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Factors Influencing Adherence to Ethical Values: A Case Study of Accountants in the Zambian Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Financial scandals continue to negatively impact businesses all over the globe with Zambia not being an exception. The financial accounts of businesses are handled by accountants who are members of professional bodies and are governed by a code of ethics put in place to regulate professional conduct. This study aimed to establish the relationship between factors influencing ethical values and the accountants' adherence to the code of ethics. The study employed a quantitative approach with the use of structured questionnaires on a population sample comprising of finance and accounting staff from the Zambian public sector. To determine the respondents, simple random sampling was used to identify the population of interest. The outcome from the study showed remuneration of accountants, internal controls within organisations and independence of accountants to be among the factors that influence adherence to ethical values. It was found that there is a positive relationship between remuneration of accountants, internal controls, independence of accountants and the accountants' adherence to ethical values. It is therefore expected that the higher the remuneration of the accountant, the stronger the internal controls, the higher the independence of the accountant, the easier it is for the accountant to adhere to ethical values. This study contributes towards enhancing measures put in place to address the shortcomings attributed to compliance with the code of ethics for public sector accountants. It will also be beneficial to accountants as it will echo the need for accountants to uphold ethical values.

Keywords-- Accountants, Adherence, Ethical Values, Public Sector

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethics for Accountants have become a priority in financial management for all stakeholders such as government, donors and the general public. Ethics can be defined as the agreed-on standards of what is desirable and undesirable and of right and wrong conduct or behavior of a person, group, or entity (Cressy et al., 2012). Ethics covers moral principles and norms by which human actions may be judged (International Federation of Accountants, 2018)

In contemporary times, unethical practices including bribery and corruption, embezzlement of funds, conflicts of interest, sexual harassment, misuse of confidential information and other illegal conduct are widespread in organizations (Ryvkin & Serra, 2012; Trevino & Nelson, 2021). This trend has led to growing public concern over the inappropriate conduct of leaders and public officials, resulting in the resurgence of interest in ethical issues (Pajo & McGhee, 2003**)**. These unethical behaviours have harmful effects on individuals as well as organizations. For instance, over Sixty-one million Zambian Kwacha was misapplied by Ministries, Provinces and Spending Agencies (MPSA's) in 2017 (Office of the Auditor General (OAG), 2019). Organizations have therefore sought to reduce these unethical practices by instituting ethics or integrity programmes, and these include the development of codes of ethics (Beeri et al., 2013; Kolthoff et al., 2013; Wolf, 2008; Wolf, 2013).

The decisions and behaviors of accountants should reinforce good governance and ethical practices, develop and promote an ethical culture, foster trust and transparency, bring credibility and value to decision making, and present a faithful picture of organizational health to stakeholders. Accountants, both in business and practice, have a particular responsibility to provide ethical and trusted leadership. They are not only expected to be technically competent but to also use their position of influence to encourage ethical behavior and decision making throughout their organization.

The application of ethics differs depending on the country, culture, and traditions, as well as the level of maturity in terms of regulation and enforcement of organizations' legal responsibility and the expectations and duties of relevant personnel. However, the nature of ethical issues is generally similar across organization types, sizes, and geographies. For finance and accounting activities, typical ethical issues include conflicts of interest, providing untruthful information and reports, and facilitating payments and bribes. The main safeguards are also universal and include ethical leadership, effective governance, a values-based code of conduct reinforced by a responsible business culture, and effective stakeholder

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engagement, transparency, and accountability. (International Federation of Accountants, 2018)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Accounting ethics require that financial statements be useful to end users in order to help them make financial decisions. Accounting professionals are expected by the business community to follow ethical standards and to provide timely, accurate, and transparent information to all end-users. Any intentional attempt to fabricate false financial statements could severely harm a company's reputation (Jaijairam, 2017). The most serious issue confronting the accounting profession is commonly referred to as 'financial ethics.' In the financial system, fraudulent activities occur when accountants and managers fail to adhere to the standards of earnings management ethics. Managers and accountants alter financial data in such cases. This change typically entails the inclusion of predetermined results in the financial statements, yielding results that differ from the actual ones. Earnings management is the term used to describe this type of behavior in the accounting profession (Ronen, 2008). The Enron and Arthur Andersen case is one to consider on a global scale. Enron and Arthur Andersen were embroiled in a scandal that led to their demise (Grasso, et al., 2009). Enron and Arthur Andersen, two utility and accounting industry behemoths, took advantage of public and government bodies, as well as investors, to increase their personal wealth through illegal and unethical practices. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) investigated Enron and discovered that it had engaged in unethical financial reporting practices (Jennings, 2014).

According to Mulenga (2015), one of the key issues of public debate and attention in Zambia is public-private wage differentials that have made it difficult for the public sector to attract and retain talent. An additional problem is the perception that there are even wider disparities within the public service itself, with those in the higher cadres earning disproportionately higher salaries. Also, within certain levels in the public service, education and experience do not seem, as they should, to account for differences in the wages. It is believed that wage differentials, both within the public service and between the public service and the private sector, lower morale and in effect output in the public sector. It could also lead to unethical behavior.

