Public service ethics in Zimbabwe: A reflective perspective

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Abstract

In Zimbabwe, unethical practices have been on the increase recently. They take many forms including corruption, bribery, nepotism and theft, conflict of interests, and the use and abuse of confidential information for personal purposes. Allegations of wrongdoing by both the policymaking authorities and the administrative authorities are prevalent in the multilevel government system comprising national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government (divided into rural councils and urban councils). Unethical practices are eroding public trust in the three-tier system of government and adversely affecting implementation of policies, including those meant to address local development as well as facilitate basic service delivery. In addressing unethical conduct, more effort appears to have been placed on proposals such as the courts of law, free press and government reform. While the emphasis is a step in the right direction, it appears to have facilitated the exclusion of other options to tackle the problem. Consequently, this article places the promotion of an ethical organisational culture at the center of a successful strategy to enhance ethics and integrity in Zimbabwe's seemingly ailing public service institutions.

Keywords: Ethics; Public Service; Corruption, Good Governance; Misconduct

1. Introduction

Much evidence appears to suggest that unethical practices are surging in Zimbabwe's public service institutions. A day barely goes by without the media exposing so-called unethical practices by high ranking government officials in the country's public sector. The practices receiving daily exposure in the media include corruption, bribery, nepotism and theft, conflict of interests, and the use and abuse of confidential information for personal purposes. As they are regarded as extremely newsworthy, it is now not uncommon for these issues to court headlines in the mass media. For example, almost every single day in Zimbabwe, the media is exposing opaque public procurement contracts entered into between government agencies and private players characterised by limited checks and balances.

One of the cases that continues to make media headlines since 2020 is the arrest and subsequent dismissal of Health and Child Care Minister Obadiah Moyo after he was accused of illegally awarding a US$42m tender to Drax International for the supply of COVID-19 drugs and personal protective equipment fully aware that it is not a pharmaceutical company but rather a consultancy (Muchetu 2021). Another case that was extensively covered since 2020 involves the arrest and dismissal of three NatPharm directors on charges of criminal abuse of office for

sourcing drugs from Drax, International LLC without following laid down procurement procedures.

Yet another case of unethical behaviour allegedly involves the country's Director of Epidemiology and Disease Control in the Ministry of Health and Child Care. Doctor Portia Munangatire was reportedly arrested in 2021 on charges of criminal abuse of duty for allegedly paying co-workers improper "facilitation fees," using health worker petrol coupons for private cars, and hiring relatives to train health workers amid the rollout of Covid vaccines. (Smith 2021; Mahlahla 2021; Transparency International Zimbabwe 2020).

Corruption in the public sector in Zimbabwe is seemingly on the ascendancy. This view is facilitated in a survey done by Afrobarometer and Mass Public Opinion Institute in 2015. The review not only points to public disillusionment in government's effort in tackling corruption but also to a lack of progress across the country's 10 administrative provinces (see Table 1). In the same vein, Transparency International ranked Zimbabwe 157 out of 180 countries in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). On a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), the CPI marked Zimbabwe 24.

Table 1: Perceptions of level of corruption by province

	Increased somewhat/ increased a lot	Stayed the same	Decreased somewhat/ decreased a lot	Don't know	Total
Harare	81%	9%	8%	1%	100%
Bulawayo	76%	12%	11%	1%	100%
Manicaland	75%	7%	10%	8%	100%
Midlands	72%	11%	12%	5%	100%
Mashonaland central	72%	8%	12%	7%	100%
Mashonaland East	65%	25%	3%	6%	100%
Matabeleland South	59%	23%	7%	11%	100%
Masvingo	60%	16%	20%	4%	100%
Mashonaland West	55%	21%	18%	6%	100%
Matabeleland North	33%	44%	9%	14%	100%
Total	68%	16%	11%	6%	100%

Question: In your opinion, over the past year has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased or stayed the same?
Source: Afrobarometer & Mass Public Opinion Institute 2015: 12.

