RESEARCH ARTICLE	Administrative Corruption and Ways to Combat It
Zerdoum Abderraouf	Dr.
	University Abbes Laghrour Khenchela
<u> </u>	Algeria
	Email: zerdoum.abderraouf@univ-khenchela.dz
Aicha Arrous	Dr.
, , ,	University Abbes Laghrour Khenchela
	Algeria
·	Email: arrous.aicha@univ-khenchela.dz
Doi Serial	https://doi.org/10.56334/sei/8.5.85
Keywords	Administrative Corruption, Public Sector, Transparency and Accountability, Anti-Corruption.

Abstract

Administrative corruption is one of the most dangerous forms of corruption, threatening development, equity and social stability. It has a negative impact on social services, investments, and trust in administrative institutions. Corruption occurs when management deviates from the public interest in order to pursue private interests, which constitutes an abuse of power.

Administrative corruption is a global phenomenon present in every country, manifesting in overt forms such as embezzlement and bribery, as well as covert forms involving the manipulation of systems and decisions for the benefit of relatives. Regardless of its various manifestations, its core impact is to undermine citizenship and weaken the sense of responsibility.

To combat corruption, it is essential to understand its causes, manifestations, and consequences, and to implement various procedures, including studies and research, to devise effective solutions. Obstacles to fighting corruption include fears for whistleblowers, slow legal proceedings, banking secrecy, a lack of explicit legal texts and corrupt individuals using modern technologies.

Proposed recommendations to address administrative corruption include promoting a culture of integrity through education and the media; activating oversight bodies; improving salaries; creating new job opportunities based on merit; holding officials accountable regardless of their position; and including university courses on ethics and the harms of corruption.

In conclusion, administrative corruption is the root of all corruption, and its prevalence can lead to the collapse of society and the state. Therefore, addressing it is essential for maintaining social stability and promoting development.

Citation

Zerdoum A., Aicha A. (2025). Administrative Corruption and Ways to Combat It. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(6), 843-850; doi:10.56352/sei/8.5.85. https://imcra-az.org/archive/363-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-5-volviii-2025.html

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Received: 15.11.2024 Accepted: 10.01.2025 Published: 31.03.2025	(available online)
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Introduction:

Administrative corruption is one of the most dangerous forms of corruption, threatening the development, justice and social stability that individuals in society seek. It disrupts social services, reduces investment and undermines trust in administrative bodies due to administrative violations and illegal actions that contradict logic and civil behaviour.

When the administration, as the main driver of state operations and existing authorities, strays from its goal of serving the public interest to serve private interests or contradicts the spirit of the law, its actions constitute corruption.

No society, whether ancient or modern, is free from manifestations of administrative corruption. There is no community in the world that is completely virtuous and free of corruption and corrupt individuals. Corruption is a global phenomenon affecting all nations, given its danger to social security, economic growth², and administrative performance, and is not specific to a particular society or state.

While there may be apparent administrative corruption, hidden corruption within systems poses an even greater difficulty and danger. The former is evident through embezzlement, bribery and obvious violations of the system, while the latter involves manipulating the system's contents, obstructing rights and disguising itself through local administrative decisions and decrees favouring relatives.

Regardless of how administrative corruption manifests, its effects are the same: it violates the concept of citizenship and weakens the sense of responsibility.

This phenomenon has attracted the attention of societies and states worldwide, resulting in calls to condemn it, limit its spread and establish mechanisms to combat it. This can be achieved through comprehensive and diverse measures based on studies and research that diagnose the problem, propose suitable solutions and monitor the effectiveness of these measures in achieving their goals.

This study is important because it sheds light on the concept of administrative corruption, its causes, manifestations, consequences and means of combating this phenomenon.

- 1. The concept of administrative corruption.
- 2. Characteristics of administrative corruption.
- 3. Causes of administrative corruption.
- 4. Manifestations of administrative corruption.
- 5. Consequences of administrative corruption.
- 6. Ways to combat administrative corruption.

The Concept of Administrative Corruption:

Despite its long history, the phenomenon of administrative corruption has not received the attention it deserves from researchers, politicians and administrators, despite its harmful and destructive effects. However, interest in this issue has increased in

recent years, making it a focal point of discussion not only for intellectuals, politicians and administrators, but also for the average citizen³.

