principles and identify the elements that affect their practicability in land administration office of Borena Woreda.

This study's primary goal is to evaluate the applicability of transparency and accountability principles and identify the elements that affect their practicability in the rural land administration office of Borena Woreda.

Theoretically, there are more than seven components that go into measuring what constitutes excellent governance. According to [10], transparency is the quality of information being publicly available and accessible as well as the honesty and fairness of land management choices and their implementation.

Transparency in land administration

According to [11], transparency was defined as an organization's efforts to lessen rent-seeking breaks in facility provision as well as to enhance information exchange both inside and between the agency and its clients. Good governance in urban land management has received significant attention in the contemporary urbanization processes where specific principles could be utilized to evaluate issues of resilient land governance because urban expansion requires a well-organized decision-making process that enhances its sustainability and resilience. Additionally, transparency demands that decisions and actions be made in an open manner and that the availability of sufficient information be evaluated by any relevant entity to determine whether or not pertinent procedures are being followed.

In light of the dearth of reliable and transparent data on land availability and transactions as well as the inadequate public education regarding land rights and rules, transparency is an essential element of an efficient land administration. Building legitimacy, trust, and a potent plan to empower people all depend heavily on transparency. Individuals can only assert their rights when procedures are sufficiently clear for them to comprehend and if they can obtain information to enable them to take part in various contexts [2].

Issue of accountability in land administration

Accountability in land administration can be improved by

implementing uniform service standards that are monitored, staff codes of conduct (as well as sanction procedures), and incentives such as awards for outstanding employees. Accountability also refers to public institutions' willingness and ability to put in place systems and procedures to engage citizen groups, capture, and utilize their feedback as well as capacity to use such platforms [11].

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Description of the Study Area

The study is carried out in Borena Woreda, which is

located in the north-central highlands of Ethiopia (Figure 1). The area is located within South Wollo administrative zone of the Amhara Regional State. It lies between 100 34'N to 100 53'N and 380 28' E to 380 54'E. The Woreda covers a total area of 937km² and is inhabited by about 195,920 people (CSA, 2008). It is characterized by diverse topographic conditions consisting of four agro-climatic zones ranging from 1000 to 4000 meters above sea (Wikipedia). Generally, the topography of Borena Woreda is undulating with highly slope and widely distributed gullies in sub-water sheds that is not appropriate for land governance (Borena Woreda office of agricultural development, 2017).

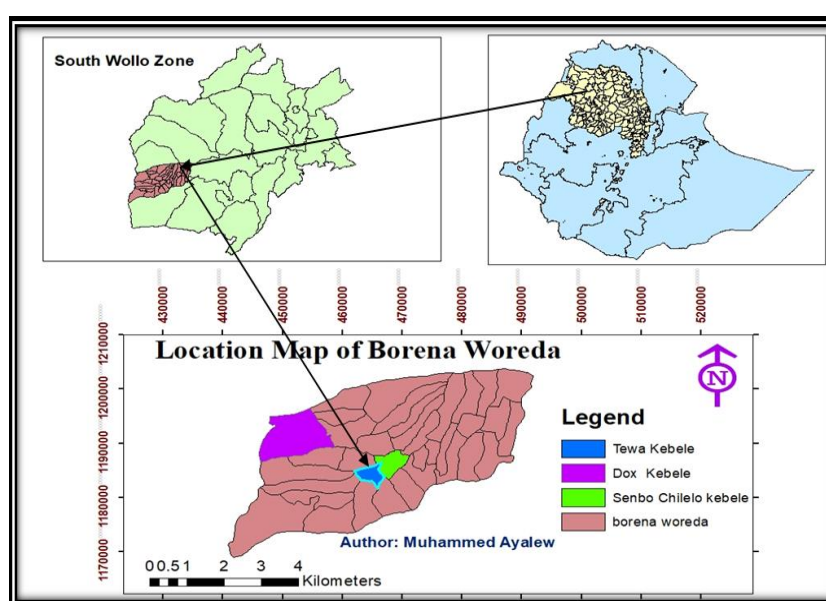


Figure 1. Location map of Borena Woreda.