Zimbabwe has an array of strategies, programmes, organisations and initiatives in the service of strengthening the capacity of the public sector to address systemic corruption. They include prosecuting high profile corruption cases, implementing of national anti-corruption strategy and forfeiture of ill-gotten wealth. But it appears that the production of political rhetoric around corruption is fast replacing the actual tackling of the scourge. A survey undertaken by Afrobarometer and Mass Public Opinion Institute in 2015 seemingly underscores public frustration at the lack of progress in tackling the issue (see Table 2).

Table 2: Ratings on government's fight against corruption by province

	Fairly/ Fairly bad	Fairly/ Very well	Don't know/ haven't heard enough	Total
Harare	90%	10%	0%	100%
Bulawayo	90%	10%	-	100%
Midlands	83%	14%	3%	100%
Masvingo	85%	14%	1%	100%
Mashonaland East	80%	18%	1%	100%
Manicaland	78%	18%	4%	100%
Matabeleland South	75%	20%	5%	100%
Mashonaland Central	70%	27%	3%	100%
Mashonaland West	69%	27%	4%	100%
Matabeleland North	62%	21%	17%	100%

Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: fighting corruption in government?

Source: Afrobarometer & Mass Public Opinion Institute 2015: 15

With focus mostly skewed towards punitive measures such as prosecuting criminal abuse of authority, minimal attention is seemingly being placed on the role of promoting moral values in the governmental system. This has given rise to questions such as: What behaviours and value systems are required for promoting accountability and an ethical culture in Zimbabwe's bureaucracy? How can the values and standards be translated into administrative policies, practices and procedures? The article engages on these questions by proffering recommendations on how ethical practices may be improved in the bureaucracy in Zimbabwe.

The article is organised as follows: After the introduction, it defines some of the terms used in the article. Thereafter it presents the theories of ethics, the aim being to set the parameters around which ethical behaviour in the public sector is explored. Following this is synopsis of the importance of ethics in the public service. This is followed by a section on the means to promote public service integrity. In this regard, the article places premium on the promotion of an ethical organisational culture at the heart of successful efforts of preventing unethical practices. In doing so, the article explores an issue that is often not given much prominence in the discourse on ethics in the public sector. The article then presents its concluding remarks.

2. Understanding the terminologies

In the ensuing paragraphs, the article defines some of the terms used in the paper. In doing so the article attempts to facilitate definitional certainty as well as assist delineate the parameters for the discussion in the paper. The following terms are briefly discussed: ethics, public service, corruption, good governance and misconduct. Their significance is that they seemingly enjoy considerable reference in the contemporary literature on public service ethics.

2.1 Ethics

Ethics refers to principles by which to assess behaviour as right or wrong, good or bad (Edwards 2008). Elucidated as well based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues, ethics facilitate human conduct and assist individuals by applying moral standards. In the public service ethics are generally broad norms that delineate how public servants should exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties (Edwards 2008). In the same vein, ethical theories represent the viewpoints from which government workers seek guidance as they make important decisions and implement policies on service delivery. Each theory underscores a different decision-making style and form the basis for what individuals consider ethically correct decisions.

2.2 Public service

These are services that are considered so essential they are made available to all citizens, regardless of income. In the majority of the cases, they are provided by the government and paid for by general taxation. They include water, healthcare, waste management and road provision (Marumahoko 2020a). In a multi-level governmental system, public services are provided by national government, provincial/state governments and local government. Other models for service delivery include shared services, outsourcing aspects of service delivery to private or voluntary providers, and its opposite, insourcing and commercialisation. The last few years have seen an increase in organisations from private, public and voluntary sectors vying for the right to facilitate and deliver many public services. In the same vein, public service consumers are frequently being asked for their opinion about whose services they receive and the quality of the service.

2.3 Corruption

Corruption is fraudulent or dishonest conduct by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority (Chayes 2015). Examples of corrupt behaviour include: (a) cronyism, (b) nepotism, (c) embezzlement, (d) fraud, (e) extortion, (f) bribery, (g) influence peddling, and (h) appropriation of public assets and property for private use. Corruption weakens democracy, erodes trust, exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and hampers economic development (Naidoo 2012). Corruption is seemingly emerging as the most common form of improper practice in the public service in Zimbabwe. It exists at all three levels of government, local government, provincial government and national government.

