



Working Paper No. 203

Economic prosperity and public backing for transparent and accountable governance in Africa

by Nnaemeka Ohamadike and Emmanuel Chukwuebuka Orakwe | April 2024

Working Paper No. 203

Economic prosperity and public backing for transparent and accountable governance in Africa

by Nnaemeka Ohamadike and Emmanuel Chukwuebuka Orakwe | April 2024

Nnaemeka Ohamadike is a data analyst and researcher in the Governance Insights and Analytics programme at Good Governance Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8633-8103>. Email: nnaemeka@gga.org

Emmanuel Chukwuebuka Orakwe is a lecturer at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7165-5651>. Email: emmanuel.orakwe@funai.edu.ng

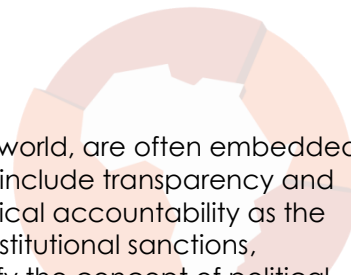
Abstract

This paper analyses how economic factors shape public attitudes toward transparent and accountable governance in Africa, a topic that has been underexplored. While many policies and programmes have been implemented to combat corruption and promote accountability in Africa, little is known about how economic factors shape Africans' perceptions of these principles. We investigate this using data from Afrobarometer Round 8 surveys conducted in 34 African countries. Our results show the significant role of economic factors in shaping attitudes. While being a citizen of a wealthy African country can decrease support for transparent and accountable governance, living in a less affluent country increases the odds of prioritising it. The study not only unearths the role of economic factors in shaping public attitudes toward the two governance ideals but also highlights challenges and opportunities that arise from this nexus.

Keywords: Economic factors; transparency; accountability; corruption; governance; democracy; public attitudes; Africa; Afrobarometer

Acknowledgements

We thank Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz for his helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.



Introduction

Popular demands for social justice in Africa, as in the rest of the world, are often embedded in calls for better governance (Gray & Khan, 2010), which often include transparency and accountability. Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin (1999) define political accountability as the capacity of citizens to exert control over their leaders through institutional sanctions, especially through elections. Lindberg's (2009) attempt to simplify the concept of political accountability resonates with Ohamadike (2022), who defines political accountability as the link between citizens (the principal) and government or public officials (the agents) tasked with safeguarding the rights and aspirations of the populace. This link forms a social contract upon which the agents (government or public officials) can be held accountable for their actions, with the principal having the privilege to impose sanctions on the agents, which can include removing them from their positions of power.

Political transparency and accountability complement one another, but popular support for these ideals varies widely at the country level in Africa. Both ideals can be considered "matching parts" in governance (Hood, 2010). Transparency entails making government information accessible to the public, which gives citizens the knowledge needed to hold officials accountable. Accountability, on the other hand, requires that public officials justify their actions and decisions, which can be done by adhering to the citizens' demands (Armah-Attah, Ampratwum, & Paller, 2014). Addressing citizens' demands is important for government to remain popular and relevant to the people.

Although experts have long connected transparency and accountability with strong government performance, citizens vary in how much they prioritise or even support these concepts. One factor that might impact how citizens form these attitudes is economic well-being. This question – the impact of economic performance on attitudes about accountability and transparency – is underexplored.

We argue that lower levels of economic development are associated with higher citizen support for accountability and transparency. Due to the pervasive poor economic outlook in most African societies, much of the citizenry is gruelingly aware of deep-seated government corruption and poor government responsiveness to citizen needs, which they often feel powerless to tackle (Franz, 2012). Citizens of less-prosperous economies might perceive transparent and accountable governance as a means to address urgent economic issues, allowing them to get more from their government. Conversely, economic prosperity can incentivise individuals to back a government that seems to be achieving results independently, diminishing citizens' insistence on changes, such as government transparency and accountability. This perspective emerges from trust in the government's competence, which could cultivate complacency regarding the necessity of transparency and accountability. To test this hypothesis, we conduct a multilevel logistic regression analysis using data from the Afrobarometer Round 8 survey. We find that economic factors significantly influence attitudes. Citizenship in a prosperous African country is associated with lower support for transparent and accountable governance, whereas living in a less affluent country is associated with heightened prioritisation.

This paper is structured as follows: Part 2 discusses the research methodology, covering the data, data sources, and analytical techniques. In the results section, findings from a sample of 48,084 Africans are presented. Concluding discussions follow in Part 4.

Methodology

The data used in this study were obtained from various sources, including the Afrobarometer Round 8 survey. Round 8 covers 34 countries – 18 countries surveyed between July 2019 and April 2020 and 16 countries surveyed (after a hiatus due to COVID-19) between October 2020 and July 2021 (Afrobarometer, 2023). The survey aimed to create a representative cross-section of adult citizens in each country by employing a national probability sample of 1,200 to 2,400 respondents. This approach resulted in country-level results with a margin of sampling

error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95 per cent confidence level.¹ To ensure accuracy, random selection methods were utilised at every stage of sampling, which provided every adult citizen with an equal chance of being selected for an interview. Moreover, a probability proportionate to the population size was used whenever possible, which ensured that more populous geographic units had a proportionally higher likelihood of being included in the sample (Afrobarometer, n.d.). Interviews were conducted face to face in the respondent's preferred language. The overall survey approach guaranteed a nationally representative sample and provided reliable data for analysis.

