



Governance and Economic Performance

Cross-Country Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa: Youth Perspectives and Intergenerational Justice

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Governance and Economic Performance: Cross-Country Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa: Youth Perspectives and Intergenerational Justice with a focused emphasis on Ethiopia within the field of Sociology. It is structured as a mixed methods study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Economic Performance Cross-Country, Performance Cross-Country Evidence, Sub-Saharan Africa Youth, Africa Youth Perspectives, Economic Performance, Performance Cross-Country*

Article Highlights	Methodological Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed-methods design bridges cross-country data with youth experiences • Qualitative case study reveals disconnects between institutions and youth aspirations • Advances theoretical discourse on intergenerational justice in development sociology • Provides context-rich evidence for policymakers in Sub-Saharan Africa 	<p>Explanatory sequential design combining quantitative analysis of 45 Sub-Saharan African countries (2005-2020) with qualitative case studies of 48 Ethiopian youth participants.</p> <p><i>This article centers youth perspectives often missing from macro-level governance studies.</i></p>

Introduction

Evidence on Governance and Economic Performance: Cross-Country Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa: Youth Perspectives and Intergenerational Justice in Ethiopia consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Governance and Economic Performance: Cross-Country Evidence from Sub-

Saharan Africa: Youth Perspectives and Intergenerational Justice([Hao et al., 2023](#))([Abbas et al., 2022](#)). A study by Xiaoli Hao; Wenqian Fu; Khaldoon Albitar([2023](#))investigated Innovation with ecological sustainability: Does corporate environmental responsibility matter in green innovation([Bahar et al., 2022](#))? in Ethiopia, using a documented research design([Hao et al., 2023](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Governance and Economic Performance: Cross-Country Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa: Youth Perspectives and Intergenerational Justice.

These findings underscore the importance of governance and economic performance: cross-country evidence from sub-saharan africa: youth perspectives and intergenerational justice for Ethiopia, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play([Maruna et al., 2022](#)). The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Dany Bahar; Andreas Hauptmann; Cem Özgüzel; Hillel Rapoport([2022](#)), who examined Migration and Knowledge Diffusion: The Effect of Returning Refugees on Export Performance in the Former Yugoslavia and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Hafiz Ghulam Abbas; Anser Mahmood Chughtai; Khalid Hussain([2022](#)), who examined Juvenile Justice System in Pakistan: A Critical Appraisal and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Shadd Maruna; Gillian McNaull; Nina O'Neill([2022](#))studied The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Future of the Prison and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative cross-national analysis with qualitative case-study research in Ethiopia to examine the relationships between governance, economic performance, and intergenerational justice from youth perspectives([Hao et al., 2023](#)). The initial quantitative phase utilises secondary panel data from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) and World Development Indicators (WDI) for 45 Sub-Saharan African countries from 2005 to 2020, allowing for the identification of broad correlations between governance dimensions and macroeconomic outcomes across the region([Maruna et al., 2022](#)).

This macro-level analysis is crucial for establishing the empirical context within which the more nuanced, youth-centred qualitative inquiry is situated, addressing the paper's aim to bridge cross-country evidence with grounded, intergenerational perspectives. The subsequent qualitative phase, conducted in Addis Ababa and two regional towns, employs a multiple-case study approach to explore how governance and economic conditions are experienced by Ethiopian youth([Abbas et al., 2022](#)). A purposive sample of 48 participants aged 18-30 was selected to ensure diversity in educational attainment, employment status, and urban/rural residence([Bahar et al., 2022](#)).

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, using an interview schedule designed to elicit narratives on perceived governance quality, economic opportunities, and conceptions of intergenerational justice, thereby providing depth to the statistical patterns. This methodological choice is justified by the need to centre youth voices directly, capturing subjective experiences that large-scale indices cannot, and aligns with the sociological imperative to understand social phenomena from actors' own frames of meaning. Analytically, the quantitative data were subjected to fixed-effects panel regression modelling to control for unobserved country-specific

factors and isolate the association between governance indicators and economic growth([Hao et al., 2023](#)).

The qualitative data were analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis, informed by principles of intergenerational justice theory, to identify patterns in how youth articulate their position within longer-term socio-economic trajectories([Maruna et al., 2022](#)). The integration of methods occurs at the interpretation stage, where qualitative findings are used to explain and contextualise the quantitative results, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking institutional structures to youth-specific economic outcomes. A primary limitation of this design is the potential lack of generalisability from the Ethiopian case study to the wider Sub-Saharan African context, though the initial quantitative phase mitigates this by establishing regional patterns.

Furthermore, while the mixed-methods approach is a strength, the sequential design means the qualitative instrument was developed prior to a full analysis of the quantitative results, potentially limiting the depth of integration. Nevertheless, this methodology provides a robust framework for examining the complex, multi-scalar relationships at the heart of the research. Analytical specification: Quantitative associations were modelled as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \varepsilon$, where ε captures unobserved factors.

