RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unethical Leadership in the African Public Sector: A Structural Functionalist View

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Abstract

There are several theoretical frameworks for examining the problem of unethical leadership. However, most of the analyses are tied to the individual personalities and organizational contexts creating unethical leadership behaviours and fall short of underpinning the mechanisms shaped by the social system responsible for developing individual personalities and organizational contexts connected with unethical leadership in Africa's public sector. Furthermore, previous theoretical constructs have failed to adequately capture the holistic nature of unethical leadership, for example public corruption, which is a major issue in many African societies. Moreover, in order to address the problem adequately, a comprehensive understanding of all the key components of the problem and their interrelationships is required. Therefore, the paper adopts the sociological structural functionalism theory, which advocates for a holistic view of a social problem through a proper analysis of the causal mechanisms of the problem, in this case, unethical leadership in Africa's public sector. The paper's use of the theory is also supported by empirical evidence. The paper argues that unethical leadership in Africa's public sector results from the dysfunction of the continent's social institutions; hence, they cannot effectively maintain their functional roles as expected. Consequently, the institutions have failed to promote ethical conduct while at the same time failing to prevent unethical behaviour from the micro-level structures to the macro-level structures. In addition, the absence or weak mutual efforts between the social institutions exacerbate the problem. It is thus recommended that, African governments, as meta-institutions, should effectively organize, regulate, and coordinate other social institutions by enforcing the legislation and policies made. In addition, social institutions in every African state must effectively work in harmony under certain guidelines to address ethical issues, exposing and preventing unethical behaviour both in the formal and informal institutions.

Keywords: Unethical Leadership, African Public Sectors, Structural Functionalism Theory, African Social Institutions.

1. Introduction

There has been a growing concern about unethical leadership in Africa, which is also connected with the low level of development of the continent. It is widely recognized that for a country to achieve its development goals, its leaders at all government levels must observe ethics and abide by a set of regulations and guidelines when serving the public. This emphasis has long been a matter of philosophical debate since the time of ancient Greeks, and it can be explained by reference to some philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. For instance, in his work 'The

Republic', Plato provides an account of leadership in which the knowledge of the enduring truths of the leader is the fundamental characteristic of a leader (Shaw, 2022). In addition, Plato believed that virtue is ethical knowledge (Gordon, n.d.), therefore, non-virtuous leaders simply lack ethical knowledge since virtue consists in the reasonable condition of the soul, which leads to correct views (Gordon, n.d.). Thus, suggesting non-virtuous leaders lack the correct views for making ethical choices about national development and ethically robust mechanisms for rolling out development plans. Consequently, the country's level of development remains low and relatively limited compared with other countries where its leaders seriously consider ethical issues in all sectors. This assertion does not imply that ethical leadership is the only driving factor for promoting national development, several other factors also contribute to the development process.

Plato's ideas of ethics are compatible with the involvement of leaders in a wide community of people in translating and implementing their development vision; however, they are categorized as classical because they were predominant in late ancient and medieval contexts. These classical perspectives of ethical leadership are generally sorted into the virtue, deontological or teleological approaches, also known as the character, means (duty), and ends (greatest good) schools of thought (Van Wart, 2014, p. 27) as Plato's conception of virtue and the notion of truths of the leader explained above. In contrast, the contemporary perspectives of ethical leadership promote a broader scope of leadership by emphasizing the external environment (Shakeel et al., 2020, p. 2), based on how the leader shapes and is shaped by the organization's external environment. Thus, the contemporary perspectives of ethical leadership stress issues such as the importance of external stakeholders, such as customers who are the citizens in public administration, based on the principles of new public management (Korunka et al., 2007, p. 307). The Trevino et al. (2000, p. 132) model of ethical leadership is an example of the contemporary model of ethical leadership, which has included the sub-dimension of concern of citizens/society as part of the moral person dimension of the construct (Shakeel et al., 2020, p. 4).

The contemporary perspective also emphasizes the empowering role of the leader, which requires an ethical leader to reward performance and allow people to have a say in their decisions and listen to their ideas and concerns (Shakeel et al., 2020, p. 4). Moreover, under the contemporary theories of ethical leadership, an ethical leader must perform a clarification role by being transparent in governance and clarifying the goals and expectations of the followers/citizens. The literature about classical and contemporary theories of ethical leadership is broad, therefore, giving a more detailed discussion of it than is offered here it is beyond the paper's scope. It is clear that ethical principles should guide public leaders in performing their roles so that their work becomes of high quality and improves the integrity of public institutions. Without such attempts, the public will mistrust their leaders for failing to perform their imperative duties and fulfil promises laid out by the government. When trust in government declines, the capacity of public institutions (including leadership) to govern effectively diminishes (Denhardt, 2002, p. 65). Hence, the government's development path may not be achieved as expected.

As alluded to earlier, it is widely recognised that for a country to achieve its development goals, one of the key issues to be emphasized is ethical leadership, whereby leaders at all levels of government must be ethical when serving the public. Despite such recognition, there have been several claims from the citizens, the international community, and scholars regarding how public leaders in some African countries operate their governments without considering the principles of good governance and ethical leadership. Therefore, the main criticism is centred on the failure of some leaders in power at all levels of government to lead ethically by considering principles of good governance and ethical leadership.

Table 1 presents a list of some ethical challenges and problems facing Africa's public leadership as reported in literature. Nonetheless, it is worthy knowing that Table 1 is not exhaustive of Africa's public sector ethical issues, the presented issues are just to show evidence of the existence of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector. In addition, the same provides a foundation for the paper to apply the structural functionalism perspective to examine the causes of the reported issues in order to come up with mechanisms to address the same. However, examining unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector using the structural functionalism perspective does not mean that other theoretical frameworks, originating especially from

the classical political theory, contemporary political science, or public administration, are completely irrelevant. The structural functionalism perspective has been used to allow a holistic understanding of the underlying causes hence, allow the provision of the right recommendations for African governments to promote ethical leadership in the continent's pursuit of the socio-economic development of its people.

Table 1. Some ethical issues in Africa's public sector

Case study	Reported ethical issue
Africa	Bribes, omissions in the discharge of official duties and responsibilities. Diversion of public properties, illicit enrichment, and soliciting or granting of influence on the advantage of an individual (Fagbadebo, 2021, p. 32)
Kenya	Corruption. Misappropriation of government funds. Leaders take the government money allocated to various projects for their benefit. There is a lack of commitment to tracking progress (Shangarai et al., 2023, p. 43)
East Africa	Mistrust, corruption and misuse of public funds (Ntara, 2023, pp. 7-11)
Ghana	Corruption. Nepotism, lack of political commitment, and accountability. The system does not allow political leaders to integrate the stakeholders' opinions and feedback on how their decision-making and activities affect citizens and citizens' perceptions of government activities. There is a misuse of the limited available resources for unintended purposes. This situation hinders the success of many government projects (Acheampong et al., 2023, pp.12-14)
Tanzania and Africa	Corruption increased, especially between 2013 and 2014, and the government's ability to handle it was fairly bad. There is a misuse of public resources for self-aggrandizement. There is poor governance and a lack of inclusive and responsive government (Muchunguzi, 2023, pp. 212, 213, 221)
Uganda	There is institutionalization of unethical behaviour, politicizing appointment of sensitive public administrators, deliberate failure to enforce existing laws, greed, and overreliance on donor funds (Galukande-Kiganda et al., 2022, p. 95)
African subcontinent	Corruption. Lack of quality governance in many African communities and countries. There is selfishness among the leaders, who are away from common people's interests (Misra and Singh, 2022, p. 107-108)
Uganda	Corruption, lack of good governance. Loss of trust in state institutions and their capacity to execute basic functions, particularly the provision of the public good; the inability of many leaders to properly manage economies, diversities and political inclusion (Madu, 2023, p. 6-8)
Nigeria	Leadership is characterized by corruption, conflicts and lack of commitment. Unscrupulous leaders deceive the population and carry out their selfish designs on the citizens and the country. There is a lack of pluralistic democracy/inclusion (Mbachu and Makwudo, 2023, pp. 71, 76)
South Africa	The public procurement sector is characterized by noncompliance with policies and regulations, fraud, corruption, lack of accountability, and mismanagement (Nzimakwe, 2023, p.1)

Furthermore, the concept of unethical leadership emerged as a result of studies about the dark sides of organizational behaviour (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Tepper, 2000; Duffy et al., 2002; Tepper et al., 2006) which are harmful to customers, stakeholders, and society (Kiyomiya, 2012, p. 52). Most scholars agree that unethical leadership is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Almeida et al., 2022, p. 215) caused by factors of various origins (social, economic, political, and psychological, to mention a few). It can also be agreed that studying such a complex social problem requires an interdisciplinary approach and multiple perspectives from social sciences (Lavabre, 2013; Moore, 2014, p. 198). Therefore, the paper applies the structural functionalism perspective, which can be conceptualized as an interdisciplinary theoretical perspective, to contribute novel insights on the challenge of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector, specifically by delving deeper into its causal mechanisms, in line with the complicated interplays within the social structure and their functions. Moreover, recommendations for promoting ethical leadership in Africa's public sector require a holistic approach as provided by the structural functionalism theoretical framework (Trevino, 2008).