Administrative corruption has been defined in many ways, reflecting various perspectives, characteristics and philosophies. Some definitions broaden its scope, linking it to cultural dimensions, values, traditions and political systems, while others adopt a more singular perspective, viewing it as a result of disorder, need or a response to various political, psychological or social situations⁴. There is no all-encompassing definition of administrative corruption as perceptions vary between societies — what one group sees as corruption, another may not.

Linguistically, 'corruption' derives from the notion of something becoming unfit or spoiled. In Islamic law, the meaning of corruption is drawn from verses in the Quran which all denounce and warn against it; some specify penalties for the corrupt. For example, Allah says, 'The only reward for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and seek to spread corruption on earth, is that they be killed, crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides; or that they be exiled from the land. This is a disgrace for them in this world, and in the Hereafter they will receive a terrible punishment.⁵⁷

In legal terminology, many researchers and academics studying corruption have offered different definitions, reflecting various viewpoints on the meaning and concept of administrative corruption. The perspectives of researchers on corruption, and their attempts to define it, are influenced by their academic fields. Some prominent definitions include:

- 1. 'Administrative corruption is the misuse of governmental authority for personal gain or benefit, in violation of the rules, laws or regulations governing government work.⁶'
- 2. 'Administrative corruption is the use of public authority or a governmental position to achieve personal benefits or advantages resulting from violations of laws, regulations and ethical standards.'
- 3. 'Administrative corruption is the exploitation of a public employee's position and powers for personal gain, characterised by deviant bureaucratic actions arising from poor planning and prioritising individual interests over public ones.⁸'
- 4. Transparency International defines corruption as the misuse of public power for private gain.
- 5. Some administrative science researchers view corruption as the use of public authority to gain personal profit, social status, or benefits for a group, thereby violating legislation and ethical standards.
- 6. Others describe corruption as a state of affairs that impedes administrative work, whether due to bribery among employees or negligence in managing administrative transactions¹⁰.

From these various definitions, it is evident that administrative corruption encompasses behaviours that violate systems and laws, contradicting societal values and ethics by prioritising personal interests over the public good. This threatens public order, undermines trust and violates the integrity expected of public employees¹¹.

It is also important to distinguish between corruption and corruption-causing actions. Corruption is a common phenomenon that can be mitigated by enacting serious policies to establish robust laws governing society and strict administrative systems that promote the public good, reward merit and penalise wrongdoing. These systems must be supported by an independent, impartial judiciary that applies the law fairly.

In contrast, corruption-causing actions aim to spread corruption among individuals who are not yet corrupt, distorting society until corruption becomes normalised and everyone either engages in bribery, receives bribes, acts as an intermediary or commits corrupt acts. Consequently, corruption becomes widespread in society, making it difficult to resist¹².

Characteristics of administrative corruption:

- 1. Diverse forms: Administrative corruption encompasses multiple forms and elements that are difficult to identify and combat. These include bribery, embezzlement, forgery, extortion and the blatant misuse of public funds for personal gain. It also encompasses favouritism, nepotism, turning a blind eye to illegal activities, and abusing policies to achieve personal objectives.
- 2. Covert nature: Administrative corruption often occurs in secret and under a climate of fear, making it challenging to reveal its full extent. Experience shows that corrupt transactions tend to be complex and indirect, enticing high-ranking officials to engage in corruption due to the low likelihood of being suspected.
- 3. Organised activity: Corruption is not merely an individual act; it usually involves multiple parties. Administrative corruption revolves around key players: public employees who exploit their authority for personal gain; individuals who interact with these employees, either purchasing unauthorised services or paying extra for services they are entitled to; and intermediaries involved in larger corruption cases. This complicates the process and makes corruption harder to combat¹³.
- 4. Element of risk: corruption is often tempting in situations where the risk of detection is low. The more significant and complex the corrupt deal, the greater the temptation, as the chances of arousing suspicion diminish. This characteristic is important to consider when initiating anti-corruption efforts.
- 5. Thrives in Crisis Conditions: Corruption tends to flourish during times of crisis, such as wars, natural disasters and economic downturns. These circumstances lead to shortages of resources, increased living costs and a decline in living standards for those on low incomes. Their ability to resist corruption weakens and they may be pressured into exploitation by beneficiaries.
- 6. Experienced Actors: Those involved in administrative corruption often have expertise and cunning, enabling them to evade accusations and escape justice.