2.4 Good governance

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR 2021) defines good governance as the process whereby governmental institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and facilitate for the realisation of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. Using a significant share of resources raised through taxation, the public sector provides services to citizens. In doing so, the public sector is accountable not only for how much it spends but also for the ways it uses the resources it has been entrusted. The characteristics of good governance include transparency, accountability, responsiveness, rule of law, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.5 Misconduct

Misconduct is defined as an act of wrong doing or an improper behavior which is inimical to the image of the service. Among other things, it is characterised by public servants behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the public service values, acts that undermine the integrity of the service, taking improper advantage of information gained through the public servant's job, engaging in theft, fraud or assault and being intoxicated at work. Generally, allegations of

misconduct arise through observation or allegations made by other employees, managers or members of the public.

3. Theories of ethics

There are four broad categories of ethical theories. They are deontology, utilitarianism, rights, and virtues. These theories offer overarching principle to which one could appeal in resolving difficult decisions. The ethical theory adopted by government officials underscore elements of an ethical dilemma important to them. Not only do they refer to the theories, public servants also make decisions according to the guidelines within the chosen ethical theories themselves.

3.1 Deontology

The deontological class of ethical theories is sometimes called obligation or duty ethics (Chonko 2012). At its center is the belief that people should adhere to their duties and obligations when engaged in decision making when ethics are involved. It places premium on the belief that ethical rules bind one to duty and that a person will follow his or her obligations to another individual or society because upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct. In the same vein, the theory underscores the rightness or wrongness of actions made in the course of fulfilling one's duty and not the rightness or wrongness arising out of the duty. Of significance is the public official's willingness to observe and apply the principle and not the consequences for the individual or their usefulness to others. A government official who subscribes to deontological theory will cultivate reliable decisions based on their prescribed duties.

3.2 Utilitarianism

Under utilitarianism, the moral worth of an action is primarily determined by its contribution to overall utility (Lopez 2012). There are two types of utilitarianism, rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism. Based on these utilitarian ethical theories the choice that yields the greatest benefit to the most people and offers the best opportunities for predicting the consequences of an action are the ones that are ethically correct. As a basis for facilitating decision-making, a rule utilitarian adopts decisions that seek to benefit the most people but through the most just and fairest means available (Chonko 2012). As a result, one can argue that the added benefits of rule utilitarianism are that it takes into account the law and is concerned with fairness at the same time. Act utilitarianism, an individual performs the acts that benefit the most people, and in doing so, disregards personal feelings or the societal limitations such as laws.

3.3 Rights

These are theories based on human rights (Chonko 2012). Essentially, they focus on people's freedom of speech, association, religion, civil rights, political rights and social/economic rights. Not only are these the rights established by a society, protected and given the highest priority, they are also considered to be ethically correct and valid since a large population endorses them. In addition, the rights-based ethics which are also known as claims-based rights imply that people have claims against somebody for instance the state, and that this individual as a result, has some responsibilities. In the public administration, the utility of this ethical theory is that it facilitates for actions and decisions made by public sector employees on a daily basis as they go about providing the general services of government. In this regard, ethics are moral justifications and considerations for the behavior of government employees.

3.4 Virtue

The utility of the virtue ethical theory is that it assesses a person by focusing on individuals' characters rather than by an action that may diverge from their normal behavior (Lopez 2012). Importantly, the theory takes into consideration peoples morals, reputations, and motivations when evaluating behaviors that are considered unethical. In governmental affairs, the theory is used as a basis for decision-making (Chonko 2012). In this regard, the focus is on the character of public officials and not on the formal rules of the bureaucracy or consequences of actions.

4. Importance of ethics in the public service

There is a need for greater awareness for ethics, accountability and transparency in the public service today, given the public sector's indispensable role in the development and governance of a nation. Ethical concerns undermine the possibilities of the state to generate credibility and authority. They are alleged to be a major cause of disinvestment and even reduced investment. Systemic corruption undermines the credibility of democratic institutions, counteracts good governance, increases income inequalities and undermines effectiveness of governmental programmes. When there is inadequate transparency, accountability, and probity in the use of public resources, the broader goal of achieving effective, fair, and efficient government is not facilitated.