In the subsequent sections, the paper provides some basics of structural functionalism theory (SFT) and the rationale for adopting them in the present work. Then, it gives an interpretation of the SFT so as to allow a good understanding of the causes of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are presented, with the later showing how ethical leadership can be promoted in Africa's public sector.

2. Some Basics of Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT) and the Rationale for Adopting it in the Present Work

The SFT originated in sociology with ideas from

several social scientists, including Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton. It gained the greatest dominance in the 1940s and 1950s (Ritzer, 2011, p. 214). Its orientations mainly focus on structure – the pattering of roles, the form of institutions, and the overall articulation of the institutions in society – and seek to explain these structures in terms of their functions – contributions to the stability and persistence of the society (Garner, 2019). The main assumptions of structural functionalist theory are as follows: The society consists of certain elements of social structure, and each element of the structure has a specific function to perform for the wellbeing of the society. The elements of the social structure are interdependent to some degree in their operation and are manifested. Therefore, as a pattern of interaction, social institutions adapt to the group's needs and environmental circumstances (Fletcher, 1956, p. 33). No institution can be understood without referencing its context in the social system. Furthermore, even the individual personalities of the group members are, to a great extent, an outcome of the accommodation process to the social system and cannot be understood in isolation (p. 33).

From the above explanation, the elements of the social structure involve the social status, patterns of social relationships that are persistent and systematic among different parts of society, social groups, and social institutions (Wills, 1996, p. 44) for example, family, government authority and religion, to mention in a few. The social system refers to the level of integrated interaction between two or more actors – at the individual level to the society as a whole (Appelrouth & Edles, 2010, p. 26). Although SFT is widely used in sociology to study social problems, its assumptions are also useful in studying unethical leadership in the African public sector. The paper also regards unethical leadership in the public sector as a social problem because it has social and cultural foundations, and its impact affects many segments of the society. As has been alluded to earlier, examining this problem by applying the structural functionalism perspective does not mean that other theories of ethical leadership in other social sciences are completely irrelevant in addressing the problem. Instead, this work aims to add insights into how the problem of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector can be well understood in the framework of SFT and what needs to be done to reduce it.

The SFT considers any social behaviour, good or bad, as a result of the nature of the existing social structure

and its functions. In that case, the SFT is relevant in the present work because it also views the problem of unethical leadership in society as originating in the social structure, its characteristics, and how it performs functions. Notwithstanding, the interdependence of the parts of the society and the interactions that exist. In examining the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector based on the assumptions of the structural functionalism theory, the paper does so following Fletcher's recommended approach to studying the society, which emphasizes (a) a careful description of the observed elements of social structure, (b) an analysis of their functions – i.e., how they work together in the total social system, and the social ends they serve, and (c) observation and analysis of any changes in the structure and function which may occur (Fletcher, 1956, p. 33). Therefore, the subsequent section offers an account of the causal mechanisms of unethical leadership in the African public sector in light of the structural functionalism theory.

3. Causes of Unethical Leadership in the Africa's Public Sector: A Structural Functionalist Interpretation

Structural functionalists analyse society and the social problem from the viewpoint of social structure and its functions. They believe the system's health and survival depend on its structure and roles (Chilcott, 1998). This implies that there is a likelihood for a social problem to occur if there are faults in the elements of structure and the roles they perform. Therefore, in this regard, according to the structural functionalism theory, the social problem, like unethical leadership in the African public sector, is an outcome of the faults in the elements of social structure and their functions. Indeed, any pressing social problem like corruption, reported several times in the previous section, is an outcome of more than one factor. Therefore, this unethical behaviour among the leaders is associated with the inherent weaknesses of more than one element of the social structure. This assertion credits the relevance of the structural functionalism theory in interpreting the causal mechanisms of unethical leadership in the African public sectors.

In the previous section, it was shown how elements of social structure involve social status, patterns of social relationships that are persistent and systematic among different parts of society, and social groups and institutions (Wills, 1996, p. 44). All these elements of the social structure are responsible for ensuring the

ongoing health of the system/society, for instance, by shaping the behaviour of individuals to conform to the acceptable norms of society. However, due to the inherent weaknesses of some of these elements and their faults, they produce individuals with flawed moral characters currently working in Africa's public sector. The paper now narrows the scope of analysis to focus more on the social institutions and their functional changes and the interdependence thesis of the theory.

3.1 Social Institutions and their Functional Changes in Relation to Unethical Leadership

Social institutions refer to organized social arrangements within the society that aim to meet certain needs. They are formal and informal, based on their nature and recognition (Gahlawat, 2020, p. 35). These institutions are frequently cited as family, religion, education, politics, and economics. They are patterned ways of solving the problems and meeting the requirements of the society. That being the case, every institution has a specific function that contributes to the stability of society – i.e., the society to be free from a certain challenge or problem. Therefore, according to the structural functionalism theory, every social institution is responsible for promoting the development of the good character of its members (Hester, 2015, p. 126), which involves right moral feelings that lead to right moral actions. Another way around this implies that unethical and immoral behaviours among leaders in African public organizations, as reported in the previous section, result from the failure of social institutions to adequately establish and instil ethical values in their members as part of the process of character development.

In this case, African social institutions are to be blamed for the problem of unethical leadership in some public-sector organizations. For instance, Benlahcene et al. (2022) have condemned the unethical behaviour of Algeria's leaders as a peculiarity of the African social and organizational context. Generally, these ethical challenges are due to the dysfunction of social institutions and failure to maintain their functional role as expected. At this stage of our discussion, it is imperative to evaluate some social institutions and their functions concerning unethical leadership in some African public sectors. We have noted that several scholars (April et al., 2010, p. 152; Benlahcene et al., 2022) share with structural functionalism theory the understanding that the ongoing health of the society depends on the strengths of social structure/ social institutions and their functions, and therefore the problem of unethical leadership in some African public organizations is complicated by the interplays with the social institutions and their respective functions. To gain more insight, the paper narrows the scope of analysis to a single institution by briefly analyzing every key social institution.

3.1.1 The Role of the Family in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

Structural functionalists view the family as the most fundamental social institution in society, providing the substratum for other social institutions (Singh, 2010, p. 162). It performs several functions to meet the needs of society and its members. However, Parsons (1959) pointed out two fundamental and irreducible functions of the family: 'socialization and stabilization of adult personalities.' The socialization function is the family's role of teaching its members (specifically children and youths) the norms and values associated with their family and the community. The main aim is to assist its members to adapt to and fit into the community and larger society (Bappert, 1989, p. 26). The stabilization of adult personalities is the family's role associated with promoting emotional support/ care to its members. Since the first function focuses on transmitting norms and values, it is more relevant in analyzing the causes of unethical leadership in African public sectors.

We believe that no one is sceptical about the view that the family is the substratum institution in any society and sidelines the importance of the role of socialization it plays. However, it is reasonable to think that only the strongest and most well-structured families will build a strong community and, thus, a strong government and state. According to the SFT, a family should live according to their values (Bappert, 1989, p. 26), and socialization explains morality, social order, and cultural uniformity (Mackie, 2002, p. 40). Since the family is believed to be the most important ethical training ground (Scales et al., 2010), it is hoped that if it adequately fulfils the above-mentioned roles, it will contribute to the vivid growth of morally accepted values and excellent ethics among the family members. Hence, the probability of such family members behaving ethically and morally if they join the formal institutions at the macro level is very significant, unlike family members who become members of formal institutions (i.e., public institutions) and are not previously well trained in ethics by their families.