7. Wider prevalence in developing societies: While administrative corruption is more prevalent in developing societies, advanced societies often produce and export corruption across borders.

Causes of administrative corruption:

Administrative corruption has political, economic and social causes. While these factors are not exhaustive, they are significant in the structure and formation of society and warrant examination.¹⁵.

A. Political causes

1. Lack of stable political systems:

The absence of stable and effective political systems based on permanent democratic constitutions that enshrine the separation of powers can lead to a lack of motivation to combat corruption. This issue is exacerbated by the prevalence of threats, marginalisation and exclusion.

- 2. Weak democratic practices: The prevalence of political tyranny and dictatorship in many countries directly contributes to the growth of administrative corruption.
- 3. Judicial independence: A lack of judicial independence undermines the principle of separation of powers. An independent judiciary is essential for ensuring fair legal practices and possessing the authority to act impartially.
- 4. Low Political Awareness: A lack of political awareness and ignorance of administrative mechanisms can hinder the effective exercise of power and impact the overall governance of the state.

B. Economic causes:

- 1. Weak economic performance: Most economic activity occurs through dubious business transactions, with financial corruption playing a significant role. This has a negative impact on the national economy and the implementation of projects.
- 2. High levels of ignorance and unemployment:

Low cultural awareness is closely tied to bribery, while low wages and purchasing power are directly correlated with the prevalence of corruption.

3. Tax evasion: Weak regulatory oversight by accounting bodies contributes to corrupt practices.

C. Social causes:

- 1. Social norms and values: Corruption can thrive due to detrimental social factors within communities where social customs and traditions play a significant role in its growth and are often influenced by tribal relationships.
- 2. Ineffective administrative systems: Nepotism and favouritism spread in developing societies, leading to public positions being filled by unqualified individuals lacking integrity and thus affecting administrative efficiency.
- 3. Lack of accountability: The failure to enforce accountability and punishment across state institutions, combined with weak

ethical standards, poor awareness in the media of the dangers of corruption, and a culture of greed and quick profit exacerbates the issue.

4. Legal issues: Vague or contradictory laws and regulations enable employees to evade legal obligations or interpret laws to serve their personal interests at the expense of public welfare.

Manifestations of administrative corruption

1. Bribery

Bribery is universally defined in criminal legislation as the act of abusing public office by soliciting, accepting or receiving a gift or promise of benefit in exchange for performing or refraining from performing an official duty¹⁶. The crime of bribery requires two essential elements:

- Material element: This involves criminal activity that constitutes the misuse of office, as demonstrated by the actions of the public employee. This may include requesting, taking or accepting a bribe¹⁷.
- Moral Element: This pertains to the bribe being intended as compensation for the employee's official duties. Bribery contradicts the ethics and values associated with public service by prioritising private interests over the public good, leading to unjust enrichment at the community's expense.

2. Embezzlement:

Embezzlement occurs when a public employee misappropriates funds entrusted to them due to their position, treating them as their own. This includes situations where a tax collector unlawfully demands or receives more than is due, or where a public employee fails to distribute goods according to established systems¹⁸.

3. Money laundering

Money laundering involves converting illegally obtained funds into legitimate assets, thereby obscuring their illicit origins. The aim is to make the funds appear to have been acquired through lawful means in the eyes of the state and society.¹⁹

4. Abuse of Office:

Abuse of office occurs when a public employee uses their authority to achieve personal goals rather than serving the public interest. Key aspects of this include:

- Nepotism: Favouring certain individuals for benefits, often relatives or members of the same community or group who lack the necessary qualifications or integrity.
- Wasta (intermediary influence): Influential individuals intervening with officials to secure government institution positions for their relatives, regardless of their suitability for the role.

4. Manifestations of Administrative Corruption (Continued):

A. Abuse of Office:

This involves public employees using administrative tools and resources for personal gain. Some employees exploit their official roles for personal gain, undermining the public good and failing to protect public assets.