Dependent variables

The Afrobarometer survey incorporated questions that explored respondents' knowledge of and attitudes toward various sociopolitical and economic issues in Africa, with two specific questions of interest for this study. The first focused on political accountability, while the second aimed to measure support for transparency in government.

Survey question relating to political accountability

Question 22: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*

Statement 1: *It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have no influence over what it does.*

Statement 2: *It is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly.*

Respondents had the following options: Agree very strongly with Statement 1, Agree with Statement 1, Agree very strongly with Statement 2, Agree with Statement 2, Agree with neither, Don't know.

Survey question relating to transparency

Question 39B: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Information held by public authorities is only for use by government officials; it should not have to be shared with the public.*

The available response options for this question were Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, and Don't know.

For each of the two questions, we create a dichotomous dummy variable from the responses. For the question on political accountability, we code all "Agree very strongly" and "Agree" responses to Statement 1 as 1, while all other responses are coded as 0 to indicate lower support for political accountability. For the question on transparency, we code all "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses as 1 to indicate higher support for transparency of information held by public authorities, while the rest are coded as 0 to indicate lower levels of such support.

In theory, endorsing the transparency of public authorities synergises with holding public officials accountable by granting citizens access to information to monitor official actions (Androniceanu, 2021). This transparency empowers citizens to oversee the activities and decisions of agents and ensure their accountability. In our data set, this connection reflects a 0.07 correlation ($p < 0.001$) between the dependent variables, a relatively low correlation coefficient, indicating that these are distinct concepts in respondents' eyes, yet they are related at a statistically significant level.

¹ The sampling error margin in Afrobarometer surveys depends not only on the sample size but also on the sample design, which incorporates stratification, clustering, and weights, and the commonly used approximation of plus or minus 2 or 3 percentage points provides a reasonable estimation of 95% confidence intervals (Alence, 2019).

Following Inman and Andrews (2014), Ohamadike and Orakwe (2023), and Nganje (2022), we dichotomise the dependent variables. This simplifies results interpretation, converting patterns into a straightforward “agree” and “disagree” comparison, which is particularly effective as responses within each group exhibit strong similarity. This approach extends to certain other predictors, enabling examination of the impact of specific responses on the dependent variables. For instance, dichotomising the age variable into “youth (aged 35 years and below)” and “non-youth (aged 36 years and above)” enables an understanding of how these two groups perceive transparent and accountable governance and the underlying reasons.

Main independent variables

The main independent variables, focused on economic conditions and outlook in the African countries, are sourced from Afrobarometer’s Round 8 survey and the World Bank. They include the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of the surveyed countries in 2020, from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2023a), and individuals’ perceptions of their country’s economic conditions, measured using Afrobarometer Question 4a. These two variables provide a comprehensive way of examining how economic conditions in African countries are related to public backing for transparent and accountable governance. While GDP per capita offers an objective, country-level measure of the economic outlook in the surveyed countries, individuals’ perceptions provide a subjective way of checking the robustness of the results of the objective measure. This dual approach allows for cross-validation of findings from perceptive and objective data.

We note that, at the individual level, our interest is in people’s subjective evaluation of their country’s economic conditions, which is closely related to GDP per capita – our objective, country-level measure of economic outlook.

Afrobarometer’s Round 8 survey incorporated Question 4a to gauge participants’ subjective evaluation of their country’s economic situation. This question allowed respondents to express their sentiments regarding the economic state, thereby capturing a qualitative insight into the populace’s views on the prevailing economic circumstances in their countries. The question asked was:

Question 4a: In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?

The response options were: Very bad, Fairly bad, Neither good nor bad, Fairly good, Very good, Don’t know. For this question, we code all “fairly good” and “very good” responses as 1 to indicate a positive perception of the economy, while all other responses are coded as 0 to indicate a negative perception. As highlighted earlier, this dichotomisation of responses streamlines the interpretation of results, enabling a direct contrast between positive and negative perceptions in this context.

Individual-level control variables

The individual-level control variables are sourced from Afrobarometer’s Round 8 survey.

Popular support for transparent and accountable governance is likely influenced by people’s absolute individual experience of poverty. To account for this, we employ Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (Mattes, 2020; Isbell, 2023). This index was constructed using five Afrobarometer Round 8 questions:

Questions 7a-e: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?

A range of response options were offered: Never, Just once or twice, Several times, Many times, Always, and Don't know (Mattes, 2020). We include this as a separate control at the individual level, while our main variables of interest focus on country-level conditions.

We control for demographic variables such as age, educational attainment (ranging from 0-9 to indicate levels from no formal education to postgraduate education), gender, and location (urban/rural), as they are commonly used in the literature (Isbell, 2023). We also control for citizens' trust in their ruling party, considering that individuals who trust their country's ruling party might evaluate them as transparent and accountable, per the principal-agent model (Mabillard & Pasquier, 2015).

Except for education attainment, the remaining individual-level control variables are represented as dummy variables (0, 1) derived from various survey questions (Table 1). Since it is difficult to establish clear thresholds for dichotomising low and high educational levels, we avoid dichotomising this variable.

Table 1: Coding scheme for individual-level control variables

Variable name	Coding categories
Age	Youth (aged 35 years and below) = 1
	Non-youth (aged 36 years and above) = 0
Gender	Female = 1
	Male = 0
Location	Rural = 1
	Urban/Semi-urban = 0
Trust the ruling party	Distrust the ruling party = 1
	Trust the ruling party = 0

Country-level control variables

The country-level control variables are included in the analysis to account for broader contextual factors that might influence the relationship between economic factors and public attitudes toward transparent and accountable governance. The variables were measured based on 2020 data from a host of databases. The population variable from the World Development Indicators was used to measure country size. We control for this as high population growth can hinder the provision of socio-economic and political needs, especially when resources per capita are limited (Simmons, 1977; Gallup, Sachs, & Mellinger, 1998; Ezeh, Bongaarts, Mberu, 2012).

