

Re-Thinking Good Governance in Africa: The Strategic Role of Intra-Government Collaboration and Responsible Negotiation

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ABSTRACT

Interest in good governance in Africa has grown significantly, establishing it as both a distinctive governance model and a dynamic field of research. However, gaps in its full application remain challenging due to limited understanding of its antecedents, mediators, moderators, and the emerging interventions required for effective outcomes. The objectives are to explore the theoretical foundations of good governance, identify key antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators, and investigate the emerging themes in good governance that can bridge its application. Seventy (70) research articles from the Web of Science database were systematically reviewed, focusing on publications from 2014 to 2024. The findings highlight a surge in interest in good governance from 2017 to 2024, following the AU Agenda 2063. Most research is primarily driven by institutions in developed nations, with no dominant theoretical approach. The findings also reveal that good governance has primarily focused on collaborative leadership, institutional synergy, and accountability at the inter-government and external stakeholder levels, limiting its application at the intra-government level. The study constructed an elaborate schematic framework to enhance the theory and practice of good governance in Africa. Intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation are proposed as key strategic enablers for the sustainable application of good governance in Africa. A future research agenda is proposed to explore the empirical effects of intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation on good governance in Africa.

Keywords: Africa; collaboration; good governance; intra-government; responsible negotiations

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a multifaceted concept encompassing both positive and negative dimensions, involving state and non-state actors in regulating public and private sectors (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2020; Bodenstein, 2021; Cilliers, 2021). External influences in Africa have historically shaped good governance, yet recent shifts emphasise localised approaches. However, intra-government collaboration among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches remains inadequately theorised and underutilised, leading to fragmented governance and accountability deficits (Makara, 2018; Rahman, 2016). Responsible negotiation, which fosters institutional trust and policy alignment, is frequently undermined by patronage networks, weak institutional capacity, and geopolitical pressures (Nilsson & Svensson, 2023). This study argues that sustainable good governance reforms in Africa require deeper integration of formal collaborative mechanisms with informal governance structures, addressing both internal leadership dynamics and external dependencies.

As good governance extends beyond traditional state boundaries, various local and international stakeholders shape good governance practices and institutional frameworks, often through indirect influence (Bridoux, 2019; Fagbadebo & Dorasamy, 2021). Many fragile African states depend on external partnerships for technical expertise and financial support, often resulting in governance structures misaligned with local needs (Dibie & Dibie, 2017; Etuk & Aweting, 2020; Fofana, 2024). The persistence of bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak judicial systems, arbitrary political decision-making, and systemic corruption further exacerbates governance challenges (Southall, 2019; Tukur, 2023; Williams & Sunjo, 2024). While the discourse on good governance has emphasised transparency, accountability, and institutional efficiency, existing scholarship has yet to fully explore the intricate interrelations among governance actors and how they impact policy coherence and implementation (Adefeso, 2018; Makara, 2018; Wani & Suwirta, 2015).

Moreover, much of the prevailing governance literature is rooted in Western liberal democratic models, often overlooking Africa's socio-political and cultural contexts. Indigenous governance principles such as Ubuntu, Harambee, Ummah, and Sankofa emphasize collective responsibility and social cohesion yet remain underrepresented in contemporary governance frameworks (Ackah, 2024; Adekeye, 2022; Carbone, 2024; Ikegbu et al., 2020; Koenane & Mangena, 2017; Mokgopo, 2018). While liberal democratic ideals have contributed to good governance advancements, their direct applicability in Africa remains contested. This study underscores the necessity of integrating indigenous governance frameworks to enhance legitimacy, inclusivity, and institutional resilience. The study seeks to bridge critical gaps in good governance scholarship and practice from an African context. It examines theoretical foundations, identifies antecedents, mediators, and moderators, and evaluates emerging governance trends that may enhance the effective application of good governance in Africa. The study explicitly explores the following: What theoretical models underpin good governance research? What are the key factors influencing good governance outcomes? How do intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation shape good governance effectiveness?

The article is structured as follows: The Literature Review contextualises good governance development in Africa; the Methodology section details the systematic literature review process; the Findings and Discussion section interprets key insights, emphasising intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation; and the final sections outline Future Research Directions, acknowledge study Limitations, and present Conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good Governance in Africa

This section delineates various reflections regarding the concept and challenges associated with good governance in Africa. The conceptualisation of good governance on the continent has experienced a significant metamorphosis over the preceding decades, indicating a substantial transition from donor-driven governance frameworks that were predominant during the 1990s to progressively localised and adaptive governance strategies observed in more recent times (Sebola, 2014; Tukur, 2022). Early scholarship surrounding good governance was primarily influenced by external entities such as the World Bank, which articulated governance through a constrained perspective, emphasising transparency, anti-corruption initiatives, and institutional efficiency as fundamental prerequisites for economic liberalisation (Sapsford et al., 2019; van Hüllen, 2019; Umezurike & Iwu, 2017). While these insights established technical benchmarks aimed at enhancing governance standards, they have faced critiques for their lack of complexity and limited consideration of the intricate socio-political landscapes inherent to African nations, which are often distinguished by a plethora of cultural, historical, and institutional diversities (Awodun, 2016; Azeez, 2018; Brierley, 2020). Moreover, these frameworks often overlooked the deep-seated impact of colonial legacies and global economic dependencies that continue to shape governance outcomes in Africa.

The governance discourse evolved during the 2000s, incorporating hybrid frameworks that aimed to amalgamate traditional governance practices with the evolving political dynamics of African states. This transition sought to enhance the legitimacy and inclusivity of governance processes (Asamoah, 2022; Asongu, 2017; Fagbadebo, 2019a). A significant initiative epitomising this evolution was the establishment of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which focus on monitoring and advocating for regional accountability and participatory development as essential elements of good governance. However, the persistent influence of international financial institutions and foreign aid policies continues to shape governance structures, sometimes in ways that conflict with local needs and priorities. Furthermore, the shifting political dynamics in African nations introduced new challenges, such as elite state capture, wherein influential individuals or groups manipulated governance processes for their own advantage, alongside the increasing prevalence of fragmented policy implementation (Fagbadebo, 2019b; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2015; Mangu, 2014).

In recent years, particularly during the 2010s and 2020s, the emphasis of governance in Africa has shifted toward inclusivity, resilience, and adaptability, intending to address past systemic inequalities and emerging socio-economic dynamics. These contemporary perspectives underscore the necessity for citizen participation, local resource management, and environmental sustainability as foundational pillars of effective governance

(Adeyeye, 2024; Justin & Verkoren, 2021; Mamokhere, 2022). Several scholars have emphasised the crucial role of participatory governance in fostering trust and accountability among citizens (Minko, 2023; Mlambo et al., 2019). However, participatory governance extends beyond electoral engagement and protests; mechanisms such as judicial oversight, independent media, and civil society interventions also play a crucial role in ensuring continuous accountability. Moreover, the role of informal governance structures, including traditional leadership and community-based governance, is often overlooked despite their significant influence, particularly in rural areas. These informal systems can either complement or contradict formal governance efforts, requiring greater integration into policy considerations (Ahere, 2021; Mlambo et al., 2020).

