

Corruption, Prebendalism and the Fragile State: A Case Study on Liberia

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationships between the dependent variable (fragile state) and the independent variables (Corruption and Prebendalism). The quantitative research method was adopted along with a survey design. The population of the study was 5.2 million people in Liberia. A simple random sampling technique generated 399 respondents as sample size. The result showed that there was a positive and strong correlation between political corruption and state fragility ($R= 0.744$, $p < 0.05$). Bureaucratic corruption as a regressor explained 47% of the variation in state fragility ($R= 0.744$, $p < 0.05$). Also, the regression model with ethnicity as a regressor can account for 37.6% of the variation in state fragility ($R= 0.376$, $p < 0.05$). The regression model with political party allegiance as a regressor shows that 24.8% of the variation in state fragility can be explained by the model.

Key Words: Prebendalism, Fragile State, Corruption, Liberia, Public Sector

INTRODUCTION

Fragile and failed states have gained significant importance in law, development, political science, and international relations in the last three decades. As noted by Ficek (2022), the political deterioration of the state, various forms of its impasse and powerlessness, fragility, and thus the degradation, as well as destabilization of political and administrative structures, are currently widely discussed issues that relate to the state's inability to act within its limits. In this sense, fragile and failing states display various deficits in implementing the fundamental tasks required of the central administration of state power. In the context of state fragility, as averred by Saeed (2020), traditionally used theorems and concepts defining the capabilities, predispositions, and competencies of the state, as well as its legitimacy, must be appropriately verified and adapted to the specificity of particular countries struggling with various problems, which, as a consequence, threatens to destabilize the local and regional as well as international situation.

Corruption is a persistent feature of human societies over time and space. While corruption is usually recognized when confronted with it, it has proved more challenging to find and agree on a precise and encompassing definition (Aidt, 2015). Grand corruption typically occurs when public officials or others abuse high-level power for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, resulting in depriving a substantial part of the population of a fundamental right or a significant financial loss for the state or its people (Duri, 2020). Many vices, including corruption, prebendalism, clientelism, cronyism, nepotism, and many more, facilitate the fragile state.

Along with grand corruption, prebendalism significantly contributes to state fragility. The concept of prebendalism connotes the systematic conversion of public offices to serve the interest of officeholders and their political, clan, and ethnic communities (Ikechukwu, 2022). Prebendalism reflects the fundamental dynamic of the country called Liberia and other fragmented societies of the third world. Prebendalism, as furthered by Richard Joseph in his theory of prebendalism, postulated in 1998, creates a situation where office holders of any given state are regarded as pretends that use their offices to generate material benefits



for themselves, their kin, and members of their subgroups or nationalities, to the exclusion of other groups.

Prebendalism is seen as one not seeing himself working for the public good but for his minority group (Onuoha & Onwuchekwa, 2017). The emphasis of this paper is to gauge the fragile state through the lenses of grand corruption and prebendalism.

With these shadowy descriptions of the fragile state, it becomes evident that citizens of such states suffer from bad leadership engendered by corruption and prebendalism. The Pervasive nature of corruption may cause economic malaise and wastage of public resources, which is the overall degradation of that economy's socio-economic status. In addition, African societies experience behavioral and structural deficiencies rooted within the social structures that migrated to Africa. This has created a form of government rooted in prebendal behavior and kleptocracy.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H01: There is no significant relationship between political corruption on state fragility

H02: Bureaucratic corruption does not significantly contribute to state fragility

H03: Class relations do not affect state fragility

H04: Ethnicity has no significant impact on state fragility

H05 Political party allegiance does not influence state fragility

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study comprised two independent variables (corruption and prebendalism) and a dependent variable, the fragile state. The section immediately below conceptually clarified both the dependent and independent variables with further discussions on each of the variables.

