

---

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BAD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: INVESTIGATING THE  
CAUSES, THE EFFECT AND REMEDIES**

By

**BASSEY UDOM, Ph.D.**

**SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF UYO,**

**AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

And

**DINAH EMEM DANIEL**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

**AKWA IBOM STATE POLYTECHNIC**

**IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

**Abstract**

*Bad governance has long been identified as a significant barrier to the socio-economic and political development of African countries. This study critically analyzes the multi-layered causes, effects, and potential remedies of bad governance across the African continent. Key causes of bad governance in African countries include weak institutions, corruption, poverty, and economic inequality. The effects are far-reaching, leading to persistent economic decline and underdevelopment, deterioration of social services, and loss of international confidence and aid. By examining these causes and effects, this paper identifies a range of potential remedies, including economic reforms, promoting transparency and accountability, and strengthening democratic institutions. The study concludes that with collective efforts, the cycle of bad governance in Africa can be mitigated, leading to a more prosperous and stable continent. One of the recommendations was that African governments should focus on inclusive policies that promote equitable access to resources, healthcare, education, and employment.*

**Keyword: Bad Governance, Causes, Effect, Remedies and African countries**

**Introduction**

In many African nations, poor governance is still a chronic and widespread problem that feeds the vicious cycle of underdevelopment, poverty, and political instability. The use of political, economic, and administrative power to run a country's affairs is known as governance. When governance is opaque, unaccountable, and exclusive, it becomes problematic. Numerous issues, such as inadequate institutional frameworks, corruption, ethnic conflicts, and the legacy of colonialism, have been associated with the prevalence of bad governance in Africa. Scholars have long debated the root causes of poor governance in the region, with some attributing it to external influences such as colonial exploitation and others highlighting internal dynamics like political elite manipulation and weak state structures (Akeju & Akinola, 2016).

One of the primary causes of bad governance in Africa is corruption, which permeates all levels of government, leading to the mismanagement of resources and the entrenchment of poverty. Corruption in African countries is often facilitated by weak institutional checks and balances, a lack of transparency, and a political culture that rewards patronage over merit (Uzochukwu & Okolie, 2018). African nations consistently rank among the worst in terms of corruption perceptions, with many leaders accused of siphoning public funds for personal gain. This diversion of resources has a profound impact on the delivery of public services, as funds meant for education, healthcare, and

infrastructure are redirected for private purposes, further undermining governance (Okechukwu, 2019).

The effects of bad governance in African countries are devastating and far-reaching. Poor governance has been identified as a major contributor to poverty, political instability, and social unrest. Without accountability and transparency, public resources are misallocated, leading to the collapse of essential services and institutions. Moreover, bad governance also affects economic growth, as foreign investors are often deterred by the lack of a stable and predictable business environment (Obeng-Odoom, 2020). A multifaceted strategy addressing the internal and external causes of inadequate leadership is needed to combat terrible governance in Africa. In order to improve accountability and openness, institutions must be strengthened.

A complex issue arising from historical, political, and economic considerations is bad governance in African nations. Even though the effects are severe and can range from social unrest to economic standstill, there are workable solutions. Building an inclusive, transparent, and accountable government culture requires strengthening institutional structures, fostering civil society involvement, and fostering regional collaboration. For Africa to continue on its current growth track, it will be imperative to address these underlying issues.

### **Concept of Bad governance**

The connection between the governing authority and people under its jurisdiction—who make decisions—is primarily characterised by the word "governance." A system of governance that falls short of meeting the needs and interests of the populace is referred to as bad government. Woniwei (2020) affirmed that poor or bad governance is a condition in which the state lacks the capacity and effectiveness in regulatory quality for the eradication of societal challenges such as impoverishment, infrastructural development, corruption, insurgency, and terrorism, among others.

Bad governance is a condition in which the state lacks the capacity and effectiveness in regulatory quality for the eradication of societal challenges such as impoverishment, infrastructural development, corruption, insurgency, and terrorism, among others. Bad governance is an extreme end condition of failure and collapse of governmental institutions and structures. Azoro, Onah, and Agulefo (2021) asserted that bad governance appears to be endemic in a state. Bad governance is a situation of unfavorable relationships between government and segments of society in decision-making. In other words, it is a reflection of instability in political regimes. It could occur in various forms.