This study argues that, while institutions are vital for promoting good governance, a thorough examination of the negotiations and collaborations that may enhance effectiveness and accountability is necessary. Effective institutions can act as accountability mechanisms and safeguard against any opportunities political actors may exploit for unethical practices. However, the efficacy of institutions primarily hinges on the quality and commitment of leadership (intra-government leadership) towards fostering accountability. Furthermore, government institutions do not operate in isolation; the actors who oversee their operations shape their responses to the expectations of effective performance. Consequently, this study posits that, challenges to good governance stem not only from leadership deficits but also from fragmented internal institutional frameworks, socio-political complexities, and intra-political influences. This gap is evident in existing scholarship on good governance in Africa (Adekeye, 2019; Cilliers, 2021; Gilbert & Allen, 2014; Muslim et al., 2022).

Intra-Government Collaboration and Responsible Negotiation

Intra-government collaboration involves coordinating and cooperating among different branches and levels of government, executive, legislative, judiciary, and local authorities, to achieve collective governance objectives (Ang'ana & Lempereur, 2024). This collaboration is essential for effective policy implementation, reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, and promoting democratic values. Makara (2018) and Rahman (2016) emphasise the need for institutional reforms that enhance cooperation between government entities. Such reforms are vital for building trust and synergy, ensuring that governance structures function cohesively. A key aspect of intra-government collaboration is decentralisation, which shifts power and resources from central governments to regional and local authorities, promoting inclusivity and improving governance effectiveness. Makara (2018) points out that coordination among government bodies in decentralised systems mitigates the risks of misallocated resources, enhances public service delivery, and strengthens intergovernmental relations. This collaboration ensures that governance aligns with the needs of local communities while upholding national unity.

Moreover, intra-government collaboration is integral to ensuring accountability and maintaining checks and balances. Separating powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches facilitates mutual oversight, mitigating the risks of power abuse. Umezurike and Iwu (2017) underscore that when governmental branches engage collaboratively within their constitutional frameworks, they uphold the rule of law, guarantee policy consistency, and foster public confidence in institutions. Additionally, intra-governmental collaboration significantly improves crisis management and conflict resolution. Efficient coordination among governmental entities allows prompt responses to political, economic, or environmental crises. Nilsson and Svensson (2023) noted that such collaboration ensures alignment in governmental actions, minimises the duplication of efforts, and presents a cohesive approach to addressing governance challenges.

Responsible negotiation is a cornerstone of good governance in Africa, where conflicts, ethnic diversity, and resource competition necessitate dialogue. It involves dialogue and compromise among stakeholders to resolve disputes and advance common interests, ensuring inclusiveness, transparency, and equity. Negotiation fosters inclusivity by engaging government officials, civil society, the private sector, and marginalised groups in decision-making. Fofana (2024) emphasises that historical treaties have influenced inter-polity relations in Africa, highlighting the importance of frameworks that reflect all parties' interests and prevent the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, which can lead to inefficiencies and social unrest.

Responsible negotiation promotes peace and stability by resolving conflicts through dialogue rather than coercion. Nilsson and Svensson (2023) argue that inclusive negotiation mechanisms are essential for resolving resource disputes, political power, and territorial boundaries. In post-conflict societies, negotiation rebuilds trust

and fosters reconciliation, paving the way for sustainable governance. Additionally, it improves resource management and equitable distribution. Barlow (2024) highlights negotiation's importance in resource nationalism, where governments balance national interests with global demands. Equitable allocation of resource revenues occurs through transparent stakeholder engagement, aiding economic growth and poverty reduction. Negotiation also fosters international partnerships and cooperation. Carbone (2024) underscores responsible negotiation's role in shaping Africa's interactions with the European Union regarding trade, investment, and human rights. Through negotiation, African governments can assert their interests and adhere to global standards, enhancing their legitimacy and development capacity.

It is imperative to recognise that the institutional mechanisms and structures at the local government level are informed by the legislature, judiciary, and various government agencies entrusted with monitoring the activities of executive actors to ensure compliance. This concept is commonly called horizontal accountability, which guarantees that public policy processes culminate in effective public service delivery (Fagbadebo, 2019a; Ngwa & Ngoa, 2024). However, the implementation of horizontal accountability is often constrained by executive overreach, political interference, and financial limitations that undermine institutional independence. Moreover, the absence of robust collaborative mechanisms among government branches gives rise to fragmented policy processes and misaligned governmental functions, thereby inadequately addressing the needs of citizens. Furthermore, centralised and hierarchical leadership models perpetuate this fragmentation by isolating intra-government institutions within rigid structures prioritising autonomy over cooperation, ultimately stifling inclusivity, undermining transparency, and diminishing public trust in government (Norman, 2024; Poncian & Mgya, 2015; Vivier et al., 2020; Wicaksono et al., 2020).

Additionally, entrenched corruption exacerbates the challenges to good governance, infiltrating leadership structures through institutionalised patronage and collusion that emphasise political allegiances at the expense of the rule of law and the public interest (Crawford & Botchwey, 2017; Hopper, 2017). The systemic erosion of judicial independence, compromised legislative integrity, and distorted executive priorities discourage collaboration, leading to decision-making predominantly controlled by elite interests. These patterns entrench governance systems that serve a select few rather than promoting cohesion and transparency for the public good, thereby obstructing efforts to implement reforms that could bridge governance gaps (Rahman, 2016; Sebola, 2014).

Moreover, ongoing political instability in countries such as South Sudan, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo undermines the sustainability of good governance and weakens intra-government coordination, as unrest disrupts institutional development and diminishes government credibility (Fofana, 2024; Justin & Verkoren, 2021). The growing disconnect between governmental actions and citizen expectations is exacerbated by limited transparency, inadequate engagement mechanisms, and financial constraints that hinder the functionality of judicial and legislative branches, restricting their ability to contribute effectively to governance reforms (Mbengue, 2019; Nilsson & Svensson, 2023; Sebola, 2014; Tsegaw, 2020; Ogbodo, 2024). Furthermore, the increasing role of technology in governance remains underexplored despite its potential to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation through digital platforms and open governance initiatives.

Addressing these issues requires a shift. Local governments in African countries need a sense of 'interoception.' A shift towards intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation, advocating for a governance model that enhances cohesion, accountability, transparency, and aligned decision-making. When internal measures fail, citizens often exercise their vertical accountability power through elections or public protests (Fagbadebo, 2019a). This study aims to significantly contribute to bridging the gap between knowledge and practice of good governance in Africa by shedding light on current developments and informing policymakers, government leaders, and other practitioners about effective governance practices. The following section outlines the detailed methodology employed in this study.

METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in an interpretive philosophical paradigm and utilises a qualitative research design. The investigation employed a systematic literature review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). This process

involved systematic and explicit methodologies in identifying, selecting, and critically evaluating pertinent research and analysing data from the selected studies to address the established research question. This methodological approach was chosen for its rigour, which facilitates a comprehensive synthesis of key theoretical and empirical insights central to the study (Booth et al., 2016).