Fragile State

Fragility demands that violence be kept at bay, for violence can reduce the stable into fragile and diminish the fragile into non-existent. Assertions of fragility do not invite violence but are reminders of treading with caution to prevent the breakdown of any (un)stable equilibrium (Saeed, 2020). At its core, fragility is the absence or breakdown of the social contract between people and their government. Fragile states suffer deficits of institutional capacity and political legitimacy that increase the risk of instability and violent conflict, sapping the state of resilience to disruptive shocks (Lindborg, 2017). Fragile states are considered the 'breeding ground for terrorism' (Kaplan, 2008, p 4), a cause of underdevelopment, and a 'menace not only to [their] own people, but also to their neighbors, and indeed the world' (Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan quoted in (Grimm et al., 2014, p.200).

State fragility is deemed not just a symptom of social/legal/political problems but also a problem that invites a diverse set of prescriptions. Development practitioners, aid organizations, and international donors suggest financial and technological aid, institution building, strengthening of governance infrastructure, or reinforcing civil society as some possible solutions (Gisselquist, 2017). Therefore, the issue of state fragility is the subject of many scientific analyses, including the phenomenon of state fragility and its definition (Ficek, 2022).

The very concept of state fragility is also the subject of criticism often, both by representatives of the scientific community and political elites of countries classified as fragile. Some opponents even find the above concept useless and even harmful. In their opinion, the idea of fragile states is characterized by

methodological inconsistency and simplifying many complex problems faced by politically weak and unstable states (Nay, 2014). In the global and multidimensional concept of international security, the term ‘fragile state’ raises a lot of controversies and heated discussions. Generally, it is invoked from the perspective of the erosion of the state, stagnation and the collapse of the socio-economic order, violent socio-political conflicts, as well as frequent situations of human rights violations and humanitarian crises (Ficek, 2022).

The existing literature, ongoing analyzes, and research programs show numerous gaps, flaws, and shortcomings. Particularly striking is the lack of systematic research into the causes and conditions that fragile states pose as a potential threat to international security. Contrary to failed or collapsed state, however, a fragile state occasionally described as a weak state, is characterized by a poor ability to meet basic needs and public services, often with poor legitimacy of state authority (Ficek, 2022). A plethora of indices and categorizations have emerged in the last decade and a half to examine and classify states on the basis of their relative stability and efficacy – a quantification trend that can also be witnessed in other areas of global governance (Davis et al., 2015).

The Fragile States Index (FSI, formerly known as the Failed States Index) produced by The Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine (The Fund for Peace, 2019), the World Bank’s periodic lists of fragile states (World Bank Group, 2019), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) ‘States of Fragility’ Reports (SFRs) (OECD, 2018) and the Index of State Weakness prepared by the Brookings Institution (Brookings Institution, 2008) are some of the most well-known examples among these.

These rankings, indices, and reports categorize states based on their performances in areas such as protection of religious freedoms, dealing with food scarcity, GDP growth, curtailment of corruption, the perceived legitimacy of the state, presence of riots and protests, responses to human rights violations, presence of political freedoms and civil liberties, periodic elections and absence of conflicts and militancy, among many others (Saeed, 2020). The insights offered by the study are based on a detailed analysis of these indicators’ development and conceptual foundations. Furthering the global trend of ‘governance at a distance’ through quantification and indicators (Davis et al., 2015), several indices and matrices cropped up in the last decade and a half to measure state fragility and potential failure. Brinkerhoff (2014) takes an optimistic view and suggests that these indicators and measurements have emerged to ‘tame the wickedness of the state fragility/failure problem set’ by bringing clarity in place of ambiguity and adding transparency, consistency, ease of decision-making, and policy harmonization.

Corruption

The problem of corruption is a pronounced challenge to public service delivery and poses questions regarding the significance of public organizations in the world (Asongu, 2013). While citizens expect to get decent and quality services, the degree of leakage through numerous forms of corruption, such as bribery, embezzlement, false accounting, fraud, influence peddling, and nepotism, continue to compromise the administrative processes (Krylova, 2018). The increasing attention of the media over the last two decades to corruption suggests that developing countries, in particular, are at a fragile stage (Assakaf et al., 2018). The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) has shown that developing countries are in need of effective mechanisms to combat corruption. More than 66% of states experience the ill effects of corruption, including a large proportion of the G20 countries (Enste & Heldman, 2017).