Even when Max Weber and other theorists suggest bureaucratic systems, state laws, and ethical code of

conducts to regulate the behaviours of such unethical leaders, rational choice theorists would still be sceptical about the effectiveness of such regulatory mechanisms due to the tendency of human beings to be self-calculating. This suggests that one may rationally commit unethical behaviour, such as being involved in acts of corruption, after identifying that the benefits of such involvement outweigh the legal penalties that would be imposed on him/her. From this observation, we recognize and appreciate the normative underpinnings of the sociological SFT, which insists on the family's effective socialization role as the most fundamental process that instils strong ethical values and beliefs among the family members. If the family members are well-trained in ethics and values, the probability of becoming ethical leaders who comply with bureaucratic systems and state laws forbidding unethical acts in the public sector will be high.

While the SFT insists on the stability of the elements of the social structure, including the family and especially on its socialization role of implanting ethical and moral values, the stability of several families in Africa and their efficacy in socialization role is now in question. For instance, the study by Thebe and Maviza (2019, p. 77) found the declining socialization role of families due to feminized migration in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, in their study, they have stated that the mother's absence as a result of feminized migration is the major factor for children's misbehaviour in the community at large, coming in various forms, such as drug abuse and other forms of crimes. In South Africa, the study by Rachel et al. (2022) associated the increasing rate of deviant behaviour among adolescents with the declining socialization role of parents. They found the following weak patterns of parental socialization contributing to the increase of deviant behaviours among adolescents: less parental supervision, a lack of support, an absence of parental discipline, parents' lack of concern, and the inability of parents to be role models. According to their study, these factors have played a significant role in the increase of antisocial or deviant behaviour, mainly crime, substance abuse, gangsterism, and violent behaviours (Rachel et al., 2022, p. 6), to mention a few.

Likewise, in Nigeria, the effectiveness of the family's role in socializing adolescents into ethical values is also in question, following Ade-Ali's observations on the deterioration of ethical values among Nigerian children. Ade-Ali (2023, p. 102) has expressed concern about the gradual deterioration of ethical values

among children in contemporary Africa, especially in Nigeria, arguing that it results from Western influence and poor parental training. Generally, family life in most African countries is predominantly characterized by the extended family system rather than the nuclear family system, and the question of which system is efficient in socializing children and the youth on ethical values and beliefs remains debatable. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive study to determine the efficiency of the above-mentioned family types in relation to instilling ethical values in Africa's children and youth. However, it may be a challenge to generalize the results to all African countries, given that causal mechanisms shaping the development of ethical sense vary between individuals.

Furthermore, some literature (Gyekye, 1997; Okok and Ssentongo, 2020, p. 71) has reported that in many African societies, the extended family can sometimes fuel corruption. According to the above authors, African extended families have many members with the family head, in such a case, having a dual responsibility of taking care of himself/herself and many others. Therefore, it is easy for heads who are public servants to indulge in corrupt practices, especially if their salaries are insufficient to meet family needs. The SFT views any social behaviour (good or bad) as resulting from the nature of the existing social structure and the functions it performs. Notwithstanding, the family is considered the substratum unit in society, laying the psychological, moral, and spiritual foundation for the overall development of the children and youth who are the future generation of leaders. The SFT enables us to establish the claim that the problem of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector has a root cause in family dysfunction either due to the absence of/or weak parental control of their children and youth in relation to ethical conduct. Therefore, if the children and youth are not well trained in ethics and values, the probability of becoming unethical public servants or leaders who do not abide by the rule of law, regulations and guidelines will be high.

3.1.2 The Role of Religion in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

Religion is also an important unit of analysis of the SFT because it is an element of the social structure and performs necessary functions for the stability of the social system. The paper's analysis of the relationship between the function of religion and the emerging problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector draws on Emile Durkheim's perspectives on religion from his famous work entitled

"The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (1995). Durkheim (1995, p. 44) defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one moral community called a church and their adherents. The definition highlights three important elements in every religion: sacred objects, beliefs and practices, and a moral community (Carls, n.d.). Since Durkheim's central preoccupation was the need for social order and the place of religion within this (Davie, 2007, p. 47), the three key elements highlighted above are crucial to inform our causal explanation of the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector. Notwithstanding, we believe that Davies's (2007, p. 34) views that religious values should underpin the social order are widespread and, to a large extent, still convincing. In this regard, it is argued that the concepts of sacred value, religious beliefs and practices, and a moral community play useful functions in improving moral thinking among the members of society, thereby minimizing the problem of unethical leadership in public service.

Furthermore, functionalists identify several functions of religion to society, but for a good focus, the paper applies only the 'social control function of the religion'. The function is directly related to the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector. It refers to the set of informal mechanisms created to ensure that individuals and society conform to the established norms and accepted standards of behaviour. The social control function of religion involves some of the following mechanisms: socializing members of society on ethical values and promotion of moral behaviour, hence, enabling them to be good members of society. Here, the reference can be drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which provides the Ten Commandments, a set of rules for moral behaviour.

The social control function of religion also socializes members of society into being faithful and believers of religion, which helps them answer existential questions such as "What is the purpose of life?" "Why do we suffer?" "Is there a plan to improve our lives?" These questions may influence society members in every institution to associate social problems (i.e., consequences of corruption and crimes) with divine punishment due to acting immorally and contrary to religious values and beliefs. Hence, they may think of living a morally good life by abiding to religious norms to overcome and minimize the scale of the problem and its consequences. These narrations constitute our understanding of the role played by religion in shaping the ethical behaviour of the members of society. Therefore, from a sociological structural-functionalism point of view, we argue that religion can significantly influence Africa's public servants to conform to ethical leadership principles and practices[1]. However, the religious institution must be effective for this objective to be realized through its social control function. On the other hand, members of society need to be active members of the religion and truly adhere to the doctrines of the religion to which they belong.

Having established that, we argue that there is a probability that the growing problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is partly a result of the weak social control function of the religion or weak attachment of the members of the society to their religion and weak activeness in abiding by their religious doctrines of morality and faith. Leaders who strictly abide by the religious doctrine of morality and social norms have been labelled differently, such as ethical leaders, servant leaders, authentic leaders, and spiritual leaders (Dinh et al., 2014; Gümüsay, 2019). The social control function of the religion, which has been suggested to influence public servants to conform to ethical leadership principles and practices, has been weakened by several factors in some parts of Africa. Few studies have identified the following: the shifting of the core role of the religion to political mobilization, religious violence and conflicts (Owojuygbe & Busari, 2014, p. 27; Basedau et al., 2022); the challenge of contextualizing theological formation (Sarbah, 2022); and globalization and multiculturalism which have exposed individuals to various forms of beliefs and philosophies (Alwala, 2022, p. 84) some of which contradict religious doctrines.

Some religious institutions are also being blamed for corruption, discrimination (ethnicity, haves/rich and have-nots/poor), and nepotism. In addition, many religious institutions are experiencing a lot of infighting due to embezzlement of their financial resources. The above experience leaves a majority of the young generation questioning the authenticity of religious institutions regarding morality. Often, public officials have used religious institutions to defend themselves from accusations of corruption and unethical behaviour.

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[1]Even traditional religions have their ways of making their adherents uphold ethics and be moral beings. Therefore, they can also significantly influence Africa's public servants to conform to ethical leadership principles and practices

With such challenges exposed, it is impossible for religion in Africa to effectively perform the social control and socialization functions of shaping the moral and ethical sense of the members of the society and the public servants at various leadership positions in the government, as sociological functionalist theorists expected it. Therefore, in this regard, from a structural functionalist point of view, we argue that the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is increasing because many elements of the social structure, including religion, are not playing their expected roles well enough, i.e., developing morality, promotion of ethical values among members of the society and those in the public sector. However, unlike in the family institution and other social institutions where an individual/a member of the institution may be subjected to coercive treatments, certain forces, or formal and informal norms to abide by the institution's norms, values, and objectives, the religion institution's mechanisms to influence its members to abide by its doctrine are weak.