2.2. Research Methods

The researchers used a combination of primary and secondary data sources to capture relevant information in

detail in order to have a better understanding of the research problem and to obtain a wealth of information [12]. For this research, the primary sources of data were observations, questionnaires, key informant interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in this way.



Figure 2. Two FGD participants.

The researcher employed both non-probability and probability sampling techniques for this work. The researcher employed systematic random sampling in place of probability sampling because the study area had a significant number of rural landholders.

In addition, the researcher employed purposive sampling,

a non-probability sampling technique, based on the notion that the informants in this study were professionals with specialized knowledge and experience. Out of the entire target demographic, 184 sample customers and rural landowners were chosen, and 15 key informants were specifically chosen.

Table 1. Summary of Research Methodology.

Specific Objectives	Data type	Data analysis
Testing the applicability of transparency and accountability principles in RLAU office	Primary & secondary data	Inferential and descriptive statistic
Identifying factors affecting GG principles practice in RLAU office	Primary & secondary data	Descriptive statistics

3. Result and Discussion

The findings pertaining to the application of accountability and transparency in the management of rural land are presented in depth and discussed in this part.

3.1. Analysis of Transparency Practice in Rural Land Administration

Transparency can be addressed from several perspectives. However, for this matter, the researchers used [13] framework to

assess transparency in rural land administration. According to this framework, the main metrics to assess the applicability of transparency in the Borena Woreda RLAU office are openness in decision-making, clarity of rules, and accessibility of information. The respondents were questioned on the availability of information, the lucidity of regulations, and the transparency of decision-making processes pertaining to rural land.

3.1.1. Accessibility of Information on Rural Land Administration

Access to information is a central component of transparency [5].

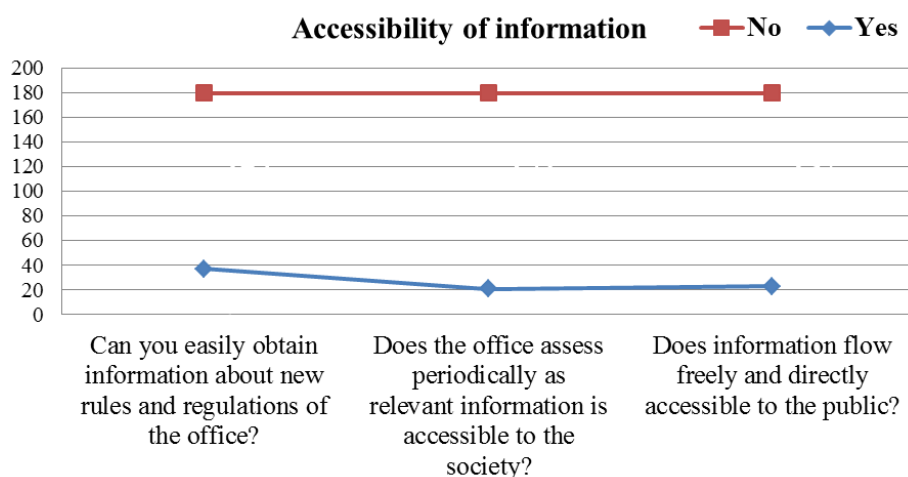


Figure 3. Views of respondents on accessibility of information.

As it can be seen in Figure 3, firstly respondents were asked whether they obtain information about new rules and regulations of rural land easily or not. Concerning this question, 143 (79.4 %) the total sample respondents replied, as they were

unable to obtain information easily about new rules and regulations of rural land administration office. The remaining 37 (20.6%) of respondents replied as they easily obtained information about new rules and regulations of office.

The second question is requested to know the respondent's perception on whether the office assesses periodically if all relevant information on rural land is accessible to the public or not.

Accordingly, 159 (88.3%) of respondents replied as the office was not trying to periodically assess as whether all the relevant information on rural land was accessible to the public. Only 21 respondents replied as the office was assesses all relevant information on rural land periodically.