B. Job Negligence: Job Negligence:

This manifests as violations of regulations and policies, such as failing to attend work on time, being absent from the workplace, neglecting duties, engaging in unrelated activities during working hours and leaving to attend to personal matters during working hours²⁰.

C. Refusal to perform duties: Refusal to perform duties:

This includes being lazy in fulfilling obligations and failing to uphold the integrity of the position, which is characterised by neglect and indifference.

5. Extortion:

Extortion occurs when a public employee abuses their authority to compel subordinates to fulfil personal interests. This often involves leveraging a position of public necessity to exploit and intimidate individuals by threatening them with physical harm, psychological distress, arrest, surveillance or false accusations if they do not comply²¹.

6. Fraud:

Fraud is a deceptive practice employed by corrupt individuals — whether producers, traders or others — to mislead those seeking products or services for personal gain. While most fraudulent acts occur in markets, they also occur in contexts such as cheating in exams or competitions for government jobs or other prestigious positions, including judiciary roles and diplomatic services²².

7. Forgery:

Forgery involves altering, imitating, or fabricating the truth to deceive others. It involves creating written lies that misrepresent facts and replace the truth with falsehoods²³. For example, a public employee may forge official documents to gain financial benefits, such as by falsifying court judgements, reports, records and other documents using forged signatures or seals, or by altering names or replicating official government insignia²⁴.

8. Damage to public funds and interests²⁵

This aspect of administrative corruption can manifest in various ways.

A. Misappropriation of public funds

This involves the appropriation of public assets, which can be either tangible or intangible. It includes situations where an employee either directly seizes these resources or facilitates their appropriation by others.

B. Waste of public funds

This occurs when public money is squandered for personal, social, political or recreational purposes that serve specific inter-

ests rather than the public good. Examples include state institutions spending excessively on conferences, delegations, celebrations or lavish receptions for high-ranking officials.

C. Destruction of public property:

This involves employees deliberately damaging or destroying fixed or movable assets, documents or other resources related to their agency. Examples include demolishing buildings, destroying vehicles or setting fire to production facilities with the intention of harming the national economy.

9. Tax evasion:

Tax evasion refers to practices employed by taxpayers to conceal their taxable income. This includes failing to report certain income on tax returns or not submitting tax returns at all. It may also involve accountants creating fictitious expense lists and manipulating financial data to reflect losses that do not warrant taxes, resulting in lower tax payments to the treasury.²⁶

10. Disclosure of Confidential Information:

This involves failing to protect confidential information to which employees have access due to their positions. Employees may withhold critical information that should not be kept secret, such as covering up theft or embezzlement, either for personal gain or without any compensation²⁷.

The consequences of administrative corruption

Administrative corruption has significant economic, social and political repercussions that undermine the foundations of society. This destructive phenomenon affects all aspects of life in the state, wasting resources, time and energy while hindering governmental performance and service delivery. It results in the deterioration of not only the economic and financial sectors, but also the political, social and cultural domains. Ultimately, this results in a serious decline in public service institutions that directly affect citizens.

1. Economic consequences

The economic impacts of administrative corruption are numerous and varied, affecting both the state and individuals. Key effects include:

- Stalling economic growth: Corruption reduces investment rates, which lowers aggregate demand and weakens infrastructure services due to embezzlement and bribery. This limits the resources allocated for investment.
- Inequitable distribution of income and wealth: Corruption enables powerful individuals to exploit their positions to control most economic resources and state-provided benefits, leading to an unequal distribution of wealth.
- Harm to small enterprises: Small businesses suffer due to higher financial costs compared to larger firms. Corrupt practices create an environment in which it is difficult for small enterprises to survive, which ultimately damages national economic growth.

- Loss of state funds: Corruption results in the misappropriation of state funds that could be used for projects benefiting citizens, leading to theft or waste for personal gain.
- Failure to Attract Foreign Investment: Corruption discourages foreign investment and increases state debt²⁰.

Poor work quality: Negligence in quality control can result in defective goods and products, damaging the reputation of the products and the institutions involved.

