



The promotion of ethical practice among local Council officials Chiredzi Town Council, Zimbabwe

Jena, Fortunate*¹; Marongere, Herbson²; Hickonicko, Beatrice³; Zingi, Godwin, K.⁴

¹ Department of Rural and Urban Development, Great Zimbabwe University.

²Department of Governance and Public Management , Midlands State University

³Department of Rural and Urban Development, Great Zimbabwe University

⁴ Department of Rural and Urban Development, Great Zimbabwe University

*Corresponding author: fjena@gzu.ac.zw

Abstract

The research seeks to explore the efforts implored by Local Authorities to improve ethical standards in Zimbabwean Local Authorities. The researchers employed a mixed method approach that is combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods but dominantly qualitative in nature. Purposive sampling was used to identify research participants basing on experience and expertise in the study. Sources of data used include secondary source that is desk research study. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Notable research findings of the study revealed that, audits, monthly reports on service delivery, Full Council meetings, Human Resource (HR) Policies, circulars and directives from the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban development are some of the efforts employed by local authorities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, the study gathered that the Socio-Political and Economic environment have however short-changed the efforts local authorities are putting in place to upheld good ethical standards within local council officials. Recommendations were that council should establish a workable code of ethics/conduct, conduct ethics training, promote anti-corruption education/campaigns, separation of politics and administration dichotomy and pay employees in time to ensure effectiveness and efficiency among local council officials in Zimbabwe.

Key words: local council's officials, Corruption and Ethical Principles

1. Introduction

Ethics is gaining prominence in the governance discourse today. There is a perception that standards in public life have declined. This raises questions about the costs of misconduct on the part of those who have been entrusted with guarding public interest and resources in local authorities. These costs are losses in trust and confidence in public institutions and losses in precious resources that were meant to support the economic and social development of nations and peoples for instance, devolution funds in the case of Zimbabwe. There is a move worldwide to restore a measure of trust and integrity in public institutions and officials, to safeguard democracy and promote better governance as proposed by the New Public Service propounded by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000, 2001, 2007) and New Public Governance as put forward by Osborne (2006, 2010).

Local governance ethics provides officials with a framework to make reasoned, informed and systematic judgement and a pre-condition for making good public policy (Hicks, 2007). There is evidence of high prevalence of corruption in African local government institutions. The practice of good ethics ensures that both appointed and elected officials in urban local authorities comply with applicable laws, and are free from fraud, conflict of interest and conform to the accepted professional standards of conduct. The practice of ethics in urban councils, forms an essential ingredient for good governance and is also the backbone for effective anti-corruption strategies or, more broadly, ethics integrity. In line with the aforesaid, the relationship between corruption and



ethics is analogous to that of a disease and a prescribed drug or treatment. Ethics is an antidote for corruption. This resonates with Kanyane (2014) who argues that corruption is an ethical problem that needs ethical medication to resolve it apart from legal and institutional instruments. The formal legal and institutional control measures though necessary cannot adequately resolve the problem of corruption. Ethical values are therefore absolutely necessary to provide normative restraints and internal discipline against corruption. Lack of ethics would lead to unethical practices and corruption in organisations and in personal life (Fernando, 2006). Corruption and unethical practices tend to thrive in organisations where ethics is detached from the operations and decision-making structures of the institutions.

2 Literature Review

The word ethics comes from a Greek word *ethos* that means “the character, custom or a set of moral behaviour that is accepted extensively (Deon, 2011) ancient Greeks, the word *ethos* refers to morality. Moral is therefore used to refer to the current morality while ethics is used as the study of morality as proposed by (Lategan, 2003). For Edwards (2007) in Aristotle’s view ethics implies the study and practice of good life Therefore, in Aristotle’s view ethics is not a matter of gaining intellectual understanding but of practical hands on which he termed *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is a sort of ethical knowhow of what action is most appropriate in a given situation.