In the Zambian context, Kasoma and Deka (2017) carried out a study that sought to find out the effect of accounting ethics on quality of financial reporting. One of the accounting ethics that the study focused on is professional competences. It was revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the professional competence of accounting staff and the financial reporting understandability and accountant's independence.

The ethical shortcomings of public accountants have necessitated a revision of accounting professional standards (Rist, 2002). Interestingly, as a result of the failures of large corporations, professional accountants working in accounting firms are confronted with new challenges within the profession (Swift, 2002). Among such challenges faced is the issue of ensuring that remuneration of accountants is not a cause of unethical conduct. According to a study conducted in the United States public service by McGuire (2003) which sought to determine how salary, bonus, and long-term incentives, as well as governance aspects of ownership, and institutional ownership, impact ethical dimensions of community, employee relations, environment and product, and public service practices. One of their most important findings was that there is a direct relationship between remuneration and ethical public service practices. According to Murphy and Boehme (2012), with the growing distrust of public service and the increasing levels of misconduct, it will become critically important for public institutions and other organizations to do a better job of using incentives as a tool to drive the kind of behavior they expect of employees. By developing appropriate compliance and ethics incentives, management and boards can demonstrate their commitment to compliant and ethical conduct in the organization; they can significantly reduce the risk of illegal or unethical conduct; and they can fulfill their fiduciary obligations to ensure that the organization has an effective compliance and ethics program. For a compliance and ethics program to be effective, it needs to affect the behavior of those acting for the company. Rewards and incentives clearly do this, and need to be included in any program. Without adequate controls and incentives, most of people will ,at least occasionally, do the wrong thing Murphy and Boehme (2012).

According to Agesa et al. (2011) one of the key issues attracting public debate and attention in Kenya is the disparity in wages between the public and private sectors, which has made it difficult for the public sector to attract and retain talent. Another issue is the perception of even greater disparities within the public sector, with those in higher cadres earning disproportionately higher salaries. Furthermore, within certain levels of the public sector, education and experience do not appear to account for wage differences as they should. As a result of these perceptions, and in conjunction with rising living costs, several public servants "dropped their tools" to demand higher pay. Wage disparities, both within and between the public and private sectors, are thought to lower morale and, as a result, output in the public sector. It may also result in unethical behavior. Although the law requires counties to ensure that all county revenue is deposited in

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its entirety into the county revenue fund prior to expenditure (CRF), most public officers defraud the county monies due to unequal remuneration (Gatu, 2017).

Independence also influences adherence to ethical values for accountants. The ability of the accountant to be impartial and free from prejudice has been seen as a key aspect in promoting good ethics in accounting. Kamyabi et al (2015), investigated the extent of accounting independence and impartiality in accounting in financial firms in Iran. The study found out that accountants were impartial in their accounting and did not engage in prejudice acts as well as fulfilling their own desires. The study further revealed that the accountants were socially responsible and were determine to present the financial statements with alterations. Kamyabi et al (2015) concluded that independence of accounting improved the financial reporting of the financial firms in Iran.

Several studies globally and in the African region have been done on the effect of internal controls on accountants' ethical values adherence. According to Gatu (2017), **"**Internal Control is the entire system of controls, financial or otherwise, established by management in order to carry on the business of the enterprise in an orderly and efficient manner, safeguarding the assets and ensuring the completeness and accuracy of records as far as possible. In Nigeria, Udoayang & Ewa (2012) investigated the impact of internal control design on banks' ability to investigate employee fraud, as well as staff lifestyle and fraud detection in Nigeria. A Four Point Likert Scale questionnaire was used to collect data from thirteen Nigerian banks, and percentages and ratios were used to analyze the results. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regressions. The study discovered that internal control design influences staff attitudes toward fraud, and that a strong internal control mechanism deters staff fraud, whereas a weak internal control mechanism exposes the system to fraud and provides opportunities for staff to commit fraud. According to the study, most Nigerian banks do not pay close attention to their employees' lifestyles, and they believe that effective and efficient internal control design can detect employee fraud schemes in the banking sector. The study concluded that an effective and efficient internal control system is required to alleviate the banking sector's woes.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agency Theory

Agency relationship is a contract under which one or more persons (principal) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision-making authority to the agent (Oteng, 2016). It is posited that when carrying out the tasks within the principal-agent relationship, the agent must choose actions that have consequences for both the principal and the agent. Furthermore, it is said that due to the fact that the aforementioned outcomes can be either positive or negative for each of the actors, the chosen action of the agent affects the welfare of both (Aylesworth, 2003). Agency Theory explains how to best organize relationships in which one party determines the work while another party does the work. In this relationship, the principal hires an agent to do the work, or to perform a task the principal is unable or unwilling to do. For example, in corporations, the principals are the shareholders of a company, delegating to the agent; the management of the company, to perform tasks on their behalf. Agency theory assumes both the principal and the agent are motivated by self-interest. This assumption of self-interest dooms agency theory to inevitable inherent conflicts. Thus, if both parties are motivated by self-interest, agents are likely to pursue self-interested objectives that deviate and even conflict with the goals of the principal. Yet, agents are supposed to act in the sole interest of their principals (Bruce et al., 2005). This theory is important in this study as it brings forth the relationship between the agents (accountants) and the principal (employer) and how it influences compliance with accountant's code of ethics.