Lastly, respondents are asked on the flows of information freely and directly accessible to the public. In this regard, 87.2% of respondents replied that the flows of information were not freely and directly accessible to them whereas, 23 (12.8%) of respondents told that information were flows freely and directly accessible to the public. In addition to this, participants of FGD also said that information on rural land was not accessible to the public in the study area. This result implies rural land administration office has not enough information was not assuring whether information is accessible to the public which creates an opportunity for corruption, one sign of lack of good governance. In relation to this, [14] justified that access to information has been sighted as a solution to the increasing incidence of bribery and corruption associated with resource management especially rural land.

3.1.2. Openness in Decision Making

There are different types of decisions that might pass on rural land, such as decisions on land delivery; acquisition, registration, dispute resolution and publicizing information

3.1.3. Clarity in Rural Land Administration

mechanism.

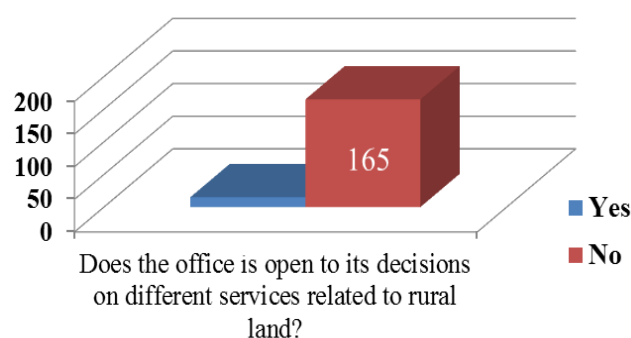


Figure 4. Openness in decision making concerning to rural land.

In regarding to openness of decision making, as shown in Figure 4., 165 (91.7%) of sample respondents confirmed that the office was not open to its decisions on land allocation, registration and land acquisition especially through inheritance. Unlike to these respondents, 15 respondents replied that there were some open decision-making processes related to land registration services. In this regard, focused group participants pointed out that: “there is no open decision making process in kebele and Woreda rural land administration bodies in case of land use, valuation, land registration services carried out in the office”. This result revealed that there is a problem in openness of decision-making process in different services of RLAU office.

Table 2. Perception of respondents on clarity information rural land administration.

Questions	Response options	Frequency	Percentage
Does rules governing rural land including size of land to be allocated and ways of transfer-ring land through inheritance is clear for you?	Yes	57	21.7%
	No	123	68.3 %

As shown in Table 2, 68.3% of sample respondents replied that rules governing rural land including size of land to be allocated and ways of transferring land through inheritance were not clear whereas, the remaining 21.7% of respondents told that as the size of the land to be allocated was clear. All participants of focus group discussion confirmed that “there is high social crisis in the family, conflict over land and bloodshed due to less clarity on implementation of land bequeaths provision especially most of conflicts arises from the term family member. This implies there is a problem on clarity rules governing rural land and appointment of administrators to public that leads to corrupt and unfair treatment of people.

Finally, the researchers put their own standard measures to generalize the overall practice of transparency in Borena Woreda based on these indicators. The standard is that: firstly, if all three indicators are problematic in the study area, the overall practice of transparency rated as very poor. Secondly, if two of these indicators are problematic, the overall practice of transparency rated as poor. Thirdly, if only one of these indicators is problematic, the overall practice of transparency rated as good. Therefore, since all three indicators are problematic in the study area, the overall practice of transparency in Borena Woreda rural land administration and use office rated as very poor. In line with this, the result confirmed by [15], implies that there was shortcomings or

problems in making information accessible, openness and clarity in governance and administration of urban land. In order to solve these problem of transparency, the researchers introduce a basic framework of transparency like use of anti-corruption agencies and whistleblowers, development of effective contracting arrangements, integrity pacts, and development of a focus on citizens which are taken from FAO [16].

3.2. Analysis of Accountability Practice in Rural Land Administration

Accountability is manifested by the terms of answerability, responsibility, liability and anticipation of account giving. It is mainly concerned with government institutions to make accountable to the people who are influenced by their decisions [17].