Rossouw (2010) ethics concerns itself with what is good or right in human interaction, it revolves around three central concepts, “self-good” and other. He goes on to state that, ethical behaviour results when one does not merely consider what is good for oneself, but also considers what is good for others. More so should the concept good be neglected, the distinct nature of ethics collapses, ethics is not merely concerned with the interaction between a self and other but with the quality of interaction, it tries to highlight whether the interaction between the self and the other is good or bad for one or both of the parties. There is no universally agreed definition of the term “ethics”. Ghillyer (2010) defines ethics is the field of study of how people try to live their life. For (Edwards, 2008), ethics and morality are often used to mean the same thing. These are principles meant to evaluate behaviour as bad or good.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD, 1996) defines ethics as “the rules that translate characteristics or *ethos* into everyday practice” Ethics refers to the sum of ideas that define an overall culture in the public sector while values may be seen as principles that guide judgement about what is good or bad. However, the relationship between these two is complex and overlapping. A number of scholars have tried to explain them. For instance , Chapman (1993) notes that the link between ethics and values is that ethical standards and principles can be applied to the resolution of value conflicts or dilemmas, while (Denhardt, 1989) argues that, the concepts have been difficult to apply to the daily lives of public servants because, “Public administrators are still striving to develop an understanding of the ethics of their profession, not because it is new, but because the understanding of the profession and its role in government has changed dramatically over years.” Public sector ethics should be seen as an activity and not a status. Therefore, encouraging ethical behavior should not be just about establishing a list of rules to be kept in offices but an on-going management process that underpins the work of government (OECD, 1996). This is supported by Thompson (1992) who says,



“Ethics may be instrumental, it may only be a means to an end, but it is a necessary means to an end. Government ethics provide the preconditions for the making of good public policy in local authorities. In this sense, it is more important than any single policy, because all policies depend on it, hence good ethical practices can lead to good policy practices within local authorities.

Local Authorities

A local authority is an administrative body responsible for the government of their area of jurisdiction and is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in that area. (Urban Councils Act, 2006). A local authority is sometimes also referred to as a municipal authority, is a term that refers to a rural and urban political subdivision. These exist below the national level that is constituted by the law and has substantial control of local affairs. These include authorities in countries, municipalities, sites, villages and others. The term excludes district or regional subdivisions of the national government that are set up solely for national administrative purposes (United Nations, 1997). Local authorities are created to render services in defined geographical areas, primarily because of the inability of the central government to attend in detail to all the requirements of society that have been satisfied by the government. Local authorities are regarded as the handmaidens of a higher government order, (Shah & Shah, 2006). This implies that they are regarded as extensions of national governments and act on behalf of the higher levels of government in local economic development. Customarily, in a unitary state system, policy development, principles of service and policy performance are resolute by national level then passed down to local authorities, (Shah & Shah, 2006). Local governments are then mandated to carry out oversight duties in the implementation at the local level of local economic development. Promotion of local economic development, local government within this model have to implement policies, programmes and projects on behalf of higher orders of government, (Evans, 2005). From this, it can be said that local authorities are not autonomous as they only exist to fulfil interests and demands of central government in local economic development. This adversely affect citizen participation of local people and local institutions in decision making and matters directly influencing development of local area under considerations (Aijaz, 2007). Local government is part of the government of a country that deals mainly with problems or issues related to a given population within a given territory. Hasluck (2010) states that local authority is the sphere of government where local authorities are allowed by the law to issue acts or decisions to adjust the way of governance. Sidwig (2014) considers local government as government of sub organs that have special powers to issue regulations or rules within the area they manage. Visser (2010) claims that the word "local council" is used to refer to town, parish, and neighbourhood councils. Chigwata (2020) cites that, a council is under the local government established by it's the Act henceforth they are to act as a representative that means they will be responsible for the decision makers in the interests of its community.

Empirical evidence of corrupt tendencies in Zimbabwean local authorities.

At local government level, in urban local authorities in particular; there is evidence of an exponential rise of cases of corruption and unethical practices (Mutema, 2012). Empirical evidence cites Chitungwiza Municipality as one of the urban local authorities where corruption has been found to be deeply rooted. Mukonza (2013)



cites forms of corruption which were found to be prevalent in Chitungwiza Municipality and these include the illegal selling of commercial stands, illegal allocation of residential in-fill stands, corruption in the allocation of vending spaces, illegal leasing of nursery schools and offering of tenders to companies with political connections. These corrupt activities were perpetrated by elected officials and council executives who are expected to set good examples to the community. Examples of these cases, especially supply chain or tender corruption, are not isolated to Zimbabwe, but also RSA, Nigeria and Angola, to mention but a few African countries. The Chitungwiza case is just a tip of the iceberg. The problem of corruption is deep seated in the majority of urban local authorities in Zimbabwe.

Highlights of the Auditor General Report of 2020 for local authorities in Zimbabwe.

The 2020 annual report had 42% governance issues which are perennially related to the absence of key policies, non-compliance with laws and other regulatory provisions and mismanagement of assets. Bulawayo City Council, Gweru City Council and Chiredzi Town Council, among others, were operating without key policies and procedures manuals. Chegutu Municipality was unable to provide the disaggregated values of its investment properties worth ZWL\$41 347 871 and the Council could not reconcile its salaries bank account by ZWL\$1 622 816 in 2020. There was lack of accountability by Local Authorities that did not consolidate financial results from the operations of their subsidiaries. Harare City Council was not accounting for its wholly owned subsidiaries in its financial statements. Despite owning 100% shares of Pungwe breweries, Mutare City has not been preparing consolidated financial statements. In addition, Harare City Council had unverifiable trade and other payables amounting to USD\$105 542 322 for the year ended December 31, 2018.

