| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Tethered Public Administration Reform in Libya

Hamza Ethelb

Department of Translation, University of Tripoli, Libya

Corresponding Author: Hamza Ethelb, **E-mail**: h.ethelb@uot.edu.ly

| **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the challenges and impediments faced in achieving comprehensive administrative reform. The study examines key aspects of the Libya administrative structure that was raised in a workshop organized by the UNDP. It includes the public administration structure, decentralization, fiscal sustainability, economic development, digital transformation, and e-government. It explores the problems and issues impacting reform efforts, such as the paucity of political will, limited reformative capacity, bureaucratic resistance, and the prevalent issue of ghost employment. The research reveals that Libya's public administration system is in dire need of transformative reforms to improve governance, enhance service delivery. Decentralization of administrative powers and resources emerges as a crucial factor for local development and effective public service provision. This research outlined the complexities surrounding public administration reform in Libya and offers guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to navigate these challenges and drive positive change in the Libya's governance and administrative systems.

| **KEYWORDS**

Libya, public administration reform, decentralization, employment, e-government

1. Introduction

Public administration reform plays a pivotal role in shaping the governance structures of nations. It enables effective service delivery, and foster socio-economic development. In the context of Libya, a country undergoing significant political and socio-economic transitions, the need for comprehensive administrative reform is paramount. This research paper aims to delve into the intricacies of tethered public administration reform in Libya. The genesis of this research is triggered by an invitation extended by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Libya, which beckoned the author to participate in a workshop centered around a dialogue on administrative reform in the country. The workshop, a collaborative effort between the UNDP, the Ministry of Planning, and the Ministry of Civil Service, sought to engage a diverse range of national and international experts in a three-day event held at the Regency Gammarth Hotel in Tunis. Over the course of three days, experts examined the current state of public administration in Libya, analyzed existing challenges and gaps, and shared insights on successful reform experiences from other countries. The workshop provided a unique platform for a wide array of experts, both national and international, to come together and engage in a comprehensive dialogue on administrative reform in Libya. The diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the participants stimulated a rich exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices. It served as a platform for robust discussions, knowledge sharing, and critical analysis of the current state of public administration in Libya. By convening experts from various backgrounds, the workshop opened an inclusive dialogue on administrative reform, with a focus on identifying challenges, exploring innovative solutions, and formulating recommendation for effective implementation of public administration in Libya. Thus, this research paper endeavors to build upon the insights garnered from the workshop and contribute to the ongoing discourse on public administration reform in Libya. By examining the collaborative efforts between the

UNDP and key ministries in Libya, the paper aims to shed light on the complexities, opportunities, and potential pitfalls associated with tethered administrative reform initiatives. This research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform policy-making, enhance the understanding of public administration reform in Libya, and provide guidance for effective implementation strategies. It examines the tethered nature of administrative reform initiatives, discusses the collaborative dynamics between national and international actors and explores how such partnerships can contribute to sustainable and impactful reform outcomes in the Libyan context.

In recent years, Libya has experienced significant political and social transformations, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the reform of its public administration. The upheavals brought about by the 2011 revolution and subsequent political instability have triggered the urgent need for a well-functioning and efficient public administration system, which can effectively respond to the needs and aspirations of the Libyan people. In fact, the importance of administrative reform in nation-building has been recognized by the UNDP, which actively engaged in supporting Libya's efforts in this domain. The discussions emphasized the importance of nurturing transparency, accountability, and efficiency within the public administration system. It also addressed the need for capacity building, effective governance mechanisms, and inclusive decision-making processes. This research paper aims to capture the essence of the workshop and contribute to the ongoing discourse on tethered public administration reform in Libya. The subsequent sections of this paper explores the Public administration structure in Libya, examines concepts of decentralization, fiscal sustainability, economic development, digital transformation, and e-government. The study also handles problems and issues related to paucity of government will, limited capacity, bureaucratic resistance, and ghost employment. By doing so, the study aspires to shed light a deeper understanding of tethered public administration reform in Libya and contribute to the ongoing efforts aimed at building a transparent, accountable, and efficient administrative system in the country.