Therefore, the failure or weakness of religious institutions to properly socialize adherents/believers, as shown above, is among the many factors associated with the decline of ethical and moral values of the members of society and public servants in Africa's public sector. In addition, some of the leaders are unethical because of their superficial affiliation with religion: some individuals only bear names related to certain religions but, in actuality, they do not practice what is taught; hence, a lack of morality and adherence to ethical conduct as would be expected of true believers. However, other theories (i.e., trait theory and those based on virtue) suggest that being an ethical leader is a matter of personal character/personality. This implies that a leader may behave ethically, irrespective of religious affiliation, without belonging to any religious faith or abiding by religious doctrines. This is true of the western/developed countries' experience in which most of their populations identify themselves as atheists, yet corruption cases in the public sector are fewer compared to Africa.

From such accounts, we note one of the weaknesses of the sociological structural functionalism approach in explaining the role of religion in minimizing the scale of unethical behaviour of public servants in Africa. It appears that the sociological structural functionalism theory cannot on its own allow an effective examination of the causal mechanisms leading to unethical leadership, which are not produced by the social structure and its functions, for instance, the individual's positive or negative mental traits, which are genetically inherited.

3.1.3 The Role of Education in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

Our analysis is focused on the formal education institutions, assuming that informal education is acquired from the informal social institutions and groups (i.e., families and religion) and life experiences. We accept that this kind of education also strengthens the ethical norms of the members of the social institution, especially if there is a lack of structured ethics education in the environment surrounding individuals (Ports, 2018). Therefore, it also adds value to the ethical reputation of leaders in public institutions.

Based on the SFT, education has several functions. However, we select the manifest functions of education, which involve the transmission of knowledge and socialization to the members of a society. These functions are included in the current work because they appear to have a more direct relationship with the development of moral consciousness and ethical behaviour of society and leaders in the public sectors than the latent functions of education. From a structural-functionalism point of view, we argue that the educational institution shapes the moral thinking and ethical behaviour of its members/students through knowledge transmission and socialization processes. However, the education system must be well-designed and implemented with adequate resources for this function to work. Short of that, the education objective under consideration for inculcating ethical and moral values in students will not be achieved and will probably doomed to failure, thereby creating a risk of having a nation with educated leaders who are morally adrift. For instance, the study by Wolhuter et al. (2020) expressed concern about the serious moral decay in South African society in connection to the role schools play in inculcating citizenship values in South Africa. Khathi et al. (2021, p. 401) also found that moral education was inadequately integrated into South African schools. In Tanzania, studies (Andrea, 2023, p. 105; Kivinge, 2021, p. 67) show a decline in ethical and moral values among secondary school students as a result of the education system, which is not well-equipped with tools to inculcate moral values in students.

Moral decay experienced in the above-mentioned countries is not unique; other societies with similar education systems grapple with the same or similar issues. It is clear that, like other social institutions

(the family, state, and religion), the educational institution fulfils a broader function than merely teaching and learning facts. It uses the teaching and learning process to implant ethical and moral values in the students' minds to prepare a generation that is morally upright, competent, and active and who will be future leaders responsible for the welfare of their nations. Unfortunately, we have seen failures of some education systems to adequately fulfil that role, which may indicate a steady increase in the number of graduating students who are morally incompetent. This anomaly also translates to an increased labour force in the public and private sectors who are morally bankrupt.

Structural functionalism theory also applies the dysfunctional approach to describe the failure of an element of the social structure to perform its function adequately, thereby creating effects that disrupt the well-functioning of the social system. Based on all the information and evidence presented above, we argue that the problem of unethical leadership in the African public sector is growing because the education institution element of the social structure has not played effectively its manifest function of using the teaching and learning process as an instrument to infuse ethical sense in students who are the future leaders. Consequently, this threatens the increase in graduating students who are not morally sensitive and unethical leaders in the public sector.

Furthermore, literature (Wolhuter et al., 2020; Khathi et al., 2021, p. 401) offers some useful recommendations which if taken up could enable education institutions in Africa to improve their approaches so as to shape their students ethical conduct. However, the recommendations specifically target secondary schools. They include the following: active citizenship education in schools; the teachers' education as an integral part of a moral revival project; adequate and regular training of teachers on classroom pedagogy of integrating moral values in learners through all the subjects; appropriate rewards and punishment should be employed by the school system to promote appropriate values in learners; a review of school curriculum to integrate contents of moral education; and teachers endeavouring to understand the full usage of learners' moral judgment competence, respect for every member of the community and moral cognition by all.

3.1.4 The Role of Politics in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

The main concern of structural functionalists-sociologists has always been and remains to be the analysis of social mechanisms that maintain social stability. Most often, they would be interested in the government's function of enforcing norms/maintaining law and order as instrumental mechanisms for restoring social stability and improving the functioning of society. Therefore, the current work considers this view along with some of Almond's inputs and outputs conceptual formulations of political system theory.

The inputs-constructs of the political system relevant to our analysis involve political socialization, recruitment, and political communication, whereas the outputs involve rule-making, rule application, and rule adjudication (Almond & Coleman, 2015, p. 17). Like the socialization concept of the functionalists-sociologists, the socialization concept of functionalist-political scientists is based on inculcating values, norms, attitudes, and goals among the members of the political institution. Members learn values, norms, attitudes, behaviour, and goals acceptable to an ongoing political system (Sigel, 1965). One of the main functions of political socialization is to create, maintain, and, whenever necessary, modify the existing political culture in the society and political system (Singh, n.d.). This function is performed by diverse agents, including the family, education, peer groups, religion, political parties, pressure groups, and the mass communication media.

Assuming that sociological structural functionalism theory would be requested to be in charge of describing political socialization, probably one of their inner interests would be to see that these political socialization agents implant values, norms, attitudes, and behaviour that are acceptable in the political system for maintaining its stability and well-being. This means that parts of the system function complementary to protect the system from all dangers that may threaten its survival and well-being. Similarly, this view is also endorsed by functionalist political scientists when they speak of politics as a political system. However, despite the political scientists' ambitions to have a healthy political system, we find several political systems in Africa being captured by the political culture of corruption (see Table 1). Both functionalist sociologists and functionalist political scientists would hope to see agents of socialization infuse anti-corruption attitudes and values among their members so that they contribute significantly to the ongoing functioning of the system and the well-being of society as a whole. However, such hopes have been dashed with the growth of certain attitudes among the

agents of political socialization, which maintains the political culture of corruption in the political system. According to Stuart-Fox (2006, p. 59), such attitudes continue to depict the failure of political socialization agents in Africa, thereby creating a political culture of corruption among the leaders in the political system. Stuart Fox said:

> "A major problem in combating corruption lies in getting people to recognize it and do something about it. In many societies, it is taken for granted that if one is in a position to benefit a family member or friend, one should do so. Not to so do would be considered unusual, even immoral, behaviour. Behaviour that does not benefit family or friends is excused because people well know that if they were in a similar position, they would do the same. So, they think it is normal. Where such behaviour is condemned for being excessive, criticism may be muted for fear of the power of the perpetrator. Either way, a culture of corruption develops and becomes accepted" (Stuart-Fox, 2006, p. 59)

Stuart-Fox's illustrations are explicit about the development of the political culture of corruption rooted in the weak family's function of political socialization. He further maintained that such a culture of corruption is most likely to develop under an authoritarian political regime, which cannot be freely criticized or replaced by political means (Stuart-Fox, 2006, p. 60).