To evaluate the level of democratic governance, we utilise data from the Varieties of Democracy (2023) V-Dem data set, specifically the component related to liberal democracy. We control for this as African democracies have often outperformed autocratic ones on good governance and other socioeconomic indicators, which allows citizens to get more from their governments (Alence, 2023). Also, citizens of more democratic countries may be more open to evaluating their country's political landscape. Additionally, we use the "political stability and absence of violence/terrorism" variable from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank, 2023b) to measure the level of political stability in the various African countries. We include this in the models to control how diverse levels of political stability might shape support for transparent and accountable governance.

We employ a correlation analysis to rule out multicollinearity among the predictors included in each model. The results of the correlation analysis are included in the Appendix.

Table 2: Summary statistics of each variable (N=48,084)²

Statistic	Mean	St. dev.	Min	Pctl (25)	Median	Pctl (75)	Max
Perception of political accountability	0.6	0.5	0	0	1	1	1
Perception of transparency	0.6	0.5	0	0	1	1	1
Location/residence	0.5	0.5	0	0	1	1	1
Lived Poverty Index	1.3	0.9	0.0	0.6	1.2	2.0	4.0
Age	0.5	0.5	0	0	1	1	1
Trust the ruling party	0.3	0.5	0	0	0	1	1
Educational attainment	3.5	2.3	0	2	4	5	9
Gender	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	1	1
Perception of country's economic condition	0.3	0.4	0	0	0	1	1
GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	583,816.3	1,046,304.0	451.6	17,997.8	168,027.5	497,660.7	5,359,616.0
Political stability	-0.6	0.8	-2.1	-1.1	-0.5	-0.1	1.0
Liberal democracy	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.7
Population	34,665,697	42,052,491	582,640	8,442,580	24,333,639	44,440,486	208,327,405

Method of data analysis

We conduct the analyses for this study using Version 4.2.1 of the R statistical software. Due to the hierarchical structure of the data and the binary nature of the dependent variables, the study employs multilevel logistic regression to estimate the impact of both individual-level and country-level predictors on the dependent variables. Multilevel models, also called hierarchical or mixed-effect models, are frequently employed in regression analysis for nested or clustered data, where cases within the same group are expected to exhibit similarities while maintaining independence from cases in other groups (Nganje, 2022). For this study's multilevel analysis, the observations or responses are clustered by the countries included in the survey. This helps account for country-specific factors that might confound the results.

By employing multilevel or mixed models, we can explore the relationship between predictor and outcome variables both within and between groups (Fox & Weisberg, 2019; Nganje, 2022). Multilevel models consist of both fixed and random effects, where the fixed effects assume that the relationship between the outcome variables and the predictors is consistent for all observations, while the random effects capture between-group variation in the effects of the predictors on the outcome variables (Nganje, 2022; Ohamadike, 2023). Statistical significance in this study was determined at the 95% ($p < 0.05$) confidence level.

² The recoded versions of the individual-level variables are presented here. This excludes "Don't know," "Refused," and "Missing" values.