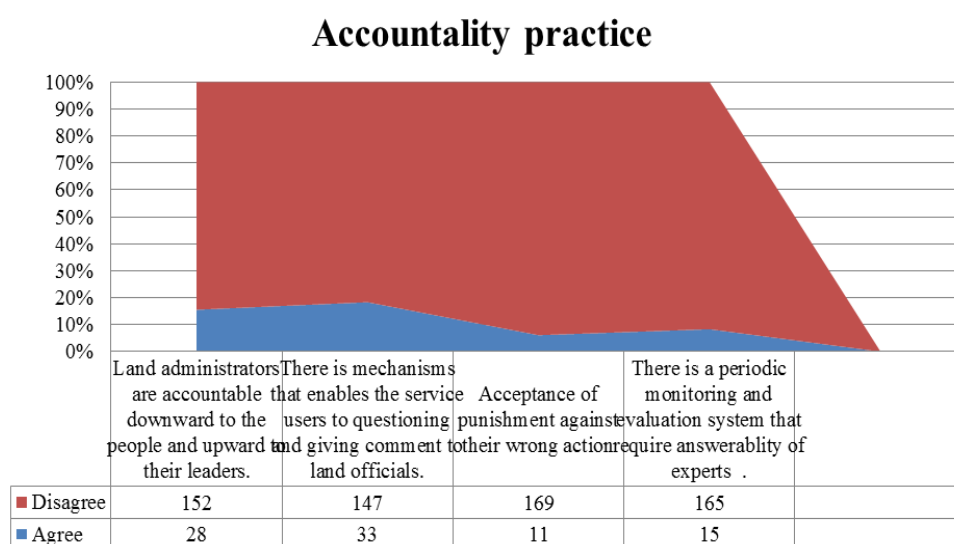


Figure 5. Indicators for the practice of accountability principles.

As depicted in Figure 5, respondents were asked their perception on the accountability of land administrators downward to the people and upward to their leaders. The majority 152 (84%) of the respondents were disagreed and the remaining 28 (16%) of respondents responded agree on the accountability of land administration committee to the people and leaders. Likewise, the interview finding indicated that land administration bodies were only accountable upward to their leaders but not downward to the public. This implies there is failure of their responsibility to the public at the bottom level. Similarly, [18] finding affirmed that the existence of imbalance of upward and down Award accountability mechanism at the ground level.

As indicated in the figure 5, only 33 (18%) of the total respondents were agreed on the presence of accountability mechanisms and tools like Gimgema with a few persons as they want. The majority of respondents (147) that accounts 82% were disagreed about the availability of accountability mechanisms and tools that enabled the public to question and control of land administration bodies. This finding indicated that the public was unable to question and control land administration bodies due to the absence of enabling environment. On the contrary, the result of a research in Tigray conducted by [19] revealed that people have full confidence to question their land administration workers. Regarding to the third question, only 11 respondents out of 180 sample

respondents agreed on acceptance of punishments against their wrong actions whereas, most of respondents (169) were disagreed the acceptance of punishments against their wrong actions/decisions. This implies rural land administration employers and officials were not truly accepting sanction/punishment against their wrong actions/decisions.

The fourth statement asked to respondents whether there was a periodic monitoring and evaluation system of experts. Accordingly, about 165 (91.7%) of the total respondents were not agreed to this statement. Only, 15 (8.3%) of respondents replied as agree on this statement. According to key informant interview, customers were asked irregular payments by experts or officials to accomplish tasks and officials use their power to favor their families, political associates and friends in the office. Due this fact, corruption and rent seeking behaviors were rampant in this office. This findings implies that there was no a periodic monitoring and evaluation system of officials and employers. In addition to this, from the researcher observation in RLAU offices, some ethical standards like rule of law, transparency and fairness accountability were posted in billboards. But in reality, there was no practice of clear ethical standard for accountability of experts for their action or decision.

