

Examining the Influence Between Governance Quality and Hunger Levels in African Countries 1998-2022

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Abstract

Hunger is one of the persistent problems in Africa. One of the key factors contributing to the ongoing hunger crisis in Africa is the poor quality of governance in its countries. The better the quality of governance, the better the level of democracy within a country. This study aims to identify the influence of good governance on hunger levels in African countries from 1998–2022. Good governance is assessed using six indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), which include Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. Using a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis, the study finds that several WGI indicators show statistically significant relationships with hunger levels, particularly Voice and Accountability, Regulatory Quality, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Rule of Law, and Government Effectiveness in specific sub-regions. These findings suggest that the impact of governance on hunger is context-specific and varies across African sub-regions.

Keywords: Africa, good governance, hunger level

Abstrak

Kelaparan adalah salah satu masalah berkepanjangan yang terjadi di Afrika. Salah satu hal yang menyebabkan masalah kelaparan bisa terus terjadi di Afrika adalah buruknya kualitas pemerintah di negara-negara Afrika. Semakin baik kualitas suatu pemerintahan, maka semakin baik pula tingkat demokrasi yang ada di negara tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh good governance terhadap tingkat kelaparan di negara-negara Afrika selama periode 1998–2022. Good governance dinilai menggunakan enam indikator dari Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) yang mencakup Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, dan Control of Corruption. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan analisis regresi linier berganda, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beberapa indikator WGI memiliki hubungan yang signifikan secara statistik dengan tingkat kelaparan, terutama Voice and Accountability, Regulatory Quality, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Rule of Law, serta Government Effectiveness di beberapa sub-wilayah tertentu. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh kualitas pemerintah terhadap kelaparan bersifat kontekstual dan bervariasi antar sub-wilayah di Afrika.

Kata Kunci: Afrika, kualitas pemerintah, tingkat kelaparan

INTRODUCTION

Democracy has long been regarded as a positive concept, based on the belief that if a country wishes to develop and move in a better direction, it must adopt a democratic system (Landman, 2018). This perspective is reinforced by democracy indexes, which consistently show that democratic countries tend to be more prosperous than those that are less democratic or non-democratic. One of the key principles of democracy is the role of the public, as democracy places ultimate power in the hands of the people. However, in the 21st century, this principle is facing significant challenges, as public trust in official government institutions continues to decline (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). This presents a serious concern, as a country cannot effectively implement democracy without the support and engagement of its citizens.

In addition to public participation, transparency and accountability also play a crucial role in a democratic system. Transparency is closely linked to how a country addresses corruption. A lack of transparency, combined with other deficiencies in governance, can ultimately lead to a decline in public trust toward the government (Androniceanu, 2021). Strong transparency practices can promote accountability, as democracy grants the public the right to hold the government accountable when it fails to fulfill its responsibilities effectively. This, in turn, also impacts the rule of law and the quality of regulations. Furthermore, democracy is not only associated with transparency and accountability, but also has a strong connection to human rights. Human

rights play a vital role in maintaining a country's national resilience. Hamdani & Fauzia (2021) explain that democracy and human rights are deeply rooted in humanity, shaped by the course of human civilization. When democracy and human rights are upheld effectively within a country, they can help ensure the dignity and well-being of its citizens.

The level of democracy in a country can be assessed through good governance. Good governance ensures democracy and prosperity within a nation (Sharma, 2007). If a country can manage its affairs effectively, issues like hunger can be prevented and addressed properly. There are numerous definitions of governance, but the one provided by the Commission on Global Governance is considered the most representative. Governance, according to the Commission on Global Governance, is a combination of various individuals and institutions, both public and private, working to manage their shared interests. Good governance can also be seen as an optimal, active collaborative effort between the state and its citizens. Since 1996, the World Bank has supported good governance in its development strategies (Santiso, 2001). Over time, the concept of good governance has faced several shortcomings, particularly in terms of its operational definition. The concept is flexible and can be applied in various contexts, with its interpretation tailored to the issues or focus being addressed (Addink, 2019).

The World Bank's concept of good governance identifies six key indicators used to evaluate a country's level of governance: (1) Voice and Accounta-

bility, (2) Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, (3) Government Effectiveness, (4) Regulatory Quality, (5) Rule of Law, and (6) Control of Corruption. Each indicator is assessed on a scale from 0 to 100, allowing for standardized measurement and more in-depth interpretation (Handoyo, 2023). Essentially, good governance functions to sustain and fulfill the needs of the population within a nation's territory. Governments aim to guide, direct, and regulate activities within their countries through various systems and relationships established via interactions, ensuring public interests are maximized (Keping, 2017).