Positive Accounting Theory

Positive Accounting Theory was developed by Ross Watts and Jerold Zimmerman in 1986. This theory seeks to explain how organizations respond and implement accounting policies. Positive Accounting Theory gives details on the roles of accounting and also explains the importance of accounting activities in an organization (Voss, 2021). The theory also explains how firms respond to the accounting policies and standards. The proponents of the theory state that the management teams of organizations respond to accounting standards and policies depending on the influences of the standards on the cash flow of the firm (Abernathy et al, & Stefaniak, 2014).

However, the theory has been critiqued on its assumption that every manager or agent is motivated by self-interests with the primary goal of maximizing their own wealth without considering any adverse effects (Gross *et al*., 2016). The theory also predicts what the financial personnel or the manager might do without giving what should be done (Park, 2018). This theory has however been widely used to explain the implementation and adherence to accounting standards in different contexts (Nderitu, 2018; Oboh & Ajibolade, 2017; Todorovi, 2018; Tormo-Carbó *et al*., 2016). In this study, the theory is used to guide the study in regard to the effect of the various accounting ethics (objectivity, professional competence, integrity and confidentiality) and the overall rationale of ethical values adherence by accounting officer in the public sector.

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Compliance Theory

According to Alexander (2019) compliance is defined as “being in accordance with established guidelines, specifications, or legislation, or the process of becoming so”. Compliance theory explains how regulations and power influences compliance decisions. Compliance theory focuses on how public regulation influences the regulated entity’s motives (goals set) and alternatives (options set), thus influencing the way their preferences become structured, (Etienne 2011). According to compliance theory, organizations can be classified by the type of power they use to direct the behavior of their members and the type of involvement of the participants, (Lunenburg 2012).

According to the theory, authority and regulations that are put in place to govern certain tasks in an organization alters the attitude of employees in performing the given tasks (Todorovi, 2018). The theory states that compliance is an element of regulations, persuasion and authority or even perception of high-ranking individual (Akenbor & Tennyson, 2014). According to proponents of the theory, compliance increase with increase in regulations and exertion of authority to the low-ranking employees to executing their roles in a given organization (Salami, Sanni, & Uthman, 2018). In respect to this, in an organization with strict supervision and requirement that the employees to obey certain code of professionalism or ethics, compliance rates may be high (Voss, 2021). In accounting profession, accountants are required to adhere to certain accounting code of ethics in their financial reporting (Yarahmadi & Hoyaryahoocom, 2015). These requirements may be integrity, objectivity, professional behaviour, professional competence and due care, and confidentiality (Agwor & Okafor, 2018).

This theory has been however critiqued due to its assumption that compliance is as result of power and authority persuasion (Enofe, 2015). The critics are that compliance can be a result of individual morals and nurturance (Kamyabi et al., 2013). This theory has however been applied in areas with a given code of professionalism and regulations (Akenbor & Tennyson, 2014; Kamyabi *et al*., 2015; Salami *et al*., 2018; Todorovi, 2018; Tormo-Carbó *et al*., 2016; Voss, 2021). This theory is therefore applicable in the area of accounting and specifically in the context of accounting that requires ethical accounting practices as is in public offices. These ethical accounting practices include objectivity, professional competence, and integrity and confidentiality aspects. It is this respect that the current study chooses to use the study to establish factors influencing ethical values adherence among public sector accountants. Usage of this theory in the study increases understanding of how individual and organizational factors, regulations, power and leadership influence compliance with the Code of ethics. This theory provides adequate information relating to the three objectives of the study.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach to assess the factors that influence adherence to ethical values for accountants. The sample comprises finance and accounting staff in 3 selected public institutions within Lusaka Province with a total of 195 finance and accounting staff. A structured questionnaire divided into five Sections was used. Section A covered demographic profile of respondents, section B asked respondents about their individual employee ethics while section C sought to assess the respondents’ take on the relationship between remuneration of accountants and accountants’ adherence to the code of ethics. Section D addressed questions that dealt with the relationship between internal controls and adherence to the code of ethics and finally Section E contained questions that addressed the relationship between independence of accountants and the accountants’ adherence to ethical values. A five point likert-scale ranging from ‘1’ (strongly disagree) to ‘5’ (strongly agree) was adopted. A total number 131 questionnaires were issued out to the respondents out of which 101 questionnaires were successfully answered and returned to the researcher. This therefore gave a response rate of 77% which as per Mugenda and Mugenda (2015) a response rate of 70% is considered excellent. The data was analysed using SPSS software. Cronbach’s alpha values for C, D and E were 0.718, 0.758 and 0.762 respectively with the average being 0.743. Having realistically high alphas suggested that the measurement of independent and dependent variables is generally reliable under the study.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 below presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. According to the results, 62.4% of the respondents were male while 37.6 were female. This means that the public sector has employed more Males compared to females. Additionally, the results showed that the majority of the respondents accounting for 45% were aged between 31 and 40 years. In respect to marital status, the results demonstrated that 50.5% of the respondents who happened to be the majority were single. Furthermore, the highest number of the respondents accounting for 40.6% have Degrees as their highest academic qualification. This means that the respondents are well educated and were able to understand the topic being researched hence giving credible answers to the questions asked by the researcher. In terms of professional qualification, the majority of the respondents (38.6%) are holders of ZICA. The results furthermore showed that the