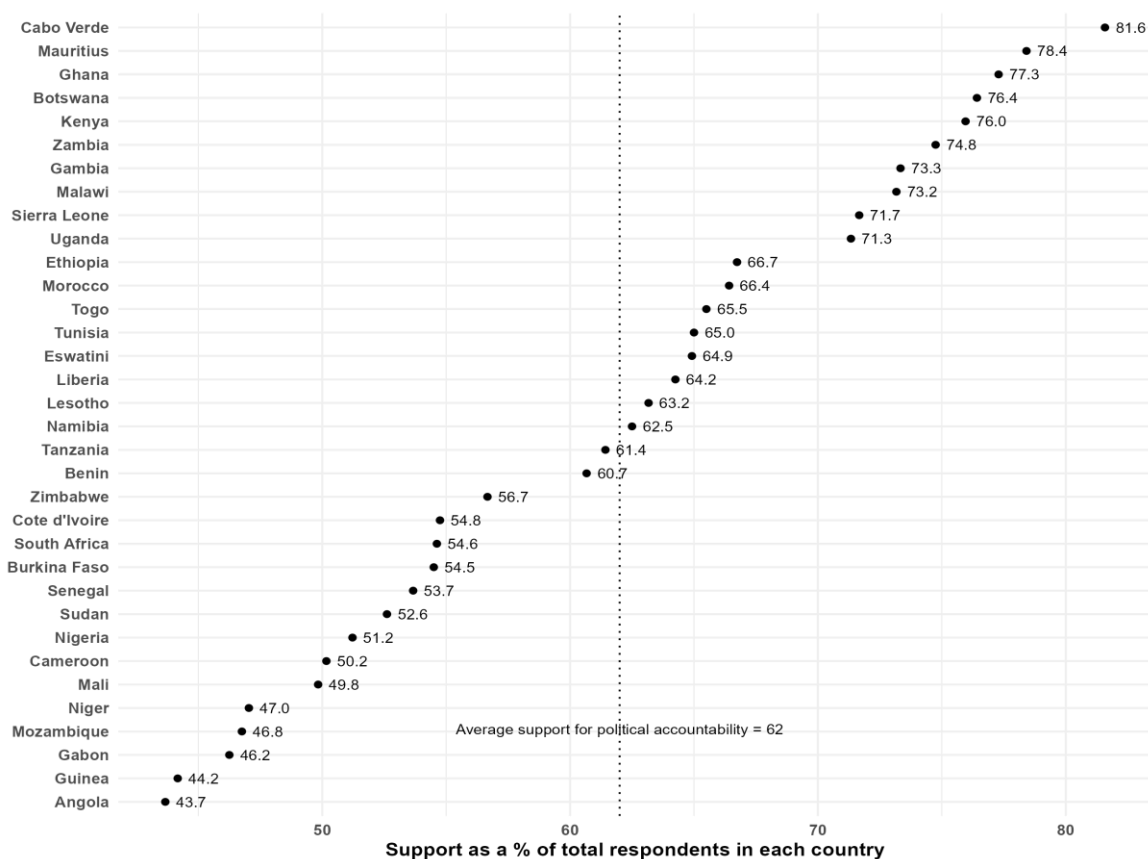
Results

Public perceptions of political accountability

More than six in 10 Africans (62%) expressed support for government-to-citizen accountability, indicating a widespread desire for elected officials to be transparent and responsive to citizens' needs. This is hardly surprising considering the low levels of political accountability on the continent (Ohamadike, 2022). However, 36% did not express support, suggesting that a significant portion of the African population desires fast results and may perceive accountability as a potential obstacle to this.

Figure 1 provides cross-national comparisons of support for government-to-citizen accountability across Africa as a percentage of respondents in each country. The data reveal substantial variation across countries. Notably, respondents in Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Ghana, Botswana, and Kenya demonstrate strong support for political accountability, with levels surpassing the 75% mark. Similarly, respondents in Zambia, the Gambia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Uganda exhibit support above 70%. In contrast, respondents in Niger, Mozambique, Gabon, Guinea, and Angola show support below 50%, with a significant portion of countries falling below the 34-country average mark of 62%.³ These significant differences not only underscore the diversity of attitudes and perspectives on government accountability across the continent but also emphasise the importance of examining how economic factors shape such diversity.

Figure 1: Support for government-to-citizen accountability



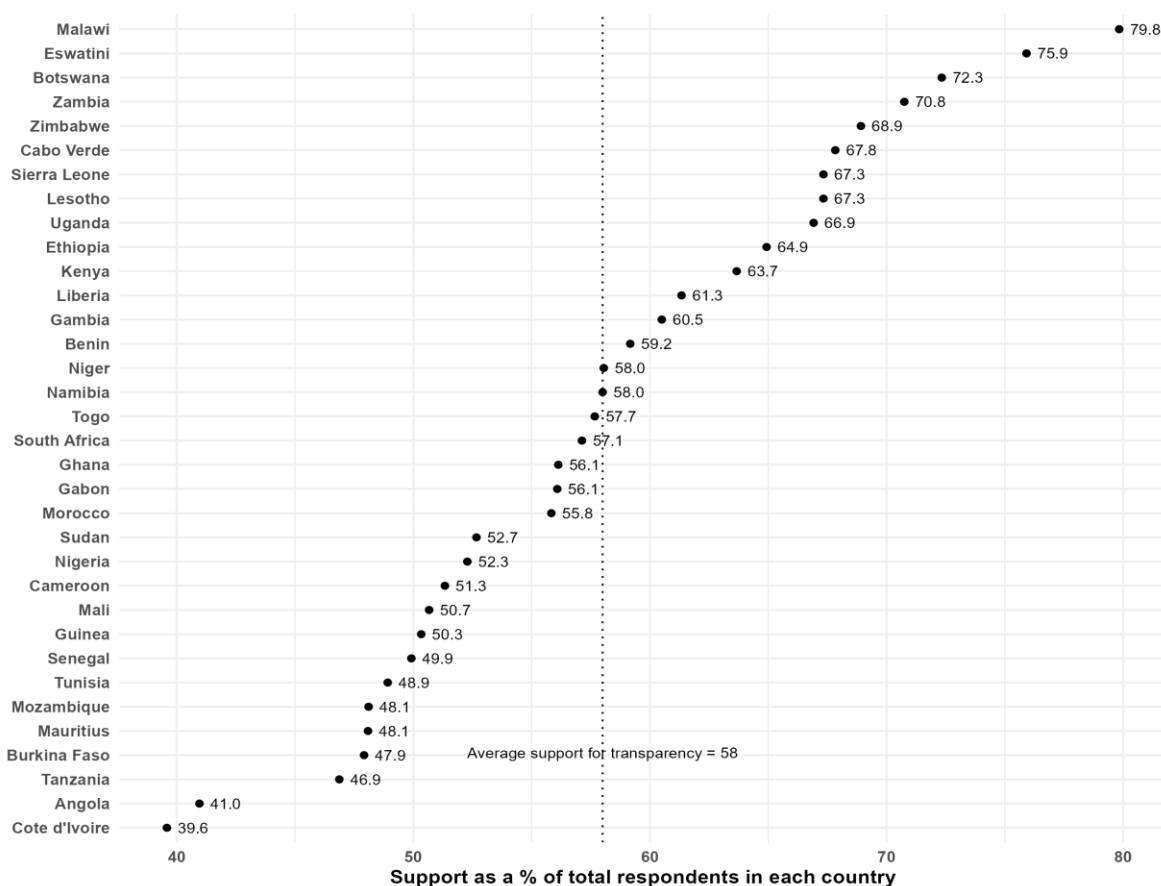
³ The 34-country average was calculated by pooling the results of the 34 countries and taking their unweighted arithmetic mean.

