

Implications of Corruption on Public Administration in Malawi

Susan Mtuwa^{1*}, Asiyati Lorraine Chiweza²

1. *Anti-Corruptions Bureau, Malawi and PhD student, School of Economics, Law and Government, University of Malawi*

2. *School of Economics, Law and Government, University of Malawi.*

* *phiri.sue@gmail.com*

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Abstract

The paper interrogates the functionality of the public administration machinery and the bureaucrat in an environment where institutional corruption exists. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy II (NACS II), a policy document launched by Malawi Government in 2019, recognises corruption as one of the significant impediments to national development targets. NACS II indicates corruption derails social and economic development efforts resulting in poor service delivery. There is a general belief among the citizenry in Malawi that corruption has become institutionalised (Chunga and Ned, 2022). The internal systems of institutions that are responsible for the provision of public service have been riddled with corruption manifested through weaknesses in critical areas such as human resource management systems, public procurement systems, and public finance management systems; weak controls in the execution of budgets leading to the misuse of public resources and maladaptive practices such as embezzlement. Based on secondary data, the paper explores the implication of such institutionalisation of corruption in the internal systems of public institutions based on Weberian theory on public administration and the bureaucrats. The Weberian theory argues that a bureaucrat is regarded as an agent of the state who is characterised as functioning not on an inherent sense of motivation but on an externally imposed set of criteria of neutrality, impartiality, ethics and professionalism

Keywords

Corruption
Public Administration
Institutionalisation,
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Malawi

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Introduction

There is a general belief among the citizenry in Malawi that corruption has become institutionalised (Chunga and Ned, 2022). The internal systems of institutions responsible for public service provision have been riddled with corruption manifested through weaknesses in critical areas such as human resource management systems, public procurement systems, and public finance management systems. Corruption has also manifested through weak controls in the execution of budgets leading to the misuse of public resources, issues in public procurement, and maladaptive practices such as embezzlement (National Anti-Corruption Strategy II, 2019).

Corruption has been defined in many ways because it is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Balboa and Medalla (2006) assert that corruption contains too many connotations to be analytically functional without a closer definition. The forms of corruption are diverse regarding who are the actors, initiators, and profiteers, how it is done, and to what extent it is practised. Banik (2010) and Brinkerhoff (2000) indirectly support this assertion by pointing out that corruption is a broad term subsuming a wide variety of illegal, illicit dishonest irregular and unprincipled activities, as well as behaviours, and most definitions share an emphasis on the exploitation of public position resources and power for private gain.

Bureaucratic or public sector corruption refers to corrupt acts of the bureaucrats in their dealings with either their superiors (the political elite) or the public. In its most common form, usually known as petty corruption, the public may be required to bribe bureaucrats to receive a service to which they are entitled or to speed up a bureaucratic procedure. This paper advances that Malawi has institutionalised bureaucratic corruption so much that it has almost become a norm that for one to access public service, there must be some inducement from the public official. Therefore, this paper will adopt the definition of bureaucratic corruption.

Bureaucratic corruption has an implication on the public administration machinery and the professionalism of the bureaucrat. Tanwir and Fennell (2010) point out that the Weberian bureaucrat is regarded as an agent of the state, an agent who is characterised as functioning not on an inherent sense of motivation but on an externally imposed set of criteria. The implication is that any intrinsic values or personal benefit does not drive the actions of the bureaucrat but is instrumental in nature. This paper argues that corruption becomes institutionalised in institutions where bureaucrats disregard those they serve, capitalise on the public's weaknesses, and seek personal gratification.

The Institutionalisation of Corruption in Malawi

Defining institutionalisation

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) see institutionalisation as a means of adaptation to the environment and is realized by developing appropriate and meaningful behaviours with the environment to gain legitimacy and conformity and transferring them to the next generations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) also posit that institutionalisation occurs by developing shared values with the environment.

In this manner, the institutionalisation of corruption in the public sector means accepting corruption as a norm in various areas within institutions in the public sector. Moreover, the institutionalisation of corruption would also mean acceptance of corruption as a norm in internal systems of the public sector institutions, a belief that corruption has gotten worse and that access to public services can only be possible with the aid of corruption.

The Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) Perceptions Survey on Corruption in Malawi (2019) highlights that 97% of the respondents indicated that corruption is a severe problem, and 61% said corruption had increased as compared to the previous year. When asked about corruption in selected public institutions, the results indicate that Malawians believe corruption is pervasive across sectors and public institutions, including among Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials. In addition, the 2022 Afrobarometer survey results on corruption

indicate that 66% of Malawians believe corruption has increased over the past year. This prevalence of corruption is an indication that corruption has become institutionalised in the fabric of Malawian society.

Chingaipe (2017) points out that the looting of government money at Capitol Hill exemplifies how corruption has become entrenched in Malawian society and culture. The malfeasance that has come to be known as '*Cashgate*' validated repeated findings of governance surveys that claimed that corruption in Malawi was endemic and dovetailed with the social fabric, such that it is a part of life.

In terms of experience with corruption, data from the ACB report centre collected in the 2021/22 financial year indicate that out of 990 complaints that the ACB received, 615 (62%) were complaints against public sector institutions, a clear indication that corruption in the public sector is a concern to the citizenry. Furthermore, an analysis of the complaints indicates that people encounter corruption during public service delivery. This then points to the institutionalised nature of corruption in the public service as corruption is so normalised that for one to access a service, generally, there must be an offering of a bribe or extortion.

Source of institutionalisation of corruption in Malawi

The history of state formation in Malawi contributes to how Malawian society behaves today. The modern political history of Malawi can be traced to 1893 when the Nyasa Districts were formally named the British Central African Protectorate (Tenthani and Chinsinga, 2016). During this time, the state machinery served the interests of European settlers, and Africans remained peripheral, if not irrelevant, in the organisation of government. Nkhata (2014) explains that the political order introduced following the declaration of the protectorate did not reflect the interests of most of the people of Malawi and was merely designed to further the interests of the colonial regime. This situation implied the nation. Wanjala (2012) observes the following about colonial governments:

Herein lies the beginnings of the institutionalisation of corruption in Africa; a government only accountable to itself in all respects as to how it governed, a government only responsible to the motherland in terms of how it exploited the resources of the governed and a government unaccountable to those it governed in all respects (Wanjala, 2012: 101).

This lack of accountability became embedded in the government system and government transactions. This did a disservice to the native Malawians. With such traits of exploitative administration, soon after the independence of 1964, Banda enacted a new constitution in 1966 which declared Malawi a single-party state (Mariyamkono and Kanyongolo, 2003). The new constitution removed the Bill of Rights, which meant freedom of expression and freedom of association, including the freedom to form political parties, was removed. This remained the case for nearly 30 years until 1992, when Malawians voted against the one-party rule in a referendum. This triumph meant the coming back of freedoms that were taken away.

Some good governance features were also thrown away in gaining back the freedoms. For example, the country began to do away with the so-called bad laws that infringed on the people's freedom. An example of such a law was the Forfeiture Act of 1966.¹ Although Banda's regime abused the Act, the law deterred people from accumulating wealth through dubious means.

The Forfeiture Act was repealed in 1994 during the country's return to multi-party democracy. According to Tenthani and Chinsinga (2016), the return to multi-party democracy was an opportunity that would lead to political emancipation and economic development. However, while the transition from one-party to multiparty democratic dispensation occurred, it was not accompanied by discernible transformation, particularly in how the day-to-day governance activities

1 An Act to empower the Minister to declare certain persons subject to forfeiture: to provide for the forfeiture and disposition of the property of such persons: to provide that such persons shall be disabled to sue for or alienate property and to enforce judgments: to provide for indemnity of any person disposing or otherwise dealing with such property: and for matters incidental thereto and connected therewith.

in various spheres were conducted. Although the Bretton Woods Institutions infused accountability and transparency in public affairs, the multi-party era saw the rise of corruption (Wanjala, 2012). Corruption in Malawi was seen to have become part of a broader pattern of social behaviour, especially after the transition to multiparty democracy in 1994. Although the Corrupt Practices Act² was enacted in 1995 and the ACB opened its doors in 1998, corruption continued to rise, as attested by various surveys. As much as corruption has increased in the democratic era, the foundations of the systems that enabled corruption to thrive were imbued from the colonial and one-party state eras (Wanjala, 2012).