Several previous studies have discussed the link between WGI and development within a country. In the study by de Miranda et. al (2021), it is mentioned that WGI is important for assessing governance in environmental performance as one aspect of a country's development. Not only that, the study conducted by Adedokun (2017) even states that foreign aid does not have a significant impact on economic growth in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. That study argues that appropriate foreign aid coupled with good governance is necessary to enhance development in the region. Still in the Sub-Saharan region, Basson (2015) also states that WGI is a fundamental framework for improving the quality of countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Examining the concept of good governance in the context of hunger in Africa is crucial to filling gaps in previous research. Most prior studies linking good governance and hunger levels have focused on only one or two

indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators. By exploring the influence of each indicator across Africa as a whole and within its sub-regions, this research seeks to answer unresolved questions about how good governance can serve as an effective and contextual solution to reducing hunger in this vulnerable region. This research is expected to contribute not only to the academic literature on governance and food security but also to offer practical relevance by supporting policymakers in designing more targeted and effective policies to combat persistent hunger.

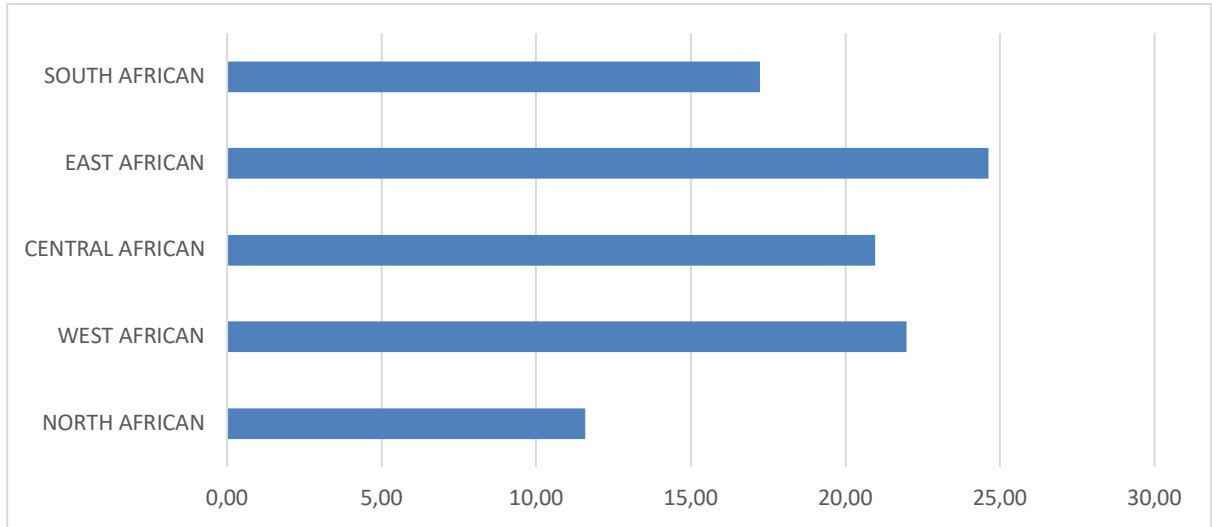
Despite data limitations in certain sub-regions, analyzing the African continent as a whole remains crucial for capturing the broader governance-hunger dynamic and providing comparative insights across sub-regions. The diversity within Africa presents an opportunity to observe varying governance patterns and hunger outcomes, which can enrich theoretical and policy debates. Moreover, the selection of the 1998–2022 timeframe is intentional. This period encompasses major political transitions, democratization waves, economic reforms, and climate-related shocks across the continent, providing a comprehensive window to examine how governance quality evolved and impacted food security under different regimes and conditions. The chosen timeframe also corresponds with the availability of both governance and hunger data, ensuring longitudinal consistency.

Hunger remains a serious issue in Africa and continues to affect its population to this day. Since the 21st century, hunger levels in many countries

have tended to decline, except in African nations (World Health Organization, 2025; Baro & Deubel, 2006). Various problems, including colonization, natural disasters such as drought, food crises, civil wars, weak economies, and political instability, have caused Africa to experience persistent hunger over a long period (Herre et al., 2025; Drèze, 1990). In addition, poverty also plays a significant role in the ongoing hunger crisis in Africa. Poverty is closely linked to both food security and food distribution. The financial constraints faced by many Africans ultimately limit their access to nutritious food (Chaka, 2023).

Malnutrition is a direct consequence of inadequate food intake, which can lead to severe and long-term health impacts. From a global health perspective, malnutrition is one of the major health challenges faced by many countries, with Africa being one of the

most vulnerable regions. This vulnerability is also reflected in the high prevalence of child stunting, child mortality, and child wasting. The widespread occurrence of these conditions in Africa is a direct outcome of prolonged hunger and poverty across the region. A study by Amadu et al. (2021) found that children aged 5 to 23 months are at higher risk of malnutrition, stunting, mortality, and wasting. Moreover, the study revealed that male children from poor households, with mothers who have low levels of education, and who live in environments with limited access to clean water and proper sanitation, face an even greater risk of experiencing these conditions. These findings highlight the need for interventions that take into account gender, socioeconomic, and environmental dimensions simultaneously.



Source: Global Hunger Index, 2024.