Search Strategy

The keywords for our search were identified through several test searches. Initially, terms like "Governance," "leadership," and "Africa" were used but proved too limited. We then combined various keywords to find papers with synonyms. The final strategy targeted the Web of Science database for peer-reviewed publications using terms like "good governance," "democratic governance," and "collaborative leadership" alongside regional identifiers like "Africa" and "Sub-Saharan Africa." Boolean operators (AND, OR) ensured robust literature retrieval on governance frameworks and leadership. The search syntax {TS=("Good governance*" OR "Democratic governance*" OR "Participatory governance*" OR "Collaborative governance*") AND ("Collaborative leadership*" OR "Shared leadership*" OR "Collaboration*") AND ("Africa*" OR "African countries*" OR "African nations*" OR "Sub-Saharan Africa*") AND ("Responsible negotiation*" OR "negotiation*" OR "Negotiation techniques*")} encompassed titles, abstracts, and keywords for comprehensive literature retrieval. The term "intra-government" was excluded to prevent narrowing the scope of articles relevant to good governance.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria emphasised scientific rigour by focusing on peer-reviewed publications, including journal articles, reviews, chapters, and conference proceedings, ensuring quality (Booth et al., 2016). An initial search on the Web of Science identified 76,130 publications. To refine this, inclusion criteria excluded grey literature and required publications to contain search terms in titles, abstracts, or keywords, be in English, be accessible online, and be peer-reviewed. Duplicates were removed, and only research from 2014-2024 was included, following the AU Agenda 2063 publication in 2013. While prioritising African literature, broader studies on collaborative leadership and negotiation were also considered to strengthen the research framework (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). After these steps, 145 publications met the criteria objectives.

Quality Assessment

The study examined original research articles, review papers, chapters, and conference papers to establish a high-quality, peer-reviewed literature foundation. Data screening involved reviewing abstracts for relevance to the research questions, followed by a full-text analysis to extract key information and ensure alignment with research objectives. All sources were cross-referenced with existing literature to strengthen data reliability, maintaining rigorous integrity standards (Booth et al., 2016). Key references were evaluated, and relevant studies were included in the final selection. This approach ensured the inclusion of credible studies, minimising bias and extraneous data. The demographics included article titles, authors, affiliations, publication types, years, and research types. The final selection consisted of 70 high-quality articles, as shown in the PRISMA Diagram (Figure 1).

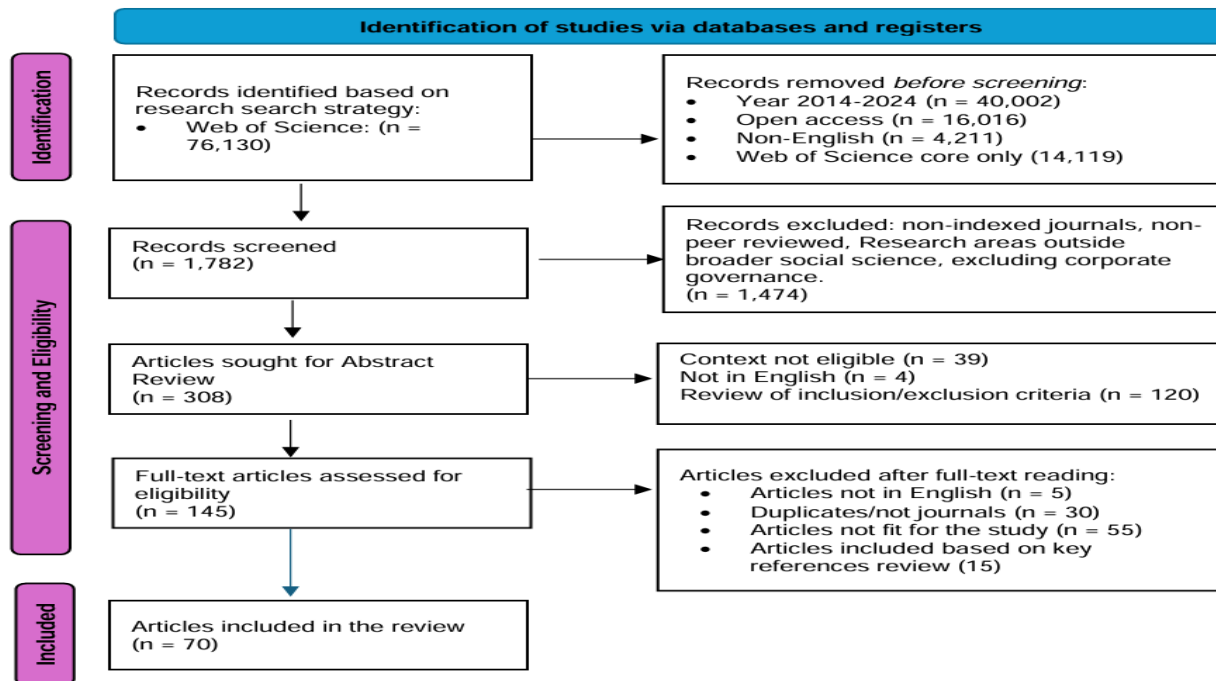
Data Extraction

The final selected 70 articles included original research papers, review papers, chapters, and conference papers. Excluded were reports, case studies, and non-peer-reviewed books. Research on good governance in Africa was prioritised, and global studies on collaborative leadership and negotiation were also included. A Microsoft Excel form was created for data extraction according to PRISMA guidelines, focusing on key information related to the research question. The form comprised three parts: characteristics of selected papers, methodology with employed theories, and concepts used in good governance to derive antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators. The PRISMA flow process ensured data authenticity and enhanced validity. The coding process aimed for consistent categorisation.

Ethical Considerations

This study used secondary data, adhering to ethical guidelines for analysis. Transparency and objectivity were upheld to ensure fair interpretation without over-reliance on any source (Booth et al., 2016). The author maintained balance in presenting the results for an unbiased examination, properly citing all sources and avoiding misuse of proprietary data (American Psychological Association, APA, 2020). The following section presents the findings from the systematic review.

Figure 1: Articles search and selection process



Source: Author, 2025; PRISMA Framework (Page et al., 2021)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section outlines the systematic review results and examines the findings from analysing 70 selected papers published from 2014 to 2024. It offers insights into the research's descriptive characteristics and analyses the literature according to the research questions.

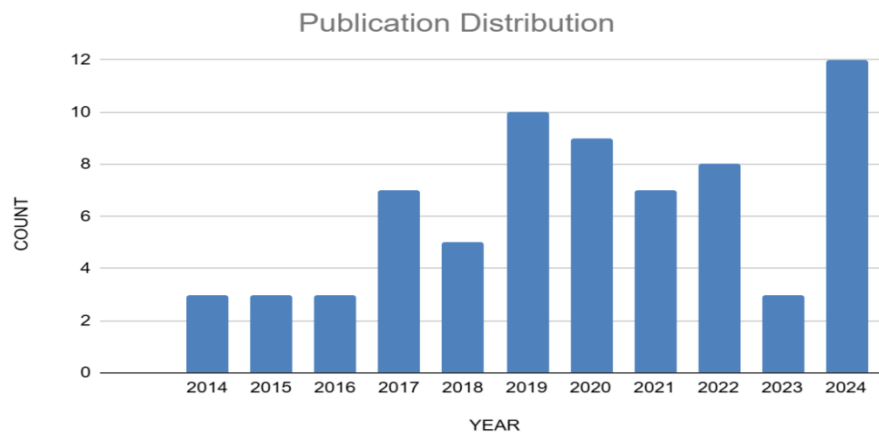
Descriptive overview of reviewed studies

The characteristics provide an overview of the literature, focusing on publication trends, journal sources, citation counts, research areas, and types. Examining study distribution over time highlights periods of increased scholarly attention, while journal analysis identifies key outlets. Citation counts reveal influential works, indicating foundational studies in the field. Categorising by research area underscores interdisciplinarity and thematic concentrations. This approach enables a systematic understanding of the research landscape for deeper thematic analysis.

