

Ethical Challenges facing Public Administration in Lesotho

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e_AOPL Journal of Social Sciences

Volume 3 | Number 1

Received:
17.01.2025

Accepted:
08.04.2025

Published:
30.06.2025

https://africaopl.org/category/e_aopl-journal-of-social-sciences/



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Abstract: High magnitudes of unethical behaviours within the public administration globally have prompted robust debates on the importance of upholding ethics within the sector. The main objective of the paper is to highlight ethical challenges faced by the Lesotho public administration. A variety of methods were used to collect data, which includes interviews, questionnaires and desk review of various documents. Respondents ranged from 20 senior officials in government, 250 public officers and 200 members of the public. Findings revealed that Lesotho public sector is faced with a number of ethical challenges which include confidential information leaks, misuse of government's resources, diversion of funds and lateness. Corruption was, however, been identified as the most prevalent unethical behaviour within the Lesotho public sector. Despite the existence of various legal frameworks that govern the public sector, corruption continues to persist. Among all the contributing factors to ethical challenges, political interference manifested the most. Ethical challenges within the Lesotho public administration have compromised public trust, good governance and accountability. Some of these challenges have also hampered the development of the country as funds were diverted. The study concludes that the Government of Lesotho needs to conduct a vigorous research to determine success of programmes undertaken to improve the public sector. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the public sector cannot be overemphasised.

Keywords: Ethics, development, governance, public administration, public officers

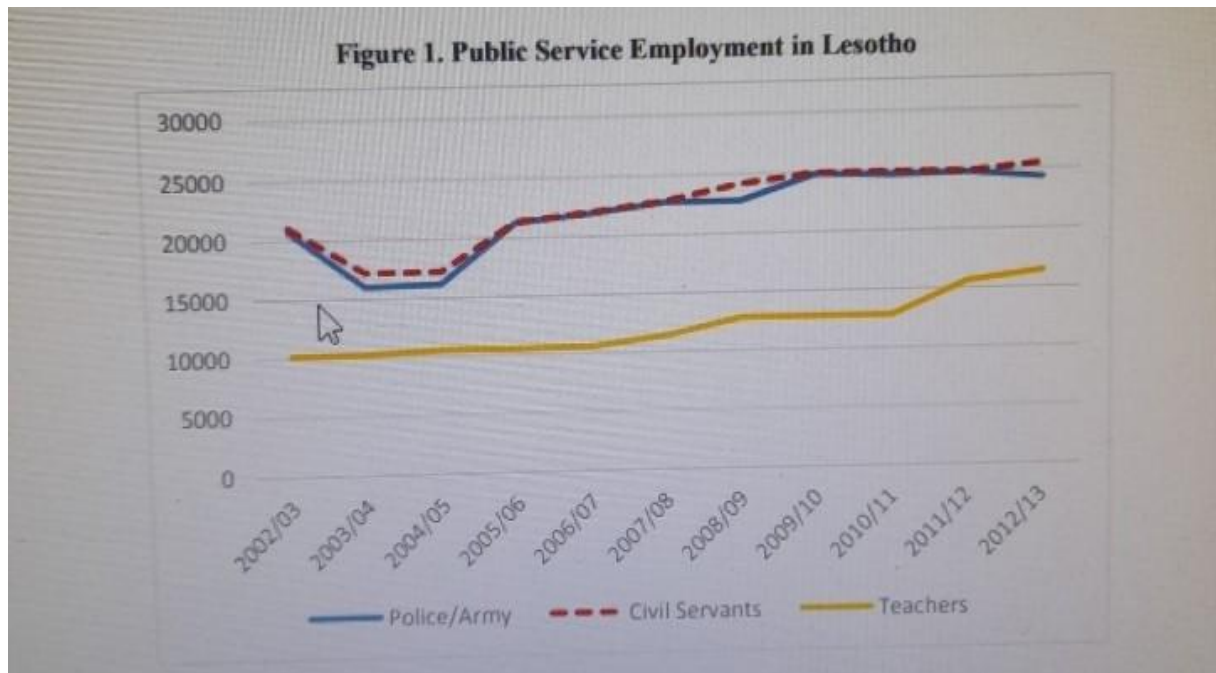
Introduction

Discourse on the lack of ethics in public administration has been avoided as it was regarded as insignificant for national debates (Groen 1981, 134-136). One would then ask why ethics seemed unimportant discourse. United Nations (2000, 4) argues that it may be that countries around the world are faced with various catastrophes such as conflicts, poverty, adverse effects of climate change and recession. As a result, debates on ethics in public administration seem not significant. This has therefore resulted in an increase of unethical behaviour by government employees at all levels over the past decades globally.