Manifestation of institutionalisation of corruption in the public sector

The public sector is the primary tool that governments use to implement various national developments, and governments rely on this machinery to design, formulate and implement their policies, strategies, and programmes and to discharge all routine government functions (Dzimbiri, 2016). In Malawi, as a former British colony (1891-1964), the public sector was shaped by the British public service in terms of rules and regulations and governing principles which embraced the principles recommended in the Northcoate-Trevelyan Report (1853), namely, political impartiality, objectivity, integrity, accountability, confidentiality, open recruitment, and promotion on merit basis (Dzimbiri, 2016). However, the public sector in Malawi has come under scrutiny over the years regarding how public administrators execute their work, especially in delivering public services to the general population.

The paper, therefore, advances that in an environment where institutional corruption exists, there will be indicators of how various systems and internal processes operate. The paper analysed the; (i) public service delivery systems, (ii) human resource management systems, (iii) financial management systems, and (iv) public procurement systems as systems that manifest institutionalisation of corruption.

² An Act to provide for the establishment of the ACB; to make comprehensive provision for the prevention of corruption; and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing.

Public service delivery systems

As indicated by various surveys carried out in recent times in Malawi, there is a general feeling that corruption has affected service delivery in the public sector. For example, according to the 2019 Integrity Assessment Survey carried by the ACB and National Statistical Office (NSO) that targeted the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services (ICS) and the Directorate of Road Traffic and Safety Services (DRTSS), it was found out that 61% DRTSS service providers sensed officials take bribes, 44.4% of users agreed that bribes are paid out. The study also found that 38.2% of ICS service providers agreed that bribery demands a service, and 75.7% of service users agreed that a bribe is paid to officials for a service.

The survey also established that ICS and DRTSS service providers and users agreed to have asked for or offered a bribe (10.5% for DRTSS service providers and 10.3% for ICS service providers, and 11.1% for DRTSS users and 16% for ICS users). These bribes were often asked for or offered at the beginning of work or service (70.6% for DRTSS providers and 85.7% for ICS providers). The main reason for paying or asking for a bribe at DRTSS was to facilitate or speed up the service processes (100% for DRTSS providers and 86.7% for users).

These findings also resonate with the Afrobarometer survey findings for 2022, in which service delivery institutions like the Malawi Police Service, Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA), Office of the President, Judges, and Magistrates were perceived as corrupt. Similarly, the 2019 IPOR survey on corruption perceptions shows that bribes were frequently requested from those who sought public service. Even when bribes are not explicitly requested, there is a widespread perception that citizens are expected to pay bribes. Out of fifteen services, in twelve cases, the majority said they were expected to pay a bribe or gratification to public officials responsible for handling the service. Police services were top, with two-thirds of Malawians saying it is likely that a bribe or gratification would have to be paid, followed by obtaining a government business or contract and a passport.

With the preceding, it is a clear indication that public service delivery is a fertile ground for corruption, especially in those public service delivery institutions with a monopoly of service. According to Klitgaard (1988), corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability ($C = M+D-A$). Illicit behaviour flourishes when agents have monopoly power over clients, when agents have great discretion, and when the accountability of agents to the principal is weak. In these scenarios, the bureaucrat ceases to act as an agent of the state but serves personal interests. According to Max Weber, the characteristics of a bureaucrat include being ethical and professional. However, the findings of the cited surveys indicate that some bureaucrats are not practising the attributes of the Weberian bureaucrat.