The state's corrective function is severely harmed by bad governance, especially when it comes to preserving peace and security and fostering the economic growth and riches necessary to combat poverty and advance the development of human capital. When someone does not accept true accountability for mishaps, particularly those that occur inside the economy, it is considered bad governance. In such a setting, corruption and the misuse of authority cease to be seen as aberrations and are accepted as the standard.

### **Prevalence of bad governance in African countries**

Sustainable development is still significantly hampered by the pervasive weak governance in African nations. Strong institutional changes, strong political will, and significant civil society participation are needed to address this issue. In African nations, poor governance is more common

in the following areas:

### **Human rights violations**

Human rights abuses are also prevalent in several African nations, often as a result of authoritarian regimes that suppress dissent and limit freedoms. The 2021 Human Rights Watch World Report indicates that in countries such as Eritrea and Ethiopia, government crackdowns on political opposition and civil society are common (Human Rights Watch, 2021). These violations not only reflect poor governance but also hinder democratic processes and public trust in government.

### **Socio-Economic Implications**

The socio-economic implications of bad governance are profound. A 2020 report by the African Development Bank highlighted that poor governance significantly impacts economic growth, investment, and public service delivery across the continent (African Development Bank, 2020). Countries plagued by governance issues often face high unemployment rates, poor health care, and inadequate educational opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

### **Modern Developments**

In recent years, there have been some efforts toward improving governance in Africa, particularly through regional initiatives such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes good governance and human rights (African Union, 2021). However, the pace of change remains slow.

### **Foreign influence and external interference**

Another factor contributing to the prevalence of bad governance in Africa is external interference. Some African governments have become overly reliant on foreign aid and intervention, often allowing donor countries or international organizations to influence domestic policies. This reliance on foreign powers can also weaken the sovereignty of African nations and reduce the incentive for governments to be accountable to their own citizens (Chabal & Daloz, 2017).

## **Bad Governance in Nigeria**

According to Aning (2016), bad governance is the failure of a government to satisfy the demands of society while making the best use of all resources available; failure of a public institution to handle public affairs and state funds. In governmental bodies, it is distinguished by corruption, criminality, and a lack of freedom of expression, among other things.

One of the major manifestations of bad governance in Nigeria is widespread corruption. Nigeria has consistently ranked poorly on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, with high-level corruption being a common feature across all levels of government. Politicians and other public servants are frequently charged with misusing taxpayer dollars for their own benefit while neglecting to provide infrastructure, healthcare, and education, among other necessities. This culture of corruption damages institutions, erodes public confidence, and makes it more difficult for the nation to handle its developmental issues.

The absence of accountability and transparency is a significant problem associated with poor governance. A lot of public institutions lack proper monitoring, and the laws designed to guarantee openness in government are frequently lax or poorly applied. Because they are unlikely to suffer consequences for their actions, public officials can behave with impunity in this setting. In addition, the populace has not received enough justice, especially those without income or political clout, as a result of politicised courts and lax law enforcement.

Nigeria's insecurity problem is another indicator of bad governance. The rise of terrorist

groups like Boko Haram in the northeast, armed banditry in the northwest, and the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta can be traced to government failures in addressing poverty, unemployment, and regional marginalization (Anekwe, 2020). The lack of coherent and effective policies to address these issues has led to the proliferation of violence, crime, and instability.

The last major issues associated with poor governance in Nigeria are economic mismanagement and inconsistent policies. Notwithstanding the abundance of natural resources in the nation, economic instability, high unemployment, and poverty have been persistent problems. Stalled economic development has been caused by a number of factors, including inadequate policy execution, frequent policy changes, and a lack of long-term economic planning.