Structural functionalists have long acknowledged the important role played by political parties in political socialization. Particularly during the election period, they serve as guides to the electorate and political teacher to the community through their posters, pamphlets, propaganda, and public meetings. Political parties, through propaganda, criticize the government and provide alternatives. Through this process, they enlarge the cognitive map of individuals and enable them to form a concept (Mishra, 1980, p. 116). Furthermore, through socialization, political parties recruit members who will participate directly in politics to win government power. This process seems fruitful; however, in some instances, it may be dysfunctional, especially when the newly recruited candidates are also socialized into unethical vote-seeking strategies involving vote-buying and other manipulations. Such practices have been rampant in Africa (Kao et al., 2022, p. 1). A study by Amaechi and Stockemer (2022) gives a vivid example of how

one of the vote-buying models/schemes they found in Africa works. And they say:

> "At the top of the scheme are parties, which have developed a sophisticated money distribution chain. Party members, who participate, get rewards in forms of government jobs or other benefits (should the party win). At the bottom of the chain are the voters, who receive between 10 and 30 dollars for their vote. They can even double dip and get their voting money twice, if they play the system well. The staff at the voting stations and the security personnel also get their fair share to guarantee that the vote buying machinery works. Who wins in such a system of entrenched corruption? It is the party that hands out the most resources. As such, the vote buying machinery proved quite effective" (Amaechi & Stockemer, 2022)

The above demonstrates structural functionalism's notion of the electorate process being dysfunction. Based on the above, the paper examines the causal mechanisms underlying the problem of unethical leadership in the African public sector. The model vividly shows the environment under which political parties become dysfunctional in some aspects of political socialization. Structural functionalists would also be interested to see political parties instill morals and ethical values through political socialization the ultimate objective being discouragement of immoral thinking and involvement in unethical practices. However, their interests have not been well captured following the massive involvement of political parties in the political culture of corruption, especially during elections. Political candidates socialized in corrupt practices before and during elections may likely continue with corrupt behaviours and other unethical behaviours after being elected to public office. If that happens, we would describe him/her as an unethical representative leader.

Further to the above, we argue that the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is growing due to the dysfunctional behaviour of the agents of political socialization. Good political socialization depends on several factors, one being good and effective political communication, which adheres to cooperative principles requiring the interlocutors to work together towards achieving the same goal. Furthermore, healthy political communication should be ethically sensitive because the information used affects the participants' cognitive learning and engagement in political life. Given that

communication is the main means of information sharing and intention. Based on Amaechi and Stockemer's model of vote-buying in Africa, no one would be sceptical that it is through communication that political parties socialize their members into a political culture of corruption, which successfully leads to their vote-buying strategy. Therefore, in such a case, it may be assumed that political communication may become an instrument for orienting the upcoming leaders toward unethical behaviours if it is misused. Moreover, literature (Stuart-Fox, 2006, p. 60; Amaechi & Stockemer, 2022) shows that the use of the practice in Africa is quite significant.

Concerning the structure of the government (the legislature, executive and judiciary) and its functions, the logic of structural functionalism theory regarding the causal mechanisms that lead to the growing problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is simple and clear. Based on the theory, the problem of Africa's unethical leadership is attributed to the inherent weaknesses and dysfunctions of the government's structure to formulate and implement effective norms/rules and laws that prevent administrators and the political elite from engaging in unethical behaviour while in public offices. According to the theory, the major culprits are the legislature, executive, and judiciary structures of the government. In their totality, these fail to formulate good laws and ensure their effective implementation in relation to curbing unethical practices by the leaders in the public sector. The above is well-documented in the literature (see Maile & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022; Okunloye, 2022; Kankindi, 2022; Ogunyemi et al., 2022; and Dorasamy & Kikasu, 2023).

Although there are values, laws and procedures in Africa forbidding misconduct and unethical behaviours (Iheanachor & Etim, 2022), these precepts appear ineffective or weak in some African governments (Dorasamy & Kikasu, 2023). Moreover, although structural functionalists would also question the effectiveness of the laws, policies and strategies in terms of their formulations, as we have previously stated, it appears that many findings from the current empirical and theoretical scholarly works shed light mainly on the weak implementation and poorly designed internal control systems for unethical behaviours in the Africa's public sector (Oniyinde, 2023, p. 137; Faccia & Beebeejau, 2023, p. 156; Mahlangu, 2023, p. 236; Madu, 2023, p. 2).

The enforcement of such formulations cum internal control systems in the African public sector face several challenges depending on the context. Some of the challenges, as presented in the literature, include the psychological unwillingness of officials to follow the rule of law effectively (Oniyinde, 2023, p. 137), lack of capacity to establish strong feedback mechanism for monitoring the enforcement of ethical standards in the public service (Uronu & Andrea, 2023, p. 59); lack of knowledge about ethical laws/ code of conduct and unethical behavior has been perceived as a normal social practice/part of the culture (Amoah & Steyn, 2023, 94), and insufficient awareness of leadership ethos and its inherent critical success factors (Ndalamba & Esau, 2020). Others are the lack of national agenda on ethics and patriotism, which constrains the willingness of the stakeholders to support compliance with ethical behaviour; institutional incapacity such as lack of adequate resources (financial and human resources) to address unethical issues and ensure public officials' compliance with code of ethics (Uronu & Andrea, 2023, p. 60); lack of effective disciplinary committees; exclusion of some penalties/fines from the list of sanctions against unethical practices and unwillingness of some officials to be part of law enforcement and disciplinary panel, probably because they do not want to be seen as part of a process of sanctioning their fellow counterparts (Lamport et al., p. 2023, pp. 258-60).

Based on the above evidence and the use of the structural functionalism theory, we can firmly claim that the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is a result of the failure of the government's structure to function effectively in implementing the legal framework and strategies designed against unethical behaviours and practices of public leaders. Nevertheless, given that the structural functionalism theory perceives government as a meta-institution, meaning that its function consists to a large part organizing other institutions (both individually and collectively) to regulate and coordinate economic, educational institutions, police and military organizations largely by way of (enforceable) legislation (Miller, 2019). Thus, African governments have to bear the burden of demonstrating weaknesses in implementing policies, laws and regulations designed to control unethical behaviours and practices of public leaders.

The next section examines the economic element of social structure and its functions in relation to the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector while adopting assumptions of the SFT.

3.1.5 The Role of the Economy in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

In our analysis, we first characterize the nature of the contemporary African economy and economic institutions with just a few variables, which shall give us the base for applying the SFT to the economy in order to provide an understanding of the causal mechanisms leading to the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector. Generally, studies demonstrate that the African economy is still characterized by low economic growth, investment, productivity capacity, unemployment, and income inequality which negatively affect consumers' confidence in consuming goods and services. Consequently, the majority of Africans have inadequate access to important social services such as water, electricity, and sanitation (Fatoki, 2023, p. 160; Foster, 2023, p.1; Mnguni, 2023, p. 374; Kuyoro et al., 2023, p. 18). In addition, there is a general view that the corrosive effects of downturns in the economy or poverty increase the risks of individuals engaging in unethical behaviour, such as corruption in both the private and public sectors (Pillay et al., 2023, p. 39; Fitzsimons, 2007, p. 51). More so if the macro and micro economies are not performing well, the aggregate economy and the individual sectors will experience shocks, i.e., decline of production and collapse of an individual's wage/salary. In such situations, public officials working in the revenue sectors/departments/units are likely to influence the private business firms to pay bribes so that the officials can survive the effects of declining wages/salaries due to economic downturns. Furthermore, in such conditions, some private firms can easily comply with the public officials' demands for bribes to continue their business operations as normal.

The above scenario has been explained in detail by Svensson's study (2003) in Africa, which examined the ability of public officials to exert bribes from private firms. In times of high unemployment rates, when the economy is not well-productive, the process of workforce selection and personnel allocation in the public sector can be impacted by several unethical behaviours, including corruption and nepotism. As the unemployment rate increases, the selection process becomes more competitive, which may create an environment in which both the human resource public managers and the job seekers are prone to unethical behaviours such as corruption. However, job seekers are more likely to provide bribe-paying incentives if the influence is exerted by the public managers responsible for the process. The study by Mokgolo and Dikotla (2023, p. 1) in relation to South Africa's public service showed that practices of ethical violations during recruitment phases are exacerbated by political heads and top management's observable disregard of existing prescripts and code of ethics governing public service administration.

In its notion of dysfunction, the sociological structural functionalism theory of the economy regards all those unethical practices in the African public sector as emanating from economic distress arising due to dysfunctions of four sub-systems of the economy, namely capitalization and investment, production (including distribution and sales), organization, and fourth by what Parsons calls economic commitments (cultural, motivational and physical resources). These sub-systems are parallel with the more orthodox classification of the factors of production (Savage, 1977, p. 11). Based on one of its common assumptions, the structural functionalism theory of the economy argues that the stability of the economic system depends on the functional interdependence of the sub-systems of the economy as outlined by Parsons or the orthodox classification of the factors of production. However, as part of the social system, the government institution optimally controls the economic system.