There are several ways through which corruption occurs, one of it is ‘kickback’ (receiving a reward from a supplier for goods or services received), embezzlement (theft of resources for personal gain), evidence destruction (abuse of records), extortion (using threat or force to obtain something), favoritism (unfairly favoring of one person or group over another) (Oghuvbu & Ugbuvbu, 2020). Using this highlight, a clearer picture of corruption was Presented by Ogundiya (2009) when he argued that corruption can be highlighted

using certain behaviors.

Corruption is a symptom of a deeper and more general malaise in any society. While it is not peculiar to any country or region, it tends to be more prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of the countries in this region regularly appear in the most corrupt countries cadre of the Corruption Perceptions Index (Olabiyi, 2021). According to the Transparency International (2018) report, only seven countries in the region scored above the global average in the Corruption Perceptions Index for the year.

Bureaucratic Corruption

Bureaucratic corruption manifests itself in the form of bribery, embezzlement, false accounting, favoritism, fraud, and theft of public funds and assets. It affects various sectors and government institutions, including the police; the defense, education, and health sectors; the judiciary; procurement; tax services; permits and registries, and customs (Berkman, 2013). Bureaucratic Corruption is a type of corruption that involves the use of public offices. It involves the technocrats and civil as well as public servants who implement policies (Osakede et al., 2015). These include but are not limited to leadership and personnel in ministries, departments, and agencies.

Despite being subjective, perception is important to consider. If an investor or donor views a country as highly corrupt, they could direct their money elsewhere (Kalesnikaite et al., 2021). Scholars argue that petty corruption thrives when only a handful of bureaucrats deliver a particular public service and deliver it through direct interaction with citizens (Rose-Ackerman, 2017). Acting as a gatekeeper, the bureaucrat may refuse, speed up, or adjust the service depending on whether an appropriate bribe has been extended (Rose-Ackerman, 2017). However, there is a contention to this as the more bureaucrats, the higher the chain of bribery.

Political Corruption

Corruption is defined as “abuse of power for private gain” by The United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) cited by Dialoke et al. (2020). A better, clear, and more focused definition was offered by Transparency International (2013); corruption was described as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” It can also be viewed as a change from the laws or generally accepted rules for personal or selfish gain. Concerning political corruption, there is no standard definition of political corruption (Xu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the conventional definition of political corruption is the inappropriate use of public power and authority for the objectives of individual or group gain (Aidt, 2015). Inappropriate use of public power refers to legal standards, political order, and public opinion (Xu et al., 2019).

Political corruption is not only a question of breach of formal legislations, code of conduct, and court rulings, but it also has a deeper impact on the entire political system. It can negatively influence decision-making, leading to the mishandling of procedures and, finally, the breakdown of political institutions (Cerqueti & Coppier, 2019). This is buttressed by Dike and Onyekwelu (2018), who averred that political corruption is the type of corruption found in a democratic rule among the three arms of government: legislative, executive, and judiciary. It involves stealing state funds, and hence, it is the highest level of corruption. Also, political corruption is “the use of legislative powers by public officials for unlawful personal gain” (Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu, 2020).

Synopsis of Corruption in Liberia

Despite high expectations placed on Liberia’s new president, his Excellency George Manneh Weah, who came to power through Liberia’s first democratic transition of power in more than 70 years, corruption continues to permeate Liberian politics and the public service. As mentioned by Lee-Jones (2019),

allegations of patronage, nepotism, and cronyism plague politics, petty corruption is rife, and judicial independence is weak. Moral and financial support to public integrity institutions is also limited, with the Liberia Anticorruption Commission (LACC), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and other public integrity institutions without fully constituted leaderships.