Publication Year Distribution

In the past decade, good governance in Africa has been a key topic in academia and practice, prompting the research community to tackle its challenges. Figure 2 shows the trend of selected papers over the years. There has been a rising interest in academic research on good governance in Africa, with a notable increase in publications over the last seven years. Most research on good governance occurred between 2017 and 2024, comprising 86% of the total publications. Before 2017, research on good governance was limited, likely due to the AU Agenda 2063 established in 2013, which restricted good governance measurement data.

Figure 2: Publication distribution by year



Source: Reviewed Data

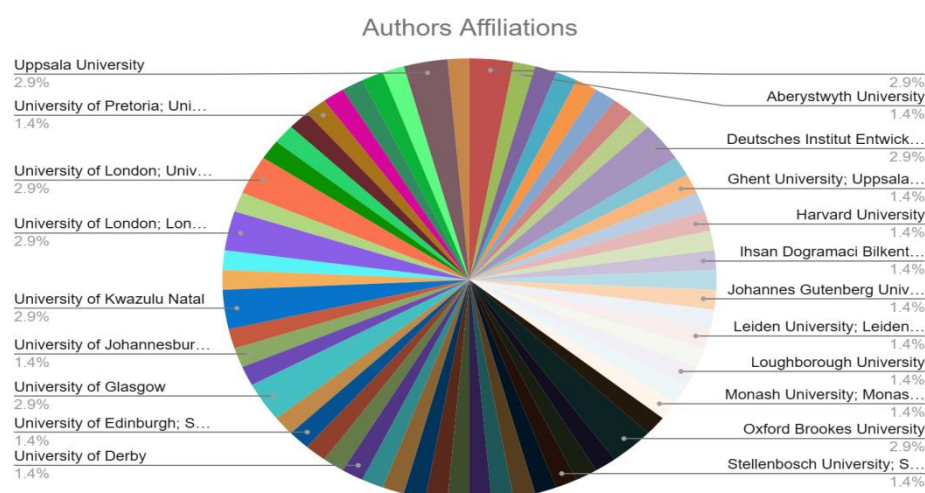
Authors' Affiliations and Journal Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the author affiliations for the articles selected in this systematic literature review. The publications are broadly spread across various journals within multidisciplinary fields of general social sciences. A similar pattern is seen in the distribution of authors' affiliations across different institutions, with significant representation from universities in developed countries. This analysis highlights the worldwide interest in research on good governance in Africa.

Citation Distribution

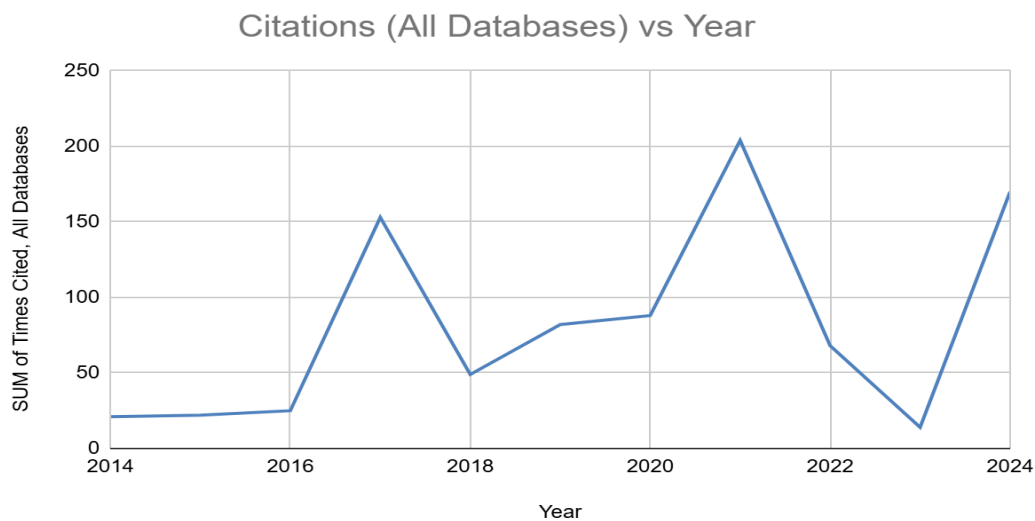
The citation distribution analysis shows a concentration of 88% of total citations occurring between 2017 and 2024. This aligns with increased scholarship, reflecting growing interest in the themes explored. This period corresponds with a crucial phase in implementing the African Union's Agenda 2063, marking five years since its operationalisation. The timeframe likely reflects a focus on evaluating early progress, assessing outcomes, identifying challenges, and proposing recommendations. The increased academic and practitioner interest highlights the role of Agenda 2063 in shaping governance, development priorities, and stakeholder alignment in Africa. The rise in citations and publications indicates a dynamic discourse enhancing evidence-based policy refinement and strategies.

Figure 3: Authors Affiliations



Source: Reviewed Data

Figure 4: Citation distribution

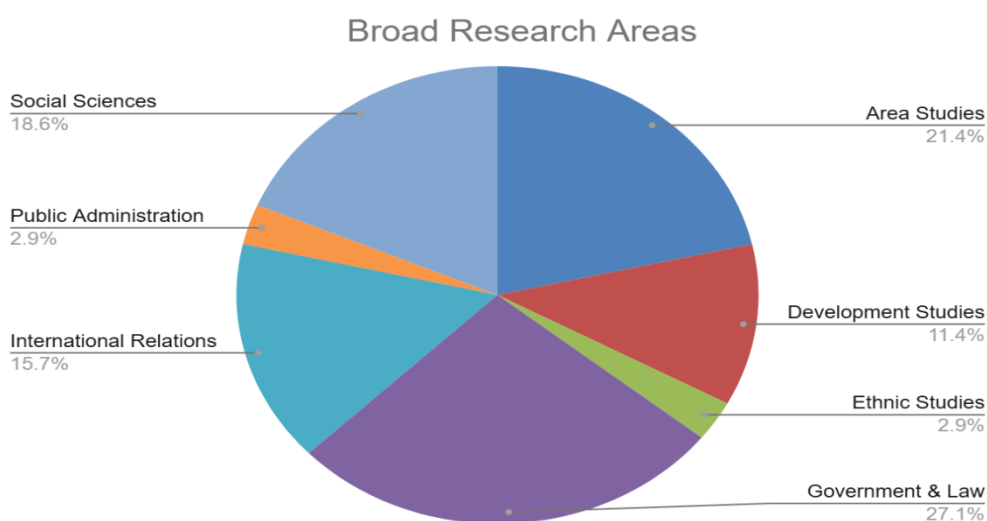


Source: Reviewed Data

Research Areas of Focus

Research indicates a growing focus on good governance, with government and law at 27.1%, area studies at 21.4%, social sciences at 18.6%, international relations at 15.7%, development studies at 11.4%, and public administration at 2.9%. This highlights the interdisciplinary nature of governance research in Africa and its relevance across societal dimensions. Scholars emphasise governance structures, policies, and practices that shape Africa's socio-economic and political landscapes. This trend reflects a commitment to understanding governance through multiple lenses, linking sustainable development, legal frameworks, and international cooperation. The findings underscore the importance of good governance in addressing Africa's challenges and promoting its development agenda.