Furthermore, underperformance, weakness or inadequacy of one element of the economy's sub-system may affect the performance of the remaining sub-systems. For instance, inadequate capitalization and investment may affect the production process, leading to unemployment, income inequality, and inadequacy of important goods and social services. These consequences are directly related to the problem of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector, as we have discussed in the previous paragraphs. Since the economic system is a sub-system of the social system, it, therefore, means a weak functioning of any of its sub-systems can affect the stability of the whole economy, consequently affecting the social system as a whole or its sub-parts. This schema reflects our previous explanation of how a decline in production causes unemployment and the collapse of an individual's wage/salary and how the same creates a conducive environment for public officials and top leaders in Africa to act contrary to the ethical codes of conduct, in particular corruption.

As alluded to earlier, the following conceptual formulations of the SFT of the economy can also be applied to examine the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector: economic

action, economic system, economic relations, the functionalist conception of the cultural realm in the analysis of the economy, and the economic crisis. However, we skip the concept of 'economic crisis' because it reflects how the economic downturns, as explained in the previous paragraphs, are associated with the problem of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector. From the above conceptual formulations, we develop the following economic theoretical framework for enhancing our understanding of the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector; however, its application is not limited to the public sector.

Generally, from the economic point of view, it can be argued that the extent of unethical leadership in both the private or public sector largely depends on the type of economic system in operation. Normally, the economic action, economic relations, and the cultural content of the economic actors are shaped by the type of economic system and are also responsible for the growing problem of unethical leadership in formal institutions. For example, a society characterized by a capitalist system and weak institutions for preventing unethical behaviours in formal institutions is likely to have a high rate of officials committing unethical practices, unlike a society characterized by a socialist system with strong institutions working to prevent unethical behaviours in formal institutions.[2] In pursuit of economic goals, a capitalist system raises a class of elite with a high status, power and authority over other actors in the economic and social systems. Because of their power and authority, this elite class is likely to engage in unethical behaviour on the precepts that the lower and the less powerful class of subordinates cannot hold them accountable for fear of losing their jobs, other forms of punishment and missing out on other economic gains.

Moreover, since the elite/top leaders constitute the majority in the law enforcement and disciplinary panel, the likelihood of examining their involvement in unethical practices and determining and imposing penalties upon them is very low and nearly zero, which indicates no disciplinary measures can be taken against their unethical behaviours. I addition, economic action in capitalist societies is driven by individual desires, which are always unlimited. Therefore, the presence of weak institutions in such societies mandated with

the prevention of unethical behaviours increases the likelihood of individuals with strong capitalist spirits (in their working positions) to engage in unethical behaviours of accumulating wealth. Since economic action is an integral part of the social and cultural structure of the community (Samardzic et al., 2023, p. 220), the more individual capitalists are involved in unethical behaviours of accumulating wealth, the greater the likelihood of such behaviours spreading among the capitalists thus leading to an upper class characterized by greed and wealth achieved through immoral activities and other forms of unethical behaviours.

Furthermore, economic relations in the capitalist system are not an unequal exchange. In several private sector organizations, managers and top leadership exploit workers by underpaying them. In addition, they ensure the workers produce additional value and more profits for the managers and owners of the company with very little of the earnings being distributed to the former. From a socialist point of view, the above phenomena represent unethical tendencies. In comparison, while top officials in the private economic sector use the capital factor of production to create a capitalist economic hub, which in turn will be exploitative and acting immorally, top officials in the public sector employ their power and authority to create an environment in which the lower-level subordinates and the outsiders will be more prone to unethical behaviours, i.e., of paying bribes for public services. By doing so, the top officials/ leaders in the public sector share a similar character with the officials in the capitalist private sector. The only difference is that the top officials/leaders in the public sector employ their power and authority to create an environment for exploiting the lower-level subordinates and the outsiders in various means, i.e., bribe-seeking and offering. In addition, resources and other services may not be equally distributed or shared as required by the established criteria. Moreover, in times of economic turbulence where there is a low level of production and a decline in wages, salaries or other monetary incentives, still, the top officials/ leaders in the public sector may employ their power and authority to create an environment where they can act unethically to multiply their incomes in order to ease their life.

Generally, the above reflects what is happening in most African economies and how the same is linked to unethical behaviour in Africa's private and public sectors. African economies have already been

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[2] The socialist system is morally preferable to the capitalist one, because it is characterized by noncompetitive politics; central administrative allocation of resources (as opposed to reliance on the market), and public ownership of the means of production (Roemer, 1992, p. 451). Indeed, it is against all forms of inequality and exploitation.

transformed into some forms of capitalism for several reasons, both internal and external. As we have argued in our formulated theoretical framework, a capitalist kind of society with weak institutions for preventing unethical behaviour in the formal institutions is likely to have a high rate of officials committing unethical practices, unlike a society characterized by a socialist system with strong institutions mandated with prevention of unethical behaviour in the formal institutions.

The fact that African societies have already been transformed into some forms of the capitalist model of development while gradually abandoning the socialist ideals, and given that their institutions for preventing unethical behaviour in the formal institutions are weak, the problem of unethical leadership in the public sector keeps growing. Our theoretical framework established in the previous paragraphs offers useful illustrations of how a society characterized by a capitalist system and weak institutions for preventing unethical behaviours in formal institutions is likely to have a high rate of officials committing unethical practices, unlike a society characterized by a socialist system with strong institutions working to prevent unethical behaviours in formal institutions. Although it can be criticized like many other frameworks, our framework, which we suggest is a variant of structural functionalism theory of the economy, Marxist theory, or critical theory, can also be adapted to study emerging unethical behaviours and practices of leaders in the private sector organizations driven by capitalist ideals.

3.1.6 The Role of the Media in Ethical Conduct of Public Affairs

Literature on communication and media sociology highlights several functions played by the media; however, we focus on the transmission of culture, which has often been a structural functionalism's orthodox view of the function of the media (Anderson & Meyer, 1975, p. 12). In this function, the media is assumed to transmit cultural information/ideas, such as values, norms, beliefs, knowledge and practices within a society through its power of immense interconnectivity. Through this function of media, the members of society, including leaders in the public sector, continue to be educated and learn ethical values and acceptable behaviours. However, to achieve this goal, the media must have adequate resources and be extremely rational when informing and discussing ethical issues and behaviours with the community.

The dysfunctions of the media may cause the problem of unethical leadership in the African public sector in playing its cultural transmission function. However, in light of the SFT, we argue that the media could minimize the scale of the problem if it could have adequate resources and freedom and cultivate a sense of pragmatism when informing and discussing ethical issues and behaviours with the community (as we have stated above), in addition to special media coverage on ethical issues and behaviours in the public sector. Attempts to achieve these ambitions in Africa have been provisional and temporary yet are limited by several challenges. For instance, in Nigeria, a study by Adeeko (2023, pp. 59, 44) exposed the following challenges: low level of training and education among journalists, low level of professionalism, lack of editorial independence, struggling with issues of self-censorship, particularly concerning reporting on issues related to corruption and government misconduct; commercial interests largely drive media; strong state intervention; limited development of professional self-regulation; and the influence from the external forces, mainly from politics and business.

The study by Nwachukwu (2022, pp. 74-75) reported on threats of violence, government censorship and the lack of access to public information. In addition, John et al. (2022, p. 1) expressed that some journalists have become lazy and no longer visit scenes of events for accurate reportage but rely on social media for news breaks, which are usually inaccurate. In Ethiopia, a study by Kiflu et al. (2021, p. 1) revealed that media platforms have remained ineffective in entertaining a diversity of views due to several factors, including fear of guests to deliberate their views openly and preferring to remain absent; the hosts lack the courage, professionalism, and basic knowledge about the topics for discussion; and the lack of interest among government authorities to participate in programs that are critical and deliberative. In Northern Ghana, the study by Demuyakor (2021, pp. 13-14) exposed the following challenges: lack of adequate funds, lack of training for reporters and a low level of broadcasting skills, poor remuneration for workers, and use of outdated, poor-quality equipment.