In June 2019, rising public discontent over the economic crisis and alleged corruption under Weah spilled onto the streets with an unprecedented mass protest dubbed #SavetheState (van Eyssen 2019). Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia 2022 State of Corruption Report revealed that 90% of Liberians think corruption level is high in the country, with confidence in the executive branch of government to fight against corruption declining from 30% in 2021 to 26% in 2022. Liberia has ranked on top of countries yet to make significant progress in the fight against corruption. This ranking means Liberia has joined the list of countries that had significantly declined on the index while being placed among the worst declining countries globally (Daily Observer, 2023).

Liberia ranks 23 out of 54 countries on the Ibrahim Index, scoring 51.6 in 2018 (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2018). In the World Justice Project's 2019 report on the Rule of Law, Liberia ranked 97 out of 126 countries with a score of 0.46. In terms of the absence of corruption in government, Liberia ranked 110 out of 126 countries with a score of 0.32. Liberia fared better in terms of open government, ranking 70 out of 126 countries with a score of 0.49 (World Justice Report 2019). Liberia is the 142 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International (Transparency International, 2022). In West Africa and the Mano River Union, Liberia is the only country that has declined by 6 points over the last five years. Since the country attained its highest score of 41 in 2012, it has been in free-fall on the index, topping the list of countries with stagnated and declining anticorruption efforts and now has a score of 26 in 2022 (Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia, 2023).

Prebendalism

Prebendalism results from people giving preference to their primordial public over and above their civic public. Prebendalism is seen as one not seeing himself working for the public good but for his minority group. This is a concept adopted from the works of Weber in his decentralized patrimonial system and orchestrated in the work of Richard Joseph (1983, 1987). Joseph coined the term "prebendalism" in 1987 to refer to "the prevalent political practice in Nigeria that allows public officeholders to control rent (prebends) by unlawfully manipulating the mechanism for their personal use" (Demarest et al., 2020, p.6). The concept of prebendalism connotes the systematic conversion of public offices to serve the interest of officeholders and their political, clan, and ethnic communities (Onuoha, 2022). This prebendal behavior creates poverty and unhealthy rivalry among groups for public office and creates an atmosphere of insecurity and instability. According to Abada and Onyia (2020), there is a sense of entitlement among government workers, public office holders, and members of religious and ethnic groups over their right to share in state revenue.

Nnoli (1995) asserts that ethnicity holds individuals together, gives them internal cohesion, encourages them to provide natural security for each other, and promotes their sense of identity and direction. Regarding political power, the group wielding power in society makes decisions that affect all members and also controls the distribution of resources. Thus ethnic groups compete for political power to control not only the people but also the resources and their distribution (Gross, 2018).

The effects of ethnicity and ethnic factions (groups) and class on the political and socioeconomic governance landscape in Liberia are very noticeable. This has led to frequent depictions of the country as an ethnically polarized democracy (Kaikho, 2021; Odebunmi, 2022). Additionally, for more than a century, from 1878 until 1980, Liberia's democracy was so constrained that Africa's first republic effectively gave birth to Africa's first one-party state (Pailey & Harris, 2017). Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly,

this discussion transcends and rests primarily on the fields of identity politics, multi-party elections, and electoral democracy. Additionally, the Black Settler-Controlled Whig Party (TWP) ruled Liberia using an electoral system that hardly ever allowed for a change in power.

To put it another way, the ruling party changed, and the party's elite took advantage of the political and economic climate (Liebenow, 1987). In addition, Liberia only had two presidents from the end of World War II until the beginning of the 1980s (Howe, 1996; Toe, 2020). The conditions for political instability and civil unrest have also existed in Liberia since the more privileged minority settlers (America-Liberians-emancipated black slaves from the Americas) declared the country independent in 1847. These settlers then instituted a system of ethno-classical segregation against the indigenous majority (Thomson, 2022). As a result, from independence until the Samuel Doe era in the 1980s, neo-patrimonial corruption and decline were deliberately pushed to a crescendo (Omeje, 2017).