Figure 1.
Global Hunger Index of African Sub-Regions from 1998 to 2022

Based on data from the Global Hunger Index (GHI), it is evident that among the regions in Africa, East Africa has the highest hunger levels, followed by West Africa. The Global Hunger Index categorizes hunger severity in a country into five levels: low (score ≤ 9.9), moderate (score 10.0–19.9), serious (score 20.0–34.9), alarming (score 35.0–49.9), and extremely alarming (score ≥ 50.0). The indicators used in the GHI to measure hunger levels in a country are (1) undernourishment, (2) child stunting, (3) child wasting, and (4) child mortality. From this data, it can be observed that three out of five regions in

Africa fall into the category of countries with serious hunger levels. East Africa may be the region with the highest Global Hunger Index due to a range of factors, one of which is the occurrence of the most severe flooding in the past 40 years, spanning from around October 2020 to early 2023. This disaster resulted in significant livestock losses, crop failures, reduced water supply, and even triggered conflicts (Kimutai et al., 2024). As a result, approximately 4.35 million people in East Africa were left in need of humanitarian assistance, directly impacting the region’s hunger levels.

Table 1.
Countries with the Highest Hunger Index in Africa

10 Countries with the Highest Hunger Index in Africa	Sub-Region	Average (1998-2022)
Somalia	East African	57.55
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Central African	39.18
Chad	Central African	34.88
Central African Republic	Central African	34.70
Sierra Leone	West African	31.63
Ethiopia	East African	31.62
Madagascar	East African	30.15
Niger	West African	30.02
Zambia	East African	29.97
Angola	Central African	29.28

Source: Global Hunger Index, 2024.

The table above highlights the ten countries with the highest hunger levels in Africa. Based on regional averages, East African countries account for the majority of those with the highest hunger indices, followed by Central African countries. However, an anomaly

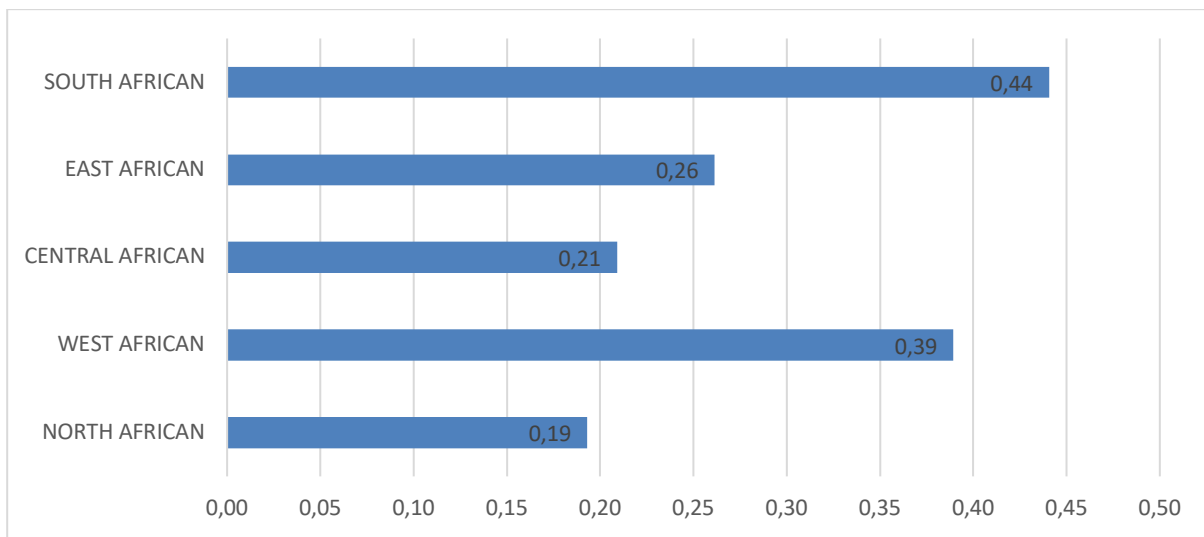
emerges when West Africa, which has the second-highest regional average hunger level in Africa, only contributes two countries to the list of nations with the highest hunger levels. This discrepancy can be attributed to differences in the crises and conditions

faced by African nations, as well as missing data for some countries in Central and East Africa. The Global Hunger Index (2024) does not provide data for Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe in Central Africa nor for Seychelles in East Africa. Additionally, data for certain countries like Burundi, Eritrea, and South Sudan is incomplete for specific years. These factors contribute to the variation between the overall regional average and the individual averages of the countries. Although this study focuses on sub-regional trends, highlighting the countries with the highest hunger levels provides a concrete illustration of extreme cases that help contextualize the broader patterns. This approach complements the regional analysis by emphasizing the urgency of addressing disparities at both sub-regional and national levels.

Hunger in Africa persists due to a variety of factors, with poor governance being a major contributor. Weak governance not only exacerbates hunger but also leads to a range of other challenges. African nations have collectively strived to establish stronger and more effective governments but continue to face significant obstacles in

their efforts. Many African countries have yet to implement the democratic reforms necessary to prevent dictatorship, curb corruption, and address declining economic growth. The lack of good governance in many African nations has made it essential to maintain peace, ensure security, and promote economic growth to address the challenges they face, including hunger (Mbaku, 2020).