Gweru City Council had been utilizing estate funds for recurrent expenditure instead of capital expenditure as required by the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15]. Moreover, the City Council was involved in unprocedural allocation of stands to two minors. In 2018, Gokwe Town Council allocated a commercial stand measuring 8 750m² to the Council chairperson without following due processes. In 2018, Nyanga Rural District Council recorded US\$526 500 as stand deposits but could not provide any supporting documents for such funds.

Masvingo City Council purchased five hundred and forty-five (545) drums of bitumen valued at USD137 713 in 2016 but had not been delivered. Gokwe Town Council failed to avail vouchers amounting to US\$ 106 525 for audit in its 2017 accounts. Tsholotsho Rural District Council did not provide the 2018 road funds acquittals amounting to US\$172 378. Redcliff Municipality in 2019 purchased two (2) preowned vehicles without approval and whose ownership had not been transferred to the Council a year later. In 2018, Chitungwiza Municipality applied new management salary scales without the approval of the Minister. On the other hand, fifty-one percent (51%) of the Council's water meters were dysfunctional. Strikingly, all the Local Authorities were not accurately accounting for beer levies deposited in their accounts by brewers as there were no supporting sales schedules as required by the provisions of the Traditional Beer Act [Chapter 14:24].

The rationale of ethical standards in local authorities

The ethical conduct of politicians and public officials is a critical ingredient in democratic governance (Chigudu 2015). The need for high ethical standards within Local authorities is widely viewed as one of the means of



fighting against unethical practices and corruption. Kolthoff et al (2010) is of the idea that a core principle of good governance is for a local civil service that provides public services for citizens in an ethical environment that is free from unethical practices and corruption. Fox and Miller (1996) added that the common response in a traditional bureaucratic local government is a call for ethics enforced by bureaucratic authority. Fukuyama (1995) highlighted that public officials needs to adhere to the code of ethics and have a high standard of personal integrity and morality. Local government employees ought to be ethical in all circumstances. Ethical employees do far more for an organisation than to keep it out of trouble.

Bruce (1994) aptly notes that public support is highest when employees are credible and trustworthy. There is a tremendous waste of organisational energy when an official does something unethical thus, significant time is spent responding to committees and disciplinary meetings as a result the employee morale becomes negatively affected. He also added that the key positions the public servants in local government finds themselves in with enormous discretionary powers make the need for ethics even more important. Since public servants are accountable to the people their actions should be explainable as ethical. Hicks (2007) in Kanyane and Mutema (2015) also postulates that local governance ethics provides officials with a framework to make reasoned, informed and rational judgments and it is also a precondition for formulating excellent public policy. Kanyane and Mutema (2015) also added that the practice of good ethics guarantees that appointed and elected officials in local authorities comply with applicable laws. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No 20 of (2013) chapter 14, 15 and 16 sum it all by stating that a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained within the Local Authorities and Provincial Councils. Thus, this is meant to ensure that the basic values and principles governing public administration are always upheld hence fighting unethical practices within the local government fraternity.

It is important to emphasise that the fiscal devolution arrangement and devolution, in general, should come with strengthened accountability mechanisms to avoid devolution of inefficiencies and corruption. Anticipating local corruption and fiscal indiscipline, there is need for policymakers to devise accountability mechanisms to ensure that local officials are held accountable for their actions. Corporate governance scandals and fiscal indiscipline are destroying local governments operations (Chigudu 2020). Siddle and Koelble (2012) aver that fiscal indiscipline is one of the greatest challenges faced by multi-tiered systems of government. It should be emphasised that 'decentralised political bodies can deliver services more efficiently and more responsibly depends on adequate mechanisms for political, fiscal, and administrative accountability' (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2012).

3. Materials and Methods

This study utilized a mixed approach research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain different perspectives on the topic and enhance the validity and reliability of the study. The qualitative research provide insight and understanding of the problem setting (Mery Klupp, 2011) while quantitative research generates knowledge and creates understanding about the social world using scientific



inquiry, relies on data that are observed or measured to examine questions about the sample (Patton 2002). The target population was 20 employees from Chiredzi Town Council who constitute the decision-making from 2015-2019, resident association representative and councillors. In this study, the researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique as known as selective or subjective sampling. For the purposes of data collection, key informant interviews and questionnaires were administered as the main research instruments. Content analysis, thematic and descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data collected during the field work to establish efforts being put in place by local authorities towards creating local government institutions that are free from corruption, nepotism and bribery.