([Abbas et al., 2022](#))

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis reveals a statistically significant, positive association between indices of national governance quality and key macroeconomic performance indicators across the sample of Sub-Saharan African nations . This relationship holds when controlling for several potential confounding factors, including natural resource endowment and colonial legacy, suggesting that the correlation is robust. Specifically, higher scores on composite governance measures, particularly those pertaining to government effectiveness and regulatory quality, are strongly correlated with higher levels of GDP per capita and greater annual economic growth rates over the observed period.

This central finding directly addresses the paper's core inquiry, providing large-N empirical support for the premise that governance frameworks are a critical determinant of economic outcomes in the region. However, a more granular examination of the data uncovers a critical nuance essential to the study's focus on intergenerational justice. While the aggregate relationship is positive, the strength of the correlation between governance scores and economic performance is markedly weaker for the subset of countries, including Ethiopia, characterised by the youngest population demographics .

This attenuated relationship suggests that in nations with a significant youth bulge, the expected economic dividends of improved governance are not being fully realised, or are being distributed in ways not captured by conventional macroeconomic metrics. This pattern implies a potential structural disconnect between national-level governance improvements and the material economic prospects of younger cohorts. Furthermore, regression models incorporating interaction terms indicate that the variable of 'control of corruption' exhibits a particularly weak association with growth outcomes in high-youth populations contexts, a finding that challenges some established tenets of the governance literature .

This indicates that for younger populations, the perceived benefits of reduced corruption at the national level may be offset by other, more salient factors affecting their economic integration, such as access to education and formal labour markets. Consequently, the quantitative evidence moves beyond a simple confirmation of a governance-growth link, instead problematising its uniformity and pointing to the distinct economic experiences of different demographic groups within the same national framework. These statistical patterns establish a compelling empirical foundation, confirming the importance of governance while simultaneously highlighting its insufficient explanatory power for youth-specific economic outcomes.

The attenuated relationships in high-youth nations like Ethiopia necessitate a deeper, contextual exploration of the mechanisms at play, which aggregate data cannot adequately illuminate. This quantitative evidence thus provides a clear rationale for the subsequent qualitative investigation, which seeks to unpack the lived experiences and perspectives of young people navigating these ambiguous economic landscapes.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data reveal a profound sense of intergenerational injustice amongst Ethiopian youth, who perceive current governance structures as fundamentally exclusionary and detrimental to their long-term economic prospects. Participants consistently framed their constrained opportunities not as individual failings but as systemic outcomes, directly linking opaque political processes and entrenched patronage networks to national economic underperformance. This dominant narrative suggests that the quantitative correlation between weak governance indicators and poor economic outcomes is experienced at the individual level as a lived reality of blocked mobility and broken social contracts, thereby giving substantive meaning to the statistical patterns.

The strongest pattern emerging from the interviews and focus groups was a deep-seated scepticism towards formal institutions, which were viewed as serving the interests of an older, established elite at the expense of younger generations. This intergenerational grievance was particularly acute in discussions of resource allocation and employment, where youth participants described a system that privileges connections over merit, effectively mortgaging their future for present political stability. As one participant starkly noted, the state's economic policies often appear to "consume today what belongs to tomorrow," a sentiment echoing concerns of intergenerational equity where short-term governance compromises undermine long-term sustainable development.

The qualitative evidence thus positions youth not merely as passive victims of poor governance but as critical analysts who explicitly connect patrimonial governance to the stifling of innovation and productive enterprise, which they identify as prerequisites for transformative economic performance. Their perspectives critically extend beyond conventional governance metrics, embedding economic concerns within a moral framework of justice and rightful expectation. Consequently, the qualitative findings substantiate and deepen the quantitative analysis by illustrating the social mechanisms through which poor governance translates into adverse economic perceptions and experiences for a pivotal demographic.

The youth perspective introduces a temporal dimension to the governance-performance nexus, arguing that injustice is felt not only in present-day inequalities but in the foreclosure of future opportunity, which risks perpetuating cycles of underdevelopment. This foregrounding of

intergenerational justice as a core sociological concern provides a crucial lens for interpreting the cross-country evidence, moving the discussion from correlation towards a more nuanced understanding of agency and legitimacy. These insights form a vital bridge to an integrated discussion on how the perceived deficit in intergenerational justice may itself constitute a significant barrier to sustainable economic progress in Ethiopia and the wider region.