An analysis of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa by Ilorah and Ngwakwe (2020) indicates that the failure to achieve these goals was largely due to operational shortcomings, as government institutions were prioritized and refocused toward meeting the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa. Furthermore, they argue that donor assistance aimed at helping impoverished communities in Africa should not be entirely blamed if the results have yet to materialize. This suggests that the failure to reduce poverty and hunger in Africa is not solely the result of ineffective aid, but also reflects the inability of governments to govern effectively.



Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), 2025.

Figure 2.
Democracy Indeks of African Sub-Regions from 1998 to 2022

Based on the composite average of five core democracy indices from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, namely Electoral Democracy, Liberal Democracy, Participatory Democracy, Deliberative Democracy, and Egalitarian Democracy (Coppedge et al., 2025), Southern Africa emerges as the most democratic sub-region in the continent with an average score of 0.44. It is followed by West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and North Africa, which recorded the lowest level of democratic quality overall. These values, measured on a scale from 0 as the least democratic to 1 as the most democratic country, reflect significant variation in democratic development across Africa. The relatively higher score in Southern Africa suggests stronger institutional structures, broader political inclusion, and greater protection of civil liberties. Meanwhile, the consistently low scores in North and Central Africa indicate

deeply rooted authoritarian governance, limited public participation, and weak civic and institutional accountability.

This study aims to examine the relationship between good governance and hunger levels in Africa. The research utilizes the concept of good governance as defined by the Worldwide Governance Indicators from the World Bank, which include Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. These six indicators provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating governmental performance. The study seeks to understand the extent to which each of these indicators contributes to either reducing or exacerbating hunger levels in Africa during the 1998–2022 period. By identifying the indicators that have the most significant impact on hunger, the

findings of this research are expected to offer actionable policy recommendations to improve governance quality and address the hunger crisis in Africa, especially in East Africa and Central Africa.

Conceptual Framework

In understanding good governance, several indicators can be used based on the Worldwide Governance Indicators or WGI from the World Bank (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2011). From the six indicators, they are further divided into three important parts. The first part is indicators related to the process of selecting, monitoring, and replacing governments. The indicators included in this part are Voice and Accountability and Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism. The second part is indicators related to the capacity and ability of a government to be more effective in formulating and implementing sound policies. The indicators included in this part are Government Effectiveness and Regulatory Quality. Meanwhile, the third part is indicators related to the respect of both citizens and the state itself toward the institutions governing the economy and social interactions within a country. The indicators included in this part are Rule of Law and Control of Corruption.

1. Voice and Accountability (VA) – This examines the extent to which citizens or the public can directly participate in governance. To assess this, aspects such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of the media are important to consider.
2. Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV) – This examines the likelihood or probability of destabilization or the overthrow of government in a country. Attempts at overthrowing power are assessed based on unconstitutional, immoral, or violent means, including violence with political motives and the likelihood of terrorism practices.
3. Government Effectiveness (GE) – This examines the quality of the government itself. The quality can be assessed based on the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service, the quality of the process from policy formulation to implementation, the independence of the government from political pressure, and the credibility of the government's commitments to policies already formulated and implemented.
4. Regulatory Quality (RQ) – This examines the government's ability to formulate and implement policies effectively. Furthermore, this indicator also assesses how a government creates regulations to support the policies that have been decided or even to promote development in other sectors.
5. Rule of Law (RL) – This examines how the rule of law plays an essential role in society, and the extent to which citizens trust and comply with the law. It also relates to the quality of the enforcement system of treaties, the concept of property rights, the existence of law enforcement officers to uphold the law, the presence of fair and impartial courts, and the

likelihood of crimes or violence within society.

6. Control of Corruption (CC) – This examines the extent to which public power can be used for personal gain, such as corruption and the influence of elite power and private interests in a country's government.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a quantitative method with a multiple linear regression model. This model is applied to examine the relationship between governance quality indicators and hunger levels. The scope of the study is focused on the period from 1998 to 2022. The selection of the 1998 to 2022 timeframe is based on considerations related to political and economic dynamics in Africa. This period reflects a critical phase in the development of governance, during which many African countries underwent political transitions, policy reforms, and significant regime changes. Additionally, this period was marked by the impact of the global food crisis and the increasing influence of globalization, which affected food security in the region (Concern Worldwide, 2022). Therefore, analysis within this timeframe provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between governance quality and hunger levels in Africa.