In a similar vein, prominent politicians who are known to be Freemasons are linked to Liberia's history of political corruption. For instance, the majority of the presidents of Liberia during its 133-year rule by The True Whig Party (TWP), also known as the Liberian Whig Party (LWP), were freemasons. Freemasonry, or more specifically, masonic craft, was a significant factor in decision-making during the TWP/LWP political eras (Niagawoe, 2010; Nebo, 2020). It also decided whether to appoint, keep, or dismiss government officials. Notably, party executives and influential politicians served as the leaders of the masonic craft, making decisions made at fraternal gatherings automatically binding on the state (Kaydor, 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study hinged on four major theories as its theoretical framework. The theories include the Collective Action Theory, the Principal/Agent Theory, the Prebendal Theory, and the Social Contract Theory.

The Collective Action Theory

This relevant theory helps us understand why anticorruption efforts may not produce the desired result designed to curb corruption. The theory posits that corruption appears and persists when a group of actors act dishonestly, and none of the actors takes on the role of the honest principal, instead putting forward personal interests and thus engaging in corruption. It further asserts that corruption arises when no explicit and legitimate effective leadership exists to regulate public or common goods (Marquette & Peiffer, 2015). The theory suggests that in an environment where everyone or a group of actors are believed to engage in corruption, corruption prevails since the group of actors lacks trust. Also, the theory predicts that a group of actors involved in a corrupt act will continue to do so when it is in their self-interest (Sardock, 2021).

In this regard, there will be no group of actors willing to act honestly in a collective action framework because corruption is perceived as behavior within the service providers and receivers. The anti-corruption effort will not produce a better result to reduce corruption due to a lack of honest actors to play honestly during service provision (Persson et al., 2019).

Prebendal Theory

Prebendalism is the primitive acquisition of material gain from the public domain. Richard (1996) used the concept to depict the politics of corruption in Africa, where cronies or members of an ethnic group are compensated whenever an individual from the group acquires political power or where; state offices are regarded as pretends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups (Richard, 1996). The attribute of prebendalism is greed, selfishness, aristocracy, circulation of elites, ethnic chauvinism, and religious bigotry. The theory reveals the extent of self-inflicted under-development and hardship that developing country imposes on the political

system and how it can be mitigated. The limitation of the theory includes the excessive focus on corruption as the sole reason for backwardness in governance. However, the theory as adopted typifies the nature of African society and the reasons for political, economic, and social stagnancy.

Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory has been the leading theoretical framework within fragile states. It has been applied by leading international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and authors across the field (Leonard & Samantar, 2011; Rothkopf, 2012). The Social Contract Theory was introduced by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau (Friend, 2013).

The main idea behind the SCT is that initially, humans lived in a ‘State of Nature’ or ‘State of War,’ an anarchical system of survival of the fittest. Within such a state lived, rational individuals, which due to the lack of social structures, would be in constant fear of losing their livelihoods or even their lives to other individuals (Friend, 2016). It is possible to escape the State of Nature by entering into a ‘Social Contract’ with others. The idea of the Social Contract is that individuals can agree to give up some of their sovereignty to a governing body that dictates rules for all contract participants, with the threat of exclusion for those who break it. The use of the Social Contract within the discourse of fragile states has been focused on faulty institutions of a society, a direct consequence of ‘bad governance’ in the state (Schouten, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research method along with the survey design allowed the researcher to employ strategies of inquiry such as surveys, and collect data on revised pilot tested questionnaire that will yield statistical data. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) explained that Quantitative methods are favored by the positivist scientific research that is concerned with high reliability that generates information through numbers and statistic that use tools such as questionnaires and surveys.