### **Bad governance in Kenya**

Over the years, Kenya has experienced serious governance challenges, with problems including corruption, ethnic favouritism, and a lack of transparency jeopardising political stability and progress. Kanyinga (2017) highlighted how governance failures are deeply rooted in political patronage and tribalism, where the ruling elite prioritizes personal or ethnic interests over national progress. Because of this political culture, there are little accountability procedures in place and public resources are regularly misappropriated for personal benefit.

Corruption is perhaps the most visible manifestation of bad governance in Kenya. In a report by Transparency International (2020), Kenya was ranked 124th out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index, indicating rampant corruption in both the public and private sectors. Despite the establishment of various anti-corruption agencies, such as the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), these institutions have been criticized for being ineffective and subject to political interference.

The 2017 general elections in Kenya also exposed systemic governance issues, including election rigging, political violence, and judicial interference. According to Cheeseman (2019), the nullification of the 2017 presidential election by the Supreme Court highlighted widespread electoral malpractice. The political elite failed to enact the essential reforms in spite of the court's decision in favour of election reforms, which increased public scepticism in democracy. Due to these acts, people's confidence in their government and the election process has been eroded, perpetuating a cycle of political instability.

The combination of weak institutions, corruption, and inadequate political reforms has stifled Kenya's economic and social development. According to Maina (2021), bad governance has exacerbated poverty levels, with government mismanagement of funds leading to insufficient infrastructure and social services. Therefore, strengthening democratic institutions, increasing accountability, and openness in government operations are all necessary to buck these trends and improve Kenyan governance, which continues to be a top priority.

### **Bad Governance in Uganda**

A number of structural issues that have impeded Uganda's political stability, economic growth, and social advancement are indicative of bad governance in the nation. The nation has struggled with problems including political repression, low accountability, weak institutional frameworks, and corruption over the years. The delivery of public services and the general well-being of Ugandan residents have been negatively impacted by these problems, which have combined to create a

governance crisis. The main contributors to Uganda's poor governance include the institutionalisation of political power, the absence of democratic procedures, and pervasive corruption in state institutions.

Corruption in Uganda is a significant problem associated with poor governance. Transparency worldwide's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is one worldwide corruption index where the nation often scores low. Public servants are often accused of embezzling public monies, and corruption is rampant in numerous government spheres, including the court, public administration, and law enforcement. Corruption-related losses of public funds make it more difficult to provide basic services like healthcare and education, which further depresses the socioeconomic status of the populace.

Political repression also contributes significantly to bad governance in Uganda. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) reports regular harassment of opposition leaders, arbitrary arrests, and the use of excessive force by security forces during political protests (UHRC, 2019). This political environment undermines democratic governance and limits the ability of citizens to participate in decision-making processes, contributing to a cycle of repression and undemocratic governance.

Moreover, Uganda's weak institutional framework exacerbates governance challenges. Institutions that are meant to act as checks and balances, such as the judiciary and the legislature, are often perceived as being under the influence of the executive branch (Makara, 2020). Finally, bad governance has negatively impacted Uganda's economic management. Although Uganda is rich in natural resources, mismanagement and corruption have prevented the country from realizing its full economic potential. Improving governance is crucial to ensuring that Uganda can create a more stable and prosperous future for its citizens.

### **Bad governance in Ghana**

Bad governance in Ghana has been a persistent issue over the years, characterized by corruption, mismanagement of public resources, and political instability. One of the aspects of bad governance in Ghana is corruption. Corruption in Ghana is a serious problem according to Transparency International's Perception of Corruption Index, in which Ghana scored 43 on a scale of 100 and ranked 70 out of 180 countries in 2023 (Pavlovskis, 2024). Strong legislative frameworks against corruption are in place with the government, although they are not always or seldom enforced. Businesses say that bribes are often paid in exchange for favourable judicial judgements, and that bribery is particularly prevalent in the legal system and across public sectors.

Another is weak accountability systems. Ghana's accountability mechanisms, such as the auditor's general's office, have often been undermined by political interference. The removal of the formal Auditor-General, Daniel Domelovo, in 2021 after he uncovered several cases of financial malfeasance, was widely seen as an attempt to stifle transparency and accountability. Political interference in anti-corruption bodies severely limits their effectiveness, allowing public officials to act without facing consequences (Acheampong, 2021).