2. Public administration structure in Libya

Under Muammar Gaddafi's regime, Libya implemented a unique model of governance known as the Jamahiriya system. This system claimed to "establish a bottom-up direct democracy with extensive devolution and de-concentration of power" (Sawani, 2017, p. 2). The Jamahiriya system aimed to replace the traditional public administration with a populist administration model, as outlined by the Centre for Administrative Innovation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region (CAIMED) in 1990. However, despite the decentralized structure, the Jamahiriya system still relied on civil servants, which resulted in a loss of independence as the administration became integrated into the national government machinery. Administrative unit heads were selected based on popular choice and political loyalty rather than meritocracy (Sawani, 2017). In an attempt to mitigate the challenges faced by the country due to sanctions and international isolation, formal decentralization was introduced in the 1990s and early 2000s. Libya was divided into governorates, known as Shabiyyat, to absorb the shocks and facilitate governance at the local level (Sawani, 2013).

Further, Sawani (2017) argues that the dual system of government emerged, with informal structures frequently overriding the formal state structures. This situation created significant challenges for effective governance. The formal system lacked defined decision rights and emphasized deliberation and consensus-building, which led to inefficiency and opacity in decision-making processes (Halm, 2013). On the other hand, the informal system exerted powerful and centralized influence, often intervening in governance in a chaotic and illegitimate manner (Sawani, 2017). Consequently, the public administration struggled to implement policies on a national level, while local governance bodies lacked the necessary information for effective decision-making and execution (Sawani, 2013). Following the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, the transitional authority faced the daunting task of governing a country with a weak and corrupt public administration system. The civil war during the transition period further weakened the central government, and allowed various peripheral factions to gain power and influence. Many aspects of the current public administration in Libya can be seen as a continuation of the previous system, albeit with different titles (ibid). Thus, it became of paramount importance for the post-Gaddafi governments to restore law and order and revitalize the public administration (Sawani, 2013).

In fact, discussions surrounding the concepts of "state" and "governance" evoke intense debates among ordinary Libyans, primarily due to their exposure to only the monarchy or the Jamahiriya system. Following the successful overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, disagreements arose among Libyans regarding the form of the new system (Mikail, 2016; Megerisi, 2018). Between 2011 and 2013, there was a growing demand for a federal system, particularly from the Eastern region, influenced in part by the organization of armed insurgency. Intellectuals and activists engaged in open debates (Ateş & Elfeitori, 2021). They looked at options such as a presidential or parliamentary system, reinstallation of the monarchy, or establishment of a liberal democracy (Laremont, 2013).

The viewpoints reflect the underlying aspirations of citizens for increased participation, a stronger voice, and greater fairness in recreating a reformed public administration (Geha, 2016). The most common demand regarding the state system was the equitable provision of public services across all regions. In addition, citizens emphasized the need to prevent the resurgence of

dictatorship and called for fair resource distribution and the promotion of sustainable administrative development (Hamada, Sökmen, & Zaki, 2020). This indicates a desire for an effective central state alongside responsive and competent local authorities (Geha, 2016). In fact, Gaddafi's policies aimed to eliminate threats to his rule, resulting in the mismanagement of state resources and a decline in transparency and accountability (Evans and Barakat, 2015). The public sector in Libya faces challenges of weak governance, corruption, and a deteriorating administration. To bring about significant change, restructuring or reconstruction of the public administration is necessary (ibid). During the UNDP workshop, discussions of public administration structure in Libya focused on the following three notions: decentralization, fiscal sustainability, economic development.