In a public engagement meeting by the ACB in May 2022 in Salima, the ACB established that communities fail to access free services because they are asked to pay for them. From the meetings with people, poor service delivery emerged as a challenge because of corruption. According to an ACB report of 2021, issues of poor service delivery are dominant in public health service delivery, social services, especially in social protection programs, agricultural services, for example, the Affordable Inputs Program (AIP), education, access to judicial services, access to land, among others. According to Lawal (2007), the prevalence of corruption in the public sector hampers efficient and effective service delivery. In support of this notion, Maina (2013) asserts that delayed services create an avenue for corruption. Thus, when services are intentionally delayed, they attract bribes, and availability and affordability can no longer be guaranteed; therefore, efficiency and effectiveness may be compromised.

Human resource management systems

The institutionalisation of corruption in the public sector also manifests through the weak human resource management systems whereby policies and procedures are flouted for the benefit and advantage of a selected few. In recent times, issues of public recruitment in some selected public institutions, for example, Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA), Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) and Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), have

been recently investigated by the Office of the Ombudsman, in which the findings point to irregular recruitment, appointments and promotions of public officials due to affiliations and collusion (OoO, 2021). These findings signify the extent of the problem of corruption in public recruitment, appointments, and promotions in Malawi, a clear sign of a disregard of policies and the use of merit in the recruitment process, but rather nepotism, a departure from the Weberian theory which propagates for the impartiality of those in decision-making positions.

Nepotism is a form of corruption similar to favouritism and cronyism. Nepotism, both in the scientific literature and in public opinion, is understood as the abuse of a person's position, power, or influence to confer a privilege on their relatives. Nepotism is particularly evident in organisational activities when a person is hired or promoted not based on professional competencies or work experience but on kinship (Bekesiene, 2021).

Bekesiene (2021) further explains that a concept closely related to nepotism is cronyism, which also means the patronage of a professional career based simply on close relationships (schoolmates or friends, joint social or political affiliation). Nepotism and cronyism go against the core values of the Weberian bureaucracy. The Weberian bureaucracy is central to creating a professional and apolitical civil service, neutral and merit-based selection (Ban, 2014). Such actions undermine the implementation of these Weberian values, giving room to an unprofessional public service prone to corruption. The values propagated by Weber create automated controls against institutional corruption. Thus, in an environment where bureaucrats are professional, ethical, impartial and neutral, corruption does not thrive. According to a KPMG survey on organisational fraud, unethical behaviour and lack of internal controls contributed to an organisation's corruption and fraud.

However, as much the Weberian theory allows for creating a functional public sector, its implementation faces challenges in many countries, including Malawi. According to studies done by Ayee (2008) in Ghana; Oyedeji (2016) in Nigeria; Mafunisa (2003) in South Africa; Dzimbiri (2016) in Malawi, including studies by ESID in Rwanda, Ghana, and Uganda; it is clear that in most African

states the Weberian principles face challenges of implementation. Ayee (2008) points out a culture of patronage within the public administration machinery in Africa, which has implications for public administrators. The recruitment process for public office is sometimes not based on the merit principle but rather on other factors such as political affiliation, family connection, and ethnic origin. Therefore, the administrators act to please the appointing authority for fear of being removed from positions.

The NACS II (2019) highlights that corruption in human resource management systems often manifests itself in the form of bribery and favouritism in such aspects as recruitment and promotions, which in turn result in the hiring of unqualified service providers, collusive behaviours to protect corruption schemes, demotivated staff, ghost workers and lack of responsiveness and accountability of service users. Further, corruption denies well-deserving candidates of employment opportunities, negatively affecting promotion opportunities and consideration for training opportunities for a public servant.

Another indicator of institutionalised corruption in the human resource management system is the presence of ghost workers. According to Matonga (2021), the audit undertaken by the National Audit Office (NAO) for the financial year ending June 30, 2016, revealed the continued existence of ghost workers, especially cases of civil servants taking home double salaries and abuse of payments through allowances, dubious fuel allocations, mobile phone airtime and other expenses. The audit also inspected the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) and reviewed the public service payroll and found that ghost workers—physically non-existent employees only found on the payroll—were still common in ministries of Health, Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development; Education, Science and Technology; and Natural Resources, Energy and Mining. Tanzi (2015) purports that “unscrupulous individuals often use ghost” workers and dead pensioners to collect unearned payments without adequate human resource databases and poor expenditure controls. At the centre of all this is the bureaucrat manoeuvring for personal benefit or to please political masters.