The study used the simple random sampling procedure. A total of 399 respondents participated in the online survey and this number is seen as the sample size of the study. The study utilized survey questionnaire for the collection of data. The study collected data from primary sources through survey questionnaire. All data analyses were done using version SPSS 21.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Hypothesis Testing

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between political corruption and state fragility

Variable A	Variable B	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (R)	P- Value
State Fragility	Political Corruption	0.744	0.000 ($p < 0.05$)

There is a positive and strong correlation between political corruption and state fragility ($R= 0.744$, $p<0.05$) and this relationship is statistically significant.

H_{02} : Bureaucratic corruption does not significantly contribute to state fragility

$$\text{State fragility} = \alpha + b BC + e$$

Where α = constant of regression

b= coefficient of Bureaucratic corruption

BC= Bureaucratic Corruption and

e = Error term

Dependent Variable	Regressor	Constant of regression (b constant)	Coefficient of Regressor	R ²	p- Value for Regressor
State Fragility	Bureaucratic Corruption	2.021	0.826	0.470	0.000 (p < 0.05)

$$\text{State fragility} = 2.021 + 0.826 \text{ BC}$$

From the table above, bureaucratic corruption significantly contributes to state fragility. The regression model outlined above with bureaucratic corruption as a regressor can explain 47% of the variation in state fragility.

H₀₃: Class Relations does not affect state fragility

$$\text{State fragility} = \alpha + b \text{ CR} + e$$

Where α = constant of regression

b= coefficient of Class Relations

CR= Class Relations and

e = Error term

Dependent Variable	Regressor	Constant of regression (b constant)	Coefficient of Regressor	R ²	p- Value for Regressor
State Fragility	Class Relations	4.502	0.702	0.433	0.000 (p < 0.05)

$$\text{State Fragility} = 4.502 + 0.702 \text{ CR}$$

From the table above, class relations significantly affect state fragility. The regression model with class relations as a regressor can explain 43.3% of the variation in state fragility.

H₀₄: Ethnicity has no significant impact on state fragility

$$\text{State Fragility} = \alpha + b \text{ Eth} + e$$

Where α = constant of regression

b= coefficient of Ethnicity

Eth= Ethnicity

e = Error term

Dependent Variable	Regressor	Constant of regression(b constant)	Coefficient of Regressor	R ²	p- Value for Regressor
State Fragility	Ethnicity	5.373	0.678	0.376	0.000 (p < 0.05)

$$\text{State Fragility} = 5.373 + 0.678 \text{ Eth}$$

From the table above, ethnicity has a significant impact on state fragility. The regression model with ethnicity as a regressor can account for 37.6% of the variation in state fragility.

H₀₅: Political party allegiance does not influence state fragility

$$\text{State Fragility} = \alpha + b \text{ PPA} + e$$

Where α = constant of regression

b= coefficient of Political Party Allegiance

PPA= Political Party Allegiance and

e = Error term

Dependent Variable	Regressor	Constant of regression (b constant)	Coefficient of Regressor	R ²	p- Value for Regressor
State Fragility	Political Party Allegiance	8.320	0.447	0.248	0.000 (p < 0.05)

$$\text{State Fragility} = 8.320 + 0.447 \text{ PPA}$$

From the table above, political party allegiance significantly influences state fragility. The regression model with political party allegiance as a regressor shows that 24.8% of the variation in state fragility can be explained by the model.

DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The study determined the relationships between the dependent variable (fragile state) and the independent variables (Corruption and Prebendalism). The first item measured the relationship between political corruption and state fragility. A Pearson Correlation was used to test the relationship between political corruption and the fragile. There was a positive and strong correlation between political corruption and state fragility (R= 0.744, p<0.05) and this relationship was statistically significant. It has been shown how political corruption affects political trust reduces citizens' support for political institutions (Anderson &Tverdova, 2013) and damages regime legitimacy (Cordero &Blais, 2017). A fragile state is one that lacks legitimization and trust in political institutions is eroded. Hence, the finding of the study corroborates with the existing literature.