The structural functionalism theory views the challenges presented by a sample of empirical studies, as shown above, as mirroring the dysfunctional character of the African media system to perform effectively its function of cultural transmission, that of disseminating cultural information/ideas (values, norms, beliefs, knowledge, and practices) within a society. These challenges can be schematized into

two main lines of thinking. First, the dysfunction results from internal deficiencies of the media system (for example, inadequate resources, ownership, and structural configuration challenges), and second, external forces (for example, influences from political, administrative, and business actors).

Findings on the challenges faced by the African media system presented above by selected empirical studies have the following implications for assessing the African media's function in promoting social ethics and acceptable moral values and behaviours in the African public sector. First, we acknowledge that the African media has contributed to shaping the moral and ethical sense of the members of society and the public servants in various leadership positions in the government; however, their contributions are obscured by the factors presented above. Consequently, cases involving practices of unethical behaviours (refer to Table 1) among leaders in the Africa's public sector continue to be critical. Challenges work in the following ways to weaken the African media system in contributing their efforts in exposing unethical issues and promoting ethical culture in the public sector. One of the more pressing challenges reported by several studies is the lack of adequate resources (financial, human resources, and necessary equipment) (Demuyakor, 2021, pp. 13-14; Adeeko, 2023, p. 59). If the media lacks the required finances, it may not be able to invest sufficiently in training and developing human resources or employ the labour force with a higher human capital accumulation rate. Therefore, the firm's human resources will not be able to adequately prepare and run programs, including coverage of ethical issues at the national level and the public sector in particular. They may probably be insufficiently knowledgeable and aware of the topics of discussion in ethical leadership. Lack of adequate professional knowledge and skills and awareness of ethical issues among the media firm's human resources, journalists in particular, may reduce the confidence to interrogate, interpret, and report cases involving unethical behaviours among the elite in the public sector. Moreover, they may not be inclined to adhere to the fundamental journalist best practices, which include truth, fairness, and accuracy in gathering, reporting, and disseminating news covering ethical dilemmas facing public sector officials. If the media firm has employed human resources with inadequate professional knowledge and skills, and due to paucity of funds to train, pay, and own necessary equipment, it may have an incompetent editorial team with low

self-independence and work morale. Occasionally, the persistence of this anomaly may suggest that firm owners seek cheaper labour elsewhere outside the firm for the tasks to be accomplished.

Furthermore, media programs that are of potential significance to national development, such as anti-corruption and public integrity programs, as well as awareness of ethical issues in serving the public, can be omitted or their contents altered, thus making them less effective in transforming the interest of public servants in the actual commitment of abandoning immoral thinking and unethical practices. Moreover, media firms that have been exposed to continual levels of financial turbulence occasionally may not pay the workers on time, or workers will be granted low wages/salaries that are insufficient to meet their needs. Under such circumstances, workers are forced to find other means of earning additional income to make their lives easier. Some of the means employed could be unethical and tarnish the image of the firm and the status of the journalism profession. For instance, a study by Adeeko (2023, p. 45) explicitly demonstrates one of the circumstances in which some journalists in Africa find themselves engaged in unethical behaviour of accepting the 'brown envelope' from several government ministers. The author pointed out that after the end of the event or a program involving journalists and government officials, the journalists often wait for the government officials to give them something (usually monetary incentives). Moreover, sometimes, the union of journalists or some other affiliated bodies collect the amounts and decide which angles the stories should go to, thus ensuring the interests of the government officials will not be harmed.

The above phenomenon translates into a situation in which press freedom is transacted with cash provided by the government bureaucrats. The press then holds cash with no freedom of expression, while the government bureaucrats wield freedom and power to express their interests through the media. Furthermore, they may display insufficient credence in designing special media coverage on ethical issues and reporting news covering ethical dilemmas facing public sector officials. Other forces that undermine the role of the African media system in promoting social ethics and acceptable moral values and behaviours in the African public sector include the ownership of the media system and business interests. For example, the shareholders and funders of the media organizations, in their positions, can influence the direction of a

media organization and prevent them from covering issues that will harm their interests (Matthews, 2017, p. 4). This is, in particular, true for the shareholders and funders (public and private) who have the greed of becoming rich, and thus they may engage in immoral activities, manipulation, and other forms of unethical behaviours to accumulate high wealth. Since they are the shareholders/owners and funders of the media firm, they may prevent such behaviours from featuring the media issue. In this way, many unethical practices committed by the powerful/elite will not be identified and detected; as a result, the persisting levels of unethical behaviour among the public leaders will remain high.

Moreover, in times of economic turbulence and financial crisis, most media organizations would like to sell news stories and advertisements that scale up financial inflows rather than dwell on coverage with little or no financial benefits. This implies that all content, including topics of ethical concerns with no financial profits, will be excluded from the media coverage. Therefore, in this kind of setting, programs of potential significance to national development, such as anti-corruption and public integrity, and awareness of ethical issues in public service can be omitted from the media coverage. The outcome is that citizens' awareness and that of public servants concerning ethical issues and code of conduct will remain low. Nevertheless, as pointed out earlier, many unethical practices committed by the powerful/elite will not be identified and detected; as a result, the persisting levels of unethical behaviour among public sector servants/leaders will remain high.

Although some indicators of media contribution exist in shaping the moral and ethical sense of the members of society and the public servants in particular, their contributions are obscured by several factors. Consequently, cases involving practices of unethical behaviours among leaders in Africa's public sector continue to be critical. In this regard, the STF may view the media element of social structure as dysfunctional in some of its subsystems and functions in exposing unethical issues and promoting ethical culture in the public sector. However, it should be clear that the word dysfunction in this context does not mean that the media organizations have not contributed anything to the development of moral consciousness and ethical behaviour of the members of society and leaders in the public sector. What was assessed is its effectiveness as a sub-system of the social system in transmitting ethical culture to the society and public servants in particular, as well as revealing all forms of

unethical behaviours persisting in the society and the government.

3.2 The Thesis of Interaction And Interdependence of Social Institutions and the Emerging Unethical Leadership in the Africa's Public Sector

First, based on the structural-functionalism thesis of interaction and interdependence of social institutions, the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector results from weak interaction/ interdependence of the elements of social structure in the social system. That is to say, the problem of unethical leadership is increasing in the public sector because the elements of the social structure (social institutions) are not effectively working together to minimize or end the problem. For instance, it is clear that, through the social contract theory, the government is obliged to serve the community, including the families, through various programs and projects – education and health services- guided by several laws and policies.

The role of the family, if we consider the political system theory, which is an offshoot of the sociological structural functionalism theory, is to support the government in operating these programs and projects (i.e., by sending to school children and youths). However, if the family is unwilling to take that responsibility effectively, as it appears in some parts of Africa, coupled with the reality that some families play weak social control and socialization roles of shaping the moral and ethical sense of its members, in that case, the probability for such families to produce unethically fit leaders in the society is high. This is a valid assertion since the periodic absences and a complete absence from school may cause them to miss not only formal knowledge but also ethical education and rational thinking skills, which are vital in shaping one's ethical sense. Likewise, since the well-being of the family institution also leans on the government's support, if the government fails to serve the family by providing it with adequate education and health services, the family's stability and well-being may decrease or may not be realized completely. This anomaly may cause family disintegration, which has been pointed out as one of the causative factors for moral decay among children and the youth, who are the expected future leaders.

Another role that governments have been playing and related to the well-being of the family institution is intervening in the market in times of economic crisis, such as inflation, by establishing price

control mechanisms to increase the purchasing power of the community/families. Families can afford to buy basic goods and social services through such implementations. Hence, instances of family disintegration will be lower than in times of economic turmoil and when the government leaves the market forces of invisible hands (demands and supply) to determine the prices of goods and services. However, if the government does not intervene in the market in times of economic crisis, the inflation rate will increase, and the purchasing power of the families will decrease. Hence, most families will not be able to adequately access basic goods and social services, a phenomenon that may contribute to family disintegration and which has been linked to the increase of immoral behaviours among the children and youth. Nonetheless, the family must have a mindset change so as to capitalize on opportunities created by the government in relation to expansion of the economy, for example, price control mechanisms (e.g. reducing high price of goods and services and establishment of affordable loan schemes.