The subjects of this study are African countries that have hunger and governance quality data available during this period. The data instruments used include secondary data from the Global Hunger Index (GHI) and data from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)

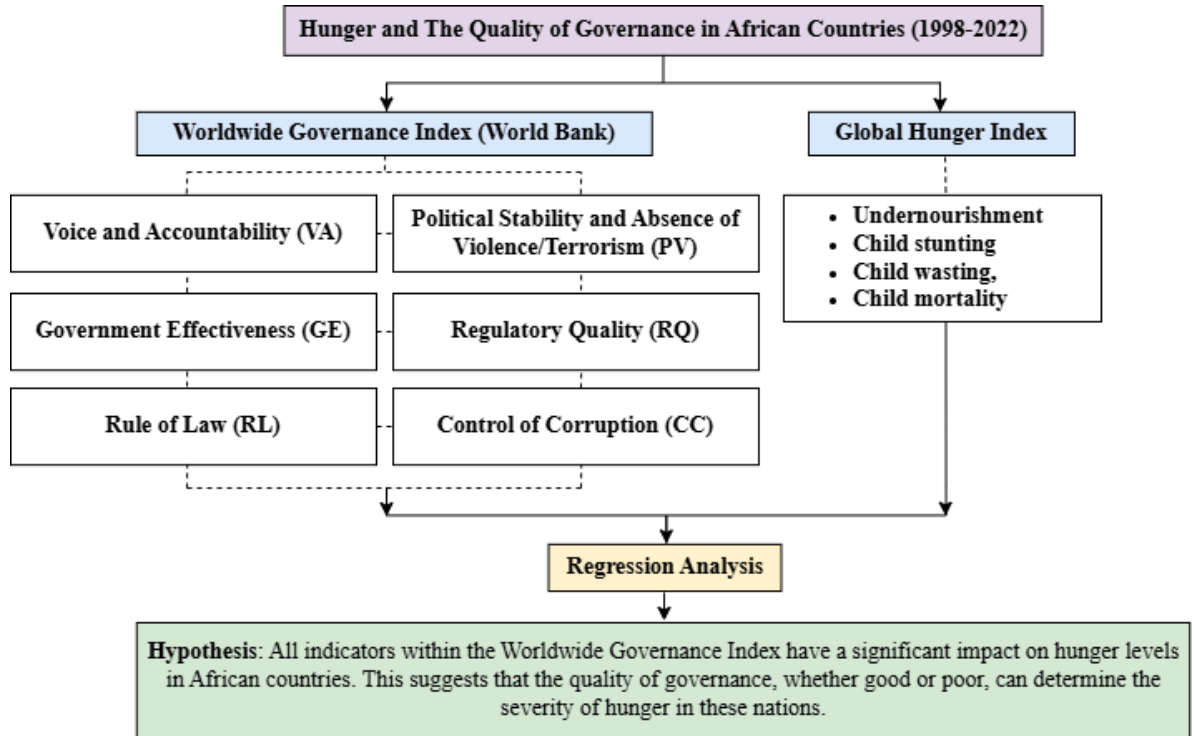
published by the World Bank to measure governance quality. Data collection techniques involve documentation from official reports and databases issued by international organizations, while data analysis techniques are carried out using multiple linear regression. This analysis aims to identify the WGI indicators that most significantly affect hunger levels by examining the regression coefficients and statistical significance of each indicator, such as Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. The study results are expected to provide insights for policymakers to address hunger by improving governance quality in Africa.

In this study, several hypotheses are formulated to test the relationship between governance quality and hunger levels in African countries:

- **H1:** If Voice and Accountability increase, then hunger levels decrease.
- **H2:** If Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism increase, then hunger levels decrease.
- **H3:** If Government Effectiveness increases, then hunger levels decrease.
- **H4:** If Regulatory Quality increase, then hunger levels decrease.
- **H5:** If Rule of Law increase, then hunger levels decrease.
- **H6:** If Control of Corruption increase, then hunger levels decrease.

For a better understanding of the research to be conducted, the

framework thinking can be seen below.



Source: Processed by the Author, 2025.

Figure 3.
Framework Thinking

This study analyzes data from 54 African countries over the period 1998–2022. To provide a clearer regional perspective, the countries are categorized into five sub-regions like

North Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa. The descriptive statistics below present a general overview of the governance indicators and hunger levels across these countries.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Statistic				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Voice and Accountability (VA)	1350	-0.65	0.74	-2.23	1.01
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)	1350	-0.60	0.92	-3.31	1.28
Government Effectiveness (GE)	1350	-0.77	0.63	-2.44	1.15
Regulatory Quality (RQ)	1350	-0.73	0.64	-2.55	1.20

Rule of Law (RL)	1350	-0.72	0.66	-2.59	1.02
Control of Corruption (CC)	1350	-0.64	0.63	-1.94	1.70
Global Hunger Index (GHI)	1350	20.90	11.97	0.00	65.10

Source: Worldwide Governance Index and Global Hunger Index (Data Processed by the Author), 2025.

The table above summarizes the distribution and variation of the variables used in this study. Across 1,350 observations, all six WGI indicators exhibit negative mean values, reflecting the generally low quality of governance in many African countries during the study period. Voice and Accountability (VA) and Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV) show relatively high

variability, as indicated by their standard deviations. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) also displays substantial variation, with values ranging from 0 to 65.1 and an average of 20.90, suggesting that hunger severity ranges from low to extremely alarming across the continent. These variations highlight the heterogeneity of political governance and hunger conditions in Africa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section offers a thematic and comparative exploration of how governance quality relates to hunger levels across African regions. The discussion focuses on identifying patterns that cut across regional bound-

aries while also attending to specific contextual variations. The analysis draws on regression results at both the regional and sub-regional levels to highlight where the Worldwide Governance Indicators significantly shape hunger outcomes and where they do not.

