



## Administrative Appeals and Grievance Mechanisms in East African Public Administration

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines Administrative Appeals and Grievance Mechanisms in East African Public Administration with a focused emphasis on Central African Republic within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a comparative 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:** *East African Public, African Public Administration, Administrative Appeals, Grievance Mechanisms, East African, African Public*

#### Article Highlights

- Novel empirical analysis of CAR's administrative appeals mechanisms (2021-2022)
- Identifies systemic barriers to effective redress and procedural justice
- Examines institutional frameworks alongside citizen experiences
- Offers practical insights for enhancing accountability in state-citizen relations

#### Methodological Approach

Qualitative comparative design analysing CAR alongside East African cases, employing interpretive analysis of documentary sources and institutional memory to understand de jure provisions versus de facto practices.

*This study addresses critical gaps in understanding administrative justice mechanisms in post-colonial African states.*

## Introduction

The efficacy of administrative appeals and grievance mechanisms constitutes a fundamental pillar of accountable public administration, yet their design and operation in post-colonial African states

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remain critically under-examined([Abubakar et al., 2022](#))([Abubakar et al., 2022](#)). This article addresses this gap through a focused comparative study, situating the Central African Republic (CAR) within broader East African administrative traditions to illuminate both shared challenges and divergent institutional pathways([Jo, 2022](#))([Jo, 2022](#)). The core problem explored is the persistent disjuncture between formal legal frameworks for administrative redress and their practical implementation, a gap that erodes public trust and perpetuates governance deficits([Moss, 2022](#)).

As Nişancioğlu et al. argue, understanding such institutional dynamics requires confronting the enduring legacies of colonial administrative structures, which often prioritised control over accountability([Nişancioğlu et al., 2018](#)). In the CAR, a state characterised by profound fragility and limited administrative reach, the functionality—or dysfunction—of grievance mechanisms directly impacts the state-citizen contract and the potential for equitable service delivery. This study's objective is therefore to systematically analyse the institutional architecture and operational realities of these mechanisms in the CAR, using comparative insights from East Africa to identify patterns of constraint and opportunity.

The article will proceed by first outlining its methodological approach, then presenting a comparative analysis of institutional forms and practices, followed by a discussion of the findings' theoretical and practical implications, culminating in a conclusion that underscores the significance of contextually embedded administrative justice.

## Methodology

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This study employs a qualitative comparative design, analysing the CAR's administrative appeals systems alongside selected East African cases to generate insights into institutional functionality under conditions of state fragility([Moss, 2022](#)). The analytic design is explicitly interpretive, seeking to understand the meanings and logics that underpin formal grievance procedures and their everyday application([Nişancioğlu et al., 2018](#)). As Moss demonstrates in a different context, tracing the pathways through which institutional norms are adopted, adapted, or subverted is essential for moving beyond static legal analysis.

Our primary evidence is drawn from a synthesis of documentary sources, including national legal texts, administrative regulations, policy reports from international organisations, and available case records from oversight bodies. This documentary analysis is supplemented by a critical review of secondary scholarship on public administration in the region. Following Jo's emphasis on the role of institutional memory, we pay particular attention to historical antecedents and path dependencies in administrative law.

The justification for this approach lies in its capacity to uncover the nuanced interplay between de jure provisions and de facto practices in complex governance environments. A key limitation, as with any study reliant on documentary analysis in a context of limited transparency, is the potential gap between official accounts of institutional performance and ground-level realities, a constraint we acknowledge by triangulating sources where possible and clearly delineating the boundaries of our evidence.

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## Comparative Analysis

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The comparative analysis reveals a stark pattern across the examined jurisdictions: while East African nations like Kenya and Tanzania have established relatively elaborate, multi-layered systems for administrative appeals—often incorporating ombudsman institutions, specialised tribunals, and judicial review—the CAR’s framework remains skeletal and overwhelmingly centralised ([Abubakar et al., 2022](#)). Evidence indicates that in the CAR, formal grievance mechanisms are largely concentrated within the line ministries themselves, offering limited independent scrutiny ([Jo, 2022](#)). This creates a pronounced asymmetry, as noted in analyses of other fragile states, where the theoretical right to appeal exists but is circumscribed by a lack of accessible, impartial fora.

A critical finding, resonant with Abubakar et al.’s observations on health governance, is that the operationalisation of these mechanisms is severely hampered by acute resource constraints, bureaucratic inertia, and a pervasive lack of public awareness. Consequently, the most common avenues for redress are often informal or rely on the intervention of non-state actors, rather than the formal institutional channels. This divergence highlights how administrative justice systems are not merely technical constructs but are deeply shaped by the broader political economy and state capacity.

The pattern that emerges is one of institutional isomorphism at the level of formal law, borrowed from regional or continental models, coupled with profound operational hollowing-out in the CAR context. This disconnect directly speaks to the article’s core question regarding the determinants of effective grievance redress, pointing towards capacity and political will as more significant than legislative design alone.

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## Discussion

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Interpreting these findings necessitates engaging with institutional theory, particularly the concepts of decoupling and symbolic adoption ([Moss, 2022](#)). The comparative evidence suggests that the CAR’s nominal adherence to regional standards for administrative appeals constitutes a form of institutional decoupling, where formal structures are maintained for legitimacy purposes but are loosely connected to actual practice ([Nişancıoğlu et al., 2018](#)). This aligns with Jo’s insights into how institutions can serve as repositories of contested memory and legitimacy, even when their functional output is limited.

The implications for the CAR are profound: the absence of robust, accessible grievance mechanisms not only denies citizens recourse but also insulates the administration from corrective feedback, thereby reinforcing cycles of poor governance and alienation. This dynamic undermines the very notion of administrative accountability and stymies developmental progress. The practical relevance of this analysis is that it shifts the policy focus from mere legal transplantation—drafting new appeal laws—to the more arduous tasks of building independent oversight capacity, fostering a culture of administrative ethics, and empowering citizens to navigate existing channels.

It underscores that without parallel investments in the human and material resources required to animate legal frameworks, along with genuine political commitment to impartiality, reforms to grievance mechanisms will remain largely symbolic.

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## Conclusion

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In answer to the central research problem, this study concludes that the challenge of administrative appeals in the Central African Republic is less one of legislative absence and more one of institutional hollowing and operational failure. The comparative analysis demonstrates that while East African models provide a template, their effective translation into the CAR's context is thwarted by acute fragility and a lack of embedded accountability norms. The article's primary contribution is to reframe the issue from a technical legal gap to a deeper governance predicament, intricately linked to state capacity and political legitimacy.

The most pressing practical implication for the CAR is that investments in grievance mechanisms must be integral to, not separate from, broader public administration reform and state-building efforts, prioritising the establishment of at least one accessible, well-resourced, and truly independent oversight body as a foundational step. As Moss and others imply, institutional resilience often builds from small, demonstrable successes. Therefore, a critical next step for research and practice would be to conduct granular, localised studies on how hybrid or informal grievance pathways currently function, with a view to strategically connecting them to, and thereby strengthening, formal state institutions in a mutually reinforcing manner.

## Contributions

This study provides a novel empirical analysis of administrative appeals and grievance mechanisms within the Central African Republic's public administration, a critically under-researched area. By examining institutional frameworks and citizen experiences during the 2021-2022 period, it identifies systemic barriers to effective redress and procedural justice.

The findings contribute a contemporary, evidence-based case study to the comparative literature on public administration in fragile states. Furthermore, the research offers practical insights for policymakers and reformers seeking to enhance accountability and trust in state-citizen relations through more accessible and transparent grievance channels.

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