Hence a growing interest in ethics and integrity became imminent (Fourie and Kimaro 2020, 76) with the new set of issues concerning social justice, beyond accountability and efficiency in administrative responsibility. Good behaviour of public administration officials and the roles of ethics in the performance of public administration services should be respected. Ethics is vital for improvements of public administration (Buye 2021, 1-4) and is an essential component of good governance (Perry et al. 2014, 27).

According to Matlosa (2006, 49-51) ethics in public administration is resounded because the public service constitutes an important arm of the government entrusted to uphold ethics at all times. The public officers with technical expertise provide services, draft laws, rules and regulations, advice the ministers as well as developing and implementation of public policies. Matlosa (2006, 49), further stated that public officers as such, are strategic to good governance.

The Lesotho public service is made-up of the civil service, teaching service, judiciary service, police service, defence force, national security service, foreign service and a wide array of statutory bodies and state owned enterprises (Government of Lesotho 2019). The focus of this study is exclusively on the civil service which constitutes of 15,707 public officers (World Bank 2016, 3). The public service is regarded as the largest employer and service provider in the country (World Bank 2016, 3). Figure 1 below shows the distribution of the civil service.

Figure1. Public service employment in Lesotho

Source: World Bank 2016

Lesotho has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at improving the civil service. These include 2004 Public Sector Reform and Improvement Programme (PSIRP) supported by various development partners, African Development Bank (AfDB) (2006, 36-17) stated. The programme was intended to (i) raise the quality of services delivered to Basotho; (ii) enhance the capacity of public service to carry out core functions of the government, (iii) to promote sustainable social and economic development (AfDB 2006) as well promotion of good governance. According to AfDB (2006) for the period of 2005-2007, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assisted Lesotho to strengthen the public sector reform in Lesotho. Again in 2016, the Government of Lesotho conducted public service biometric and payroll census under Public Service Modernisation Project (PSMP) funded by the World Bank¹ (Government of Lesotho 2016). The census was undertaken to improve the integrity of the public service payroll. Currently, the country has undertaken overhaul national reforms. Government of Lesotho (2019, 8-10) highlighted that one of fundamental and specific objectives of the

¹ The World Bank funded the Lesotho Public Service Modernisation Project (PSMP) in Component II: Civil Service Reform. The PSIRP is a government initiative that is being formulated in collaboration with development partners in response to the need to strengthen good governance as a basis to achieve accelerated growth and poverty reduction. It is a multi-dimensional reform package and its objectives are to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery and public financial management.

current and ongoing national reforms is the creation of effective and efficient professional and result-oriented civil service for enhanced service delivery.

Despite all these efforts, the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of public officers have always been a major concern. Rakolobe (2019, 2) asserted the Lesotho public service has been labelled as unprofessional and politicised. Khasoane (2022) stated in his December 2022 The Post article “Imperatives of Professionalising Public Service, that “this endangers perennial political and social-economic perils”. This is said to have bearing on the public officers’ propensity to engage in multiple corrupt activities. In 2017, Lesotho was ranked 42nd on the Transparency International Corruption Index. This is an indication that corruption seem to be rampant in the Lesotho public service (Rakolobe 2019). By the end of 2023, Lesotho was ranked 93rd out of 180 countries (Transparency International 2023).

The article, therefore, aims to highlight the ethical challenges faced by the Lesotho public administration in the midst of various programme initiatives intended to enhance the public sector as well as the governing legal frameworks. The article also discusses possible major contributing factors to these challenges. Most importantly, the article also looks into further research to promote ethical behaviour in the public administration.

Definition of ethics

Many authors define ethics in various ways. Ethics originates from Greek word “*ἦθος*” (ethos) (Fejzullahu and Batalli 2019; Maw 2018; Shava, 2006) which relates to an individual character or morale nature. According to Fejzullahu and Batalli (2019, 269-271) ethics can be understood as a form of self-responsible or even as an inhabitation of action of public administration. Amundsen (2009, 6-7) defined ethics as principles through which behaviour considered right or wrong is evaluated. Ethics can be seen as continuous efforts striving to ensure that public officers and institutions live up to the standards that are reasonable and solid reinforced (Amundsen 2009).

Mofuoa (2021) and Mukhopadhyay (2002) indicated that ethics may be referred to as morals. Ethics is defined as the ideals, values or standards that people use to determine whether their actions are morally good or bad or ethically acceptable or unacceptable (Mofuoa 2021; Banks 2004; Albanesa, 2008). Freakly and Burgh (2000, 97-100) and Birswal (2015, 74-76) added that ethics is “what we ought to do, that is, it requires judgement and reasoning in decision-making and raises questions concerning what is right, wrong, good, bad, just or unjust conduct”.