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largest number of respondents accounting for 42.6% have been in in public service office for a period of 3-5 years. In concluding demographic characteristics, 47.5% of the respondents which happened to be the majority are occupying middle level management in the public sector.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	63	62.4%
Female	38	37.6%
Age		
20-25 years	14	14%
26-30 years	29	29%
31-40 years	45	45%
41-50 years	8	7.9%
Above 51 years	5	4.9%
Marital Status		
Married	20	19.8%
Single	51	50.5%
Divorced	11	10.9%
Widowed	13	12.9%
Separated	06	5.9%
Highest Level of Education		
Masters	15	14.9%
Degree	41	40.6%
Diploma	24	23.8%
Certificate	18	17.8%
Any other	03	2.9%
Professional Qualification		
ZICA	39	38.6%
ACCA	25	24.7%
CIMA	21	20.7%
Any other	16	15.8%
Length of service in public service office		
1-2 years	27	26.7%
3-5 years	43	42.6%
6-12 years	19	18.8%
Above 12 years	12	11.9%
Current rank held		
Lower level management	31	30.7%
Middle level management	48	47.5%
Top level management	20	19.8%
Non-management	02	1.9%

Individual Employee Ethics

This question was a descriptive where respondents were asked the levels of agreement that best describes their degree of agreement with each statement under individual employee ethics from a scale of 1-5 where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly agree (Table 2).

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Table 2: Individual Employee Ethics

Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I take a lot of pride in not missing work needlessly and being at work on time.	101	3.72	1.087
Getting to work late and leaving early is a normal practice in the institution I work for.	101	3.94	0.734
I would not tell the truth if one of my colleagues would be fired because of my testimony	101	4.20	0.816
It is common to take home some office supplies such as printing paper, pens and staples	101	4.06	1.281
Surfing the Internet for non-work-related matters during work time is common practice in the office	101	3.67	1.340
Its normal to ignore certain accounting principles that are tedious	101	4.08	0.597
Standard accounting procedure is only followed when reporting	101	2.93	0.991
If it balances then its correct	101	3.10	0.770
It's okay to ignore non-retirement of imprest from senior public service officers	101	3.41	1.079
It's common to take personal endowments while undertaking your duty	101	2.96	0.862

According to the results in table 2 above, it is clear that most of the respondents were in strong agreement that it is normal to ignore certain accounting principles that are tedious as shown by mean value of 4.08 and a standard deviation of 0.597. The participants equally strongly agreed that it is common to take home some office supplies such as printing paper, pens and staples. This is indicated by the mean value of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 1.281 Furthermore, the respondents were in strong agreement to the statement that I would not tell the truth if one of my colleagues would be fired because of my testimony as shown by an average value of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.816. Likewise, the respondents were in agreement to the statement that getting to work late and leaving early is a normal practice in the institution they work for as shown by an average value of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.734. Equally, I take a lot of pride in not missing work needlessly and being at work on time as shown by an average value of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.087. Additionally, respondents also agreed that Surfing the Internet for non-work-related matters during work time is common practice in the office as indicated by a mean value of 3.67 and standard deviation of 1.340. However, respondents disagreed that Standard accounting procedure is only followed when reporting as indicated by mean value of 2.93 and standard deviation of 0.991. Equally, respondents disagreed that it is common to take personal endowments while undertaking your duty as indicated by mean value of 2.96 and standard deviation of 0.862.

VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REMUNERATION OF ACCOUNTANTS AND THE ACCOUNTANTS' ADHERENCE TO THE CODE OF ETHICS

This section aimed at establishing the relationship between remuneration of accountants and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. The following sub-questions were asked;

6.1 Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures

According to the results shown in figure 1, the majority of the respondents representing 61 (60.4%) stated that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures very greatly Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics; 24 (24%) and 7 (6.9%) said that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures has a great and moderate Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics respectively. Furthermore, 3 (2.9%) of the participants were of the view that that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures has little Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics. However, 6 (5.9%) of the respondents stated that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures has no Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics.