Public finance management systems

Corruption in the public sector also manifests itself through weak controls in the execution of budgets leading to the misuse of public resources and maladaptive practices such as embezzlement (GoM, 2019). According to NACS II (2019), corruption in public finance management persists despite the existence of the Public Finance Management Act. Schaeffer (2002) highlights that weaknesses in the budgeting process depend mainly on political factors and the organisation of the government (e.g., lack of coordination, unclear lines of accountability, and overlaps in the distribution of responsibility).

Schaeffer (2002) further asserts that budgeting, policy formulation, and implementation mechanisms should be explicitly designed to reinforce coordination and cohesion in decision-making. In Malawi, budget implementation remains a challenge as each year, issues of failure to implement budget activities arise, raising questions of whether this is done deliberately to divert the resources to other unbudgeted activities. For example, in May 2022, the country's four city councils collectively received a paltry MK4.4 billion out of the total MK24.9 billion budgeted and approved in the 2021/22 National Budget to finance the rehabilitation or construction of roads (Mchulu, 2022). This is a clear manifestation of poor financial management. Schaeffer (2002) points out that poor, inefficient, or inadequate public financial management may result from several factors, including civil service incompetence, lack of efficient institutions, and pervasive institutional corruption.

In February 2022, local councils in Malawi came under fire for allegedly mismanaging MK4 billion, which was revealed by National Audit Office (Chitete, 2022). However, Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA) Executive Director blamed the central government for some audit queries. The central government was accused of introducing ad hoc funding windows that are not aligned with the development plans of local governments and of persistently treating local governments as development agencies of the centre, not development actors. With this assertion, there is a clear indication of financial mismanagement

and lack of accountability, which is a breeding ground for corruption. Chitete (2022) further explains that councils were carrying out expenditures outside the integrated financial management information system (IFMIS) because of the malfunctioning system. This then, in turn, gave room for mismanagement. Further, signs of mismanagement highlighted in the audit report were failure to issue general receipts, misappropriation of the deceased estate, failure to recover loans, other expenditure management issues, and financial statements.

Public expenditure management is instrumental to effective public service delivery and reducing the extent of public sector corruption. Access to information on the actions and performance of government expenditures is critical to achieving government accountability. Unless the public knows what goods and services are provided, how well they are provided, who the beneficiaries are, and how much they cost, it cannot demand (nor expect) an effective government. Government budgets and expenditure programs must be disclosed to the public to promote accountability. However, many developing countries have weak or inadequate mechanisms for citizens to monitor the government's actions (Schaeffer, 2002).

Public procurement system

Procurement- purchasing goods, works, and services- is another area often affected by poor governance and corruption (Tanzi, 2015). Corrupt practices and extortion by public officials in the procurement of goods and services are widespread in Malawi, and the award of tenders is plagued by patronage (Nawaz, 2012). In the 2010 – 2011 Global Competitiveness Report, business executives gave the favouritism of government officials towards well-connected companies and individuals when deciding upon policies and contract a score of 3.3 on a 7-point scale (1 being 'always show favouritism' and 7 'never show favouritism').

According to NACS II (2019), corruption in public procurement of inputs and services related to and required to deliver public services results in substandard and over-priced goods and services. Business entities that refuse to bribe or collude with corrupt public officials are deprived of business opportunities. Corruption in

this area includes collusive practices, bribery, and kickbacks. Drivers of corruption in procurement have informal links between procuring entities and potential suppliers; weak or weakly implemented procurement laws; rent-seeking; state capture; lack of technical competence of officials tasked to manage procurement processes; and a collective action problem where perceptions are that it is not possible to compete for a public tender without engaging in bribery or other types of corrupt practices, thus, normalizing and institutionalizing corruption (NACS II, 2019).