Public perceptions of transparency of information held by public authorities

Regarding transparency, 58% of Africans expressed support for transparency of information held by public authorities. This signifies a strong demand for more transparent practices, which are vital for enabling informed decision-making, holding government officials accountable, and combating corruption. However, it is essential to note that 33% did not express support, suggesting varying perspectives on or potential reservations about the desired extent of transparency in governance.

Figure 2 further illustrates a cross-national pattern consistent with the findings in Figure 1, showing significant variation in support for transparency of information held by public authorities. These findings highlight the need to address and enhance support levels for transparency in Africa, especially as one-third of the people in Africa do not support the transparency of information held by their public authorities. Notably, support exceeded 75% in only Malawi and Eswatini, and 70% in Botswana and Zambia. Meanwhile, Tunisia, Mozambique, Mauritius, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Angola, and Côte d'Ivoire recorded support below 50%, with a substantial number of countries falling below the 58% average mark for the 34 surveyed countries.

Figure 2: Support for transparency of information held by public authorities



Taken together, these findings highlight the polarised debate about transparency of public authorities and accountability of government officials and the need to address the concerns and perceptions of citizens who express lower levels of support for political accountability and transparency in Africa.

Regression results: Support for political accountability

Table 3 displays the coefficients and standard errors for the binary logit (M1) and mixed-effects (M2) models that examine how economic factors shape public attitudes toward transparent and accountable governance.

Table 3: Support for accountability (logit, mixed effects)

	Dependent variable: Support for political accountability	
	Binary logit (M1)	Mixed effects (M2)
Positive perception of economic condition	-0.147*** (0.022)	-0.156*** (0.023)
Educational attainment	0.043*** (0.005)	0.049*** (0.005)
Female	-0.061*** (0.019)	-0.063*** (0.020)
Youth	-0.048** (0.020)	-0.038* (0.020)
Rural	0.158*** (0.021)	0.040* (0.022)
Distrust ruling party	0.102*** (0.022)	0.186*** (0.024)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.045*** (0.011)	0.021* (0.012)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.025*** (0.004)	-0.023 (0.028)
Political stability	0.273*** (0.020)	0.339*** (0.130)
Liberal democracy	0.702*** (0.071)	0.588 (0.464)
Population (log)	0.042*** (0.010)	0.049 (0.068)
Constant	-0.100 (0.168)	-0.214 (1.109)
Observations	47,880	47,880
Log likelihood	-31,216.120	-30,465.350
Akaike information criterion	62,456.250	60,956.710
Bayesian information criterion		61,070.800

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

The regression results presented in both models in Table 3 support our hypothesis regarding the influence of economic factors on public attitudes toward political accountability in Africa. In line with the conjectured framework, the results indicate that, controlling for other factors, citizenship within a prosperous or economically thriving African country correlates with a diminished inclination to endorse the idea of holding government officials accountable to the populace. This implies that the prevailing economic landscape in such

countries can induce individuals to back a government that can deliver outcomes without necessitating their influence over its actions. This line of thinking suggests a perception that the government's performance has been satisfactory, potentially engendering complacency toward the imperative of governance accountability. This perspective also presents challenges, which are discussed in subsequent sections.

This resonates at both the country level (as measured by GDP per capita) and the individual level (as indicated by a positive perception of the economic condition) but is particularly pronounced at the individual level. The pattern also shows that lower economic ratings correspond to heightened support for accountable governance. This implies that Africans in countries with lower economic performance may perceive accountable governance as an avenue to address pressing economic concerns.

Certain control variables also display meaningful patterns. The constructed Lived Poverty Index shows a negative correlation with support for accountability, albeit only in the first model. This indicates that Africans experiencing higher levels of "lived poverty" are less likely to prioritise accountable governance. This implies a desire for prompt and tangible outcomes in this group. Essentially, poorer individuals are inclined toward a government that exhibits efficacy in improving living conditions, even if this effectiveness comes at the expense of their influence over its actions. Within this perspective, attributes such as accountability and the ability to shape governance processes are regarded as supplementary to the primary objective of expeditious results. The results show how a country's economic condition (on subjective and objective levels) and people's actual lived experiences of poverty can shape support for accountability in different ways. While lower economic ratings or performance correspond to heightened support for accountable governance, personal experiences of poverty diminish the priority accorded to it in favour of more immediate outcomes.

The positive and significant relationship between educational attainment and support for political accountability, on the other hand, suggests that individuals with higher levels of education tend to be more supportive of political accountability, potentially due to their increased awareness of democratic principles, institutional processes, and the benefits of transparency and accountability in governance. Similarly, distrust in the ruling party and residing in a rural area both show significant positive relationships with support for accountability. In contrast, being female reduces the likelihood of expressing support for political accountability, although the underlying reasons for this relationship may require further investigation.

At the country level, political stability displays a strong positive association with support for political accountability in both models. The positive coefficient suggests that countries with higher levels of political stability tend to have greater support for political accountability. This finding aligns with the notion that stable political environments create conditions conducive to accountability mechanisms and citizen engagement. Similarly, the variable for liberal democracy is highly significant in Model 1, indicating a positive link with support for political accountability. In other words, a democratic environment in African countries influences the level of support for political accountability, with citizens in more robust democracies being more likely to express such support.

