

This study explores the causes of corruption in 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa from 1996 to 2013. The sources of corruption are grouped into three main thematic areas – historical roots, contemporary causes and institutional causes to make way for subjective and objective measures. The subjective measures allow for assessment of the effectiveness of anticorruption policies. Using pooled OLS, fixed-effect and instrumental-variable approaches, and focusing on the perceived level of corruption as the dependent variable, we find that ethnic diversity, resource abundance and educational attainment are markedly less associated with corruption. In contrast, wage levels of bureaucrats and anticorruption measures based on government effectiveness and regulatory quality breed substantial corruption. Press freedom is found to be variedly associated with corruption. On the basis of these findings, we recommend that the fight against corruption on the continent needs to be reinvented through qualitative and assertive institutional reforms. Anticorruption policy decisions should focus on existing educational systems as a conduit for intensifying awareness of the devastating effect of corruption on sustainable national development. Key words: corruption, sustainable development (SD), institutional quality, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), governance