Fuertes (2021) on the other hand, stated that ethics can be understood as the prevalence of efficiency or as a social contract or as a defence of core values of public interest. According to the University of Texas Arlington (2016), “ethics is rules that define moral conduct according to the ideology of a specific group.

In the context of public administration, ethics is viewed as an integral part of public administration which put more focus on how the public officials conduct their work (Fejzullahu and Batalli 2019; Shava 2006) and constitutes the moral fibre of civil servants as it regulates the conduct of different categories of civil servants (Maw 2018, 113). United Nations (2000, 1-2) and Sok (2005,1-3) reinforced that ethics in the public service refers to broad norms that delineate how public servants should exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties. Kumasey (2017, 35-37) echoed that ethics tries to develop practicable and applicable concepts, tools, skills and expertise to deal with the rapid change especially relating to unethical behaviour in the public institutions. The values and norms are better reinforced if exists in a system of administration policies that provide incentives and penalties to encourage public servants to professionally carry out their duties and observe high standards of conduct (United Nations 2000, 4).

According to Nawawi (2018, 3) ethics in the public administration, is defined as a set of values that become the reference or guide for people in the organisation. Public administration ethics is defined as the philosophy and professional standards (code of ethics) or the right rules of conduct that should be obeyed by public providers or public administrators (Nawawi 2018, 3-5).

Ethics is of great importance for a good business (Silva et al. 2021, 407-409), as it is vital element in determining the successful implementation of organisational activities and public administration actors (Wahyuli, 2021). Fejzullahu and Batalli (2019) added that ethics in the public sector and its administration plays a pivotal role as ethical rules represent the foundation for the provision of the administration services to the society and development within the society. Khasoane (2022) and United Nations (2000) concurred that ethical public sector also plays an indispensable role towards improving the country's economy as well as strengthening the pillars of sustainable development. As a result, community confidence in public officers is fostered (Fejzullahu 2019, 270-272). In addition, public service ethics encompasses values that guide the public service

such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness and impartiality (Kumasey 2017, 35-36).

It is very vital for public office holders such as civil or public servants to observe and uphold ethical codes at all times in executing their duties (Rothstein and Sorak, 2017, 7) and this needs to be professionally carried out as well as taking appropriate political decisions about who gets what, how much, where and when (Nawawi 2018). University of Texas-Arlington (2016) added that adhering to code of ethics ensures that the public receives what it needs fairly. Ethics is said to provide for public administration accountability and trust, as public administrators are viewed as custodians of contemporary administrative state, stewards of public resources and guardians of trust that citizen have placed on them the bedrock of governance (Kumasey 2017, 35; Nawawi 2018, 1; United Nations 2000, 1; Hermana 2017, 2366).

The importance of ethics in public administration is timely and informative communication with the community (University of Texas-Arlington 2016). As public administration communicates with the public, it becomes transparent of their activities. According to the University of Texas-Arlington (2016), this prevents or minimises potential issues that may rise when information is divulged by other sources. Communication keeps both public officers and community engaged in working for common goals.

As illustrated above, Fejzullahu (2019, 270) indicated that ethics regarded as the law that guides all public officers. Rothstein and Sokak (2017, 8-9) argued that ethics satisfies issues which the law has not provided for. Ethics also said to be an important element which determines the successful implementation of an organization's activities and public administration actors (Nawawi, 2018), according to the needs of specific town, state or country (University of Texas-Arlington (2016). In addition, ethics in public administration can be used as a standard for determining attitudes, behaviours of public officers as well as policies as good or bad (Nawawi, 2018; Wahyuli 2021).

Moreover, ethics in the public administration evaluates performance. Maw (2018) indicated that the welfare of the country is developed by efficient civil service performance. Thus, political, social and economic development goals of the country are realised.

Ethics in the public administration provides an understanding of what is right or wrong (Fejzullahu and Batalli 2019, 266-267) in regard to the rules of engagement. Good

administration is indeed directly linked to good administrative behaviours. This therefore implies that the public officers should possess a sound ethical outlook that will create a good reputation and earn respect of citizen (Fejzullahu and Batalli 2019, 267-278).

In relation to governance, Mukhopadhyay (2022, 1) asserted that ethics occupies a primary ground as the actions of the government impact the society at large. Mudau (2022, 149-151) indicated that good governance is a key element in the public sector. It entails stable administrative structures, service delivery, high standards of ethics and professionalism, public trust and satisfaction.