Election-related violence is frequently used by the political elite as an operational strategy or counter-strategic tactic to gain an electoral advantage. Violence is frequently used by individuals or groups of party followers who have conflicting agendas to further a variety of purposes, such as obtaining political power or financial gain. Often, these acts of violence combine to produce a tense,

volatile, and unpredictable electoral atmosphere that creates an urgent sense of insecurity in the minds of many Ghanaians during elections (Boateng, 2019).

Ghana's inability to provide basic public services, especially in rural regions, is one of the most obvious signs of the country's limited state capability. Inefficiencies, insufficient money, and poor management frequently affect health, education, and infrastructure development. Inequality is exacerbated and public confidence in the government is damaged by poor public services.

### **Causes of Bad governance in African countries**

In many African nations, poor governance is a complicated problem impacted by a number of interconnected causes. These reasons fall into one of four categories: political, economic, social, or historic. They are all detrimental to progress and good leadership. Among the reasons for poor governance in African nations are:

#### **Corruption**

Corruption remains one of the most prominent causes of bad governance in Africa. Corruption permeates various levels of government, including high-level political elites and local administrations. According to Momoh (2015), Africa annually loses an estimated US\$148 billion to corruption. This has brought to the fore the danger corruption has posed to African states, as urgent steps are required to thwart the monster called corruption, which has led to increasing levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Corruption also hinders foreign investment, exacerbating economic underdevelopment.

#### **Weak Institutions**

Many African countries suffer from weak institutions that lack autonomy and the ability to check political excesses. The absence of strong democratic institutions such as an independent judiciary, robust electoral commissions, and accountable civil services creates an environment where political leaders act with impunity. These weak institutions also lack the resources and capacity to enforce laws, leading to systemic inefficiencies and lawlessness. When institutions like the judiciary, anti-corruption bodies, or parliamentary oversight committees are ineffective, public officials are not held responsible for their actions, leading to a lack of transparency and rampant corruption.

#### **Poverty and Economic Inequality**

Extreme poverty and widespread economic inequality are both consequences of bad governance. Governments that fail to address these issues often see reduced political participation and citizen engagement. Poverty exacerbates inequality, limiting the population's ability to demand better governance or hold their leaders accountable.

#### **Poor Leadership and Lack of Accountability**

Many African countries suffer from poor leadership, where political leaders focus on maintaining power rather than implementing policies for the public's good. As explained by Mugabe (2020), authoritarian rulers, or "strongmen," often stay in power for decades by manipulating electoral processes and undermining democratic principles. This concentration of powers in the hands of a few individuals stifles political opposition and fosters a culture of unaccountability.

### **Effect of Bad Governance in African Countries**

The socioeconomic development of Africa has been severely hampered by bad governance in the continent's nations, which has an impact on social cohesion, economic expansion, and political

stability. The consequences of poor governance in African nations are listed below:

### **Political instability and corruption**

One of the most profound effects of bad governance in African countries is political instability. Governments that fail to ensure transparency and accountability often foster environments where corruption thrives. According to Soremekun (2017), corruption within government institutions undermines trust in the political system, leading to political unrest and, in some cases, armed conflicts. In many African nations, leadership struggles and authoritarian regimes continue to dominate, preventing the establishment of stable democratic institutions. This, in turn, has stunted the growth of political systems capable of delivering long-term development.

### **Economic Decline and Underdevelopment**

Bad governance is closely linked to economic underdevelopment. Governments that lack the ability or will to implement effective policies tend to mismanage resources. This inefficiency in resource allocation has led to widespread poverty, unemployment, and economic disparity in many African countries. Akinola (2019) noted that bad governance hampers foreign investment, which is crucial for economic growth, by creating an unstable and unpredictable economic environment.