Table 3.
Regression Results for African Region and Sub-Region

Dependent Variable <i>Global Hunger Index</i>	(Enter Method)		
	B	S.E	Sig.
Africa Region			
<i>Voice and Accountability (VA)</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)</i>	35.736	25.563	0.178
<i>Government Effectiveness (GE)</i>	19.751	23.748	0.416
<i>Regulatory Quality (RQ)</i>	-29.941	26.920	0.280
<i>Rule of Law (RL)</i>	-7.451	38.630	0.849
<i>Control of Corruption (CC)</i>	16.798	31.270	0.597
West African			
<i>Voice and Accountability (VA)</i>	23.676	9.030	0.018
<i>Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)</i>	28.002	10.318	0.015

<i>Government Effectiveness (GE)</i>	20.500	18.449	0.282
<i>Regulatory Quality (RQ)</i>	-14.442	11.225	0.215
<i>Rule of Law (RL)</i>	21.324	22.924	0.365
<i>Control of Corruption (CC)</i>	9.941	14.099	0.490
Central African			
<i>Voice and Accountability (VA)</i>	51.479	17.303	0.008
<i>Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)</i>	-4.009	7.377	0.594
<i>Government Effectiveness (GE)</i>	-5.585	8.328	0.511
<i>Regulatory Quality (RQ)</i>	-22.556	9.134	0.024
<i>Rule of Law (RL)</i>	-47.602	17.928	0.017
<i>Control of Corruption (CC)</i>	-14.111	13.109	0.297
East African			
<i>Voice and Accountability (VA)</i>	48.267	19.096	0.021
<i>Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)</i>	-0.899	8.335	0.915
<i>Government Effectiveness (GE)</i>	11.945	16.492	0.478
<i>Regulatory Quality (RQ)</i>	2.400	12.325	0.848
<i>Rule of Law (RL)</i>	-29.231	22.038	0.201
<i>Control of Corruption (CC)</i>	0.896	16.764	0.958
South African			
<i>Voice and Accountability (VA)</i>	30.127	16.606	0.085
<i>Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV)</i>	-12.210	4.890	0.021
<i>Government Effectiveness (GE)</i>	-14.978	3.804	<0.001
<i>Regulatory Quality (RQ)</i>	-11.631	4.160	0.010
<i>Rule of Law (RL)</i>	-19.188	10.265	0.076
<i>Control of Corruption (CC)</i>	1.822	6.094	0.768

(*significant at 0.05 level)

Source: SPSS Results Processed by the Author, 2025.

At the regional level, the regression results show that none of the six Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) had a statistically significant effect on the Global Hunger Index (GHI). The model only accounted for 25.9% of the variation in hunger levels, indicating that governance, when measured in aggregated form across Africa, does not

sufficiently explain hunger outcomes. This finding may be attributed to two critical issues. First, the presence of regional heterogeneity across Africa like differences in political systems, levels of economic development, and institutional histories may dilute the explanatory power of a unified governance model. The idea of pan-Africanism, which aims

to promote cooperation among African countries, is difficult to achieve due to the region's vast heterogeneity (Anyanwu, John, & Chinyere, 2025). This challenge is further compounded by a shared history of colonialism experienced by nearly all African nations, which created rigid borders that divided ethnic and cultural groups. As a result, African countries now face significant differences in their social and political systems. For instance, Southern Africa generally scores higher on democracy indexes than Central Africa, where authoritarian regimes dominate. Second, the use of aggregated national-level data in the WGI could result in measurement aggregation bias, masking variations within countries and weakening the associations in region-wide models.

Beyond measurement concerns, the insignificance of the Worldwide Governance Indicators at the regional level may also be the result of omitted external variables. Conflicts and political instability, such as in South Sudan and Somalia, have disrupted food systems regardless of governance structures. Additionally, Africa is highly vulnerable to climate shocks such as droughts and floods, which directly affect food production. Kotir (2010) states that Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa is considered the most vulnerable region to the impacts of climate change. This vulnerability stems from the region's heavy reliance on agriculture and natural resources. In addition, the post-colonial legacy of weak governmental institutions, combined with a continued dependence on foreign aid, has further hindered the ability of African governments to effectively address hunger.

Traditional authorities in many African countries retain significant legitimacy and influence in local governance, often operating alongside or even in competition with elected officials, which can lead to ambiguity in roles, weakened coordination, and reduced accountability in service delivery (Logan, 2009). These factors highlight the importance of analyzing sub-regional dynamics where governance variables may interact more meaningfully with local conditions.