3. Decentralization

Decentralization has been a prominent topic in discussions regarding the public administration structure in Libya. Many participants argue that decentralization is crucial to empower local authorities and ensure greater participation and responsiveness in decision-making processes. By devolving power and resources to local levels, decentralization aims to address regional disparities and promote equitable provision of public services across all regions. Advocates of decentralization believe that it can foster a sense of ownership and accountability among local communities (Geha, 2016).

Libya embarked on decentralization reforms in the aftermath of 2011, driven by new political momentum. The Constitutional Declaration passed by the National Transitional Council (NTC) in 2011 called for the establishment of Local Councils, while the Local Administration Laws of 2011 and 2012 granted decentralized political and fiscal powers to these councils (UNDP, 2015). The relationship between the Local Councils and the Ministry of Local Governance was regulated by the Local Administration Law passed by the General National Congress (GNC) in 2012 (Chatham House, 2012). However, the lack of clarity in the reform provisions, absence of bureaucratic specifications, absence of timelines for implementation or local elections, and ongoing nationwide violence have hindered progress (Böckenförde & Megerisi, 2016). The historical context of Libya has both fueled the drive for decentralization reform and posed challenges to its implementation. The Libyan context of decentralization presents difficulties for executing the reforms, primarily due to the absence of the rule of law and the presence of widespread secessionist demands. Most national actors and the public support decentralization, there is a preference for federalism among those in the eastern region. However, key national actors involved in formulating and managing the reform, such as the Prime Minister's office and the Ministry of Local Councils, have advocated for the adoption of Law no 59 (2012) on Local Administration and its Executive Regulations. The National Transitional Council (NTC) and the General National Congress (GNC) provided parliamentary support for the decentralization bills (Ateş & Elfeitori, 2021).

In fact, both economic and political considerations necessitate a decentralized approach to the provision of public services in Libya, following a prolonged period of intense centralization. Decentralization addresses the longstanding concerns of cities and regions regarding the loss of decision-making authority. Decentralization offers the potential for increased local accountability, greater local involvement in policy formulation and implementation. It enhances legitimacy of the country's governance framework (Ateş & Elfeitori, 2021). This local governance structure includes local, municipal, and provincial levels of government. This three-tiered system of local governance aims to facilitate greater devolution. It intails financial and legislative functions, and grants elected municipal councils and regional governments the ability to generate their own revenue (Pickard, 2013). The proposed structure seeks to achieve an extensive degree of decentralization, where local authorities would be responsible for service provision and self-management. However, Article 150 implicitly addresses concerns that this proposal may jeopardize national unity or violate the constitution and laws. Article 149 stipulates that all local government units should be subject to subsequent oversight at the central level to ensure the legitimacy of their work (Langhi, 2013).

During the three-day discussion supervised by the UNDP, participants stressed the importance of developing a strategic roadmap to support decentralization. Many foreign actors, including NGOs, have prioritized supporting municipalities over central governments. They believe that decentralization enhances capacity to deliver services and it is more crucial than conflict resolution. However, these objectives remain abstract as long as the political divide and civil war persist, posing threats to Libya's unity and social cohesion. It was evident in the workshop that decentralization is a reform of utmost importance in administrative reform in Libya. Decentralization has been presented as an integral part of Libya's democratization process and as a means to alleviate poverty, as local control over taxation and service provision would enhance access to central government services for local citizens (Chatham House, 2012). However, despite almost 11 years of experience, Libya remains in a delicate and challenging transitional period characterized by deep divisions and bitter conflicts. The country is still awaiting the ratification of a new constitution and the organization of elections to establish a pluralistic political and administrative system. Building a local administration and governance structure that achieves a balance between decentralization and modified centralization is a crucial aspect of establishing a well-rounded administratively reformed system.

4. Fiscal sustainability

Fiscal sustainability is another key notion that has been emphasized in discussions on public administration reform in Libya. Participants recognize the importance of establishing a sustainable fiscal framework that ensures responsible management of

public finances. This involves implementing transparent budgetary processes for the purpose of enhancing revenue collection mechanisms, and improving expenditure management. By promoting fiscal sustainability, Libya can address the challenges of budget deficits, public debt, and inefficient use of resources. This will ultimately lead to a more stable and resilient public administration (IMF, 2023).