Figure 5: Research Areas

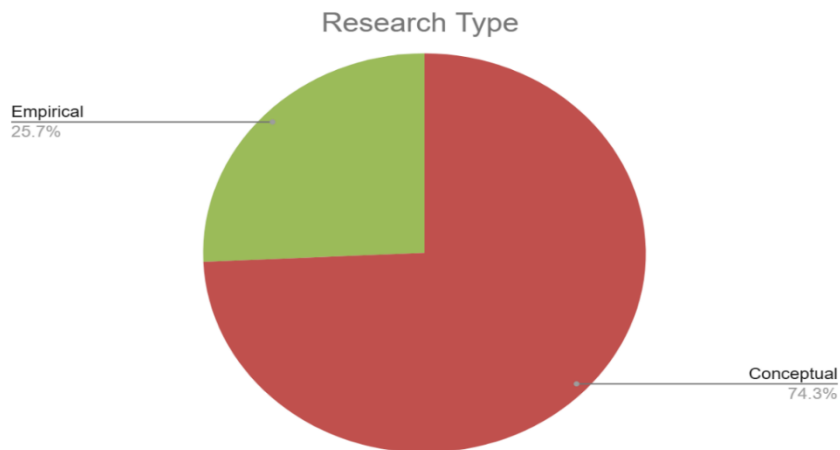


Source: Reviewed Data

Publications by the Method

Figure 6 shows that most studies used conceptual analysis to examine good governance in Africa, with 51 (74.3%) conceptual papers and 19 (25.7%) empirical papers.

Figure 6: Research Types



Source: Reviewed Data

Among the conceptual studies, 36 (70.6%) were conducted post-2019, while 15 (29.4%) were before. As shown in Table 1, most empirical studies were carried out in 2024. These findings highlight the changing discussions around good governance in Africa. Researchers' emphasis on conceptual studies was primarily aimed at strengthening the theoretical foundations of good governance in the region and distinguishing it from other governance models. In 2024, researchers sought to promote good governance in Africa by examining it through various theoretical perspectives.

Table 1: Research Types Distribution

Year	Research Type		
	Conceptual	Empirical	Grand Total
2014	3		3
2015	3		3
2016	2	1	3
2017	5	2	7
2018	2	3	5
2019	8	2	10
2020	7	2	9
2021	5	2	7
2022	6	2	8
2023	3		3
2024	7	5	12
Grand Total	51	19	70

Source: Reviewed Data

Most conceptual studies explored established good governance theories through different perspectives. Only a handful of studies have offered new ideas and frameworks to improve the theoretical advancement, conceptualisation and implementation of good governance practices in Africa.

Theories related to good governance in Africa

This study's theoretical analysis critically examined good governance in Africa by synthesising existing frameworks and classifying them into distinct theoretical categories. While much of the literature emphasises broad concepts rather than advancing novel frameworks, this analysis identifies Institutional Theories, Leadership and Ethical Frameworks, and Developmental and Socio-Political Theories as the primary lenses through which governance in Africa has been understood.

Institutional theories critically assess governance structures, legal frameworks, and organisational mechanisms central to achieving good governance. Key components such as institutional capacity, decentralisation, and collaborative governance highlight the interplay between policy implementation and public service delivery. Makara (2018) underscores decentralisation as a pivotal mechanism for redistributing power, enhancing accountability, and fostering inclusivity. However, persistent political manipulation and weak institutional frameworks challenge its efficacy, limiting its transformative potential. Similarly, as Wicaksono et al. (2020) discussed, collaborative governance integrates multiple stakeholders in decision-making, enhancing trust and strengthening governance mechanisms. Rahman (2016) argues that the rule of law is fundamental in promoting transparency and equity, ensuring fair policy enforcement and institutional integrity. In contrast, Hopper (2017) critiques the entrenched influence of neopatrimonialism, where governance remains susceptible to patronage networks and elite dominance, necessitating pragmatic reforms tailored to Africa's political realities.

Leadership and ethical frameworks emerge as crucial in shaping governance outcomes in Africa, focusing on the human element of governance. Ethical leadership theories underscore the inseparable pillars of ethics, accountability, and democracy, as Koenane and Mangena (2017) highlight, emphasising the role of moral leadership in aligning governance practices with societal expectations. Such frameworks are foundational for building trust and accountability, essential for addressing systemic governance challenges. Dibie and Dibie (2017) extend this perspective by advocating for servant leadership, a model prioritising public welfare, participatory governance, and efforts to mitigate inequality, positioning leadership as a transformative force within governance systems. Complementing these perspectives, Adekeye (2022) integrates Social Identity Theory (SIT) and empowerment theory, arguing that leadership fosters trust between citizens and institutions by creating partnerships and equipping institutions with necessary resources. These theories highlight the importance of leadership as a tool for citizen engagement, institutional empowerment, and governance stability.

Further, developmental and socio-political theories explore the broader socio-economic intersections of governance. Loewe et al. (2024) revisit social contract theory, underscoring the evolving agreements between state and society, urging governance systems to remain adaptive to changing societal needs and values. Justin and Verkoren (2021) introduce hybrid governance, which merges formal and informal governance systems to address local contexts and power dynamics pragmatically, offering a more inclusive governance approach. Critiques of neoliberal governance frameworks by Mlambo et al. (2020) and Adejumo-Ayibiowu (2020) advocate for African-centered models, emphasising indigenous knowledge and cultural systems to design governance solutions suited to Africa's distinct socio-political landscape. These perspectives argue that sustainable good governance requires context-specific strategies incorporating traditional and contemporary governance practices.

Theories on good governance in Africa highlight the significance of institutional capacity, ethical leadership, and socio-political development. The theories broadly emphasise decentralisation, collaborative governance, and the rule of law as essential components of effective good governance frameworks from an inter-government and external stakeholders' perspective. A gap exists in theories that foster internal government mechanics and negotiations. As a result, insights that advocate for inclusive and context-sensitive governance approaches in Africa, guiding future research and policy reforms towards more sustainable and locally responsive governance systems, are limited.

Antecedents of Good Governance in Africa

The literature analysis on good governance in Africa revealed key antecedents necessary to advance the good governance agenda. This study identifies a multidimensional framework categorising these antecedents into structural, cultural, and systemic factors. Structural factors form the foundation for institutional effectiveness, transparency, and decentralisation. Scholars such as Makara (2018) and Rahman (2016) highlight institutional reforms, transparency, and the rule of law as essential components in governance systems that can withstand political instability and corruption. The rule of law is crucial for accountability, ensuring public officials operate within clear legal frameworks. Transparency fosters trust between governments and citizens, particularly in resource allocation and public service delivery. Davis (2016) argued that decentralisation redistributes power from central to local governments, enhancing citizen participation and aligning development initiatives with local needs. However, political manipulation and weak institutional capacity often undermine decentralisation, limiting its transformative potential.