4. Findings

Table 1: Response rate for questionnaires

CLASS	TARGET RESPONDENT	ACTUAL RESPONDENT	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Top management	4	4	100%
Middle management	3	3	100%
Council employees	5	4	80%
Councillors	8	6	75%
Resident Association	10	10	100%
TOTAL	30	27	90%

Table 1 highlights that the overall response rate to questionnaires was fair, 90% of the questionnaires were returned so as to analyse the sample 30 questionnaires were distributed, were returned. The top management had a response rate of 100%, middle management 100%, council employees 80%, councillors 75% and the resident’s association 100%. The high percentage response rate can highlight that the researcher personally administered the questionnaires and the respondents were given more time to fill in. 10% of the questionnaires not returned by some of the respondents can be attributed to the fact that some members were busy with other tasks, unwillingness to disclose information, poor cooperation by some of the respondents.

[Efforts towards upholding ethical standards at Chiredzi Town Council](#)

Internal and external audits

Data gathered indicates that 60% agreed and 40% disagreed to the issue of internal and external audits at Chiredzi Town Council. Audits are carried out in various forms that are financial, assets audits some respondents



highlighted that the carrying out of audits relies on the fact that who is being investigated since some of the auditors tend to overlook some of the issues due to personal relations. One respondent is also outlined that if an audit is conducted and the results highlight misconduct by top officials the issue is mostly side lined. A fair percentage of those who agreed indicate that audits at Chiredzi Town Council are not given much attention to. As evident from the 2020 Auditor General annual report had 42% governance issues which are perennially related to the absence of key policies, non-compliance with laws and other regulatory provisions and mismanagement of assets. Bulawayo City Council, Gweru City Council and Chiredzi Town Council, among others, were operating without key policies and procedures manuals.

Monthly reports on service delivery provision

Data gathered indicates that 90% agreed and 10% disagree on the issue of monthly reports. One respondent highlights that the council furnishes the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development through the DDCs office on a monthly basis highlighting the state of service delivery, challenges and any other vital aspects.

Council meetings open to the public and press

Data gathered indicated that 30% agreed and 70% disagreed to the issue of council meetings open to the public and press. One respondent openly highlighted that the council conducts its meetings secretly. Another respondent highlighted that the majority of people do not see the need to attend meetings since their views are not articulated. It can be noted that a lower percentage on those who agree clearly indicates lack of transparency by the council since the public should have sit during council deliberations and scrutinize the proceedings. That resonates with New Public Service paradigm as propounded by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000, 2001, 2007) on the concept of participatory democracy of the citizens. The main essences of NPS focus on the value of democracy by paying attention to the participation of citizens

Access to council minutes

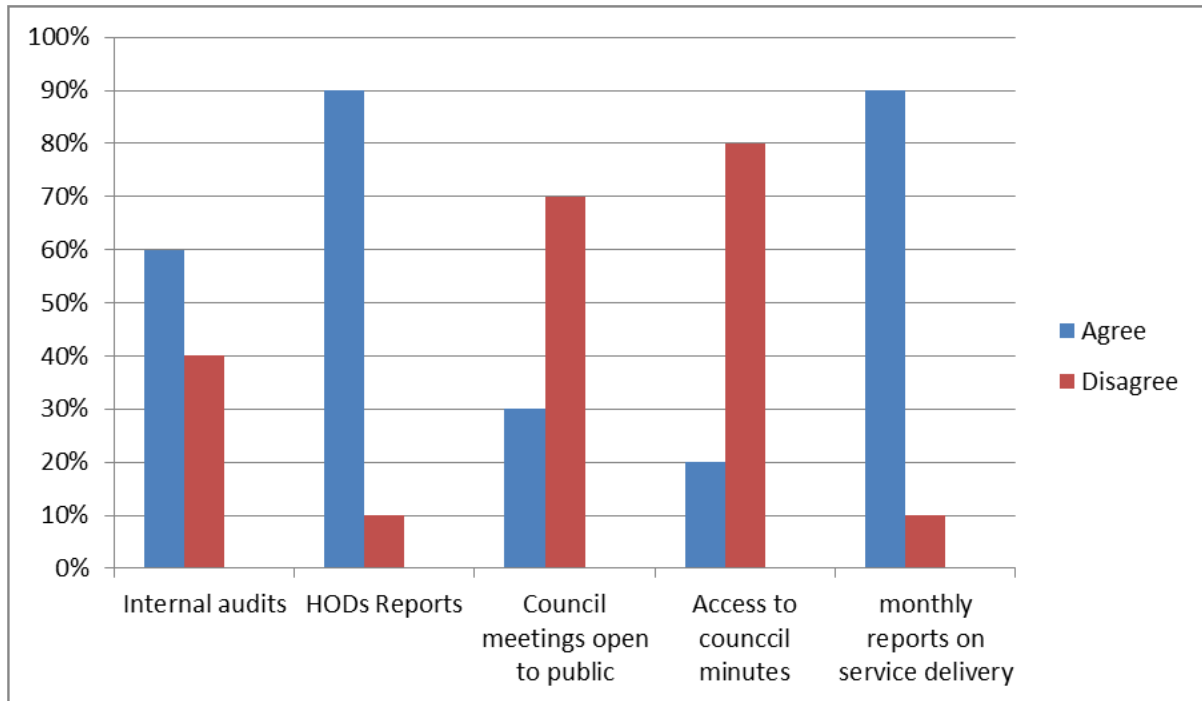
Data indicates that 20% agreed and 80% disagree to the issue of access to council minutes. One respondent highlighted that if one asks for the minutes from council officials they always give excuses and uncooperative responses. Another respondent states that council officials always cite the issue of confidentiality of council minutes therefore they are not for public consumption. It can be noted that from the response percentage the council is failing to abide to the transparency and accountability principles. Generally accessibility to council minutes is very difficult amongst employees themselves which will assist to make informed decisions within the council.