2. Social consequences

The social consequences of administrative corruption can be summarised as follows:

- increased crime rates; Corruption contributes to rising crime rates because fraudsters in corrupt systems often evade punishment easily.
- Income inequality: Administrative corruption leads to disparities in income distribution, widening the gap between rich and poor. This can foster feelings of deprivation among large segments of society, particularly when assistance programmes intended for the poor are misused by the wealthy.
- Negative social norms: Harmful traditions and customs can drive individuals towards criminal behaviour. The desire for status can lead individuals to seek wealth by any means necessary, including bribery or embezzlement³¹.

Impact on social mobility: Corruption directly affects efficiency and effectiveness, creating negative behaviours that hinder social mobility. Feelings of despair, frustration, insecurity and a sense of injustice pervade society when corrupt officials are not held accountable.

Moral decay: Corruption fosters moral decline and the proliferation of unethical practices and the evasion of responsibility. It also leads to the breakdown of oversight and accountability mechanisms.

3. Political consequences⁸²

The political ramifications of corruption include:³³

- Erosion of legitimacy: Corruption undermines the legitimacy of the political system, causing citizens to lose trust in government institutions and resulting in their interests being neglected or exploited. This results in decreased political participation as citizens become disillusioned with officials' and public institutions' integrity.
- Irrational decision-making: The concentration of power and the absence of rational decision-making can have a negative impact on the country's future. In such cases, critical political decisions may harm national interests.

Political instability: Political instability contributes to the proliferation of corruption, while corruption in turn breeds instability. Societies plagued by corruption are often at a higher risk of violence, as unlawful conduct replaces lawful behaviour, with vio-

lence posing a significant threat to the effectiveness of the system — often more so than corruption itself.

Ways to Combat Administrative Corruption

Effective measures against administrative corruption combine two approaches:

- 1. Preventative approach: This approach involves higher short-term costs, but is more efficient in the long run.
- 2. Punitive approach: Penalties are imposed on those involved in corruption, which is less costly and provides immediate results.

Various methods exist for combating corruption, including legal and administrative means.

1. Legal means to combat administrative corruption

Legal methods aimed at reducing administrative corruption include:

- Promotion of equality and justice: Constitutional laws should emphasise principles of equality, social justice, security and equal opportunities for all citizens. Public service should be viewed as a national duty, with public employees focusing solely on the public interest in their roles.
- Protection of public funds: Every citizen should be responsible for protecting public assets, and there should be laws specifying penalties for violations. Paying taxes is also a civic duty that should not be avoided, as it benefits the public good³⁴.
- Imposing severe penalties: Strict penalties should be imposed for bribery and embezzlement, including imprisonment and restitution of an equivalent amount to that obtained through corruption³⁵.
- Criminalising abuse of office: Enacting laws that criminalise the exploitation of public positions and encroachment on public funds, with penalties to protect these assets.
- Amendment of penal laws: Updating laws in developing countries to include international bribery and allow for the prosecution of foreign bribers.

Judicial oversight: Administrative courts should oversee decisions made by ministers and senior officials to prevent abuse of power. Though challenging, this oversight is crucial for curbing administrative corruption.

- The role of administrative courts: These courts can effectively protect citizens from illegal actions that violate their rights and ensure compliance with the law.

Banking regulations: Banks should implement measures to combat financial corruption, including monitoring funds obtained from criminal activities such as money laundering and drug trafficking. It is also essential to establish financial investigation units within banks to receive, analyse and report suspicious transactions.³⁶.

2. Administrative Means to Combat Administrative Corruption

Combating administrative corruption through administrative means involves public employees, their behaviour, the administrative apparatus within which they work, the criteria used to select leaders, and administrative procedures. Key administrative strategies to combat corruption include:

- establishing specialised bodies; Creating dedicated administrative bodies to combat corruption and enhance oversight by focusing on performance evaluation. These bodies should assist management in correcting errors and achieving objectives, thereby protecting against manipulation and personal gain.

Adopting a code of conduct. Implementing a system of professional conduct for state employees that emphasises ethical behaviour, equal opportunities, justice, transparency, accountability and respect for public funds. The code should also respect the rights and interests of all individuals, regardless of their background, in order to build public trust through integrity and transparency.

Selecting competent leadership: Appoint qualified and honest leaders based on objective criteria and avoid assigning leadership roles to individuals with inadequate qualifications or experience.

Streamlining administrative procedures: Simplifying administrative and judicial processes for addressing corruption cases to help investigators handle corrupt employees more effectively.