The 2011 Global Integrity Assessment indicated Malawi had an excellent legal framework for ensuring public procurement effectiveness. The country scored 90 (strong) for government procurement transparency, fairness, and conflict of interest safeguards. Laws are in place to address conflicts of interest for public procurement officials, and there is mandatory professional training for these officials. In addition, significant procurements require competitive bidding, and strict formal requirements limit the extent of single sourcing. Nonetheless, as Nawaz (2012) noted, implementing procurement laws and regulations received a much lower score by the Global Integrity assessment.

Malawi enacted a new procurement law in 2017, strengthening procurement process checks. Section 37 of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act of 2017 stipulates that all single-source and high-value procurements will be subjected to vetting by the ACB. This was meant to strengthen scrutiny in the procurement process. However, be that as it may, corruption cases in procurement are still on the rise. Data from the ACB Report Centre indicate that many complaints reported at the ACB involve procurement issues. Further, most cases that the ACB is currently pursuing in the courts are procurement related.

Schaeffer (2002) points out that Government contracting and procurement procedures play a significant role in public service provision and account for a substantial share of resource leakage and corruption. Administrative oversight and audit can help in restraining procurement corruption. However, sometimes the administrative oversight can be compromised, as with most procuring and

disposing of entities in the country. Officers responsible for procurement turn a blind eye to substandard goods because of the benefit they get from the deals.

Implications for Public Administration

Public administration represents the organisational arrangements, managerial practices, and institutionalised values which officials legislate in the chase of policy implementation and the endorsement of the will of governments (Ghsoub, 2018). Woodrow Wilson (1887) states that public administration is the most prominent part of government; it is a government in action; it is the executive, the operational and the most prominent side of government. In other words, public administration is concerned with politics and policymaking; it is concentrated in the executive branch of the government, where the purposes and goals of government are implemented. The public administrator or bureaucrat, therefore, is the face of the government. The Weberian theory argues that a bureaucrat is regarded as an agent of the state, an agent who is characterized as functioning not on an inherent sense of motivation but on an externally imposed set of criteria of neutrality, impartiality, ethics and professionalism. The paper advances that in an environment where institutional corruption exists, the functionality of the public administration machinery is compromised, and the bureaucrat is faced with the difficult task of upholding the Weberian values of a public administrator. Thus, corruption implies public administration. The paper highlights practical implications on the Malawian public administration machinery:

Loss of government legitimacy

Firstly, it is essential to understand that corruption in the public sector exists when officials, whether politicians or civil servants, behave unlawfully and misuse the public power entrusted to them to satisfy their private interests (Ghsoub, 2018). Where public sector corruption exists, there is a loss of confidence and trust in the public officials, affecting how the public official executes their work. Since the public official is the face of the government, in an environment where there is a loss of trust, the government's legitimacy starts to be questioned, thereby

creating a government that does not instil confidence in people. Thus, corruption weakens the legitimacy of government and democratic values such as trust and tolerance. In the same vein, corruption leads to the failure of the state to deal with fundamental, political, and governance issues such as the public budget and the appointment of significant public officials. Malawi experienced this during the 2020 elections when the citizenry lost confidence in the governing party due to a perception that corruption was widely spread, especially in government. This resulted in a change of the governing party from the Democratic Progressive Party to the Tonse alliance led by the Malawi Congress Party.

Poor quality goods and services

Corruption in public procurement systems creates wrong economic choices, constrains the government's ability to implement policies, makes the poor pay the price, and threatens the government's policies of private-sector-oriented growth. Ghosub (2018) supports this notion by pointing out that corrupt officials make prejudiced decisions that serve their private interests instead of the public ones – taxpayers swallow the cost. In such a client-centred public administration, resources that should be reallocated for productive uses are instead devoted to corrupt practices for private gain. As a result, Malawi has seen poor services in health, education, construction works, and overpriced goods in public institutions.