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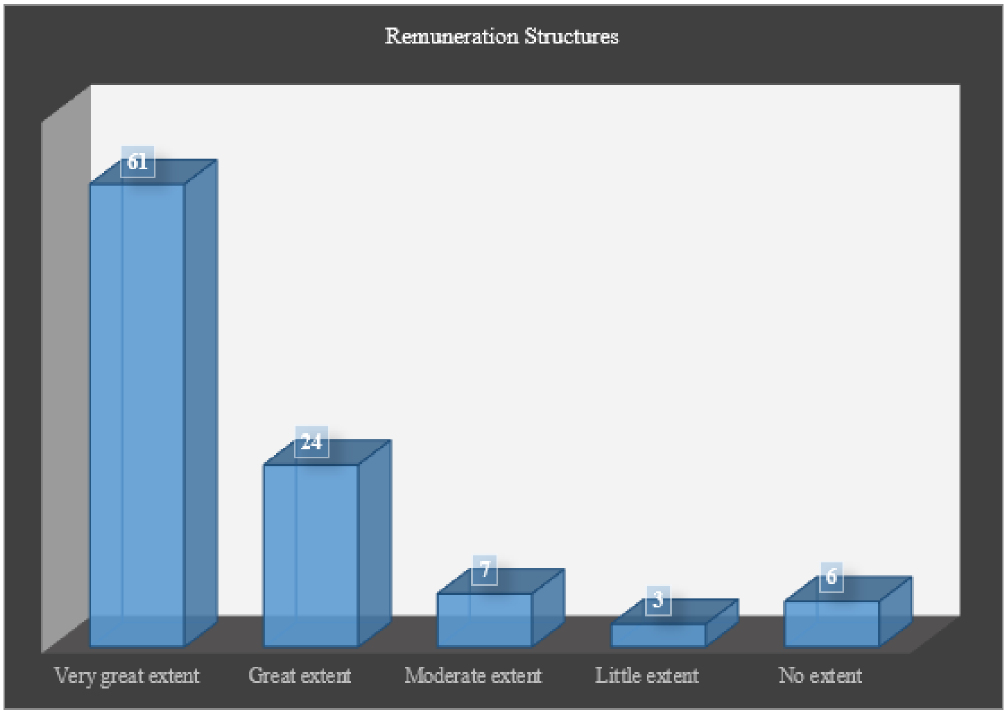

Figure 1: Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures

6.2 'Disparities'

According to the results shown in figure 2 the majority of the respondents representing a total of 60% stated that disparities very greatly and greatly Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics respectively; 24% of the participants stated that disparities have little Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics while 7% of the participants stated that disparities have moderate Influence. However, 6% of the participants had a different opinion in that they believed that disparities have no whatsoever Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics.

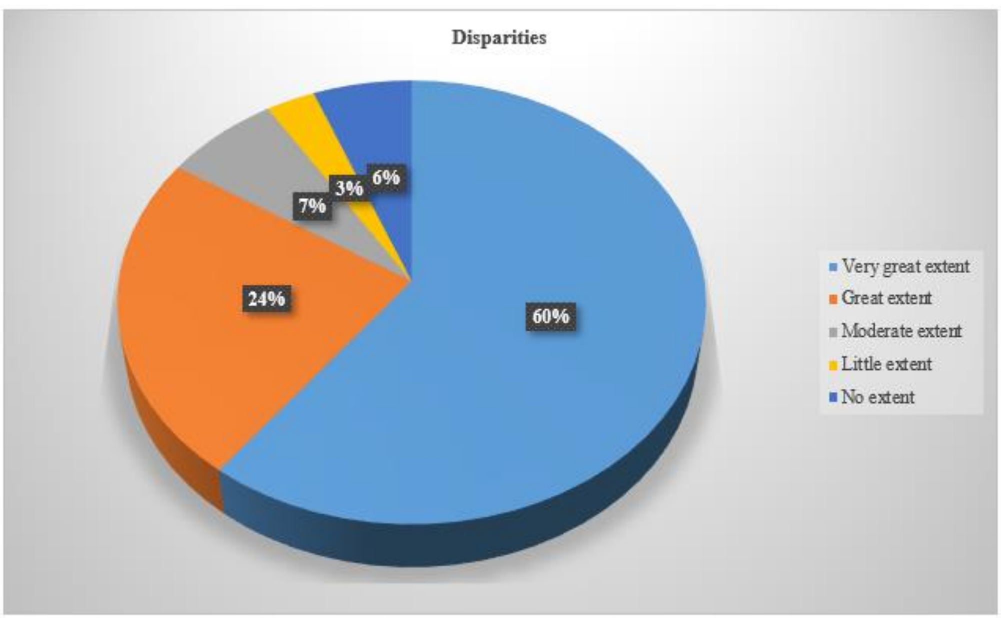

Figure 2: Disparities

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6.3 'Public Sector Wage Differentials'

According to the results shown in figure 3, the majority of the respondents representing a total of 61 (60.4%) stated that Public sector wage differentials have moderate Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics; 24 (23.7%) and 7 (6.9%) of the participants stated that Public sector wage differentials have great and very great Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics respectively while 3 (2.97%) of the participants stated that Public sector wage differentials has little Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics. However, a small number of the respondents 6 (5.9%) were of the view that Public sector wage differentials has no influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics.