Fiscal sustainability is crucial for maintaining a stable and healthy economy in the long run. It involves adopting the permanent income hypothesis (PIH), which sets a limit on government spending based on the rate of return from current and future natural resource streams, including financial assets, until those resources are depleted. This approach ensures that government expenditures align with the sustainable income generated by the available resources. In the case of Libya, an analysis of the country's current and projected fiscal position reveals that without any policy adjustments, the existing situation is not viable in the long term. This means that if no changes are made, there will be a significant erosion of wealth and a potential threat to macroeconomic stability. To address this issue and ensure fiscal sustainability for future generations, it is crucial to implement a transparent and well-designed fiscal policy rule. Therefore, the discussions of the UNDP workshop have identified several key factors that can contribute to achieving fiscal sustainability in Libya. These factors include the need for clear financial policies that support sustainable fiscal practices, the establishment of a framework for performance management to enhance accountability and efficiency, and the diversification of income resources beyond reliance on natural resources.

Furthermore, participants stressed the need to develop a comprehensive taxation policy as this will assist and broaden the revenue base and reduce dependence on volatile oil revenues. Additional police that deemed necessary to be adopted is the support of strategic industries, such as promoting non-oil sectors and encouraging private sector growth, as this contributes to a more sustainable and diversified economy. There is also a need that presented in the necessary involvement of sovereign funds in budget policies which provide stability and long-term planning, as these funds can serve as a buffer against economic shocks and help manage fiscal resources effectively. Furthermore, it is important to implement strict policies to control both the inflow and outflow of oil income. This is to ensure prudent management and allocation of these resources. By addressing these aspects and adopting a holistic approach, Libya can work towards achieving fiscal sustainability, ensuring fairness and stability for future generations. It requires a long-term commitment from successive governments to implement and adhere to transparent and well-crafted fiscal policies that sustain credibility and consistency in the management of fiscal resources.

5. Economic development

Economic development is a central concern when discussing the structure of public administration in Libya. Participants highlight the need for a system that supports and promotes sustainable economic growth. This involves creating an enabling environment for businesses, attracting investments, and adopting entrepreneurship concepts. In addition, there is a call for effective economic policies that prioritize diversification, job creation, and the development of key sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and tourism. By aligning the public administration structure with economic development goals, Libya can work towards building a prosperous and inclusive economy that benefits all citizens (UN, 2022).

In providing a brief historical account, during the Gaddafi regime, Libya's economic policies were solely focused on the regime's survival, stalling any attempts at reforms after Gaddafi's removal from power (Clancy-Smith, 2012). The revolution, which took place in February 2011, caused a crisis in electricity and energy production, leading to non-operational energy sectors and a significant impact on GDP (IMF, 2023). Government revenues sharply declined, pushing one-third of the population below the poverty line. While Libya experienced periods of recession under Gaddafi's rule, the economy showed promising growth before the uprising, being recognized as the fastest-growing globally (ibid). The collapse of the Gaddafi regime necessitated a re-evaluation of Libya's economic management, particularly in the energy sector, to benefit its citizens, combat corruption, and promote private enterprise, such as tourism (Chivvis and Martini 2014).