Regression results: Support for transparency of information held by public authorities

The findings in Table 4 on support for transparency of information held by public authorities paint a somewhat similar picture to our results on political accountability.

As in the prior findings, a favourable perception of economic conditions consistently exhibits a significant negative influence on support for transparency in both models. GDP per capita echoes this outcome, though confined to Model 1.

Table 4: Support for transparency of information held by public authorities (logit, mixed effects)

	Dependent variable: Support for transparency	
	Binary logit (M1)	Mixed effects (M2)
Positive perception of economic condition	-0.139*** (0.022)	-0.114*** (0.022)
Educational attainment	0.053*** (0.005)	0.058*** (0.005)
Female	-0.048** (0.020)	-0.038* (0.020)
Youth	0.063*** (0.019)	0.060*** (0.020)
Rural	0.099*** (0.020)	-0.013 (0.021)
Distrust ruling party	0.257*** (0.022)	0.289*** (0.023)
Lived Poverty Index	0.011 (0.011)	0.010 (0.012)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.023*** (0.004)	-0.024 (0.029)
Political stability	0.038** (0.019)	0.107 (0.132)
Liberal democracy	-0.009 (0.069)	-0.213 (0.476)
Population (log)	-0.058*** (0.010)	-0.041 (0.068)
Constant	1.290*** (0.163)	1.197 (1.102)
Observations	47,880	47,880
Log likelihood	-32,298.060	-31,573.350
Akaike information criterion	64,620.120	63,172.710
Bayesian information criterion		63,286.800

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

As hypothesised, the results underscore that, controlling for other factors, citizenship within a prosperous or economically flourishing African country correlates with a reduced propensity to support the transparency of information held by public authorities. This finding extends to the endorsement of government officials' accountability, a complementary notion as established earlier. This conveys that the economic landscape prevalent in such countries can potentially breed complacency toward the significance of accessing public authority-held information as well as the complementary accountability of government officials.

In contrast, Africans indicating lower economic ratings tend to exhibit a higher likelihood of rallying behind the transparency of such information. In essence, the economic climate in African countries emerges as a key force sculpting public attitudes toward both transparent and accountable governance. While a healthier economic backdrop corresponds with diminished support for such governance, a less robust economic performance motivates individuals to accord these governance aspects higher priority.

The control variables further exhibit a meaningful linkage with the dependent variable. Educational attainment, youth, and distrust in the ruling party all exhibit significant, positive relationships with support for transparency across both models. Except for the youth population variable, these factors consistently manifest a parallel association with support for both political accountability and transparency. This suggests a shared underlying motivation that drives the advocacy for openness and accessibility in governance.

At the group level, political stability demonstrates a positive and significant relationship with support for transparency. However, its significance diminishes when country-level differences are considered in the second model. This indicates that the influence of political stability on support for transparency may be contingent upon country-specific dynamics.

Overall, introducing country-level mixed effects in our models decreases the predictive capacity of GDP per capita and other predictors on the outcome variables. Unlike fixed-effects models (binary logit), which overlook country differences, the random-effects intercept in our mixed-effects models accounts for country-specific factors. These factors absorb some of the variability in the outcome variables attributed to each country's unique characteristics. Accounting for the distinct levels of support for transparent and accountable governance in our countries (figures 1 and 2) may alter the impact of GDP per capita while controlling for other confounding factors.

Implication of findings for the research hypothesis

The findings of this study carry significant implications for the research hypothesis that controlling for confounding factors, the economic prosperity of African countries is associated with lower support for transparent and accountable governance. The research demonstrates that our subjective and objective measures of economic prosperity in the surveyed countries exhibit a negative correlation with support for transparent and accountable governance and vice versa – albeit with limitations for GDP per capita. This suggests that being a citizen of a wealthy African country can decrease the likelihood of supporting transparent and accountable governance, while affiliation with a less affluent country increases the odds of prioritising such governance.

The findings highlight how enhanced economic performance can motivate individuals to rally behind a government capable of delivering results independently of their influence over the government's actions. This perspective indicates a belief in the government's competent performance, potentially fostering complacency toward the necessity of transparent and accountable governance. Conversely, individuals residing in less-thriving economies may perceive transparent and accountable governance as a route to address pressing economic concerns.

Conclusion

This study investigates the role of economic factors in public attitudes toward transparent and accountable governance in Africa and thus addresses a significant gap in the academic literature. To analyse the data, the study employs mixed-effects binary logistic regression using data sourced primarily from Afrobarometer's Round 8 survey. Supplementary data were obtained from the World Development Indicators, Worldwide Governance Indicators, and Varieties of Democracy databases.

The regression results support the idea that economic factors can play a significant role in explaining attitudes held by the African public toward transparent and accountable governance. Specifically, the perception of economic conditions and GDP per capita emerge as key factors shaping these attitudes. The former gauges the economic landscape at the subjective, individual level, while the latter provides an objective measure at the country level. The findings reveal that while being a citizen of a wealthy African country dampens the inclination to endorse transparent and accountable governance, affiliation

with a less economically prosperous country amplifies the propensity to rally behind such governance ideals.

The results also reveal the impact of sociopolitical factors, which were included as control variables, on transparent and accountable governance. Factors such as educational attainment, scepticism toward ruling parties, and country-level political stability collectively wield substantial influence on support for transparent and accountable governance.