Generally, these findings confirmed that Borena Woreda RLAU office has weak accountability system to maintain good governance due to the absence of periodic monitoring

and evaluation system of officials and employees. Therefore, in order to enhance and ensure the future to be sustained, everybody should be concerned and give much attention to the accountability.

3.3. Regression Analysis of Factors for Applying GG Principles in RLAU Office

According to the response of customers and experts, the major factors for applying transparency and accountability

principles in RLAU office were the presence of corruption and rent seeking behavior, lack of qualified manpower, lack of education, implementation gaps, weak monitoring and evaluation, weak coordination of stakeholders, inadequate motivation and incentives.

Generally, the researcher was made the following regression output table on idea that which factor are highly statistically significance at 95% level of confidence to identify the factors that is highly affects the applicability of transparency and accountability principles in rural land administration.

Table 3. Regression analysis output on factors.

Regression Statistics						
Multiple R	0.71477					
R Square	0.70125					
Adjusted R Square	0.68999					
Standard Error	0.32667					
Observations	180					
ANOVA						
	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F	
Regression	7	19.172877	2.73	25.666	0.00000808	
Residual	172	18.35490	0.10			
Total	179	37.52777				
Factors for Applying GG Principles in RLAU office	Coefficient	Standard Error	t stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	0.38612	0.19873876	1.943	0.0537	-0.0061646	0.7783972
Weak monitoring and evaluation	-0.0437	0.06411309	-0.68	0.006	-0.1702233	0.0828761
Inadequate motivation & incentives	-0.0141	0.07607729	-0.86	0.0004	-0.1642751	0.1360554
Weak coordination of stakeholders	-0.0217	0.08646654	-0.25	0.8025	-0.1923324	0.1490118
Corrupt and rent seeking behavior	-0.0397	0.08168221	-0.49	0.0006	-0.2009719	0.1214853
Institutional set up	-0.0671	0.05201707	-1.29	0.1987	-0.1697828	0.0355652
Legislation and implementation gaps	0.06987	0.05711365	1.223	0.0002	-0.0428630	0.1826047
Lack of skilled manpower	0.8034	0.06598358	12.17	0.000025	0.67316069	0.9336443

As depicted in the Table 3, the investigated relationship of the practice of good governance principles with weak monitoring and evaluation, inadequate motivation & incentives, weak coordination of stakeholders, corrupt and rent seeking behavior, Institutional set up, legislation and implementation gaps, and lack of skilled manpower showed a good relationship ($R^2 = 0.701$). This indicates 70% of the variation is due to the stated variables; the remaining 30% of

the variation is as a result of other extraneous factors (variables) that affect the applicability of good governance principles in the office. Among the seven variables, five variables i.e. weak monitoring and evaluation, Inadequate motivation & incentives, corrupt and rent seeking behavior, legislation and implementation gaps, and lack of skilled manpower are statistically significance because their p-value is allowable at 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$) and they affect

the applicability of good governance principles in the office in the same direction except institutional set up and weak coordination of stakeholders. Implementation gaps and lack of skilled manpower highly affected the applicability of good governance principles in rural land administration than the others constraint because their Beta coefficient is greater than the others.

3.4. Analysis and Discussion of Significant Factors

Corruption and rent seeking behavior: this factor had a positive relationship and highly statistically significant at 0.0006 which is less than 5% probability level. This implies that the applicability of good governance principles in rural land administration is highly affected by corruption. In line with this factor, most of key informants replied that *“land administration officials bribes either to speed up administrative procedures or produce results that favor the bribers. And also customers required additional illegal payments to obtain certificate of land registration for their land”*. This implies that corruption and rent-seeking behaviors are much severed in the study area.

Similarly, the findings of [19] also imply that, corruption is one of the most rampant problems in local land administration. As a result, corruption is a systematic problem for land administration. Uses of anti-corruption agencies and development of a focus on citizens are the best corrective measures to minimize corruption.