Public leadership and citizen participation are equally vital structural components of governance. Vivier et al. (2020) illustrate how collaborative public leadership and inclusive engagement improve service delivery and build citizen trust. Fofana (2024) highlights the role of negotiations and treaties in conflict resolution and economic partnerships, strengthening intergovernmental cooperation. These structural antecedents underscore the necessity of building transparent, participatory, and legally robust institutions to maintain public trust and ensure governance efficiency.

Similarly, cultural factors influence good governance through ethics, leadership behaviour, and societal expectations. As described by Koenane and Mangena (2017), ethical governance necessitates professionalism and morality among public officials, ensuring governance aligns with justice and fairness. Accountability, a cultural and systemic factor, fosters credibility in governance processes by holding leaders responsible to the public they serve. A cultural reorientation towards indigenous African values also emerges as a critical antecedent. Igboke-Ibeto et al. (2015) argue that principles such as communalism, respect for humanity, and collective responsibility should inform governance frameworks. These values can mitigate the disruptions caused by colonial-era governance models, which often disregard indigenous governance traditions. Integrating these cultural practices can promote inclusivity and local ownership of governance processes.

Political consciousness is another key cultural factor. Ikegbu et al. (2020) highlight how an awareness of rights and responsibilities among citizens strengthens democratic engagement and reduces marginalisation. Political consciousness empowers citizens to hold leaders accountable, demand inclusivity, and participate actively in governance. Azeez (2018) further argues that political consciousness helps address exclusion and ethnic tensions, which often exacerbate governance challenges in Africa. These cultural antecedents provide an ethical and moral framework for governance, fostering collective responsibility and citizen engagement in governance.

Further, systemic factors provide the broader framework for good governance, encompassing democracy, civil society, and anti-corruption measures. Democracy is fundamental to systemic governance, ensuring the separation of powers and fair electoral processes. Mlambo et al. (2019) and Davis (2016) emphasise the role of democratic institutions in preventing the concentration of power and promoting checks and balances that safeguard governance integrity. Civil society plays a crucial role in governance by acting as a watchdog and advocating for marginalised communities. Mlambo et al. (2020) argue that civil society organisations enhance transparency, encourage public participation, and ensure governance initiatives reflect societal needs. Minko (2023) and Kali (2022) highlight civil society's role in fostering advocacy and accountability, particularly in weak government responsiveness. Strengthening civil society engagement can provide additional layers of oversight that enhance governance effectiveness.

Combating corruption is another systemic factor indispensable to good governance. Hopper (2017) and Fagbadebo (2019a) emphasise that corruption erodes trust in governance, weakens institutions, and exacerbates inequality. Addressing corruption requires systemic reforms that enhance transparency, strengthen legal frameworks, and promote accountability mechanisms. Sebola (2014) argues that governance integrity is essential for reducing political dishonesty and ensuring effective law enforcement. Without these systemic safeguards, good governance risks becoming unresponsive and exclusionary.

However, achieving good governance in Africa requires a holistic approach integrating structural, cultural, and systemic reforms into intra-government engagements and negotiations. Technical improvements must align with intra-government cultural transformations that reflect the aspirations of African societies. Embedding these principles within governance structures, local governments can develop good governance models that are both effective and contextually relevant.

Mediators of Good Governance in Africa

Good governance in Africa is contingent upon various mediating factors that facilitate the connection between governance inputs (antecedents) and outcomes. These mediators function as pathways that enhance institutional effectiveness, promote societal engagement, and ensure leadership accountability. A review of scholarly literature identifies three primary categories of mediators: institutional, socio-cultural, and collaborative mechanisms. The following discussion synthesises these mediators and their significance.

Institutions form the backbone of governance systems, mediating between policy objectives and tangible outcomes. Key institutional mediators include the rule of law, accountability frameworks, and transparency mechanisms. Rahman (2016) and Koenane and Mangena (2017) emphasise that adherence to the rule of law ensures fairness and justice in governance, constraining arbitrary actions by political leaders and public officials. Transparent fiscal policies, accessible public records, and independent oversight bodies further enhance accountability (Asamoah, 2022; Makara, 2018). Additionally, creating checks and balances among government branches prevents power concentration and reinforces democratic accountability. Umezurike and Iwu (2017) underscore the role of institutional checks in strengthening democratic consolidation in Africa. Judicial independence further ensures that laws are enforced objectively, maintaining public trust. Without robust institutional mediators, governance risks becoming arbitrary and unresponsive to citizens' needs.

Socio-cultural mediators shape governance through values, ethics, and societal norms. As highlighted by Koenane and Mangena (2017), ethical governance fosters accountability and professional integrity among public officials, discouraging corruption and nepotism. Igbokwe-Ibeto et al. (2015) argue that communal values and moral standards can bridge the gap between leaders and citizens, promoting mutual respect and cooperation. Civic education and political consciousness are crucial socio-cultural mediators. Adekeye (2019) notes that informed citizens actively engage in governance processes, challenging undemocratic practices and demanding inclusivity. Political awareness empowers communities to hold leaders accountable and advocate for transparency. Furthermore, trust between the state and society is essential. Asamoah (2022) asserts that when citizens trust governance institutions, they are more likely to comply with laws, pay taxes, and participate in development initiatives. Without trust, governance systems risk alienating their constituencies and eroding legitimacy.

Collaboration among stakeholders, including government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners, is vital for effective governance. Muslim, Prasojo, and Salomo (2022) highlight that collaborative governance integrates diverse perspectives, ensuring policies reflect collective interests rather than individual ambitions. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a pivotal role as watchdogs, advocating for marginalised communities and holding governments accountable for service delivery (Mlambo, Zubane, & Mlambo, 2020). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) further enhance governance efficiency. Wicaksono et al. (2020) argue that PPPs bridge infrastructure gaps and improve service delivery by leveraging private sector expertise and resources. International cooperation also mediates good governance by encouraging adherence to global standards in trade, human rights, and institutional reforms. Carbone (2024) contends that international partnerships foster capacity-building and institutional strengthening in African states.

Negotiation and dialogue reinforce collaborative mechanisms. Fofana (2024) highlights how diplomatic engagement between states and communities facilitates conflict resolution, fosters peace, and creates environments conducive to sustainable development. However, this study identifies a gap in the limited focus on intra-government collaboration at the local level, particularly in negotiations required to enhance governance effectiveness.

Mediators of good governance in Africa are critical for transforming governance inputs into effective outcomes. However, these mediators do not function in isolation but reinforce one another to strengthen good governance systems. This study emphasises the importance of integrating these mediators into the holistic local government mechanism to address good governance challenges. A holistic good governance framework that embeds these mediators ensures robust, inclusive, and citizen-centred governance, ultimately contributing to Africa's sustainable development and political stability.