5. Suggestions for promoting public service integrity

The strategies for advancing public service integrity include, promoting professionalism in the public service, adopting a more scientific approach to misconduct, whistle blowing policy, institutionalisation of codes of conduct and codes of ethics, assets and income disclosure, promoting an appropriate public service culture, rewarding exemplary behaviour, promoting an organisational culture where employees can openly discuss unethical conduct without the fear of retribution and ensuring the promotion and appointment of public servants committed to the cause of integrity. In the ensuing paragraphs, the article engages on the promotion of professionalism in the public service, a more scientific approach to misconduct, the stimulation of good governance, rewarding exemplary behaviour and the appointment of public servants committed to integrity to government agencies as some of the strategies for promoting good ethical practices in Zimbabwe's public administration.

5.1 Supporting professionalism in the public service

Defined as the overall value that includes all other values that facilitate the public service, public service professionalism is a key component of good governance. It encompasses values such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness and impartiality. It underscores that people joining governmental service need to espouse shared values and training in elementary abilities to professionally undertake their official responsibilities. Yet the scandals highlighted earlier suggests not only the absence of public service professionalism and ethics but also the absence of a system of rules, activities, and agents that provide incentives and penalties for public officials to professionally carry their official duties.

Cultivating a culture of professionalism could commence simply by facilitating the existence of sound public management systems and practices. This could be achieved by adopting a career system based on the merit principle. At its center is that recruitment, selection, and promotion of public servants needs to be based on the merit system and not political patronage which can dissolve systems based on qualification and merit, thus leading to a deprofessionalisation of the public service (Bertucci 2001). In other words, it is in the public

interest that the best suitably qualified candidate and experienced person is appointed to the public service (Webb 2009). According to media reports however, it is not always the case that people with appropriate skills and experience are appointed to the public service (Marumahoko & Chigwata 2020). This is undermining the principles of neutrality, fairness and impartiality in public human resources management.

Having a code of conduct for governing policymakers and the bureaucracy may also contribute to the facilitation of a public service based on integrity and ethical conduct (Marumahoko 2020b). Developing, reviewing, and communicating a code of conduct assists to make visible (a) how a government agency operates; (b) how it embeds its core values, and (c) how it relates to its key stakeholders. In this regard, it may facilitate good governance if the public sector in Zimbabwe made reference to the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1996 and the Model Codes of Conduct for Public Officials developed by the Council of Europe and adopted by the Member States in 2000 as it updates and reviews its code of conduct. The significance of a code of conduct would be to provide a shared understanding of what constitutes good governance (Chigudu 2015).

5.2 A more scientific approach to misconduct

Misconduct in the public service has long been identified as an issue of concern that is tarnishing the image of the public administration. Although the public sector often responds to these through remedies such as verbal warnings, written warnings, suspensions and dismissals, there appear to be inconsistency in how these cases are handled and resolved. It is not always the case that misconduct cases are properly investigated and proved. In some cases, government workers are relieved of their duties seemingly without due process. For example, on 21 March 2021, Zimbabwe's minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement reportedly dismissed the head of an Agricultural Rural Development Authority (ARDA)-run agriculture scheme in Lupane on the spot amid spurious accusations of poor agronomic work (Ncube & Tshili 2021). The decision to dismiss was seemingly not informed by due process.

It is recommended that the disciplinary process is based on procedural fairness (Bertucci 2001). This means acting fairly in administrative decision making. The significance of procedural justice is that it underscores the idea of fairness in the processes that resolve disputes and allocate resources. Among other things, it requires a decision-maker in a misconduct case to: inform people against whose interests a decision may be made of the allegations against them or grounds for adverse comment in respect of them; provide those people with a reasonable opportunity to put their case forward; hear all parties to a matter and consider submissions; make reasonable inquiries or investigations before making a decision; ensure that no person decides a case in which they have a direct interest; act fairly and without bias, and conduct the investigation without undue delay.