- Providing effective channels for complaints: Establishing mechanisms for citizens to report grievances related to public services and unfair treatment when accessing their rights and services.

Implementing job rotation policies: Regularly rotating employees and officials in departments with high corruption rates prevents the establishment of corruption networks. Long tenure in positions can lead to the entrenchment of corrupt practices⁵⁷.

- Using competitive recruitment: Adopting competitive processes for hiring government employees ensures that the right person is placed in the right position, thus reducing nepotism and favouritism.
- Training on work ethics: Providing training for employees on work ethics and public responsibility.
- Encouraging research: Encouraging academic institutions and research centres to conduct studies on protecting public integrity and understanding the causes and motivations behind corruption.³⁸.
- Improving living conditions: Enhancing the living and working conditions of citizens to help prevent them from resorting to corrupt practices to earn an income.

Media engagement: Engaging with various media outlets to raise awareness of administrative corruption and its severe economic and social consequences for individuals and society.³⁰

International Cooperation: Leveraging experiences from other countries and international organisations and utilising modern scientific methods, especially technology, to gather and exchange information. International collaboration is vital for sharing intelligence and providing training in effective monitoring techniques for detecting corruption.

These comprehensive strategies can provide an effective framework for tackling administrative corruption.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we find that administrative corruption is a societal scourge that represents not merely an undesirable phenomenon, but a grave threat capable of leading to the collapse of the state and society itself. It is the root of all forms of corruption, including educational, financial, media, health, cultural and economic corruption. It is the nucleus of corruption in various aspects of life and society. When corruption spreads, the entire community deteriorates, and a corrupt society becomes unstable and vulnerable to infiltration by wrongdoers.

There are numerous challenges hindering efforts to combat administrative corruption, such as:

- Whistleblowers' reluctance to report corruption due to fear of retaliation or harm to their personal interests.
- Slow judicial processes that fail to deter corrupt individuals.
- The confidentiality of bank accounts, which makes it difficult to uncover certain cases.
- The absence of clear legal provisions that define and criminalise various forms of corruption.
- Corrupt individuals using advanced technical methods to carry out their activities.
- Suspects fleeing the country before they can be apprehended.

Based on this analysis, we propose the following recommendations:

Develop educational and cultural programmes through various media to foster a culture of integrity and protect public funds. This long-term strategy aims to enhance loyalty and a sense of belonging between individuals and the state by emphasising that a culture of integrity is essential in deterring corruption, not just the law.

- Ensure that central oversight bodies and internal auditing agencies within ministries and public offices fulfil their roles effectively, identifying perpetrators of administrative corruption and applying regulations fairly. They must not show leniency and should refer offenders to the relevant investigative authorities for prosecution.
- Raise salary levels and establish minimum wage standards that align with the rising cost of living. This will reduce the temptation for individuals to engage in corrupt practices, as well as improving their morale and social standing.
- Create new job opportunities to promote deserving individuals, ensuring these positions are filled based on merit.
- Hold every official accountable, regardless of their position.

Introduce university-level courses focused on professional ethics and the severe consequences of administrative corruption, making this subject compulsory for all university students.

By implementing these recommendations, we can cultivate a more transparent and accountable society, ultimately reducing the prevalence of administrative corruption.

Footnotes and references:

- 1. Administrative corruption exists in both developing and developed countries; it is not exclusive to developing nations, as some claim. Corruption crimes in the U.S., U.K., and France are well-known. For instance, Arthur Andersen admitted to destroying crucial documents during the collapse of Enron, which concealed about \$9.3 billion. In the U.K., Lord Sainsbury amassed wealth by developing genetically modified food products, which many scientists and environmental advocates oppose.
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- 19. Nawaf Salem Kanaan, op. cit., p. 108.
- 20. Fayçal bin Tal'a bin Tayyeh Al-Mutairi, op. cit., pp. 35-37.
- 21. Hamdi Abdel Azim, op. cit., p. 33
- 22. Hamdi Abdel Azim, op. cit., p. 35.
- 23. Hamdi Abdel Azim, op. cit., p. 36.
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- 25. Khalid bin Abdul Rahman bin Hassan bin Omar Al-Sheikh, op. cit., p. 32.
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