Head of department's reports

Research results shows that 90% agreed and 10% disagreed to the aspect of HODs reports. HODs write reports to the CEO as a measure to ensure transparency and accountability of council employees. These reports are

written on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly basis highlighting ethical conduct of employees, projects, programs being done and the challenges facing the local authority to fully implement changes from within.

Figure 1: Ways towards upholding ethical standards at Chiredzi Town Council



Code of ethics/conduct

From the findings 70% agreed and 30% disagreed to the existence of a Code of Conduct/ethics at Chiredzi Town Council. The Code enshrines the ethical conduct of employees at Chiredzi Town Council. This is supported by Burke (2002) who highlights that code of conduct/ethics can be employed in an organisation as a measure to adhere to the ethical standards. However, research findings had it that only employees are guided by the Code of conduct, councillors who play a pivotal note are not governed by the conduct and the code is now too old can no longer address the current trends of the organisation. More so other employees are not aware of the existence of a code of conduct/ethics this is supported by Bates, (2000) who states that old codes become irrelevant because of the changes in organisations. One respondent stated that even though there is a code of conduct, those who breach even go unpunished. From the findings gathered the researcher established that poor enforcement of the code of conduct/ethics results in a rise in unethical practices among council officials and ultimately negatively affecting the provision of service delivery by the local authority.

Ethics training

Data gathered indicates that ethics training at Chiredzi Town Council is not being taken seriously 30% of the respondents agreed and 70% disagreed to ethics training at Chiredzi Town Council. From the findings the majority of respondents have never been involved in ethics training and some are not even aware of the meaning of that subject. Ethics training is intended to allow members to meet their obligations and to comply with the



organisation's ethical standards and requirements. This is supported by the OECD (2013) that highlighted that ethics training for public officials is one of the instruments for building integrity in state institutions and ensuring quality cooperate governance. One should note that the absence of ethics training implies virtue ethics is not being imparted within the officials and this result in unethical practices that greatly compromise the provision of efficient and effective service delivery.