This ensures that public finances and other resources are properly managed (Lucky 2019). Mofuoa (2021, 129-131) added “consequently, ethics or morals in public administration and governance are understood as encompassing moral value judgements covering administration and governance of public affairs”. Accountability, ethics and trust are necessary elements for good governance (Shava 2006). According to Shava (2006) trust reveals the existence of ethics which binds the public administration’s leadership together to improve service-delivery. On the other hand, ethics through trust establishes a conducive working environment in an organisation. The Central Bank of Lesotho (2007) reinforces the importance of good governance in the public sector management suggests a focus on accountability and responsiveness to customer needs as fundamental for economic development.

Types of ethics

According to Maw (2018, 113-114) ethics is divided into meta ethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Meta ethics is basically whether ethical claims are true to false. It can also be referred to as descriptive ethics (Amundsen 2009). Normative ethics are said to describe the standards for the righteousness and wrongness of acts (Amundsen 2009). It strives to arrive at practical moral standards that assist public officers to distinguish right or wrong. Applied ethics refers to specific issues in practical life (Maw 2018, 114) which Lucky (2009, 6-8) and Dimmock and Fisher (2017) identified as deontological ethics. This ethics can also be referred to as duty or obligation based ethics. Deontological ethics actually binds employees to their duty and look at the rightness or wrongness of actions. Normative ethics on the other hand bridges the gap between meta ethics and applied ethic.

Promotion of Ethics Internationally and regionally

International standards on ethics

Different international and regional standards have been adopted to promote public sector ethical conduct. This has been largely prompted by scandals involving the public officials (United Nations 2000). Hence a massive campaign to uphold ethics (Shava 2006) as politicians and public officials struggle to conduct themselves ethically to demonstrate integrity and honesty. Cooper and Yoder (2002, 333-334) alluded to a number of such international ethics standards. These include Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on Problem of Corrupt Practices established by the United Nations in 1975 (Cooper and Yoder 2002, 333-334). The Ad Hoc Committee issued the guidelines for how Member States should punish various transgressions committed by the public officials.

Another international initiative is the 1989 Global Programme against Corruption created by the United Nations for International Crime Prevention Office for Drugs Control and Crime Prevention (Cooper and Yoder 2002, 336-338). The programme was intended to assist the Member States in their efforts to fight corruption in both private and public. Cooper and Yoder (2002) explained that the programme calls for transparency and accountability in government transactions.

In 1996, the United Nations spoke firmly on corruption through its General Assembly on a Declaration against Corruption and Bribery. The General Assembly was concerned over escalating incidences of corruption in the public administration, adopted a non-binding International Code of Conduct for Public officers (Cooper and Yoder 2002; United Nations 2000). The Code of Conduct specifies that “public officials shall ensure that they perform their duties and functions efficiently, effectively and with integrity in accordance with the national laws and administrative practices. According to Cooper and Yoder (2002,340), the Code further calls for fairness and impartiality among public officials, provides for guidelines on conflict of interest and disqualification, promotes disclosure of assets and recommends against the acceptance of gifts to carry favours. Most importantly, the public officials must maintain the confidentiality requirements of their governments.

Again in 1996, General Assembly resolution 50/225 on Public Administration and Finance to the Development adopted a resolution that confirmed the importance of governance, public administration and finance to the development processes (United Nations 2000). In 1997, eighth International Anti- Corruption Conference held in Lima, Peru adopted a declaration that calls for international and regional effects to rectify and

implement code of conduct, statements against corruption and cooperative efforts to prevent and punish corrupt practices (Cooper and Yonder 2002, 336-338).

In 1998 Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance acknowledged that the state must be in the forefront of implementing change and smoothing the path for progress. According to the United Nations (2000), in 1998, a Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance called for a new image of public service which emphasise is more on mobility, the importance of integrity and professionalism.

The Global Forum on Fighting Corruption I and II were held in 1999 and 2001 respectively. The first Forum was held in Washington, provided the guiding principles for fighting corruption and safe-guarding integrity among justice and security officials. According to Cooper and Yonder (2002, 337-339), these principles focus on the hiring, management practices, code of conduct, criminal sanctions, auditing, autonomy, fairness, deterrence, disclosure, cooperation and research to prevent corruption. The second Forum held in The Hague, aimed at strengthening the International anti-corruption movement and enhance working level anti-corruption cooperation among professionals from the public sector and private sector as well as civil society (Cooper and Yonder 2002).

Ethical standards adopted in Africa

Mudau (2022, 149-151) indicated that Africa like other regions is also prone to public service mal-governance, which resulted into erosion of professionalism and public service ethics, rampant bureaucratic corruption, excessive politicisation, institutional ineptitude and poor service delivery. As a result, the continent adopted a number of guidelines and standards to promote and enhance ethics within public administration through which the public sector in Africa witnessed a widespread of new public management in the 1990s (Rubakula 2014,85-87). The continent created the Global Coalition for Africa in 1990, a forum on issues relating to development of the African nations (Cooper and Yonder 2000).