### **Insecurity and violence**

In many African countries, bad governance has exacerbated insecurity, leading to increased levels of violence and conflict. Weak rule of law and the inability of governments to protect their citizens create a vacuum where criminal activities, insurgencies, and terrorism can thrive. In Nigeria, for example, the rise of groups like Boko Haram can be linked to poor governance and the marginalization of certain regions. The failure of government institutions to provide basic social services and opportunities for youth, such as education and employment, has also fueled violence and criminal behavior in countries like Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### **Deterioration of Social Services**

Another critical consequence of bad governance is the deterioration of essential social services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. African countries suffering from poor governance tend to invest insufficiently in these vital sectors, leading to widespread poverty, poor healthcare outcomes, and low literacy rates. Gyimah-Boadi (2016) mentioned that countries with higher levels of corruption and bad governance tend to have weaker health systems, with devastating consequences for the population.

### **Loss of International Confidence and Aid**

Many African countries are dependent on international aid for development, but bad governance has led to a loss of confidence from international donors. Governance plays a crucial role in fostering international partnerships, and countries with weak governance structures often lose out on crucial financial and technical support necessary for development. The misuse of foreign aid in the hands of corrupt leaders has led to reduced international cooperation and developmental assistance in several African nations.

### **Strategic ways to end bad governance in African countries**

Addressing bad governance in African countries is crucial for sustainable development and stability. One strategic approach is to **strengthen democratic institutions**. Establishing independent electoral commissions can ensure free and fair elections, fostering public trust in the political process. Voter education programs are vital to encourage civic participation, empowering citizens to hold their

leaders accountable.

**Promoting transparency and accountability** is another key strategy. Enabling individuals to obtain information about government spending and budgets may be achieved through the implementation of open data projects. By facilitating public scrutiny of government acts, transparency aids in the fight against corruption. Moreover, establishing citizen oversight mechanisms, such as community monitoring committees, enables local populations to participate actively in governance, enhancing accountability at all levels (World Bank, 2017).

**Empowering civil society** is fundamental to ending bad governance. Supporting non-governmental organizations that advocate for human rights and good governance can amplify citizen voices and promote grassroots movements. Initiatives for civic education can increase public knowledge of the rights of citizens and the value of accountability, resulting in an informed electorate that calls for improved government. Nations may develop a transparent and accountable culture by supporting an active civil society.

**Implementing robust anti-corruption measures** is essential for combating bad governance. Strengthening anti-corruption agencies with adequate resources and authority allows for effective investigation and prosecution of corrupt officials. Furthermore, passing legislation protecting whistleblowers encourages people to expose unethical behaviour without worrying about facing consequences. These actions promote better governance by fostering an atmosphere in which corruption is less likely to thrive.

**Economic reforms** also play a significant role in addressing governance issues. Promoting economic diversification can reduce dependence on a single resource, which often breeds corruption. Helping small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) may boost employment and economic development while building a stronger, more resilient economy. A more equal allocation of resources is encouraged by a varied economy, which reduces the concentration of authority that can result in corrupt behaviours.

**Leveraging technology** can enhance governance efforts. Implementing e-governance platforms can streamline public services, reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies and opportunities for corruption. Utilizing data analytics allows for the identification of trends and irregularities in public spending, providing valuable insights for policymakers. Additionally, developing global alliances with institutions such as the United Nations and the African Union may promote the sharing of resources and best practices, resulting in a cooperative strategy for reforming government. African nations may strive towards eradicating poor governance and promoting sustainable development by using these tactical approaches.

## Conclusion

The persistence of bad governance in African countries is deeply rooted in historical, socio-economic, and political factors. Colonial legacies, weak institutions, corruption, and poor leadership have contributed to this governance crisis, stunting the continent's development potential. The effects of bad governance are widespread, manifesting in economic stagnation, poverty, social unrest, and a lack of trust in public institutions. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening democratic institutions, promoting accountability, ensuring transparent governance, and fostering civic education are essential remedies. With collective efforts, the cycle of bad governance in Africa can be mitigated, leading to a more prosperous and stable continent.