One significant challenge inherited from the Gaddafi era was Libya's complete dependence on oil as the sole source of national income. Despite having abundant reserves of oil and natural gas, the regime failed to diversify the economy and address this overreliance (Toaldo, 2016). The civil war severely impacted the economy after 2011, leading to a significant drop in oil production, which had been the primary revenue generator. In 2011, the country experienced a contraction of 41.8% in its economy (IMF, 2023). However, the first post-Gaddafi government managed to resume oil production, albeit not reaching pre-uprising levels. The surge in global oil prices in 2012 boosted revenues, allowing for increased government spending, including higher salaries for government employees. This positive trend continued in 2013 under the new government (Toaldo, 2016). However, in 2014, a decline in oil prices combined with militia occupation of oil fields and ports led to a substantial decrease in national income (IMF, 2023). This resulted in a large annual budget deficit, the government's inability to meet financial obligations, halted infrastructure and development projects, and severe impacts on the already weak private sector. Although oil production partially resumed after the establishment of the Government of National Accord in 2016, it has been repeatedly disrupted by different factions, freezing corresponding revenues and depleting the central bank's foreign exchange reserves. The country's national income remains below acceptable levels, forcing consecutive governments to borrow from the central bank

and failing to fulfil their financial obligations. This situation poses a threat to Libya's economic recovery and the depletion of the central bank's foreign exchange reserves unless effectively addressed. The government's ability to stabilize the situation will determine the future of the country's economic recovery.

During the workshop discussion, a consensus was reached on the importance of supporting the transition to an e-economy in the field of entrepreneurship. To achieve this, it was emphasized that the government should prioritize rationalizing spending to ensure efficient allocation of resources. Further, there was a strong recommendation to encourage investment in Fintech (Financial technology), as it plays a crucial role in driving digital transformation. In recognizing the significance of digitalization skills in economic development, participants strongly underpinned that the government should actively support the development of these skills among the workforce. This would empower individuals and businesses to effectively navigate the digital landscape and seize opportunities presented by the evolving economy. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the need for the government to streamline and simplify procedures related to foreign investment. By doing so, it should adopt a favorable environment for foreign businesses to establish themselves in the country to diversify economic revenues and promote sustainable growth.

6. Digital transformation and E-government

Libya still lags behind in its journey towards digital governance. The absence of a nationally recognized biometric database for citizens has led to various challenges (Ateş & Elfeitori, 2021). These include issues such as duplicate salaries for civil servants, difficulties in managing national ID cards and passports, and the lack of accessible and reliable data for informed decision-making in different government sectors. In addition, many government services continue to be provided through manual, traditional methods, resulting in inefficiency and high costs (Mohamed, 2017). Both citizens are required to visit multiple government departments to access basic services. In 2012, there was an initiative called e-Libya aimed at developing electronic government services (e-government) (Khamallag, 2018). By focusing on digital government services, it is possible to achieve quick wins in terms of providing efficient and transparent government services; thus, the Government of National Unity worked on a digital transformation strategy.

The Digital Transformation strategy adopted by the Libyan government, known as the Service Roadmap, encompasses several core components that are crucial for its successful implementation. This strategy has been developed by the Libyan Authority of Information in collaboration with various governmental institutions in Libya. It aims at bringing about significant reforms in public administration and service delivery. These components of the strategy include Human Capital Capacity Building, Legal Framework, Media Awareness, Infrastructure of Electronic Networks, Communications of ICD (Interface Control Document), Cyber Security and PKIs (Public Key Infrastructures), Services and E-Portals, and Systems, Databases and Applications.

Human capital capacity building is essential to equip the public sector workforce with the necessary skills and capabilities to effectively leverage digital technologies. This involves implementing training programs, workshops, and capacity-building activities to enhance the digital skills of government employees. Another critical component that was addressed during the talks is the establishment of a robust legal framework. This involves developing and enacting laws, regulations, and policies that govern digital activities. This is to protect privacy and data security, and to ensure compliance with international standards and best practices. A comprehensive legal framework provides the necessary structure and guidance for the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives. Further, raising public awareness through media campaigns is crucial to sustain acceptance and utilization of electronic services. Awareness campaigns in a developing country would definitely educate and inform the public about the benefits, availability, and usage of electronic services. They can build trust and confidence in digital platforms. This results in promotion of digital literacy among the population.