The Pan African Conferences of the Minister of Civil Service were held in Morocco in 1994 and 1998 respectively. The 1994 conference was concerned over the decline of professionalism in most African public administration (United Nations 2000). The 1998 conference is said to have laid a foundation for the establishment of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service Administration (Mudau 2022) which came

into force in 2016. However, the charter was formally adopted in the third Ministers of Civil Service conference held in Namibia in 2001 (Mudau 2022).

The African Charter on Values on Principles of Public Service has outlined how public offices should conduct themselves. These include upholding professionalism among public officers, ethical behaviour (African Union 2011). Specifically, the Charter urges the public officers to demonstrate and respect all rules, values and establish code of conduct in the performance of public officers' duties (African Union, 2011). The Charter prevents soliciting or receiving of gifts for services rendered.

Examples of unethical behaviours in the workplace

Ethical problems in the public administration are said to range from small and personally to highly complicated cases (Lynch 2009, 7-8). These include intentionally slowing down the work cycle, petty theft, disrespectful treatment of co-workers, violence, sabotage, misuse of organisational information such as information leaks, alcohol and drug use, gambling, harassment and fraud (Kumasey 2017 .49-51). Puiu (2015) also listed use and abuse of confidential information for personal purposes and conflict of interest as unethical behaviours. Menyah (2010, 5-6) added that administrative discretion, corruption, nepotism, administrative secrecy, and policy dilemma as some of ethical dilemmas in the public sector. Shava (2006) identified lack of transparency in executing their duties. Hanekom as quoted by Shava (2006) stated that nepotism also seem rife in the public sector. Nepotism involves appointments of friends and relatives to senior public positions without considering their merits. According to Shava (2006) this leads to poor performance in the public sector.

United Nations (2000) also added that diversion of aid is also other unethical behaviour. Diversion of aid means that the intended purpose of aid is not reached. Other unethical behaviour includes wide-spread public sector patronage, and outright corruption (United Nations 2000). Corruption hinders effectively public administration (Shava 2006) subsequently inhibiting development of societies. Abuses of authority and general mismanagement have been also identified as unethical behaviour in the public sector.

Contributing factors

Despite numerous efforts by countries globally to vigorously backing to uphold ethics, Shava (2006, 2-4) and Tsebe (2011, 25-27) noted that ineffective control system paves for unethical behaviours in the public administration. When public officers perceive loopholes either in the policy or code of conduct, may lead to dishonest public officials

exploiting the situation for their own benefit (Shava 2006; Tsebe). According to Tsebe (2011, 8-10), this has adverse implications on service delivery as resources are not used on for the development and welfare of the society.

Complicated legislations, inadequate procedure and manuals, ineffectual management and organisations, psychological factors, social factors, economic factors as well as lack of ethical awareness have also been identified as contributing factors of unethical behaviour within the public sector (Tsebe 2011). Ethical standards should be clearly reflected in the legal framework (Viorescu and Nemțoi (2015, 272-273).

Methods and materials

Various data collection methods were used to collect data from diverse respondents. These include face to face interviews, self-administered questionnaires, review of court cases, media reports and other research articles. Respondents were drawn from senior government officials, 150 public officers and limited number of 200 members of the public.

Results

Definition of ethics in the workplace

Respondents were asked to define ethics particularly in the workplace. They indicated that they understood ethics to be codes that guides employees' behaviour or conduct in the workplace. Being punctual, performing one's duties diligently, mutual respect to members of the public as well as co-workers, accountability, obeying company rules as regulations. Other respondents defined ethics as order which include service-delivery, not wasting the organization's resources, dress code, attitude, teamwork, work etiquette, acting with honesty and transparency.