A regression analysis was used to estimate the effect of bureaucratic corruption on the fragile state. From the finding, it was shown that bureaucratic corruption significantly contributed to state fragility. The regression model depicted bureaucratic corruption as a regressor that explained 47% of the variation in state fragility with State fragility = 2.021 + 0.826 BC. Liberia has ranked on top of countries that are yet to make significant progress in the fight against corruption. This ranking means Liberia has now joined the list of countries that had significantly declined on the index while being placed among the worst declining

countries globally (Daily Observer, 2023). Bureaucratic corruption has clogged the bureaucracy where bureaucrats see themselves engaged in multiple schemes of corruption which has stalled the provision of basic services.

The finding also showed that class relations significantly affect state fragility. The regression model with class relations as a regressor explained 43.3% of the variation in state fragility. The nature of politics and the role of the ruling class contribute to the problem embedded in governance and development, particularly the problem of state-centered corruption in many developed and developing countries (Ogundiya, 2009). The effects of ethnicity and ethnic factions (groups) and class on the political and socio-economic governance landscape in Liberia are very noticeable. This has led to frequent depictions of the country as an ethnically and class oriented polarized democracy (Kaikho, 2021; Odebunmi, 2022).

From the finding, ethnicity has a significant impact on state fragility. The regression model with ethnicity as a regressor can account for 37.6% of the variation in state fragility. In Liberia, ethnic groups compete for political power in order to have control not only over the people but also the resources and their distribution (Gross, 2018). Further, it has been suggested in that Africa's ethnic diversity can explain the region's poor economic performance as this correlates with bad economic policies.

Political party allegiance was said to significantly influence state fragility. The regression model with political party allegiance as a regressor shows that 24.8% of the variation in state fragility can be explained by the model. In Liberia, it is not uncommon to hear chants such as "the party is supreme" and "the party mandate." These are claims that suggest that political parties are given preeminence over the state and government officials from the ruling party pledge unflinching support to their parties even when the interest of the state is subverted.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study was to examine the level at which corruption and prebendalism contribute to the fragile state with Liberia as the case study. It was shown that fragile state encompassed such descriptions as the presence of regular protestations, institutional failure, ineffective service and issues with legitimacy. These descriptions as averred by the findings are very well visible in Liberia. Corruption as an independent variable had two measurements: political and bureaucratic corruptions. Abject poverty, exploitations of state resources by politicians and lack of proper functioning institutions were all deemed as outcomes of political corruption that is plaguing the state. Also, inadequate incentives to provide local public goods, theft of public funds and assets and extortion of money from service receiver were major underpinnings of bureaucratic corruption that have undermined the state which is also affecting legitimacy.

For prebendalism, three measurements were considered which included ethnicity, class relations and political party allegiance. Inequality, class difference, and class dominance were all identified as valid vices of class relations that have affected the state of Liberia and divided the country right from independence. Ethnic cleavage, division along ethnic line, competition among ethnic groups for political power and social and political disunity were identified as ethnicity issues that have plagued the state of Liberia. Loyalty to party than state, commitment to party than state, subordination of national interest to the mandate of the political parties and compromising qualifications and competence for partisans showed the extent to which political party allegiance have affected the state. The combination of these factors pose a serious threat to the legitimacy of the state which lead to a fragile state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To minimize the occurrences of corruption, anti-graft institutions should have enforceable prosecutorial

powers that deal with corrupt officials in the public sector. In addition, there should be competitive and commiserate salary for public service officials; E-governance practices should be adopted and enforced to reduce citizens' direct interaction with bureaucrats and corporate governance approaches to enhance accountability of public officials; the Government of Liberia and relevant civil society organizations should ensure the robust civic education about the duties and responsibilities of citizens to the state. Such citizenship education will engender a spirit of nationalism which is apparently missing in Liberia and there should civil service reforms and strong policies instituted to ensure that recruitment for public offices should be directly in line with civil service regulations to reduce the bloated public sector and partisan government that is widely practiced in Liberia

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