Indeed, the development and enhancement of the infrastructure of electronic networks are fundamental for the effective delivery of digital services. This component focuses on improving the connectivity, accessibility, and reliability of digital infrastructure. It includes broadband networks, data centers, and cloud computing, which support the seamless provision of e-services to citizens and businesses. Further, effective communication and information sharing among government entities and stakeholders are vital for successful digital transformation. The establishment of integrated communication networks and platforms facilitates collaboration, and data exchange. This enables efficient service delivery and decision-making processes. Cybersecurity is another critical concern in the digital age. The implementation of robust cybersecurity measures, including Public Key Infrastructures (PKIs), encryption protocols, and information security frameworks, is necessary to safeguard government systems, citizens' data, and critical digital infrastructure from cyber threats. Within this Libyan newly developed Digital Roadmap, it is also essential to develop and deploy user-friendly e-services and electronic portals for citizens and businesses to digitally access and interact with government services. This involves digitizing administrative processes, creating online platforms for service delivery, and integrating multiple services into unified e-portals for ease of use and convenience.

The workshop's participants stressed such digital procedures including the establishment and integration of robust systems, databases, and applications to support digital transformation initiatives. These technologies facilitate data management, process automation, and seamless integration of services across various government entities. All the aforementioned components will comprehensively contribute to the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives in Libya. The success of the Service Roadmap depends on the effective implementation and measurement of these components.

7. Problems and Issues

The preceding discussion, particularly the workshop proceedings, clarifies the endeavors undertaken by successive governments to reshape the administrative system. In this instance, the government sought to augment the system's responsiveness to the populace's needs and enhance public administrative efficiency through the adoption of a digital transformation strategy. Regrettably, these commendable attempts have encountered setbacks, either through non-implementation or a dilution of their fundamental essence during execution. Administrative reform initiatives currently exhibit a state of stagnation or sluggish progress, lacking genuine commitment to enact the recommendations put forth by diverse reform committees, commissions, or study groups. Subsequently, as the following subsection unfolds, they will identify the primary impediments obstructing the implementation of administrative reform, with a particular emphasis on examining the obstacles and challenges associated with the adoption of substantive administrative reforms.

7.1 Paucity of political will

The successful implementation of administrative reform initiatives is heavily contingent upon the unwavering commitment demonstrated by political leadership. However, upon analyzing the past three decades in Libya, a disconcerting pattern emerges. It indicates a notable lack of seriousness among political leaders when it comes to undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of the administrative system (Mohamed, 2017). Remarkably, major political parties, or independent candidates, consistently emphasize their intentions to reform the administrative system during electoral campaigns to raise expectations among the populace. However, once these parties assume power, their professed intentions often fail to materialize into concrete actions. This discrepancy can be attributed, in part, to the country's political instability and the frequency of elections. With the nation grappling with instability and a disrupted governance structure, the decision-making processes of political leaders are frequently influenced by short-term political calculations. As a result, the immediate political costs associated with implementing administrative reforms are perceived to outweigh the potential long-term benefits. This prioritization of short-term gains hampers the translation of political promises into substantive reform measures. Moreover, the context of Libya is further complicated by the prevalence of clientelist politics. The allure of clientelism entices political leaders. It diverts their attention and resources away from embarking on comprehensive reform programs. This diversion exacerbates the challenges faced in achieving meaningful administrative reform. In light of these factors, the commitment of political leadership to effecting substantial administrative reform in Libya remains circumscribed. In fact, it impedes progress toward a more efficient and responsive administrative system.

7.2 Limited reformative capacity of government

Administrative reforms require coordinated efforts from the ruling government. Without demonstrating its capacity, the reform agenda is destined to fail in achieving the desired outcomes. Successive governments in Libya, especially after the 2011 uprising, have consistently failed to showcase this capability. Several factors have hindered their ability to push through reform initiatives. The institutional structure of the state has deteriorated significantly in recent years. This has led to a state of uncertainty in the rule of law and hampering public life in all aspects. The state seems to be under the influence of predatory interests, while development agencies often disregard rules and regulations to serve their own sectional interests (Sawani, 2017). Furthermore, politicians have abused their power over the police force (Perroux, 2019).