Applying a more scientific approach to misconduct facilitates for good governance, transparency and accountability. It also upholds ethical decision making in the public administration. Therefore, once in a while, it may be necessary that surveys are conducted to ascertain the extent to which those in positions of authority are familiar with the misconduct process. In doing so, it may be informative as well as educative to underscore that the purpose of a misconduct process is to uphold the values of good public service and to prevent further misconduct. Additionally, it may be important to ensure that the misconduct process is viewed as being transparent, thorough, purposeful and not conducted in a manner that undermines the rights of all public servants involved.

5.3 Stimulating good governance

The public service in Zimbabwe has been associated with deviations from the norm. The deviations are experienced at all levels of the governmental system; local government, provincial government and national government. In the case of public procurement for example, allegations of misuse of government funds, fragile procurement processes and inadequate systems of checks and balances within the public administration are seemingly undermining the basis of transparency, accountability and integrity in the management of public funds.

Since 2020 for example, the media, the Auditor-General and various parliamentary portfolio committees have widely reported about allegations of abuse of public resources in Zimbabwe under the cover of Covid-19 related procurement. Those engaged in skewed procurement procedures are seeking to recover their money by inflating prices, billing for work not performed, failing to meet contract standards, reducing quality of work or using inferior materials; resulting in exaggerated costs and a decrease in quality. Not only are the deviations exposing poor public finance management by public institutions, they are also underscoring that public contracting continues to be shrouded in secrecy

Having several mutually supportive principles may, directly or indirectly, prevent corruption and stimulate good governance and accountability in public procurement in Zimbabwe. The principles may include, integrity, transparency, stakeholder participation, accessibility, e-procurement, oversight and control. Through safeguarding the integrity of actors in the procurement process, the authorities may also tackle the challenge of unethical practice (OECD 2016). This strategy may be a basis for achieving fairness, non-discrimination and compliance in the public procurement process. Another strategy is facilitating public disclosure of beneficial ownership of companies awarded public contracts. This could be realised by creating an online beneficial ownership register to inculcate a culture of transparency when awarding public procurement contracts.

It also helps if the authorities can conduct due diligence of a company before awarding a public contract (Magamba 2020). This strategy may also include assessing the management and ownership of the company, its capitalisation, physical location, revenue and margin trends, stock price history, tax compliance and competition among other critical factors. It also helps to discipline those not complying with Zimbabwe's public procurement procedures. This may ensure that public sector procurement is conducted in a manner that is transparent, fair, honest, cost- effective and competitive (Magamba 2020).

5.4. Rewarding exemplary behaviour

It is not always the case that exemplary behaviour is rewarded in Zimbabwe's public sector. Rather, the government agencies do not appear to have developed deliberate ethics and management processes that reward ethical employees and admonish unethical behaviour. This may accidentally be sending the message that it is not unprecedented to embrace unethical tendencies. Yet if the public sector wishes to cultivate a favourable work environment in which public servants practise accountability and transparency and uphold the values and beliefs of good governance, it may need to embrace formal ethics management processes and reward ethical employees. In this regard, it may be a good thing if the public sector does not encourage practices that promote and reward unethical employees while leaving ethical employees feeling unrecognised and frustrated.

Positive reinforcement is one way that ethical behaviour may be rewarded (Wei & Yazdanifard 2014: 9). It is regularly applied in motivational contexts with great success. It works like this: through repeated experiences, a public servant learns to associate a given action with a given outcome. It could be as easy as learning to associate ethical performance with employee recognition at the workplace. At the heart of the rule is that public servants are fond

of giving more to what is rewarded in the workplace. Examples of positive reinforcement include may include a pat on the back and annotations of ethical behaviour in the public servant's performance evaluation record for future reference.

Ethical behaviour may also be recognised through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Wei & Yazdanifard 2014). Examples of intrinsic rewards include: pride in one's work; feelings of respect from supervisors and/or other employees; personal growth; gaining more trust from managers; feelings of accomplishment and learning something new or expanding competence in a particular area. Extrinsic rewards can be financial or non-financial (Sonawane 2008: 256). Examples of financial rewards may include a bonus, incentive, or commission. Non-financial rewards include praise, a training badge, a development opportunity, or a coveted project assignment (Ndungu 2017).