Poor service delivery

Corruption in public administration results in the inadequate provision of services. According to Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1998), corruption violates a fundamental principle of republicanism regarding civic feature centrality, leading to unresponsive policies and poor administration. Ghosub (2018) asserts that due to corruption in public administration, the state may fail and be powerless to provide even essential services, such as public order for society in any meaningful form. In Malawi, there is a feeling that security agents fail to provide security services because of corruption. Bamusi (2022) highlights that corruption and abuse of funds in state security agencies go unnoticed due to the institutionalisation of

closed governance systems. Bribery and extortion of advantage are the common forms of corruption demanded by bureaucrats in the security agencies for them to provide a service. This, in turn, causes a security threat for the country as security services are seen to be for sale. This then disadvantages people with low incomes who cannot pay a bribe, and the public administration machinery fails its mandate of serving people with impartiality.

Poor performance of public service institutions

Corruption in Human resource management systems has contributed to the dismal performance of the public sector. Max Weber pointed out that the performance of bureaucracies or the public sector (where nepotism and cronyism are constrained by tests and other human-resources systems that foster decisions based on impersonal assessments of merit) was superior to the performance of traditional forms of organizing (based on nepotism and cronyism, among other things). Pearce (2014) highlights that nepotism and cronyism damage organisational performance, documented in numerous studies after Max Weber's analysis.

According to Malawi Public Service Management Policy (2018), the performance of the public sector has been deteriorating over the years. This is because the public service has been unable to deliver adequate and quality public services and has failed to effectively implement policies and programmes crucial for poverty reduction and the country's overall development. This problem is attributed to many factors, one being poor recruitment tendencies. The Malawi Public Service Management Policy (2018) further asserts that this problem contributes to the political appointments of senior officers to the public service. This further undermines the capacity of Controlling Officers to provide professional advice and engender professional public service. In addition, poor recruitment tendencies contribute to a system of lack of accountability, leading to poor performance.

Overall, corruption poses a serious development challenge. The excessive tolerance of corruption can have grave negative consequences on economic, social, and political development and threaten sustainable economic growth (Ghsoub,

2018). For example, Schwenk (2021) asserts that in 2019 alone, Malawi lost over half a billion United States dollars (about MK4 trillion) to corruption and indicates that an assessment by the country's Financial Intelligence Agency revealed that Malawi lost approximately \$7.4 million (about MK6.097 billion) to illegal foreign exchange externalisation over eleven months. Schwenk (2021) further said that, in October 2020, the UN Conference on Trade and Development stated that Malawi was losing five per cent of its total annual wealth to illicit financial flows.

Due to such financial flaws, development partners suspended their direct budgetary support in the third quarter of 2013. Without the donors' estimated contribution of 30% to the recurrent budget and at least 85% to the development budget, Malawi's national budgets have hardly matched what is on paper. The trend has been to allocate the barest minimum resources to the various sectors, and the challenges have been witnessed through the lack of medicines in public hospitals and failure to execute projects within deadlines, among others (Mchulu, 2022).

Conclusion

Bureaucratic corruption, a form of corruption that captures the public administration machinery, is responsible for the deterioration of institutions' internal systems that are responsible for the provision of public services. The bureaucrat, being the face of the government once captured by corruption, is seen to serve individual interests rather than the interests of the public. The paper used the lens of the Weberian theory that argues that a bureaucrat is regarded as an agent of the state, an agent who is characterized as functioning not on an inherent sense of motivation and private gain but on an externally imposed set of criteria of neutrality, impartiality, ethics and professionalism. The paper has used various surveys, reports, and journals to establish that the Weberian values of the Public Administration and the bureaucrat are compromised with corruption. For example, a bureaucrat demanding bribes for services to be offered for free goes against ethical values.

Further, the paper has highlighted the institutionalisation of corruption in the public sector. Thus, for one to access public sector services, a bribe or an inducement must be given. This is seen in public procurement, human resource, and financial management systems. The paper, therefore, submits that institutionalisation of corruption has diverse implications on public administration, including loss of trust in the government, poor service delivery, loss of revenue, deprives development and poor performance of bureaucrats, among others.

Declaration of conflict of interest

We declare that there is no known conflict of interest.

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