The evident administrative failure, characterized by the inability to provide essential services such as public goods, economic infrastructure, and law and order, necessitates the reliance on market-oriented reforms. Political incapacity is evident in various areas. Over the past three decades, Libya has experienced nearly fifteen years of direct or indirect military rule. The constant confrontation between major political parties has severely hindered political transition and agreement on crucial national issues. Moreover, the criminalization of politics poses a significant obstacle, with armed hooligans being utilized for political purposes, armed extortionists operating under political banners, and social bandits ascending political hierarchies (Rahman and Di Maio, 2020; Perroux, 2015). The absence of effective participation from civil society organizations further compounds the unhealthy political process (Sawani, 2017). The state has lost its direction and remains adrift, progressively losing legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, who perceive the state machinery as part of the problem rather than the solution to their daily concerns (Cole and Mcquinn, 2015).

In the absence of a stable democratic political order, the government lacks a strong moral foundation to implement comprehensive administrative reform programs (Perroux, 2019). Clientelism dominates the political landscape. It hindered reform efforts both in the past and potentially in the future. Clientelism includes a range of patron-client relationships prevalent in most

developing countries (KAS, 2020; Hamzeh, 2001). The susceptibility reflects the technical incapacity of the state and the influence wielded by clientelist groups. The clientelist nature of Libyan politics presents a significant obstacle to reforms, as they are either not implemented at all to appease clientelist lobbies or implemented in a way that favors such interests. Governments have thus far been reluctant to initiate reform measures that could undermine their own power base. The various aspects of state incapacity described above have remained significant barriers to the reform process in Libya.

7.3 Bureaucratic resistance

The issue of comprehensive administrative reform necessitates an examination of the intricate dynamics and influence exerted by the public bureaucracy. In the Libyan context, the advancement of administrative reforms has encountered significant obstacles stemming from the limited acknowledgment and support received from civil servants, who bear the responsibility of executing reforms that are likely to have repercussions on their own roles (WB & IMF, 2013). Predominantly, civil servants adopt a protective stance aligned with the prevailing power structure, which frequently favors vested interest groups, including the civil servants themselves (Sarker, 2004). Consequently, reform endeavors are perceived as potential threats to their present status, positions, and authority, prompting orchestrated resistance aimed at impeding the implementation of reforms. The proclivity of the majority of civil servants to uphold the existing order and expand their sphere of influence within the public service system is conspicuously manifested within the Libyan context (Wijaya & Shariha, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of robust political leadership serves to reinforce bureaucratic opposition towards administrative reforms.

In the Libyan context, the advancement of comprehensive administrative reforms faces significant obstacles due to the limited recognition and support received from civil servants, who are tasked with implementing reforms that may directly impact their own roles and responsibilities (WB & IMF, 2013). Civil servants in Libya predominantly adopt a protective stance aligned with the prevailing power structure, which often favors vested interest groups, including themselves (Sarker, 2004). Consequently, reform efforts are perceived as potential threats to their current status, positions, and authority, leading to orchestrated resistance aimed at impeding the implementation of reforms. This resistance is fueled by the inclination of the majority of civil servants to uphold the existing order and expand their sphere of influence within the public service system, a trend that is particularly evident within the Libyan context (Wijaya & Shariha, 2016).

Moreover, the absence of strong and decisive political leadership further reinforces bureaucratic opposition to administrative reforms. The lack of robust leadership allows bureaucratic interests to prevail, as there is no clear direction or impetus to drive and champion comprehensive reform agendas. Without strong political guidance, civil servants are less likely to feel compelled to support or actively engage in reform initiatives, perpetuating the status quo and hindering the progress of administrative reforms. These dynamics within the public bureaucracy in Libya require not only addressing the concerns and resistance of civil servants but also establishing effective leadership that can guide the reform process. By acknowledging and understanding the intricate dynamics and influence exerted by the public bureaucracy, policymakers should develop strategies and approaches that address the specific context of Libya to achieve successful implementation of administrative reforms.