At the sub-regional level, significant differences emerged in the relationship between the Worldwide Governance Indicators and hunger levels. In North Africa, Regulatory Quality was found to be a significant predictor, along with Government Effectiveness and Control of Corruption when tested separately. The relative centralization and strength of North African institutions may explain this, as effective bureaucracies and regulatory frameworks are better positioned to deliver food-related programs and services. In West Africa, the significant indicators were Voice and Accountability and Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism. Here, the role of civil society and peacebuilding is essential. Countries like Ghana and Nigeria have made more significant progress in building a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient democratic system. (Okey & Ikehukwu, 2024; Tuffuor et al., 2025), where public participation can help shape food security policies, while insurgencies and coups in Mali and Burkina Faso have disrupted food systems (Gevao, 2023; Maitre d'Hôtel et al., 2023). This contrast between North and West Africa may

stem from differences in institutional legacies and state capacity. North African states tend to have more centralized administrative systems influenced by post-colonial bureaucratic traditions, whereas West African countries often operate in hybrid systems where formal governance coexists with strong traditional or local authorities. Moreover, the frequency of electoral transitions and the pluralism of media landscapes in West Africa, such as in Nigeria, which succeeded in developing more transparent elections by leveraging media in 2011, demonstrate the region's growing democratic maturity (Smyth & Best, 2013), may amplify the impact of Voice and Accountability, as public scrutiny and civic mobilization place pressure on governments to respond to food insecurity more directly. These findings highlight that governance does not operate uniformly across contexts. In North Africa, administrative efficiency and anti-corruption measures appear central, while in West Africa, participatory politics and security conditions are more salient for food outcomes.

Central Africa presents a different picture, where Voice and Accountability, Regulatory Quality, and Rule of Law are significant. In regions governed by extractive authoritarian regimes, citizens often depend heavily on formal legal and regulatory institutions due to the absence of robust informal accountability mechanisms. Historically, many Central African regimes have preserved legal-administrative frameworks not for inclusive service delivery, but for the consolidation of elite power

and control over natural resources (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). This helps explain why institutions like the judiciary and regulatory bodies become central in mediating hunger responses, even as political freedoms remain restricted. The significance of Rule of Law and Regulatory Quality thus reflects citizens' reliance on formal systems in environments where democratic checks and balances are largely absent. This dynamic is particularly evident in several African contexts, where institutional weaknesses in democratic oversight mechanisms compel citizens and stakeholders to depend more heavily on the predictability, fairness, and enforcement of formal regulations and legal systems. As highlighted in recent research on governance and sustainable development in Africa, the presence of strong legal institutions and regulatory frameworks significantly contributes to improved service delivery, reduced corruption, and more inclusive development, even in the absence of robust democratic structures (Adebayo et al., 2025). In such settings, formal governance mechanisms become critical anchors for accountability and state responsiveness.

In contrast, East Africa revealed Voice and Accountability as the sole significant governance variable influencing hunger outcomes. This underscores the critical role of civic engagement and media freedom in shaping hunger-related policies in countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia. One important factor influencing this dynamic is the uneven development of digitalization across countries in the region. A study highlights that, although Kenya and

Ethiopia belong to the same sub-region, they exhibit stark differences in terms of digitalization and media access (Desta, 2018). Kenya has made more rapid progress in utilizing digital technology within newsrooms and promoting public participation through social media, whereas Ethiopia continues to face significant challenges such as the digital divide, limited technological infrastructure, restrictions on freedom of expression, and internet censorship. These differences illustrate how technological capacity and civic space can directly affect the effectiveness of Voice and Accountability in fostering responsive policymaking. In a broader context, the region's comparatively higher tolerance for political pluralism and grassroots activism may enhance governmental responsiveness to public demands. Nevertheless, the limited impact of other governance dimensions may be attributed to persistent structural challenges, including climate shocks, food price volatility, and institutional fragility, which can undermine the effectiveness of even well-intentioned governance reforms.

Southern Africa emerged as the region with the most consistent governance influence. Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism had a significant impact, along with Government Effectiveness and Regulatory Quality when tested separately. This

aligns with the region's relatively higher levels of political order and institutional maturity. In countries such as South Africa and Botswana, stable democratic transitions, independent judiciaries, and professional civil services (IJR, 2023), have long underpinned the implementation of development policies, including those related to food security. The significance of Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism reflects the foundational role of a secure and predictable environment in enabling long-term interventions in agriculture, infrastructure, and welfare. Meanwhile, the influence of Government Effectiveness and Regulatory Quality, though observable only when tested separately, suggests that technical governance performance plays a critical role in translating policy into impact in contexts where basic political order is already established. In such mature systems, the absence of significant effects from variables like Control of Corruption or Voice and Accountability may indicate that their functions are embedded within broader institutional mechanisms, and thus their direct statistical effects are harder to isolate. The table below summarizes which of the Worldwide Governance Indicators were found to be significant in each African sub-region, providing a cross-regional comparison to support the thematic analysis.

Table 4.

WGI Indicators Influencing the Hunger Index in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan	WGI Indicator(s)
North African	Regulatory Quality Government Effectiveness* Control of Corruption*
West African	Voice and Accountability Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism
Central African	Voice and Accountability Regulatory Quality Rule of Law
East African	Voice and Accountability
South African	Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism Government Effectiveness* Regulatory Quality*

Indicators marked with an asterisk (*) were found significant only when tested separately due to multicollinearity.

Source: SPSS Results Processed by the Author, 2025.