The most prevalent unethical behaviours among Lesotho public officers

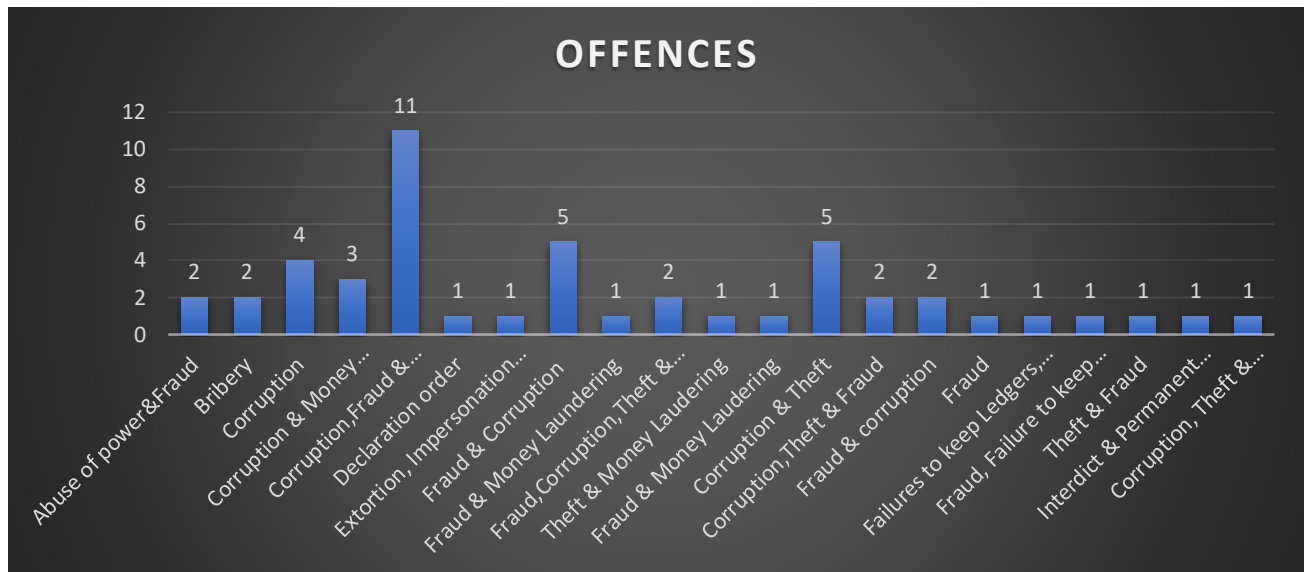
Members of the public were discontent about public officers' lateness at work as well as knocking –off before knock-off time contrary to Code of Good Practice of 2008 section 2 (l). Public officers are expected to report at work at 0800 hours and knock at 1630 hours. Public officers were also said to be negligent in executing their duties, lack professionalism, low productivity, insubordination, negative attitude, conflicts, nepotism and misuse of government resources. Interviewed member of the public were concerned that over the years, government vehicles were seen transporting political supporters to political rallies.

Public officers were said to discuss personal and private lives during working hours and disclose of confidential information. There is to this effect a pending court case in which a public officer was charged for disclosing confidential Cabinet information through social media. Code of Good Practice Notice of 2008 section 2(i) prohibits public officer to directly or indirectly reveal any information coming to his/her knowledge or acquired while executing official duties.

Respondents further indicated that corruption is rife among public officers, as public officers often solicit bribes before rendering services to members of the public. It was further stated that this is common in the procurement department across Government Ministries, and other Ministries that offer crucial and key services such as passport and traffic services. One respondent complained about Traffic Department:

There is something seriously wrong at the Traffic Department and it needs urgent attention. Whatever is happening there and it is not good reflection of our country and the government. There are a couple of people at the main gate of the Department. These people demand payment from people seeking services to enter the Department's yard to be provided with "quick" services. The experience I got there last week Monday and Wednesday is appalling. For the last six months, I have been going to traffic Department looking for my number plates, but no avail. I then approached front desk supervisor to intervene. My number plates were retrieved right underneath officers' desks. Had I not asked the supervisor to intervene, I would not have gotten the number plates. I was expected to pay bribery before I could get them.

Graph 1 below shows some of the corruption offences committed by the public officers in the public sector.

Graph 1. Corruption offences committed by the Public officers between 2021-2023

Source: Source: Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences

One particular corruption case that is before the courts of law involves a senior officer the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning for allegedly soliciting bribes from people seeking funding to further their studies in China. The officer in question is also said to have awarded sponsorship to undeserving people in exchange for money. The Public Accounts Committee² (2016) asserted that the Government of Lesotho for three consecutive fiscal years 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 lost an amount of M1, 479,462.60 due to corruption. Apart from corruption offenses, public officers also commit various criminal offences as shown on the table 1 below.

Table 1. Criminal offences committed by public officers

Offences	Number
Assault Grievous Bodily Harm	109
Murder	13
Malicious damage to property	12
Contravening section 30 of Penal Code	11

² Public Accounts Committee is a sessional committee of the Parliament of Lesotho established under Standing Order No. 75 (5), whose function include considering the financial statements and accounts of all Government Ministries and Departments.

Fraud	8
Contravening section 59 (b) and (c)	8
Sexual offence	7
Stock theft	6

Source: Lesotho Mounted Police Service records.

Contributing factors to unethical behaviours

Respondents cited a number of factors that may be attributed to unethical behaviour among Lesotho public officers.