Seemingly, to get the most out of these methods, it may be a good idea to embed ethics in the performance management system. This could mean creating ethics performance indicators, developing ethics performance measurements, incentivising ethical practices, and sanctioning unethical behaviour. It may also be good practice if public administration developed an ethics award system based on peer and supervisor nominations. Among its duties is identifying employees who exemplify ethical behaviour. These may be nominated for the ethical public servant of the month and/or year awards (Mhonderwa 2013).

5.5 Integrity in the appointment of public servants

It has been observed that there is increase in the number of disreputable people joining the public service (Marumahoko 2020). This is seemingly facilitated by laxity in recruitment and selection policies. Adherence to procedure is often suspect, leading to undeserving individuals being appointed to government positions. In the absence of rigorous pre-employment background checks, people without the right professional qualifications and experience are often appointed to the public service. In the same vein checks prior to promotion are reportedly not as thorough as they need to be. This facilitates for increased cases of misrepresentation to the employer. A characteristic of this is that a public servant may not fully disclose their criminal background before they are hired.

For instance, in 2015, Chinhoyi Municipality discovered that one of its signatories who was the finance director had a previous fraud conviction and served a 24-month custodial sentence with labour. The issue came to light when a financial institution (CABS) requested curriculum vitaes (CVs) of Chinhoyi Municipality senior managers as it wanted to do a background check on whether they were not blacklisted. Once the anomaly was discovered the blame game set in. The town's councillors blamed the municipality's Town Clerk (Chief Executive Officer) and the town's Mayor for disregarding due process in the employment of the under fire finance director. With the situation seemingly becoming untenable, the Town Clerk tendered his resignation (Nyamukondiwa 2015).

Another case of misrepresentation involves forgery of academic and professional qualifications. In 2020 for instance the Chief Operating Officer at the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) was exposed for forging educational and professional certificates for the purposes of getting a job (Nemukuyu 2021). On the strength of the questionable qualifications, the senior manager was employed as Chief Operating Officer, the second highest position from the Chief Executive Officer at the country's quality regulator of degree and diploma programmes. The misrepresentation came to light when ZIMCHE ascertained that the senior manager only passed a single O-Level subject, but produced a forged certificate showing she had five passes for the purposes of landing the managerial position. The Higher Examinations Council (HEXCO) also dismissed the senior manager's two diplomas in

Accounts and Secretarial Studies as well as a Higher National Diploma in Office Management as fraudulent. With the issue courting intense public discussion, the Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) withdrew the degree it had conferred to the senior manager claiming that she grossly misrepresented information to the university, behaviour that allegedly amounts to a gross academic offence (Nemukuyu 2021).

It is suggested that government agencies conduct rigorous pre-employment checks. The background checks may be conducted prior to hiring and promoting someone, and sometimes also on a periodic basis thereafter. The background checks may focus on criminal history search, education and credentials verification, employment history verification, nationwide background search and motor vehicle records examination. In addition, they may include drug test checks, sexual offenders list search, wants and warrants, worker's compensation, and international employment and criminal record searches (Anderson 2021). In the same vein, checks prior to promotion may consider reviewing available internal personnel documentation on the employee's conduct to date and repeating the pre-employment background check process. It may also be useful if government agencies conduct written performance reviews annually, and include compliance and ethics leadership as part of its job performance measures. Interviews and reference checks with former managers and employees may also be considered as a final fact-gathering additional approach.

6. Impact of unethical practices on public service delivery

Zimbabwe is a country in a precarious situation. It faces many socio-economic difficulties and political challenges. Over the past few years, it has sought to extract itself from the deep end through unveiling and implementing policies such as National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) which was unveiled in 2020 and Vision 2030 which was adopted in 2018. The NDS1 is a short-term five-year national development programme that forms the basis for the accomplishment of Vision 2030. It runs from 2020 to 2025 and is scheduled to be succeeded by NDS2 which runs until 2030, facilitating for Zimbabwe to become a higher upper-income country. Yet it is difficult to envision success unless ethical practices in the spheres of government responsible for public service delivery are addressed.