However, foremost among these revelations is the role of economic factors in shaping the disposition of the African public toward these governance ideals. Individuals residing in less-prosperous economies are more likely to support transparent and accountable governance, perhaps because they see them as an avenue to address pressing economic concerns. Conversely, better economic performance can drive individuals to rally behind a government's transformative capacity, irrespective of their influence over the government's actions. While this perspective might breed confidence in the government's efficacy, it also gives rise to multifaceted challenges. The absence of effective oversight could enable misconduct, misallocation of resources, and policy deviations due to the principal's complacency or passivity. Furthermore, the potential for overlooking critical issues and compromising governance and public service quality highlights the need for ongoing monitoring and engagement from the principal.

Taken together, this study not only unearths the role of economic factors in shaping public attitudes on two important governance ideals but also highlights the challenges and opportunities that arise from this nexus. Ultimately, the path forward necessitates a balance between economic prosperity and vigilant governance to ensure enduring transparency, accountability, and prosperity for Africa.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question,
for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at
www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.



References

- Afrobarometer. (2023). Merged Round 8 data (34 countries) (2022).
- Afrobarometer. (n.d). Sampling.
- Alence, R. (2019). What the people of Africa think about international organisations. *Politeia*, 28(2), 1-20.
- Alence, R. (2023). Why African democracies govern better. Good Governance Africa.
- Androniceanu, A. (2021). Transparency in public administration as a challenge for a good democratic governance. *Revista Administratie Si Management Public*, 2021(36), 149-164.
- Armah-Attoh, D., Ampratwum, E., & Paller, J. (2014). Political accountability in Ghana: Evidence from Afrobarometer Round 5 survey. Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 136.
- Ezeh, A., Bongaarts, J., & Mberu, B. (2012). Global population trends and policy options. *Lancet*, 380, 142-148.
- Franz, E. (2012). Toa kitu kidogo: Corruption in East Africa. *In the Balance*, 1(1).
- Fox, J., & Weisberg, S. (2019). *An R companion to applied regression* (Third). Sage.
- Gallup, J., Sachs, J., & Mellinger, A. (1998). Geography and economic development. *International Regional Science Review*, 22, 179-232.
- Gray, H., & Khan, M. (2010). Good governance and growth in Africa: What can we learn from Tanzania? In Padayachee, V. (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Africa*. London: Routledge, pp. 339-356.
- Hood, C. (2010). Accountability and transparency: Siamese twins, matching parts, awkward couple? *West European Politics*, 33(5), 989-1009.
- Inman, K., & Andrews, J. T. (2015). Corruption and voting in Senegal: Evidence from experimental and survey research. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 9, 100-114.
- Isbell, T. (2023). Keeping up with the Dlaminis: Perceived inequalities and satisfaction with democracy in Africa. Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 199.
- Lindberg, S. I. (2009). Accountability: The core concept and its subtypes. Africa Power & Politics Working Paper No. 1.
- Mabillard, V., & Pasquier, M. (2015). Transparency and trust in government: A two-way relationship. *Yearbook of Swiss Administrative Sciences*, 6, 23-34.
- Mattes, R. (2020). Lived poverty on the rise: Decade of living-standard gains ends in Africa. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 62.
- Nganje, F. (2022). A multilevel analysis of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Ohamadike, N. (2022). Measuring political accountability in Africa using a multi-item index. *The Africa Governance Papers*, 2(1), 32-34.
- Ohamadike, N. (2023). Does education aid promote educational development in lower-middle-income countries? Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Ohamadike, N., & Orakwe, E. C. (2023). The role of education in the public perception of corruption in Sudan and Zimbabwe. *Politeia*, 41(1&2).
- Przeworski, A., Stokes, S. C., & Manin, B. (1999). *Democracy, accountability, and representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Simmons, G. (1977). People versus development: An overview of the economics of population growth. *Preventive Medicine*, 6(1), 4-29.
- Varieties of Democracy. (2023). The V-Dem dataset.

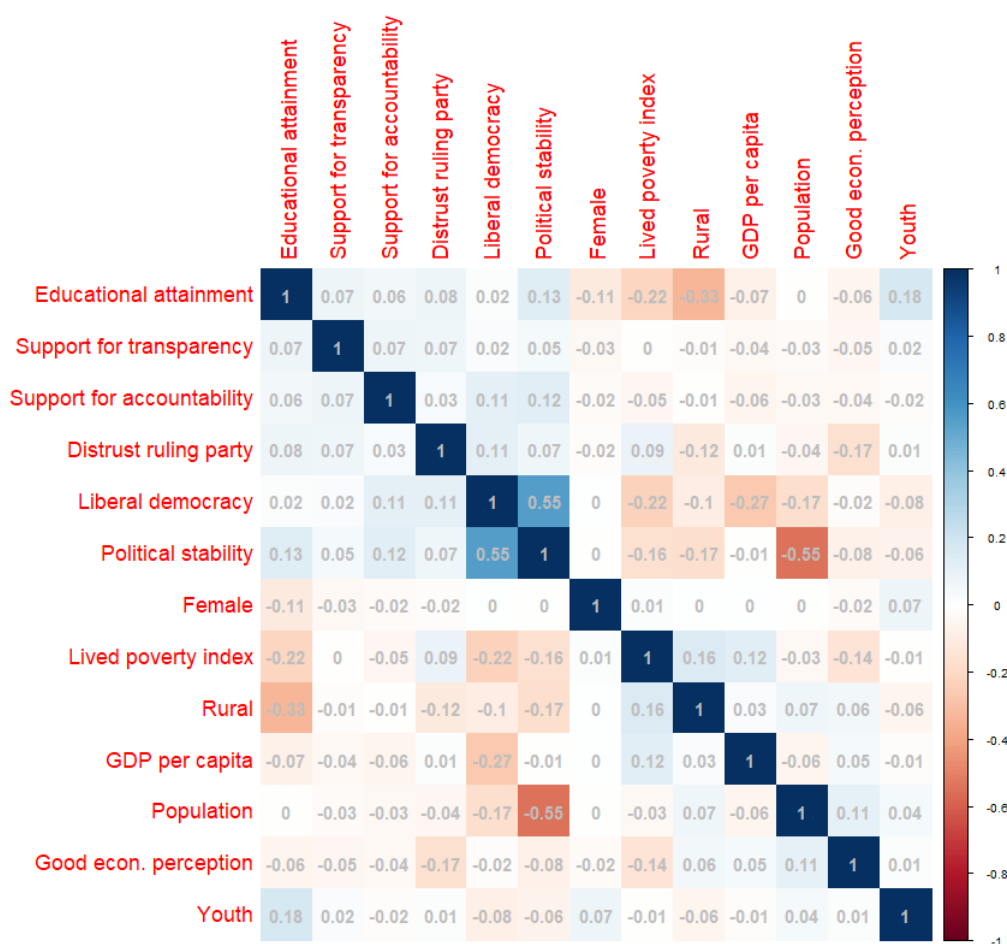
World Bank. (2023a). [World development indicators](#).