Political interference was cited as one of the major contributing factors of unethical behaviour among public officers, since the dawn of coalition governments in 2012. Public officers showed that their political principals at times have little regard of the legal frameworks, rules, regulations and procedures that govern the Lesotho public sector.

Ministers tend to influence political appointees to non-political positions. As a result, a number of technical diplomatic positions have been highly politicised. Molefi and Du Plesses (2019, 240-242) confirm that indeed Ministers tend to influence employment of their political supporters to positions that require extensive expertise. Respondents also showed that only those aligned with the government of the day are appointed to diplomatic missions, contrary to Public Service Act 2005 8(1).³ This has resulted in several lawsuits against the government. In 2021, public officers deployed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations filed a court application against the government over diplomatic appointments.⁴ Instead of the administration to address the concerns of public officers, the concerned officers were rather transferred to other government Ministries. This resulted in more lawsuits⁵ in which officers sought relief from the courts of law to review and set aside their transfers. The Courts granted their plea.

³ Section 8(1) stipulates that entry into and advancement within the Public Service shall be based on merit namely ability, qualifications, knowledge, skill and aptitude after a fair and open competition which assures all citizens of Lesotho receive equal opportunity.

⁴ CIV/APN/85/2021.

⁵ CIV/APN/146/2021 (Mabaso and others matter) and CIV/APN/149/2021 (Kanono matter).

Furthermore, in 2023, political appointees gave rise to more lawsuits against the government.⁶ A public officer sued the government for hiring the spouse of one Member of Parliament (MP) to a non-political position. It must be noted that Sections 137 (g) and 143 (3) of the Constitution of Lesotho allow for political appointees to political positions. Liphoto (2024) reveals that indeed political interference is rife in government's employment. The Minister is said to have ordered the recruitment manager to take instructions from a ruling party MP in the incumbent government. The instructions were about who should be employed as temporary staff for the National Identity and Civil Registration (NICR) and the Livestock Registration and Marking Systems (LRMS) Departments, Liphoto (2024) wrote.

Political interference has even escalated to Ministers interfering with disciplinary hearings of staff. Respondents pointed out that Ministers can even call-off disciplinary hearing instituted against public officers. One respondent said,

A public officer was deliberately not executing the assigned duties by supervisors. Despite all efforts and instructions from her supervisors, the said officer just ignored her principals' instructions. After a year, a disciplinary case was brought against her. While preparations were being made for the disciplinary case to be held, the Principal Secretary got a call from the Ministry instructing that such disciplinary should not be held.

Section 144 (1) of Public Service Regulations of 2008, prohibits active participation in politics or take an active part in support of any candidate in election, wearing symbols, chanting or singing at political rally. Respondents were however unwavering that the Lesotho public officers are highly political. They argued that this was more prevalent in 2012 when the country had its first coalition government. During this period, Lesotho witnessed public officers actively and openly participating in politics, in order to secure lucrative senior positions in the public sector or in diplomatic missions. Pherudi (2022) corroborated that Lesotho public sector is highly politicised. Newly elected government always embarks on the politicisation and polarisation of the public service Pherudi (2022, 80-82) stated. One of the respondents also reiterated:

The current regime is also perpetuating political public sector. Some of the Ministers have openly stated that a public officer has been appointed to a

⁶ CIV/APN/0356/2023.

diplomatic position because such officer is an active and loyal member of the current ruling party.

Some of the respondents showed that public officers in Lesotho are demoralised, hence unethical behaviours displayed. Firstly, it is due to allocation of resources. Senior public officers in the technical departments reasoned that critical and key resources to deliver services to the public such as finances, transport, and office equipment are mostly allocated and concentrated in the support departments such as Accounts, Administration, Human Resources, and Procurement. The officers pointed out that departments that constantly have to go to field missions to execute their mandate, several times they have to postpone or cancel such activities due to lack of transport or insufficient funds despite having budgeted for such activities. This has resulted in high incidents of absenteeism. The technical departments also showed they often operate with minimal staff, as they reminded of high wage bill in filling up positions.

Some public officers were of the view that there is no recognition of qualifications. They pointed out that there are public officers employed at lower grade (A-E) with no formal qualification or Diploma. They later improve their qualifications to Masters Degrees and PhD. Upon completion of their Degrees, they still hold position of lower grades positions. All graduate entry level is grade F. Some of the affected officers indicated that they were informed to submit their improved credentials at the Ministry of Public Service to be deployed and follow the procedures like any other newly graduates seeking public service employment.