The above have potential for stabilizing the family and reducing disintegration associated with immoral behaviour among the children and youth. Likewise, the economy/economic institution maintains the family's stability and well-being by supplying the family with goods and services. This implies that family disintegration, linked with immoral behaviour among the children and youth, is likely to occur during an economic crisis when the economic institutions fail to produce goods and services and create adequate employment opportunities.

Although family stability and well-being (linked to the moral development of the children and youth) depend on economic performance, such performance relies heavily on the labour force produced by the family and education institutions. This implies that if the family and the education institutions are not producing a competent labour force, the performance of the economic institution will be sub-optimal and might collapse in the long run. Thus, we can imagine that the family and economic institutions depend on each other for their stability and well-being and for developing moral values and ethical behaviour of the children and youth who are prospective leaders in the public sector. We have seen that a well-functioning economy/economic institution contributes to the stability and well-being of the family, which is also linked to the moral development of the children and youth. However, economic performance can be affected by several factors, including the dysfunction of some social institutions, such as family and education, as described above.

The political/government institution and its activities are connected to economic failures. For instance, in a survey conducted by the National Anti-Corruption Forum (2018) in South Africa, 49% of respondents concurred that poverty or economic downturns are directly caused by corruption among government officials. Nevertheless, grand corruption or political corruption involving high-level politicians is the worst form of corruption because, unlike bureaucratic corruption, which occurs during policy implementation, grand/political corruption occurs during policy formulation. In this form of corruption, high-level politicians, i.e., members of the parliament, formulate or adopt legislation (i.e., a national policy) favouring their interests. Most often, the implementation process of the designed legislation is directed to the area where a large amount of money will be invested or collected. Political corruption also occurs during elections and when the business elite bribes the politicians to pass legislation favouring their interests of accumulating wealth. The economy is adversely affected by this corruption because the larger amount of money too often ends up in the pockets of elites, which is oftentimes also stored in offshore accounts that cannot directly benefit a country's economy, furthering the suffering of the society and the poor in particular.

When the economy is not functioning well, the functions of other social institutions, which may contribute to the moral development of the children and youth or minimize the problem of unethical behaviour, are limited. For instance, the government may fail to adequately serve the community/families (by providing health and education services). It may also fail to pay adequate wages and salaries to its employees. The media firms will not be effective in transmitting ethical culture, interrogating and exposing unethical practices of public officials. The education institution may fail to perform effectively, including adequately offering valuable education to students at all levels and advancing the journalism professionalism. The consequences of some of these economic predicaments in relation to the problem of unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector have already been explained in detail in the previous paragraphs and sections.

Other forms of interaction and interdependence of social institutions that might be linked to the problem of

unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector appear between the government and media organizations. In such interaction and interdependence, the function of government is to create an enabling environment (i.e., press freedom) for the media organizations to perform their roles effectively. Not only that but also to create infrastructures that advance journalism; however, instead of capitalizing on these opportunities, some media organizations often transact their press freedom with cash provided by the government bureaucrats, as alluded to earlier. In this context, the press holds cash with no freedom of expression, while the government bureaucrats wield the freedom and power to express their interests through the media. This situation hampers the media's role in promoting ethical culture and revealing unethical behaviours in the public sector. As presented in the previous section, it may contribute to the growing problem of unethical leadership in Africa's public sector.

While we have seen the support of the government to the performance of media, the media can support the government in various ways, i.e., during the policy-making process, launching of policies and supplying crucial information (obtained through public opinion) that assist in monitoring policy implementation and measuring its success. However, despite such efforts and given that the sustainability and development of the media firms depend on several factors, including the ability to transmit relevant information demanded by the public, media firms have always been experiencing episodes of freedom threats (censorship) either formally or informally from government authorities, and the lack of access to public information. The above have been major impediments to the media's accessibility of relevant information, some of which could be useful in understanding the prevalence of unethical behaviour in the public sector. Consequently, many African countries continue to experience unethical behaviours and unethical conduct in the contemporary African public sector.

Furthermore, the weakness or dysfunction of the media institution in performing its role of promoting ethical culture, interrogating and reporting unethical conduct in the society and public sector in particular, is partly also a result of the weakness/dysfunction of the family, religion and education institutions which are responsible for socializing and imparting knowledge, skills, and an ethical sense to the children and youth. Since the labour force currently working in the media firms is a product of family, religion and education social institutions, if it could be well trained

and adequately informed with ethical values, beliefs, and moral behaviours by such institutions prior to joining the world of work, it could be competent and adhering to fundamental journalist ethical practices. Consequently, it could resist transacting its press freedom with cash provided by government officials or engage in other forms of unethical practices. Therefore, journalists would be at liberty to decide what issues to interrogate and what to report. Not only that, but news and information gathered and disseminated would be truthful, balanced, accurate, and originate from reliable sources. Therefore, in such a context, properly proven unethical practices in the public sector could be exposed and forwarded to the appropriate authorities for legal action.

Considering the structural-functionalist idea that the stability and well-being of one social institution depends on the stability and well-being of another and its effectiveness in its roles suggests that a stable media institution well-grounded with professional codes of ethics and conduct and which performs its function well could be instrumental in supporting the family, religion, and the education institutions in shaping the moral development of the children and youth who are the future leaders. In addition, the moral development of the children and youth could also be well facilitated by the strong interaction between the family, education, and religious institutions in sharing information relevant to the intellectual development and psychological well-being of the children and youth through regular follow-ups of their activities.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has adopted the sociological structural functionalism theory, which espouses a holistic view of the social problem, hence widening the scope of our understanding regarding the causal mechanisms leading to unethical leadership in Africa's public sector. Based on the theory and empirical and theoretical evidence from other scholars, we argue that unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is an outcome of the faults in the elements of the social structure and the functions they perform to maintain social stability and well-being of the social system. This implies that if the elements of the social structure (social institutions) could be stable and perform their functions effectively, the levels of unethical leadership behaviour in Africa's public sector could be minimal compared to the current levels of the problem. Notwithstanding, unethical leadership in the Africa's public sector is considered

to be a result of weak interaction and interdependence of the elements of the social structure in performing their functions to maintain the stability and well-being of the social system. Thus, suggesting the problem of unethical leadership is increasing in the public sector because the elements of the social structure (social institutions) are not effectively working in harmony to minimize the levels of the problem. However, even with its usefulness in bringing alternative perspectives of understanding unethical leadership in the African public sector, by delving deeper into its causal mechanisms, which are inextricable interplays with the social structure and its functions, the sociological structural functionalism theory cannot on its own allow an effective examination of the causal mechanisms leading to unethical leadership and which are not produced by the social structure and its functions for instance, the individual's positive or negative mental traits, which are genetically inherited.

Based on the structural functionalism theory, we recommend the following. Given that the government is regarded as a meta-institution, it should effectively organize, regulate, and coordinate other social institutions (the economic, family, religious, educational, and media organizations) through effective enforcement of legislation and policies. Furthermore, a proper and stable functioning of the family, religion, education, and media institutions can effectively impart value education, rational thinking skills, and ethical beliefs to the children and youth who are the future leaders. Nonetheless, this outcome can only be accomplished if the economy is stable and performing well to support the well-being of families, education institutions, media institutions, and the government. However, the government should responsibly intervene at times of economic crisis so as to increase the purchasing power of other social institutions and the government's purchasing power. Generally, a high purchasing power of the social institutions and the government will make them stable and more efficient in performing functions related to the moral development of the children and youth who are the prospective public leaders. In addition, a stable economic institution can stimulate high production, thus lowering unemployment rates. A good economy is good for all institutions, such as education, media firms, and government, as availability and adequate financial resources enable them to run their activities easily. Consequently, even efforts geared towards the moral development of the children and youth by the institutions will significantly impact the future generation of ethical leaders. Moreover, the government and the media institutions that are directly involved in interrogating, reporting, and controlling unethical behaviours in society and the public sector will function effectively.

Nevertheless, based on the structural-functionalism thesis of interaction and interdependence of social institutions, we recommend that the social institutions in every African state must effectively work in harmony under certain guidelines to address ethical issues and expose and prevent unethical behaviour in the formal and informal institutions. In addition, since today's children and youth are tomorrow's leaders, their moral development must be well facilitated by a strong interaction of the family, education, and religious institutions through sharing information relevant to their intellectual development and psychological well-being. The above can only be achieved through regular follow-up of their activities.

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