World Bank. (2023b). [Worldwide governance indicators](#).



Appendix

Figure A.1: Correlation of all variables used in the analysis



Recent Afrobarometer working papers

No. 202 Bortey, I. N. Willingness of Zambians to sacrifice democratic principles during a pandemic: The case of COVID-19. 2023

No. 201 Martínez, B. C., & Da Costa, S. Taxation for development: The impact of the Ebola epidemic on citizen support across West Africa. 2023

No. 200 Whitaker, B.E. Border proximity and attitudes toward free movement in Africa. 2023

No. 199 Isbell, T. Keeping up with the Dlaminis: Perceived inequalities and satisfaction with democracy in Africa. 2023

No. 198 Youmbi, W., & Banini, D. K. Does local infrastructure determine trust in local government councils? Evidence from Cameroon. 2023

No. 197 Alabi, T. A. Explaining the experience of political violence in Nigeria. 2023

No. 196 Isbell, T. Keeping tabs? Perceptions of relative deprivation and political trust in Africa. 2023

No. 195 Yeandle, A., & Doyle, D. Remittances and corruption perceptions in Africa. 2023

No. 194 Armah-Attoh, D. Declining poverty level in Ghana: Exploring the role of migrants' remittances. 2022

No. 193 Desai, P. Population density and governance in Africa. 2022

No. 192 Friesen, P. Measuring the impact of self-censorship on political party support in Afrobarometer data using machine learning. 2022

No. 191 Isbell, T. Only game in town? Inequality and demand for democracy in Africa – a micro perspective. 2022

No. 190 Krönke, M., Mattes, ., & Naidoo, V. Mapping state capacity in Africa: Professionalism and reach. 2022

No. 189 Lewis, J. S., & Topal, S. A. How does exposure to conflict events shape social trust? A spatiotemporal approach. 2021

No. 188 Stoecker, A. Partisanship in a young democracy: Evidence from Ghana. 2021

No. 187 Marfouk, L., Sarvaš, M., Wippell, J., & Zhu, J. Does sensitivity bias lead respondents to misreport their level of trust in political parties? An investigation into Afrobarometer's survey results and methodology. 2021

No. 186 Krönke, M., Lockwood, S. J., & Mattes, R. Party footprints in Africa: Measuring local party presence across the continent. 2020

No. 185 Erlich, A., & McCormack, A. Age-group differences in social and political interactions in Africa. 2020

No. 184 Armah-Attoh, D. Curbing intolerance of persons in same-sex relationships in Ghana: The important role of education. 2020

No. 183 Chlouba, V. Traditional authority and state legitimacy: Evidence from Namibia. 2019

No. 182 Brass, J. N., Harris, K., & MacLean, L. M. Is there an anti-politics of electricity? Access to the grid and reduced political participation in Africa? 2019

No. 181 Lockwood, S. J., & Krönke, M. Do electoral systems affect how citizens hold their government accountable? Evidence from Africa. 2018

Afrobarometer Working Papers Series

Editor: Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, jconroy@afrobarometer.org

Editorial Board: E. Gyimah-Boadi, Michael Bratton, Carolyn Logan, Robert Mattes

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminate, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, the Global Centre for Pluralism, and GIZ.



#95 Nortei Ababio Loop,
North Airport Residential Area
Legon-Accra, Ghana
+233 (0) 302 776142/784293
www.afrobarometer.org

Core partners:



**Center for Democratic
Development
(CDD-Ghana)**
Accra, Ghana
www.cddghana.org



**Institute for Development Studies (IDS),
University of Nairobi**
Nairobi, Kenya
www.ids.uonbi.ac.ke



Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR)
Cape Town, South Africa
www.ijr.org.za

Support units:



Michigan State University (MSU)
Department of Political Science
East Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.
www.polisci.msu.edu



University of Cape Town (UCT)
Institute for Democracy, Citizenship
and Public Policy in Africa
Cape Town, South Africa
www.idcppa.uct.ac.za/