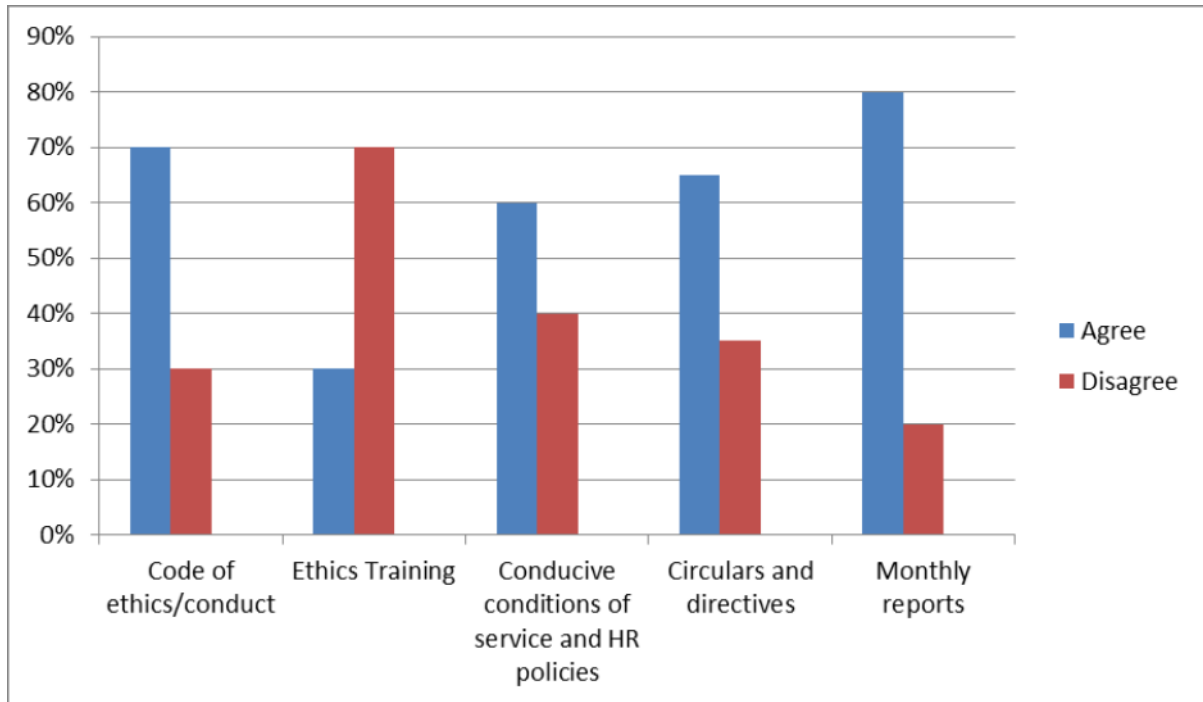
Conducive Conditions of Service and HR Policies

Data gathered indicated that 60% of the respondents agreed and 40% disagreed to the aspect of conducive conditions of service and HR policies. The percentage of respondents who agreed is slightly fair indicating that the conditions of service are not satisfactory. One respondent highlighted that salaries for the junior officials are no longer being paid at the end of the month but the top officials and councillors would have received their monies. Bradfordnut (2012) define conditions of service as terms on which employees are coactively employed and this incorporates issues like working conditions of the workplace, fulfilment of the psychological contract, providing a healthy professional employment environment. Armstrong (2006) defines HR polices as continuing guidelines on the approach the organisation intends to adopt in managing its people and this in cooperates reward management system, recruitment and selection among others. It has to be observed that unsatisfactory conditions of service results in employees finding other survival skills that manifests in unethical behaviour and ultimately negatively affecting the provision of efficient and effective service delivery.

Circulars and directives from the ministry to ensure strict adherence to the Urban Councils Act chapter 29:15 and other legal provisions.

Data gathered indicates that 65% agreed and 35% disagreed to the issuance of circulars and directives so as to ensure good ethical conduct and behaviour. The Ministry of Local government, public works and National Housing sometimes issue circulars and directives to Local Authorities so as to ensure that they adhere to certain Legal provisions and ensuring ethical behaviour and integrity in the exercise of duties officials from the District Development Coordinator's office. The Ministry responsible issued a circular that ensured adherence to the 30:70 ratios, where 30% is to be directed to salaries for council officials and 70% towards service provision. However research, revealed that Chiredzi Town Council is not adhering to the circular as noted by the response in poor service delivery in business Centre as there is poor road network system. Chiredzi Residents Association member representing residents highlighted that residents are paying bills in time. In light of the above one can deduce failure to adhere to the circulars and directives results in ultra vires conduct by the council and hence negatively affecting the proper provision of service delivery.

Figure 2: Efforts to improve ethical standards at Chiredzi Town Council



Monthly reports

Data gathered indicates that 90% agreed and 10% disagreed that Chiredzi Town Council submits reports to the DDCs office in that corporate issues and service delivery status are encompassed. However, one respondent outlined that its monthly reports do not always give a true picture of what is transpiring on the ground. This is indicated by the service delivery reports in that the council exaggerates some of the information and failures are omitted.

Challenges faced in upholding ethical standards in local authorities

Political environment

The figure above reveals that 80% agreed and 20% disagreed to the impact of politics on the practice of ethics at the council. One of the respondents highlights that a councillor is supposed to dance the tune of the political party that one belongs to and in most cases such individual will have to bend the ethical rules so as to further the party's interest. More so another respondent indicates that political patronage is one of the unethical practices common at the council, councillors would like to reward their supporters hence favouritism in tenders promotions and recruitment and selection. One of the respondents reiterated that the process of recruitment and selection and promotion is done along party lines. The findings are consistent with Dryden (1968) who argues that councillors are politicians who assail to power through a democratic process of election, this has seen party politics enrol in local government: the councillors are fielded by their political parties to represent party interests in the governance of local authorities. Lawrence and Rodger (2009) support this by arguing that councils are colonized by dominant party agenda. Jonga (2009), cited that there has been a conflict of view and

ideology, approach between The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Party (ZANU-PF). These are the dominant parties in the council and expected to come with resolutions together yet their ideologies differ.