Moderators of Good Governance in Africa

Good governance outcomes are contingent on antecedents, mediators, and specific moderators that shape the intensity, direction, and effectiveness. Moderators act as contextual factors that amplify or constrain the relationship between governance processes and their outcomes. This study categorises these moderators into three broad categories: environmental, institutional, and socio-political factors. Drawing insights from the reviewed literature, this analysis explores the key moderators of good governance and their implications.

Environmental moderators encompass geographical, economic, and technological contexts that enhance or hinder good governance outcomes. Barlow (2024) highlights resource management as a crucial environmental moderator. The availability and governance of natural resources, such as oil, minerals, and agricultural land, significantly impact governance outcomes. Effective resource management fosters equitable economic growth and reduces conflicts over resource control. Conversely, resource mismanagement leads to corruption, environmental degradation, and social unrest (Hopper, 2017). States with weak resource governance mechanisms often experience rent-seeking behaviours and elite capture, undermining development efforts.

Technological advancements also shape good governance through digital transformation. Ngwa and Ngoa (2024) explain that digital tools enhance citizen engagement, transparency, and efficiency in public service delivery. Technology facilitates access to information, allowing citizens to monitor government activities and demand accountability. However, unequal access to technology and poor digital infrastructure in many parts of Africa exacerbate inequalities, limiting the reach of good governance initiatives. Digital authoritarianism, where governments manipulate technology to suppress dissent, negatively impacts governance outcomes. Further, economic disparities affect good governance effectiveness by influencing resource distribution and service accessibility. Asongu (2017) argues that countries with robust economies are better positioned to implement governance reforms effectively. In contrast, economically fragile states struggle with debt dependency, poverty, and unemployment, which hinder governance processes. Economic volatility, such as inflation and currency depreciation, can weaken public institutions and limit their capacity to deliver services effectively.

Institutional moderators refer to the strength, capacity, and resilience of governance institutions. Key factors in this category include institutional quality, legal frameworks, and capacity-building. Asamoah (2022) emphasises that governance effectiveness depends on institutions' ability to enforce laws, manage resources, and deliver public services equitably. Weak institutions are prone to corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of public trust, resulting in governance failures. Legal frameworks play a pivotal role in moderating governance effectiveness. Countries with robust legal systems ensure the rule of law, protect human rights and promote fair political competition. Rahman (2016) and Makara (2018) argue that a lack of independent judicial systems undermines governance by enabling impunity and fostering political instability. Effective legal frameworks create accountability structures that deter corruption and enhance governance performance.

Intergovernmental coordination is another institutional moderator affecting governance efficiency. Makara (2018) states that collaboration between different government levels, national, regional, and local, determines good governance success. Poor coordination results in duplicative efforts, resource misallocation, and service delivery gaps. Conversely, well-aligned local governmental cooperation facilitates policy coherence and efficient governance.

Finally, socio-political moderators influence good governance practices through cultural, political, and social dynamics. Leadership style is a critical socio-political moderator. Koenane and Mangena (2017) emphasise that ethical and inclusive leadership fosters accountability and public trust, while authoritarian or self-serving leadership undermines governance. Leadership styles also determine the extent of stakeholder involvement in

decision-making, shaping governance legitimacy. Cultural diversity and inclusivity also moderate governance effectiveness. Igbokwe-Ibeto et al. (2015) highlight that inclusive governance, which respects ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, fosters stability and social cohesion. In contrast, exclusionary practices based on identity politics often fuel conflict and weaken governance structures. Governance models that fail to integrate indigenous governance principles risk alienating local populations and diminishing policy effectiveness.

Public trust and political stability further influence governance outcomes. Asamoah (2022) explains that trust in governance institutions enhances citizen compliance, participation, and policy acceptance. Political stability fosters an enabling environment for reforms and sustainable development initiatives. Conversely, political instability—manifested through coups, protests, and electoral violence—disrupts governance processes and weakens public confidence in state institutions.

The moderators of good governance in Africa operate across environmental, institutional, and socio-political spheres, influencing governance effectiveness. However, for effective good governance outcomes, these moderators must interact with antecedents and mediators and integrate into the intra-government collaborations and negotiation mechanisms. This study highlights the necessity of holistically addressing antecedents, mediators, and moderators to develop inclusive, equitable, and sustainable good governance systems.

Outcomes of Good Governance in Africa

Extant scholarship shows that good governance practices address institutional inefficiencies and systemic gaps at the inter-government level while catalysing positive outcomes across external stakeholders. This study categorises these outcomes into political, economic, social, and leadership. The analysis below explores these diverse governance outcomes in Africa.

Considering political outcomes, good governance fosters democratic systems characterised by transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Adekeye (2022) and Rahman (2016) highlight the establishment of strong political institutions as fundamental to good governance, ensuring stability, the rule of law, and adherence to constitutional principles. Transparent electoral processes and the inclusion of marginalised groups enhance public trust and government legitimacy (Ikegbu, Iwuchukwu & Bisong, 2020). Additionally, good governance mitigates political corruption and authoritarian tendencies by promoting equitable power-sharing among government branches (Wani & Suwirta, 2015). It also supports peacebuilding and conflict resolution, particularly in politically unstable regions. Institutional frameworks and inclusive negotiation processes reduce tensions, foster peaceful coexistence, and strengthen democracy (Nilsson & Svensson, 2023).

Economic outcomes, economic growth, and sustainable development are key outcomes of good governance in Africa. Davis (2016) and Bodenstein (2021) argue that accountability and resource efficiency drive poverty reduction, equitable resource allocation, and economic diversification. Transparent financial management and investment processes mitigate corruption and mismanagement, creating an environment conducive to economic stability and growth. Hopper (2017) highlights governance reforms as essential for enhancing economic efficiency and public trust. Good governance also fosters trade openness and attracts foreign investment by establishing clear regulatory frameworks and reducing investment risks (Asongu, 2017). By integrating economic growth with broader development goals, African governments can stimulate job creation, reduce inequality, and ensure shared prosperity.

Moreover, good governance's social outcomes entail enhancing human development, social cohesion, and protecting fundamental rights. Sarpong and Bein (2021) argue that transparent and inclusive governance improves access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water. Promoting human rights and social justice ensures that marginalised and vulnerable groups are included in development initiatives (Makara, 2018). Vivier, De Jongh, and Thompson (2020) assert that citizen participation in governance empowers communities and strengthens trust in public institutions, reducing social tensions and enhancing societal resilience. Furthermore, Kali (2022) highlights civil society's role in advocating for social change and holding governments accountable, ensuring governance remains aligned with public needs and aspirations.

Finally, the leadership outcomes entail effective leadership, which is integral to good governance, ensuring policies reflect ethical standards, inclusivity, and accountability. Koenane and Mangena (2017) emphasise that ethical leadership fosters integrity within public institutions. Leaders prioritising service delivery and citizen welfare build trust and legitimacy (Ogunyemi, Adisa, & Hinson, 2022). Muslim, Prasojo, and Salomo (2022) highlight collaborative leadership as another critical outcome of good governance, noting that leaders engaging with civil society, the private sector, and international partners enhance governance effectiveness. Such leadership ensures participatory and responsive governance, driving sustainable development and long-term stability.