Lack of constant induction is also viewed another aggravating factor of unethical behaviour despite existence of Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management (LIPAM). LIPAM was established with the mandate of providing in-service training to public officers. This includes training newly recruited public officers about the laws, rules, and regulations that govern the Lesotho public sector. It also provides induction to management for senior government officials, such as ministers, principal secretaries, directors and managers. Lack of training has thus resulted in public officers not be informed of the existing rules, regulations as well as programmes aimed at promoting efficiency, integrity, accountability in the sector (Tseisa 2016, 74-78).

Another noticeable contributing factor cited is lack of supervision. Respondents in the public sector stated that most of their supervisors are reluctant to implement public sector laws particularly the Code of Conduct of 2008 and other programs aimed at

improving civil service such as Integrated Performance Management System (IPMS). A research conducted by Ramataboee and Lues (2018, 85-87) concluded that there is a limited management involvement in the implementation of IPMS. An Integrated Performance Management System was introduced in the Public Service of Lesotho to enhance public officers' performance and ultimately service delivery.

Most of the respondents stated that low salaries which the public sector offers coupled with eagerness to have "finer things" seem to contribute to unethical behaviours among public officers. Public officers also stated that their working conditions and environment are unfavourable.

Discussions

The main objective of the paper was to highlight ethical challenges that the Lesotho public administration is facing. The research paper also aimed at outlining possible contributing factors of unethical behaviours within the public sector. Lesotho public sector is one of the largest employer and service provider in the country, where alternative job opportunities in the private sector are limited. The public sector is a public entity that needs to be transparent and accountable to the taxpayers. In addition, one of the pillars of good governance according to the World Bank (2016) is an "efficient public service". The more reason as to why ethics is vital in the public sector. Ethical public sector contributes immensely to the sustainable development of a country.

The results show that the Lesotho public sector like other countries is plagued with multiple ethical challenges. Different unethical behaviours have been displayed in the sectors which seem to undermine the integrity and professionalism of the public sector. Corruption is the most prevalent unethical challenge in the public sector. Lesotho public officers' conduct is not only unethical but also brings the public sector into disrepute by engaging in criminal tendencies. Hence integrity of the Lesotho public administration is questioned.

It is worthwhile to note that Lesotho is a state party and signatory to a number of ethics standards set by international and regional bodies such as United Nations and African Union. As shown in the previous sections, these are International Code for Public Offices of 1996 and the African Charter on Values and Principles of the Public Service and Administration. Having adopted these standards and guidelines, Lesotho has an obligation to adhere to the set standards.

Lesotho has made positive progress and shown its commitment in domesticating these standards by enacting various legal frameworks as well as developing policies, procedures and rules to uphold ethics in the public sector. Few of these include Public Service Act of 2005 and Code of Good Practice of 2008. The Lesotho public sector also adopted Performance Management System which its implementation is still questioned by many. This means that the Lesotho public administration have the governing laws which their compliance remains critical for efficient public sector.

The country has also taken some significant decisions in enacting laws that specifically address corruption in the public sector and other sectors. These include Prevention of Corruption and Economic Offences Act of No, 5 of 1999. The Act establishes Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO). Specifically, the Act confers powers to DCEO to investigate all suspected cases of corruption and economic crimes. Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime NO.4 of 2008 established Anti-Money Laundering Authority and Financial Intelligence Unit to identify, trace, freeze, seize and confiscate suspected proceeds of crime. The ethical challenges displayed in the public sector have adverse implications on the development of the country and governance. Subsequently, they also have far-reaching implications towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals⁷ and Africa Agenda 2063⁸.

The findings further corroborate with the results of previous research papers that political interference in the administration of the public sector is deeply manifested alongside other contributing factors. Political interference has also resulted in numerous court cases for the Lesotho public sector.

Recommendations

Governance and rule of law are key aspects to the integrity of the public sector in any given country. It is eminent that political parties will end up in public sector administration. The fact that political principals will always be largely part of the public sector, it is therefore critical that further research explores the importance of governance within political parties as this will influence their compliance to governance issues when in administration.

⁷⁷ Sustainable Development Goals: The SDGs are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations. The aim of the Goals is peace and prosperity for the people and the planet.

⁸ Africa Agenda 2063 is a 50-year strategic framework to guide Africa's Development and to achieve the vision of Africa We Want.

It is also critical that the administration conserves the best practices established in the public sector such as LIPAM. The administration should ensure that LIPAM is well resourced with human resource and financially to be able to provide constant induction trainings to public officers about code of conduct and other legal frameworks governing the public sector.

Most importantly, periodic monitoring and evaluation of the public sector cannot be under-emphasised. The administration will have a view of the progress of its activities and overall impact in the communities. Lastly, the public sector should also enlist all programme initiatives geared towards accountable, efficient and effective public sector. There is a need for further research to gauge implementation thereof.

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