From a comparative perspective, Regulatory Quality and Voice and Accountability stood out as the most impactful across regions. Regulatory Quality was significant in North, Central, and Southern Africa, suggesting that coherent policy design and regulatory enforcement are key to enhancing food security. This pattern indicates that in regions where state institutions have greater administrative reach, the effectiveness of policy implementation depends not just on what is being decided, but on how clearly and consistently it is executed. Regulatory frameworks that are predictable, inclusive, and development-oriented may provide the necessary conditions for stable agricultural systems and effective

distribution mechanisms. Supporting this, recent research by Richard (2024) on donor-funded development projects in Kwale County, Kenya, highlights the crucial role of effective Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems in improving project performance. The study found that the success of development initiatives hinges on well-structured MEAL frameworks that ensure clear indicators, routine monitoring, and community engagement. This underscores that beyond high-level regulatory quality, practical mechanisms of accountability and participatory monitoring are essential to translate policy into tangible outcomes on the ground. Thus, combining strong regulatory environ-

ments with strategic MEAL practices can enhance the overall effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts.

Voice and Accountability, on the other hand, was significant in West, Central, and East Africa, highlighting the role of participatory governance, freedom of expression, and civic space in combating hunger. In these regions, where state capacity may be more limited or uneven, public engagement and bottom-up accountability serve as crucial levers for influencing government responsiveness. The prominence of this indicator suggests that empowering citizens to express needs and hold leaders accountable can compensate for other institutional weaknesses, especially in fragile or transitional political environments. Achieving accountability is a key objective that must be applied in the policymaking processes of developing countries (Barungi, 2022). The majority of countries in Africa fall under the category of less developed nations. Therefore, in order for African countries to formulate more effective policies addressing issues such as hunger, poverty, and food governance, it is essential that they fully integrate the principle of accountability into their policy frameworks.

In contrast, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption had limited influence, appearing significant in only one region each. This may imply that their impact is conditional and potentially influential only when paired with other institutional factors such as administrative coherence or political inclusion. In some contexts, formal legal mechanisms or anti-corruption efforts

may exist in principle but remain ineffective without broader institutional support or political will. These variations underscore that the Worldwide Governance Indicators do not function in isolation, rather, their influence depends on how they interact within each region's unique political and institutional landscape. Unfortunately, to date, research examining the relationship between hunger and corruption in Africa remains limited. One study by Njangang, Asongu, and Mouchili (2024), which also investigated the link between corruption and hunger levels, found that countries with higher levels of corruption tend to have higher rates of hunger as well. This study analyzed 45 African countries and considered three types of corruption dynamics: legislative, judicial, and executive corruption. It also used the Control of Corruption indicator from the Worldwide Governance Indicators. Differences in findings may be attributed to variations in the variables and indicators used in this research.

These findings also raise concerns regarding endogeneity. While governance may influence hunger, the reverse is also possible: high levels of hunger may destabilize governance through reduced legitimacy and increased institutional strain. Furthermore, other variables such as income inequality, trade dynamics, and donor presence may confound the observed relationships. In contexts of chronic food insecurity, governments may become increasingly reactive rather than proactive, focusing on short-term relief rather than long-term institutional development. This bidirectional dynamic complicates

causal inferences and highlights the need for governance strategies that are both resilient and responsive to socio-economic shocks. Addressing this complexity requires methodological approaches that can account for simultaneity, such as instrumental variable techniques or longitudinal analyses. Moreover, integrating qualitative insights from affected communities can offer context-specific understanding of how governance and hunger interact on the ground, beyond what aggregate data alone can reveal.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between governance quality and hunger levels in African countries from 1998 to 2022, using the six indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI): Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. The findings show a complex and uneven landscape. At the regional level, none of the WGI indicators had a statistically significant impact, which suggests that a unified governance model may not adequately explain hunger variations across Africa. This underscores the importance of disaggregating governance analysis to the sub-regional level, where more meaningful patterns can be observed in context.

In the sub-regional analysis, certain governance indicators showed significant associations with hunger. Regulatory Quality and Voice and

Accountability emerged as the most consistently influential variables, followed by Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism and Government Effectiveness, particularly in more institutionally mature regions. These findings emphasize that governance is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Its effectiveness in addressing hunger depends largely on regional historical trajectories, institutional capacities, and the socio-political environments in which it operates.

Moreover, the analysis highlights the need to account for additional factors such as conflict, climate shocks, institutional legacies, and external dependencies in understanding and addressing hunger. Hunger is a multidimensional problem, and while governance remains a critical pillar in hunger reduction strategies, it is insufficient in isolation. It must be complemented by broader structural reforms that address economic inequality, improve resilience to environmental stressors, and strengthen local institutional legitimacy.

Future research should explore dynamic interactions between governance and non-governance factors using mixed-method or longitudinal approaches, and policy frameworks must adopt multi-scalar strategies that bridge national agendas with community-level needs. Ultimately, achieving sustainable food security in Africa will require not only improving how governments function but also rethinking for whom and under what conditions they function best.

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