Good governance in Africa can potentially yield expansive, transformative political, economic, social, and leadership outcomes at the intra-government level if practised and integrated into local government mechanisms and negotiation structures. The outcomes discussed underscore the urgent need for good governance reform to propel Africa's progress and be responsive to Africa's evolving needs. Figure 7 outlines the study's schematic representation of the good governance framework, integrating antecedents, mediators, moderators, and governance outcomes.

Figure 7: A schematic representation of the good governance framework developed in the study



Source: Author, 2025

The Strategic Role of Intra-Government Collaboration and Responsible Negotiation

Good governance is an intricate web of relationships, strategies, and processes that demands coherence across institutional, cultural, and systemic domains at all levels. While the extant scholarship on good governance in Africa has focused on advancing inter-government and other external stakeholders, intra-government collaboration and negotiations have been unaddressed. This gap has resulted in the dysfunctional application of

good governance in Africa with ineffective envisaged outcomes. Given Africa's current challenges, these factors may serve as transformative tools in bridging the gaps in good governance practice.

While distinct, intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation are interconnected. Collaboration provides a framework for negotiation, vital in resource management and conflict resolution and requires well-coordinated intra-government institutions for effectiveness. Conversely, responsible negotiation establishes collaborative frameworks, particularly amid political fragmentation. Decentralisation at the intra-government level exemplifies this relationship, necessitating negotiation and collaboration between all government levels for effective good governance outcomes. Makara (2018) notes that negotiation aids resource allocation, while collaboration ensures that resources achieve governance objectives. Responsible negotiation resolves conflicts in peacebuilding, while collaboration is needed for implementation across intra-government, civil society, and international partners. Nilsson and Svensson (2023) argued that poor coordination in implementing agreements often leads to renewed tensions. This interplay also could effectively address governance issues like corruption. Collaboration among judicial agencies and legislative bodies creates a united front, while negotiation with intra-government stakeholders establishes necessary frameworks to combat corruption. Table 2 outlines the integration of intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation into good governance.

Table 2: Intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation

Category	Connection with Mediator/Moderator	Concepts	Authors
Intra-Government Collaboration	Acts as a mediator by fostering institutional synergy and as a moderator, ensuring coordination across governance levels.	<i>Decentralisation</i> : Redistribution of power to local authorities enhances inclusivity and efficiency.	Makara (2018), Rahman (2016)
		<i>Checks and Balances</i> : Ensures accountability and prevents abuse of power.	Umezurike & Iwu (2017), Rahman (2016)
		<i>Crisis Management</i> : Facilitates coordinated responses to governance challenges.	Nilsson & Svensson (2023)
		<i>Intra-government Coordination</i> : Aligns policies across levels of government.	Makara (2018)
Responsible Negotiation	Functions as a mediator by fostering inclusivity and resolving conflicts; serves as a moderator by addressing socio-political divides.	<i>Inclusivity</i> : Involves diverse stakeholders in decision-making.	Fofana (2024), Nilsson & Svensson (2023)
		<i>Conflict Resolution</i> : Resolves disputes and builds trust through dialogue.	Nilsson & Svensson (2023), Carbone (2024)
		<i>Resource Management</i> : Negotiates equitable allocation of resources to prevent conflicts.	Barlow (2024), Hopper (2017)
		<i>International Partnerships</i> : Facilitates cooperation in trade, investment, and human rights.	Carbone (2024), Fofana (2024)

Source: Author, 2025

Future Research Agenda

The study of good governance in Africa remains profoundly relevant, particularly as the continent shifts toward a more pan-Africanist approach that prioritises reforms tailored to local contexts and aspirations. African leaders and policymakers increasingly reject externally imposed, restrictive governance models, favouring collaborative and adaptive strategies emphasising intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation. These frameworks empower African states to take ownership of governance, positioning them to design systems that address their unique socio-political and economic realities. This growing recognition among governance actors that African-led solutions are key to addressing governance challenges marks a critical turning point for the continent's future.

This study highlights intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation as transformative frameworks for advancing governance in Africa. While these concepts are gaining traction in scholarly and policy discourses, they remain evolving ideologies requiring further refinement and empirical validation. The literature underscores their potential to reshape strategic good governance practices, yet gaps in methodology and application persist. Current research is constrained by a reliance on cross-sectional studies and survey-based methods, which limit the ability to uncover causal relationships and long-term impacts. Future studies must prioritise longitudinal designs to capture governance trends over time, offering a deeper understanding of the enduring effects of collaboration and negotiation on governance systems.

Additionally, mixed-methods research and multilevel analyses are underutilised in this field. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches can provide richer insights into the interplay between public leadership behaviours, institutional mechanisms, and systemic governance outcomes. Scholars must also work to refine theoretical foundations by embracing African-centered, interdisciplinary frameworks that reflect local realities. Incorporating numerous governance models alongside theories of collaboration and negotiation can yield nuanced perspectives on good governance success. By advancing this research agenda, scholars and practitioners can build resilient, inclusive, and transformative good governance frameworks that align with Africa's aspirations while contributing to global best practices.

Limitations

This study offers valuable insights into good governance in Africa but has limitations. Data drawn solely from indexed academic journals may restrict generalizability, as important contributions from non-indexed and regional publications may be missed. Moreover, the study's subjective methodology could result in varied outcomes with different approaches. Future research could employ meta-analytic techniques to reduce subjectivity and yield more objective insights. Additionally, bibliometric analyses could reveal the intellectual structure and research trends in good governance in Africa, enhancing understanding of this crucial subject.

CONCLUSION

This study, grounded in a review of 70 scholarly articles, offers a nuanced analysis of good governance in Africa. The findings illuminate the mediators such as institutional reforms, trust-building mechanisms, and collaborative partnerships that translate governance practices into tangible impacts. Moderating factors like resource management, political stability, and leadership styles further shape the efficacy of these practices, underscoring the intricate interplay of institutional, socio-political, and environmental dynamics in African governance. While recent years have seen an encouraging rise in empirical studies on African governance, much of this research still originates from developed countries, reflecting a critical need for African scholars and institutions to contribute context-specific insights and solutions.

Moreover, the findings highlight the strategic roles of intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation. These governance strategies are instrumental in shaping political, economic, social, and leadership outcomes by fostering decentralisation, institutional efficiency, and crisis resilience through intergovernmental synergy and mutual accountability. Responsible negotiation complements these efforts by addressing conflicts, ensuring equitable resource management, and enhancing inclusivity via stakeholder engagement. Together, these practices tackle good governance challenges while laying the foundation for sustainable development,

institutional resilience, and peace. Exploring innovative governance models and leveraging emerging technologies can further enhance intra-governmental coordination and stakeholder negotiations. As African nations pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such efforts will be pivotal in aligning governance systems with the continent's unique aspirations and challenges.

Ultimately, intra-government collaboration and responsible negotiation are not merely governance mechanisms but foundational pillars for building resilient, inclusive, and adaptive good governance systems in Africa. By adopting these practices, policymakers and stakeholders can drive transformative change, ensuring governance systems that foster peace, growth, and prosperity while reflecting African societies' values and priorities. This research highlights a robust good governance framework for advancing scholarship and actionable policy interventions.

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