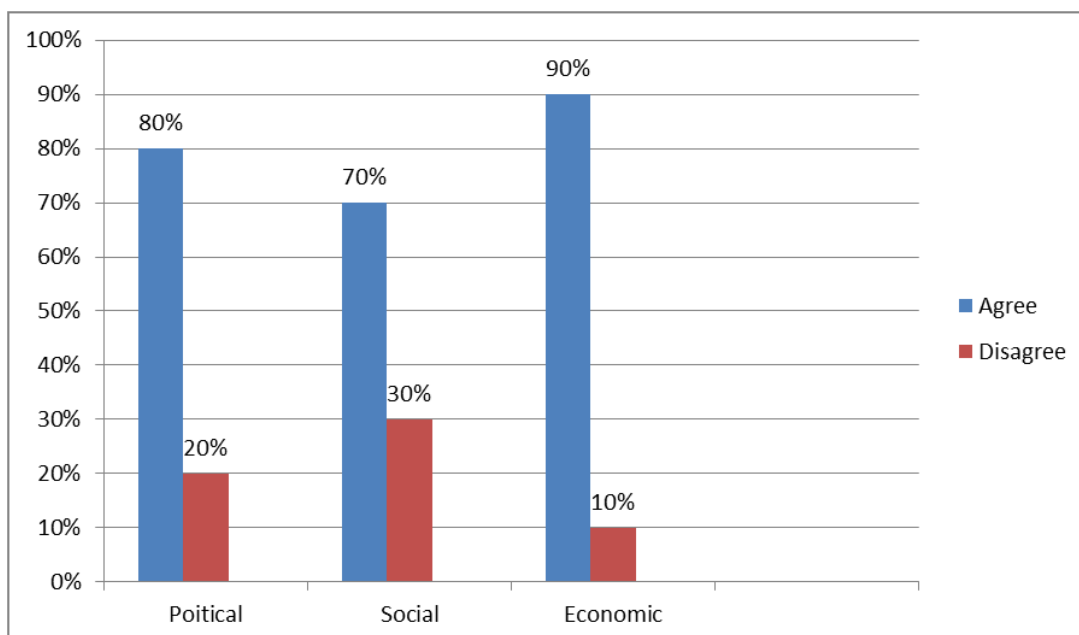
Economic environment

Data reveals that 90% agreed and 10% disagreed to the economic impact on the practice of ethics at the council. On respondent highlights that due to the hard economic scenario the council is failing to conduct ethical training programs. Another respondent reiterated that employees are sometimes not timeously paid and this exposes them to embark in unethical practices in a bid to make ends meet. More so the findings outline that period of 2008 that was characterized by high levels of inflation exposed council officials to unethical practices since they could not live on their salaries and up to now this has become a culture embedded in them. The research findings were in consistent with Darly (2008), who asserts that the ethical conduct of employees is affected by the economic environment they are exposed to.

Social Environment

Research findings highlight that 70% agreed and 30% disagreed to the impact of social environment on the practice of ethics at the council. One respondent clearly states that nepotism is manifesting at the council, recruitment and selection is now being done basing on whom you know. If one does not have a relative at the council the chances of securing a job are very slim. Another respondent highlights the issue of self-enrichment by some officials. This is supported by Kalaer (2000) who assets that African society places a great emphasis on success and accumulation of great wealth.

Figure 3: Challenges faced in upholding ethical standards in local authorities





5. Discussion and Conclusions

The study has managed to highlight views from respondents on entrenching ethics in Zimbabwean Local Authorities. The study established the rationale of ethical standards at Chiredzi Town Council. There is a tremendous waste of organisational energy when an official does something unethical. Significant time is spent responding to committees and disciplinary meetings. The employee morale becomes negatively affected. The key positions to the public servants in local government find themselves in enormous discretionary powers that make the need for ethics even more important. Since public servants are accountable to the people their actions should be explainable as ethical. The study also established that Audits are carried out in various forms that are financial, assets audits and this highlighted that the carrying out of audits relies on the fact that who is being investigated since some of the auditors tend to overlook some of the issues due to personal relations.

The study revealed that the efforts put in place to improve ethical standards at Chiredzi Town Council that includes a code of ethics/conduct is however, outdated and not religiously followed. Circulars and directives from the Ministry of Local Government Public Works and National Housing that ensures strict adherence to the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 and other related legal provisions governing operations of Local government. It also established that transparency and accountability mechanisms at Chiredzi Town Council are strengthened and cemented through HOD report, internal and external audits, monthly reports submitted to the District Development Coordinator's office on the state of service delivery, council meetings open to the public and the minutes available to the public for scrutiny and also the committee system that ensures accountability such as the audit committees, HRD committees among others.