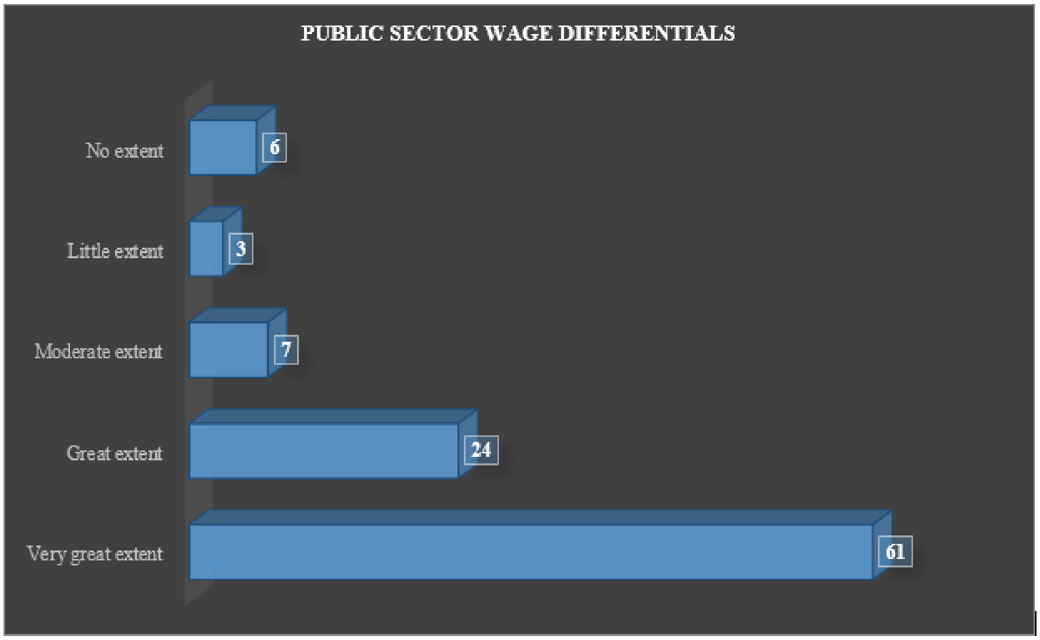

Figure 3: Public Sector Wage Differentials

6.4 Promotions

The results in figure 4 shows that Promotions done on merit, Education and experience consideration in department/ministry very greatly influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics according to 67% of the respondents who happens to be the majority. Similarly, 13% of the participants stated that that Promotions done on merit, Education and experience consideration in department/ministry has a great influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics. Furthermore, 10% of the participants pined that Promotions done on merit, Education and experience consideration in department/ministry has a moderate influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics while 6% were of the view that Promotions done on merit, Education and experience consideration in department/ministry has little influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics. However, 4% of the participants indicated that Promotions done on merit, Education and experience consideration in department/ministry has no influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics.

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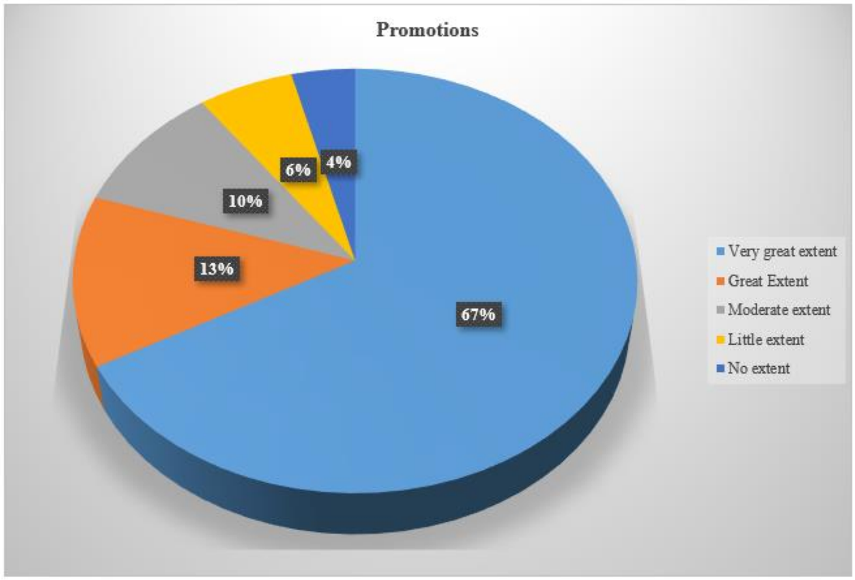

Figure 4: Promotions

6.5 Incentives

The results in figure 5 shows that incentives awarded in the employee's organization very greatly influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics according to 67% of the respondents who happens to be the majority. Correspondingly, 13% of the participants stated that that incentives awarded in the employee's organization has great influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics. Additionally, 10% participants were of the view that incentives awarded in the employee's organization has moderate influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics whilst 6% of the respondents stated that incentives awarded in the employee's organization has little influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics. Contrary to the opinions of the majority that incentives awarded in the employee's organization has influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics, 4% of the participants were of the view that incentives awarded in the employee's organization has no influence compliance with the accountants' code of ethics.