### Recommendations

1. Governments must adopt transparent policies and practices that allow for public access to information on decision-making processes, budgeting, and expenditures.
2. To curb bad governance, African nations need to prioritize the strengthening of democratic institutions such as the judiciary, electoral bodies, and anti-corruption agencies.
3. African governments should support civil society organizations that advocate for human rights and good governance.
4. African governments should focus on inclusive policies that promote equitable access to resources, healthcare, education, and employment.

## References

- Acheampong E. (2021). Political Interference and Governance: An Analysis of the Domelevo Dismissal in Ghana. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 11(2), 15-31.
- African Development Bank. (2020). Africa's Economic Outlook 2020. Retrieved from African Development Bank
- African Union. (2021). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Retrieved from African Union
- Akeju, O. T., & Akinola, B. (2016). The impact of bad governance on socio-economic development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 5(3), 89-106.
- Akinola, A. O. (2019). "Bad Governance and Economic Development in Africa." *Journal of Governance and Development*, 15(2), 45-63.
- Anekwe R. (2020). Leadership Challenges and Nigeria Development the Issues and Imperatives.4. 1-5.
- Aning, K. (2016). Negotiating the west African conundrum: developing society through human security and social justice. In Keynote address at the international conference, Africa since Independence: Promise, Pugnacity and Failure in the Post-Colonial Contexts, University of Ibadan.
- Azoro C.J.S., Onah C.A. & Agulefo Q.O. (2021) Weak institutions and poor governance in Nigeria: a socio-legal perspective. *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*.4 (2)66.
- Boateng K., Gyamfi S. & Michael A. (2019). Electoral Violence and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana: A Synthesis of the Literature (1993-2016). *African Journal of Democracy & Governance*, 6(2): 73-98
- Chabal, P., & Daloz, J. P. (2017). Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument. Indiana University Press.
- Cheeseman, N., Lynch, G., & Willis, J. (2019). The Supreme Court ruling in Kenya: Electoral malpractice and political reforms. *Democracy in Africa*, 10(2), 115-130.
- Dan-Woniwei, F. (2020) the Nexus between Poor and Bad Governance, and Sub-National Conflicts in Africa. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 10, 697-704.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2016). "The Political Economy of Bad Governance in Africa." *African Studies Review*, 59(1), 27-47.
- Human Rights Watch. (2021). World Report 2021: Events of 2020. Retrieved from Human Rights Watch
- Kanyinga, K. (2017). Political patronage and tribalism in Kenya's governance. *Journal of African Studies*, 45(3), 218-234.
- Maina, W. (2021). Governance, economic growth, and inequality in Kenya. *African Economic Review*, 12(4), 134-151.
- Makara, S. (2020). The politics of Uganda's electoral processes: Understanding the dynamics of elections in a semi-authoritarian state. *African Studies Review*, 63(2), 215-232.
- Momoh Z. (2015). Corruption and Governance in Africa. Proceedings of the International Academic Conference for Sub-Sahara African Transformation and Development, 3(6).
- Mugabe T. (2020). Leadership and accountability in African governance. *Journal of African Political Economy*, 10(3), 35-47.
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2020). Africa's development challenges and global governance. *African Affairs*, 119(475), 555-575.



- 
- Okechukwu, E. C. (2019). Corruption and bad governance in Africa: Examining the root causes and solutions. *Journal of African Political Economy*, 4(1), 55-70.
- Osei-Assibey, E. (2022). "Governance and Inequality in Ghana: Examining the Role of Resource Allocation." *African Development Review*, 34(1), 1-20.
- Pavlovskis R. (2024). 2024 Investment Climate Statements: Ghana. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-investment-climate-statements/ghana/>
- Soremekun, K., (2017). "Corruption and Political Instability in Africa." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35(4), 563-577.
- Transparency International. (2020). Corruption Perceptions Index. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>
- Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC). (2019). Annual report on the state of human rights and freedoms in Uganda. Kampala: UHRC.
- Uzochukwu, C. & Okolie, A. M. (2018). Governance and corruption in Africa: Examining the past and present. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 36(4), 478-496.
- World Bank (2017). "Using Data Analytics to Improve Public Sector Performance."