The research established the challenges faced in upholding ethical standards in local authorities at Chiredzi Town Council. The party politics affects conduct of council officials, councillors and this result in patronage tendencies. Economic atmosphere that is unstable results in self-enrichment tendencies by most council officials and councillors. The social environment cannot be left out since aspects of culture, family relations results in council officials not adhering to the good ethical practices end up in nepotism tendencies.

In light of the above, the study concludes that it is imperative to improve ethical standards in the operations of Zimbabwean local Authorities in order to ensure upholding of good ethical conduct and ultimately improving the provision of efficient and effective service delivery.

6. Recommendations

Having looked at the conclusion drawn from the study, the research managed to come up with recommendations in a bid to ensure ethics is improved in Zimbabwean Local Authorities and ultimately cultivating good ethical behaviour.

There is a greater need for the local authorities to update local council's code of conduct such that it addresses all current unethical issues.



Code of ethics is the source of ethical guidance and defines what is right or wrong in an organisation. The code of conduct should be religiously adhered to and include the councillors since they are part and parcel of the organization and their ethical conduct greatly affects council operations.

There is need for the local authorities to conduct periodic ethical training programs for the council officials, councillors and other stakeholders in order to ensure that good ethical conduct is cultivated and ultimately stamp the occurrence of unethical practices within the organisation.

Employees should be trained on ethical issues at induction and as an ongoing activity so as to raise ethical consciousness, impart ethical skills and inculcate organisation value system.

Council officials should be made to understand that corruption is detrimental and greatly affect service delivery. Organisations like the Residents Associations should be made to understand and the ward coordinators representing residents such that they avoid conniving with council officials and this fights bribery, favouritism and nepotism more so residents will be in a position to understand mechanisms in place to report unethical practices.

Timeous payment of salaries of council employees should be paid well in time such that the tendency of engaging in unethical practices is reduced.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, and methodology, F.J and G.Z.; writing original draft preparation and data nalysis, B.H. and H.M.

Funding: "This research received no external funding."

Conflicts of Interest: "The authors declare no conflict of interest."

References

- Armstrong, M. (2006) A handbook of Human Resources Management 10th edition, Kagan page limited: London
- Bishop, P.J. and Preston,N. (2000) Local Government, Public Enterprise and ethics. Sydney: Federation Press.
- Bradfordnut T (2012) Fundamentals of HRM Bradford nut
- Chigudu, D., 2020, 'Public sector corporate governance: Zimbabwe's challenges of strategic management in the wake of sustainable development', Academy of Strategic Management Journal 19(1), 1–13.
- Darly (2008) Finance ethics; Critical Issues in Theory and practice, Wiley and Sons Publishers: Amazon.
- Deon, A (2010) Ethics Infrastructure. University of Chicago press: Chicago
- Dryden, W (1968) Ethics guidelines in training and examination handbook, Nottingham, EATA
- Government of Zimbabwe (1996) Rural District Councils Act Chapter 29:13, Government printers: Harare
- Government of Zimbabwe (1996) Urban Council Act Chapter 29:15, Government printers: Harare
- Jonga, W (2009) Urban Local Governance in the Crucible: Empirical Overtones of Central Government Meddling In Local Councils Affairs in Zimbabwe. Ethiopian Civil Service College: Addis Ababa



Mukonza, R .M (2011) Anti-corruption and local governance in Zimbabwe. A case of Chitungwiza Municipality
Journal of US China Public Administration, Vol 10 No .1 pp 39-48

Nyikadzino, T. & Vyas-Doorgapersad, S., 2020, 'The devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities in post-independent Zimbabwe', *African Renaissance* 17(1), 233–251. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2020/17n1a11>

OECD (2005) Managing conflict of interest in the public sector. A tool kit, OECD publishing: Paris

Sithole, A (2013) Corruption in Zimbabwean Urban Local Authorities: A case of Gweru City Council: *Asian journal of social sciences and humanities* Vol 2 No 3 pp 126-133

Wilson, J (1998) Culture and ethics, *Journal of Business ethics*: New York

Vyas-Doorgapersad, S., 2012, 'Decentralization and capacity building: Paradigm shifts in local self-governance', *African Journal of Public Affairs* 5(2), 130–141.

Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. & Aktan, C.C., 2017, 'Progression from ideal state to good governance: An introductory overview', *International Journal of Business and Management Studies* 9(1), 29–49.