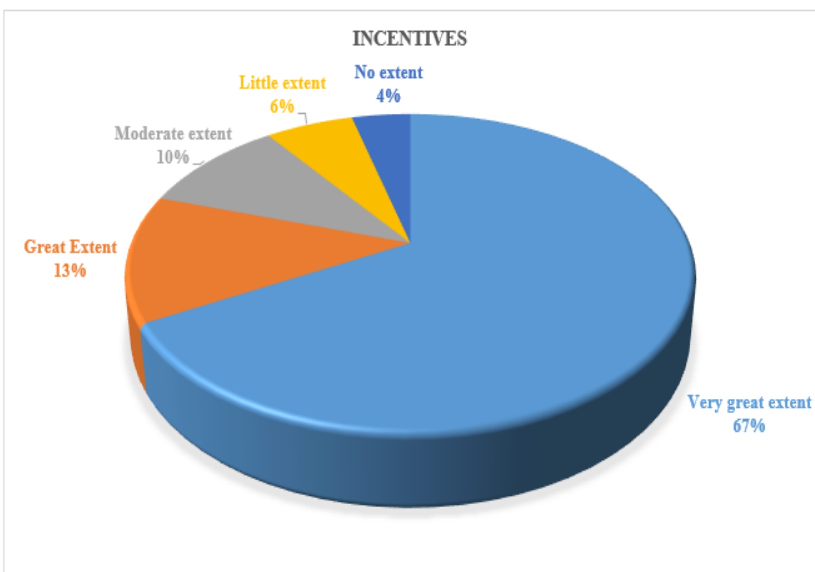

Figure 5: Incentives

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VII. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL CONTROLS AND THE ACCOUNTANTS' ADHERENCE TO THE CODE OF ETHICS

This question was descriptive where respondents were asked the levels of agreement that best describes their degree of agreement with each statement under internal controls and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics from a scale of 1-5 where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly agree (Table 3)

Table 3: Relationship between internal controls and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) strengthens internal controls and absolutely prevents unauthorized transactions	101	4.45	0.787
Supervision by departmental heads adequately strengthens adherence to codes of ethics	101	2.18	0.732
Flow of communication up, down and across the organization barres unprofessional acts.	101	3.94	0.630
Risk assessment mechanisms on internal controls enhance accountants' adherence to codes of ethics	101	3.89	0.875
Existence of an independent internal audit department in your organization has sealed a number of loop holes in the accounting system	101	4.37	0.899

From the results as shown in table 3 above, it is clear that most of the respondents were in strong agreement that Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) strengthens internal controls and absolutely prevents unauthorized transactions as shown by mean value of 4.45 and a standard deviation of 0.787. The participants equally strongly agreed that the Existence of an independent internal audit department in your organization has sealed a number of loop holes in the accounting system. This is indicated by the mean value of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.899. Furthermore, the respondents were in agreement to the statement that Flow of communication up, down and across the organization barres unprofessional acts as shown by an average value of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.630. Additionally, respondents also agreed that Risk assessment mechanisms on internal controls enhance accountants' adherence to codes of ethics as indicated by a mean value of 3.89 and standard deviation of 0.875. However, respondents disagreed that Supervision by departmental heads adequately strengthens adherence to codes of ethics as indicated by mean value of 2.18 and standard deviation of 0.732.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE OF ACCOUNTANTS AND THE ACCOUNTANTS' ADHERENCE TO THE CODE OF ETHICS

There were several elements of independence that influence compliance with accountants' code of ethics. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which these elements have influenced compliance in their ministry/department. Answer Yes or No, where 1=yes and 2=No (Table 4)

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Table 4: Relationship between independence of accountants and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics

Statement	Yes	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
Have you ever been put under pressure during your professional career to act contrary to your professional ethics, organizational/ accounting procedures or to tax or accounting legislation?	61	40	4.23	0.809
Was the person who exerted the pressure on you responsible for financial accounting matters?	57	44	3.72	0.718
Was the person who exerted the pressure your superior?	53	48	3.34	1.980
Would you rather be ethical and risk your relationship with your superior or you would rather obey to avoid consequences such as being transferred?	60	41	3.24	0.788
Would you have done things differently in your job if you had to make decisions on your own?	58	43	4.01	0.651

The results show that most of the respondents been put under pressure during their professional career to act contrary to their professional ethics, organizational/ accounting procedures or to tax or accounting legislation as shown the mean value of 4.23 with standard deviation of 0.809. Furthermore, the respondents stated that the person who exerted the pressure on them was responsible for financial accounting matters as indicated by mean value of 3.72 and standard deviation of 0.718. Additionally, the respondents stated that they would have done things differently in their job if they had to make decisions on their own as indicated by 4.01 mean value and standard deviation of 0.651.

IX. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the variables. Table 5 below shows that the number for adjusted R Square is 0.701 which means that 70.1% of the Accountants' Ethical values adherence in the public sector in Zambia can be accounted for by Remuneration of Accountants, Internal controls and Independence of Accountants while the remaining 29.9% is attributed to variables not studied in this research.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of estimate
1	.826[a]	.711	.701	.6215

a. Predicators: (Constant), Remuneration of Accountants, Internal controls and Independence of Accountants

The ANOVA in Table 6 below shows that the model is significant since the p-value is less than 5% and the F statistic is considerably more than 1, indicating that the model is acceptable for examining the link between independent and dependent variables. As a result, the model is acceptable for interpreting the variables in this investigation.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	98.29	1	27.08	8.32	.003[b]
Residual	15.12	100	.45		
Total	113.40	101			

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The results in table 7 below shows that a unit change in remunerations of the accounts will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.272, a unit change in internal control will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.108, and a unit change in independence of the accounts will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.316 while taking into consideration a positive constant number 2.319.