The ethical issues undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector include corruption, bribery, nepotism and theft, conflict of interests, and the use and abuse of confidential information for personal purposes, public responsibility and accountability and so on. Corruption ominously stands out. It is considered to be the biggest threat to Zimbabwe's socio-economic recovery and development (Reuters 2016). In 2016 Transparency International reported that Zimbabwe was losing at least $1 billion annually to corruption. The report, just like the one prepared by Afrobarometer and Mass Public Opinion Institute in 2015 mentioned law enforcement officers and the local bureaucracy among the worst offenders (see Table 3).

The upsurge in corruption appears to suggest that resources meant for public services are unethically diverted from various arms of government towards individuals thereby undermining the capacity of the government to facilitate much needed socio-economic development. In 2019, the government named individuals who failed to return nearly US$1 billion they had externalised in the past years (Madzimure 2019). Progress is slow even as the government has intensified its efforts to recover ill-gotten wealth from the country being stashed abroad by engaging with SADC member states in the fight against corruption (Madzimure 2019).

Table 3: Perceptions about individuals involved in corruption

	None	Some of them	Most of them	all of them	Don't know/ Haven't heard enough
The president and officials in his office	16	41	21	9	12
Members of parliament	8	44	29	9	9
Government officials	7	44	31	10	8
Local government councillors	9	43	31	10	7
Police	6	31	38	20	4
Tax officials like Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) or local government tax collectors	6	34	31	15	14
Judges and magistrates	11	49	23	6	11
Traditional leaders	18	48	18	4	12
Religious leaders	24	51	16	3	6
Business executives	8	42	29	10	12

Question: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Source: Afrobarometer & Mass Public Opinion Institute 2015: 13.

Zimbabwe is not the only country reeling from the effects of corruption. The scourge's impact is experienced wide and afar and affects many countries around the globe. Every year it is said that US$1 trillion is paid in bribes around the world (OHCHR 2021). In the same vein, an estimated $2.6 trillion are reportedly stolen every year through corruption (OHCHR 2021). The amount of money that is diverted from public services is equivalent to more than 5 per cent of the global GDP. In developing countries, the sum of money lost to corruption is estimated at 10 times the amount of official development support. The United Nations (UN) agencies fighting corruption as a global scourge include the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)). World-wide, these efforts are facilitated through the UN Convention against Corruption which was adopted in 2003.

7. Conclusions

The article focused on the promotion of moral values in Zimbabwe's public administration. The subject is important given the role of ethics and moral values in facilitating good governance, transparency and accountability in public affairs. The article focused on the promotion of ethical organisational culture. In doing so, it did not discount the contribution of other strategies including prosecuting criminal misconduct. Rather, it focuses on an issue that is seemingly pushed to the periphery of the analysis of ethical practices in the public service in Zimbabwe. It is the promotion of an ethical organisational culture.

In its introduction, the article began by presenting a gloomy picture of the state of ethical practices in Zimbabwe's public administration. The objective was to give insight into the nature of the ethical practices besetting the bureaucracy as well as present justification for the research. Thereafter, the article attended to definitional issues. Among other issues, this was meant to achieve a certain degree of definitional certainty and facilitate a common understanding of some of the terms used in the article. After this, the article briefly explored four ethical theories: deontology, utilitarianism, rights, and virtues. The significance of this was to set the parameters for the discussion in the paper and generally introduce the ethical theories commonly referred

to by government officials in ethical decision making. The article then engaged on the significance of ethics in public institutions assigned service delivery functions. Among the contribution of ethics is promotion of accountability, transparency and facilitation of efficiency and effectiveness in public administration.

Thereafter, the article addressed a few selected strategies for promoting ethics in the public service. In this regard, it focused on promoting professionalism in the public sector, a more scientific approach to misconduct processes, fostering good governance, compensation of exemplary behaviour and assigning increased significance to integrity checks before and after appointing individuals to the public service. The article then engaged the impact of unethical practices on Zimbabwe's socio-economic development. In this regard, the article briefly discussed faltering ethics in the public service in the context of Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) and Vision 2030; two development policies unveiled by the current government since it came to power in 2018. Seemingly, the bottom line is that the country's 2030 aspiration of attaining upper middle-income status may experience setbacks associated with proliferation of unethical practices in the public service. This may require authorities to rationalise ethical behaviour in the public service by among other things, strengthening governance, ensuring greater transparency and facilitating improved accountability.

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