Lack of skilled or qualified manpower: the result shows that lack of skilled manpower is highly significant ($p = 0.000$) factor that affect the practice of good governance principles in RLAU office. This data analysis validates the idea put forth by FAO (2007), which states that multidisciplinary experts such as surveyors, valuers, lawyers, and land administrators are necessary for efficient land administration. Thus, there were no graduate experts of this kind in Borena Woreda's RLAU offices. Interestingly, the manager of the Temechew RLAU office stated that most employers were diploma holders and that there isn't a single employer with a background in land administration or management. There are just two employers that hold an MSc in project planning and public management. According to similar findings, [20] also revealed that limited skilled manpower and resources was one of critical institutional challenges facing service delivery in land administration at local level.

Legislation and Implementation Gaps: similarly it also another significant factor ($p = 0.0002$) that affect the applicability of transparency, accountability, responsiveness and equity principles in RLAU office. Key informants also stated that lack of clear legislations and implementation gap particularly in land inheritance and compensation regulation were basic causes for rural land disputes and bad rural land governance in the study area.

Inadequate Motivation and Incentives: as shown in Table 3, it is also evident that inadequate motivation and incentives is significant factor ($p = 0.0004$) that affect the practice of good governance principles in RLAU office. Similarly, two kebele committees said that employers who work in RLAU office had lack of motivation due to their poor salary paid and trained.

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation: it is the fifth statistically significant variable ($p = 0.0006$) that affect the applicability of good governance principles in RLAU office. According to the statement of the manager of RLAU office, technically there was weak evaluation and monitoring performance in study area. Theoretically, [21] suggested that lack of sufficient capacity to monitor and implementation is a major obstacle to the realization of good governance in rural land administration.

In general, good governance principles, particularly accountability and transparency responsiveness were not practiced in the RLAU office due to the existence of gaps in legislation and implementation, a lack of skilled labor, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, insufficient motivation, poor stakeholder coordination, corrupt and rent-seeking behavior, and an unstructured institutional setup.

4. Conclusion

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate the accountability and transparency practices used in rural land administration. To evaluate the applicability of each principle of accountability and transparency in the study area's land administration office, the researcher created a number of indicators.

When it comes to the accountability principle, the results showed that the most prevalent way that officials utilize their position of authority to favor their friends, family members, and political allies in office is through favoritism. This is because the accountability principle is not applicable in this particular situation.

Regarding the principles of transparency, the findings verified that there existed issues with the availability, transparency, and lucidity of information in the services rendered by the rural administration office. A lack of skilled labor, inadequate motivation and incentives, poor coordination among stakeholders, corrupt and rent-seeking behavior, inadequate institutional setup, gaps in legislation and its implementation, and poor monitoring and evaluation were among the statistically significant factors impeding the study area's adoption of accountability and transparency principles.

Ultimately, the rural land administration office's overall performance services in terms of accountability and transparency were inadequately implemented and did not effectively combat malpractices, corruption, or rent-seeking conduct within the agency.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions made, the following recommendations and policy implications were forwarded by the researchers.

- 1) In order to reduce the existing corruption and rent seeking behaviors, Borena Woreda RLAU office should follow Botswana's land policy against corruption that is "naming and shaming" of those involved in corruption in front of the public like in the religious and public institutions.
- 2) All employees/workers in RLAU office of Borena Woreda should be transparent, accountable and responsive to their action and decisions on a given services.
- 3) There should be a system developed by district land administration office to monitor and evaluate the performance of employers to take corrective measures on gaps identified.
- 4) Land administration office should implement subprinciples of accountability like Proper evaluation of the performance of officials, official's be liable to their decision, Subjecting to regular audits and Clear assignment of responsibility based on the careers of employer.

Abbreviations

CSA	Central Statistical Agency
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
RLAU	Rural Land Administration and Use
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
MSc	Master of Science
GG	Good Governance
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Pakage for Social Science
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Author Contributions

Muhammed Ayalew Kassa: Conceptualization, Resources, Project administration, Data curation, Software, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing

Getachew Tadese Mussa: Funding acquisition, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Visualization

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Data Availability Statement

The data is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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