7.4 Ghost employment

Ghost employment, also known as "phantom workers" or "ghost workers," (Tefurukwa, 2022; Bwaki, 2020) refers to a prevalent issue in Libya's employment sector where individuals receive salaries or benefits from the government or public institutions without actually performing any work or fulfilling their job responsibilities. This phenomenon has significant implications for the country's economy, public finances, and overall governance. This is one of the main issues that was raised by participants in the workshop. Ghost employment has become a pressing concern in Libya due to a combination of factors. The country's prolonged period of political instability and armed conflicts has created an environment conducive to fraudulent practices. This included a creation and maintenance of ghost employee lists. Political factions and interest groups often exploit these practices to secure financial resources and maintain patronage networks. In fact, the existence of ghost employees poses several detrimental effects on Libya's socio-economic landscape. It places an immense strain on public finances and the national budget. Salaries and benefits paid to non-existent employees drain public resources that could be allocated to essential services, infrastructure development, or social welfare programs. This misallocation of funds hampers the Libya's ability to address pressing societal needs and impedes its path towards sustainable development.

Moreover, ghost employment eroded public trust and reinforced a culture of corruption. The manipulation of public employment systems undermines the principles of fairness and transparency. It reflects a sense of injustice among those who genuinely seek employment opportunities. Efforts to combat ghost employment in Libya have faced significant challenges. The lack of a centralized and robust system for personnel management, coupled with weak governance structures, has allowed this issue to persist. Political divisions and the absence of a unified government have hindered comprehensive reforms and the establishment of effective oversight mechanisms.

It was agreed upon during the discussions that ghost employment posed a significant impediment to public administration reform in Libya. The presence of phantom workers undermines the integrity and effectiveness of reform efforts by distorting the actual size of the public workforce and creating a false sense of productivity. Thus, it is essential to address the issue of ghost employment in order to achieve meaningful public administration reform in Libya. This will enable the country to build a more efficient, merit-based, and accountable public service. Further, international support and cooperation can also play a pivotal role in combating ghost employment. Technical expertise, financial assistance, and knowledge sharing can assist Libya in building capacity, improving governance structures, and implementing effective anti-corruption measures.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper shed light on the intricate challenges and obstacles that hinder comprehensive administrative reform in the country. The study, initiated by a workshop that was organized by the UNDP, examined various aspects, including the public administration structure, decentralization, fiscal sustainability, economic development, digital transformation, and e-government. It also delved into the problems and issues that plague reform efforts, such as the paucity of political will, limited reformative capacity of the government, bureaucratic resistance, and the pervasive issue of ghost employment. The findings of this research necessitate the urgent need for substantial and transformative reforms in Libya's public administration. The current structure and functioning of the public administration system impede effective governance. It hinders service delivery, and undermine the country's overall development objectives. The decentralization of administrative powers and resources, along with the promotion of fiscal sustainability, emerge as important considerations for sustaining local development and improving public service delivery. Moreover, embracing digital transformation and e-government initiaves can enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability within the public sector. By leveraging technology, Libya can streamline administrative processes and strengthen governance mechanisms.

However, the research also highlights significant challenges that must be addressed to facilitate successful reform. The paucity of political will, characterized by the absence of strong leadership and commitment to reform agendas, poses a significant barrier. The limited reformative capacity of the government and bureaucratic resistance further impede progress. The pervasive issue of ghost employment emerges as a critical challenge that demands immediate attention. To address these challenges, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving political commitment, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and international support. Libya needs to prioritize these areas to achieve sustainable and meaningful public administration reform.

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

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