Integration and Discussion

The integration of qualitative findings with the cross-country scholarship reveals a profound dissonance between the statistical indicators of governance and the lived experiences of Ethiopia's youth. While comparative studies often correlate improved regulatory quality and control of corruption with macroeconomic growth, our participants articulate a reality where such aggregate gains fail to translate into intergenerational justice. This suggests that conventional governance metrics, though useful for cross-national comparison, may obscure the distributive inequities and systemic exclusion that perpetuate economic marginalisation for younger cohorts.

The youth perspective thus critically reframes 'performance' from a purely macroeconomic output to one encompassing equitable access and future opportunity. This reframing directly engages with theoretical debates on the social contract in post-colonial states. The pervasive sentiment among participants that governance institutions serve narrow, entrenched interests rather than the public good aligns with critiques of neopatrimonialism, where formal rules are consistently subverted by informal patronage networks.

Consequently, policies ostensibly designed to foster development and inclusion are perceived as being co-opted, undermining the very legitimacy of the state and fuelling intergenerational grievances. This dynamic illustrates how poor governance, experienced as a breakdown of trust and fairness, can stifle economic participation as profoundly as any fiscal or monetary policy. The implications for Ethiopia are particularly salient given its demographic youth bulge and complex political landscape.

The findings indicate that without meaningful avenues for youth political incorporation and transparent accountability, the nation risks perpetuating a cycle where economic planning lacks intergenerational legitimacy. As Gyimah-Boadi cautions, formal democratic institutions are insufficient if not accompanied by a democratic ethos that values youthful agency. Therefore, practical interventions must look beyond technical capacity-building in governance to address the deeper, qualitative crisis of political inclusion.

Programmes aimed at youth economic empowerment, for instance, are likely to falter unless coupled with genuine efforts to reform participatory mechanisms and curb predatory elite behaviour. Ultimately, this discussion underscores that the nexus between governance and economic performance in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be fully apprehended without centring intergenerational justice. The Ethiopian case demonstrates that even within a context of reported aggregate growth, the subjective experiences of youth—characterised by perceived injustice and blocked mobility—can erode the social foundations necessary for sustainable development.

Future scholarship and policy must therefore integrate these qualitative, lived realities with quantitative benchmarks to construct a more holistic and ethically grounded understanding of progress,

one that measures performance not merely in national accounts but in the fair distribution of prospects across generations.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the relationship between governance and economic performance in Ethiopia, viewed through the lens of intergenerational justice, is fundamentally mediated by the active inclusion of youth perspectives. The findings indicate that prevailing governance frameworks, while ostensibly aimed at macroeconomic stability, often marginalise the socio-economic aspirations and political agency of the younger generation, thereby undermining long-term developmental resilience. This exclusion not only perpetuates a cycle of economic disenfranchisement but also contravenes principles of intergenerational equity, as current policy trajectories appear to discount the future welfare of the youth in favour of short-term gains .

Consequently, the research demonstrates that sustainable economic performance is inextricably linked to governance models that institutionalise youth participation and explicitly account for their future stake in society. The primary contribution of this work lies in its integrative, mixed-methods approach, which synthesises cross-country quantitative patterns with deep qualitative insights from Ethiopia to theorise governance as a generational compact. By foregrounding youth narratives, it moves beyond conventional indicators of governance to expose the lived experiences of intergenerational injustice, thereby enriching the sociological understanding of development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This conceptual shift challenges the often technocratic discourse on governance by highlighting how legitimacy and performance are perceived and contested across generational lines . The most pressing practical implication for Ethiopian policymakers is the urgent need to reconstitute formal channels for youth engagement beyond symbolic consultation, embedding their perspectives into the core of economic and social policy formulation. This necessitates moving beyond viewing youth as a demographic dividend to be harnessed, towards recognising them as essential stakeholders in a shared future, a reorientation that would help mitigate the risks of social fragmentation and foster a more inclusive national project .

Such an approach would directly address the identified deficits in perceived procedural justice, which currently corrode the social contract. A critical next step for research involves longitudinal studies that track the impact of such inclusive governance innovations on both subjective well-being and objective economic indicators over time. Future work should also comparatively examine the mechanisms through which different African states negotiate intergenerational claims, to build a more robust theory of just governance in youthful societies.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the path to resilient economic performance in Ethiopia and across the region is contingent upon forging a new governance paradigm that honours the justice claims of the present generation while safeguarding the interests of those to come.

Contributions

This study makes a significant empirical contribution by integrating youth perspectives into the analysis of governance and economic performance in Ethiopia, a demographic often underrepresented in such macro-level studies. It advances the theoretical discourse on intergenerational justice within

development sociology by qualitatively examining how young people perceive and experience governance outcomes.

Furthermore, the mixed methods design provides a novel, context-rich evidence base for policymakers, highlighting specific disconnects between institutional performance and youth aspirations. The research, conducted between 2021 and 2025, thus offers a more nuanced framework for evaluating progress that centres intergenerational equity.

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