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \longrightarrow Y = 0.27\,x_1 + 0.11 + 0.32\,x_3 + 2.32 \quad (1)$$

(1) Y= Accountant's adherence to ethical values
X1= Remuneration
X2= Internal controls
X3 = Independence
ε = Error of prediction

β0= Constant. Value of dependent variable; Accountants adherence to ethical values when all the independent variables are held constant at zero.
β1, β2, β3 = Regression coefficients of independent variable. Rate of change in dependent variable as a result of a unit change in independent variable; X1, X2 and X3.

Table 7: The Coefficients

Model	**Unstandardised Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**p-value**
	B	**Std. error**	**Beta**		
Constant	2.319	0.14		1.67	.000
Remuneration					
Internal controls	.272	0.09	0.41	0.93	.002
Independence of Accountants	.108	0.08	0.33	0.21	.000
	.316	0.08	0.37	0.97	.004

X. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the results arranged as per research objectives:

1. To assess the relationship between remuneration of accountants and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics

The results of the study found that remuneration of accountants had an influence on the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. The results resonate with those of Gatu (2017) that the compensation of accountants impacted adherence with the accountants' code of ethics in Kenyan county governments, according to this study, which was consistent with Murphy's (2011) findings that with increasing fear and mistrust of business and increasing levels of misconduct, it will be critical for businesses and other organizations to do a better job of using incentives as a tool to drive the kind of behavior they expect of employees. Hall (2018) reported similar findings, stating that the connection between salary and performance has roughly tenfold risen since 1980. Gatu (2017) further stated that salary disparities, both within and between the public and private sectors, impair morale and, as a result, production in the public sector. It may also result in unethical behavior. According to Damagum and Chima (2014), as stated in Gatu (2017), despite the fact that the law compels counties to deposit all county earnings into the county revenue fund (CRF) before expenditure, most public employees cheat the county cash owing to inequitable pay.

2. To assess the relationship between internal controls and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics

The research results found that there is a positive significant relationship between internal controls and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. This is in line with the findings of Gatu (2017) that Internal controls had a significant influence on compliance with the accountants' code of ethics in Kenya county governments, according to the study, which was also consistent with the findings of Graham and Lynford (2007), who stated that common organizational control gaps in entities include a lack of controls, documentation, accounting expertise, and the inability to properly accrue for expenses and prepare financial statements. Internal controls, according to Manhattan (2015), are sound business procedures that should limit the risks associated with undiscovered

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mistakes or anomalies. The study also revealed comparable results to Devra (2015), who discovered that internal controls are a process influenced by an organization's structure, work and authority flows, people, and management information systems that are meant to assist the business in achieving its goals

3. To assess the relationship between independence of accountants and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics

Further, results showed that the independence of accountants had an impact on the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. The research results are in line with the findings of Symsuddin et al (2014) that in carrying out job obligations, auditors may face pressure or conflicts from management of audited entities, various levels of governmental positions, and other parties that may affect the objectivity and independence of auditors were supported by the findings of the study. Similar results by Grama (2015) said that challenges connected to independence are endangering the viability of accountant companies of all sizes and have the potential to undermine the accounting profession overall. In his study, Abu Bakar (2006) cited by Gatu (2017) also concluded that it is critical that auditors maintain their independence and provide high-quality auditing to ensure the credibility of financial information, not only for the purpose of reducing the number of corporate scandals, but also for the survival of their profession and the development of a healthy financial and capital market.

XI. CONCLUSION

The main aim of this research was to investigate the factors influencing adherence to ethical values: a case study of accountants in the Zambian public sector. The conclusion hereby done according to the objectives set-forth in chapter one as follows;

1. To assess the relationship between remuneration of accountants and the accountants' adherence to the code of ethics

The results of the study found that remuneration of accountants had an influence on the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. The respondents representing 61 (60.4%) stated that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures very greatly Influence Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics; 24(24%) and 7 (6.9%) said that Lack of Clear Remuneration Structures has a great and moderate Influence on Compliance with The Accountants' Code of Ethics respectively.

2. To assess the relationship between internal controls and the accountants' adherence to the code of ethics

The research results found that there is a positive significant relationship between internal controls and the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. Furthermore, the respondents were in strong agreement that Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) strengthens internal controls and absolutely prevents unauthorized transactions as shown by mean value of 4.45 and a standard deviation of 0.787.

3. To assess the relationship between independence of accountants and the accountants' adherence to the code of ethics

Further, results showed that the independence of accountants had an impact on the accountants' adherence to codes of ethics. The participants strongly agreed that the Existence of an independent internal audit department in your organization has sealed a number of loop holes in the accounting system. This is indicated by the mean value of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.899. The regression model was found to be significant since the p-value is less than 5% and the F statistic is considerably more than 1, indicating that the model is acceptable for examining the link between independent and dependent variables. As a result, the model is acceptable for interpreting the variables in this investigation. The regression analysis further showed that a unit change in remunerations of the accounts will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.272, a unit change in internal control will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.108, and a unit change in independence of the accounts will lead to an increase in Accountants' Ethical values adherence by 0.316.

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