

Corruption in Public Administration: Evaluation of its Impact on Government Efficiency

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Abstracts

Corruption in public administration is a serious problem that negatively affects society and the functioning of the State. It is essential to address this issue effectively to promote transparency, integrity and trust in government institutions. This research aims to review the existing literature on the evaluation of corruption and its effects on the effectiveness of public administration. Three research questions were posed following the PICO methodology (1) What is the effect of corruption on the population's trust in government institutions?, (2) What mechanisms to prevent and combat corruption in public administration have been implemented in different countries?, (3) What is the impact of corruption on government efficiency? The investigations were carried out using the Scopus database and Web of Science for which inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to identification, screening and including 40 relevant articles. The results elucidate citizens' perception of corruption in public administration, as well as the sources that cause this scourge. In addition, the key findings of the review are presented, including the mechanisms to prevent and combat corruption implemented in different contexts. It is concluded that to combat corruption requires a joint effort from society, the government and entities in order to promote transparency and strengthen institutions, which in turn will contribute to building a more just and trustworthy society.

Keywords: Corruption, citizen participation, accountability, transparency, public administration.

Introduction

Organized criminal activities are being fueled by a lack of bold and firm action to combat corruption and strengthen public institutions, which is undermining democracy, human rights, and threatening the Sustainable Development Goals (CNN, 2023). In this sense, one way of perceiving how the phenomenon of corruption has evolved at the international, regional or local level can be achieved through measurement indicators (Cuzme et al., 2023). Since the 1990s, several agencies have implemented tools in order to gain a more complete understanding of the problem of corruption and its repercussions. The main trends for measuring corruption include

opinion polls and government statistical tools. In addition, there are similar experiences at the national or local level, as well as international experiences (OAS, 2023).

The Transparency International Organization's Corruption Perceptions Index is published annually. Denmark and New Zealand were the most important countries in the world. Clean in 2022, that is, with the lowest perception of corruption in the public sector. Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia rank lowest in terms of corruption in the public sector (Transparency International, 2023). According to the results of the index, Uruguay and Chile are considered the least corrupt countries in Latin America in 2022, while Venezuela, Haiti and Nicaragua are considered the countries with the worst levels of corruption. Guatemala and Honduras are also among the nations with the highest level of corruption. (Statista, 2023).

Corruption is a serious problem that can have serious consequences in a society. When corruption is allowed to run rampant and affect public officials, trust in government, the effectiveness of institutions, and justice are eroded. Corruption has exceeded all levels of control in recent years; for example, corruption in the healthcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, corruption in the healthcare sector is considered a global problem (Hossain et al., 2023). Because of its connection to life-saving medical products, corruption in the healthcare sector has an impact harmful and unjust in people's lives (Mhazo & Maponga, 2022). Corruption in the health sector affects both developed and developing countries (Campante & Do, 2014). Public health in developing countries has been hampered by a lack of basic health infrastructure, human resources, adequate supplies and equipment, among other factors (Fagbadebo & Dorasamy, 2022; Torres-Puraca, 2020).

Corruption and bribery are practices that undermine trust in public institutions and weaken the rule of law. Not only do these acts negatively affect a country's economy and development, but they also harm citizens by diverting resources that could be used for essential services such as education, health, and safety (Dragan et al., 2020; Falisse & Leszczynska, 2022; Macedo et al., 2023). It is important to foster a culture of integrity and ethics in public service. This can be achieved through training and sensitization of public officials on the risks and consequences of corruption, as well as by promoting accountability and citizen participation in the oversight of government activities (Rieznik & Lee, 2021; Vaquero & Cadaval, 2022).

The review of the literature on the subject will allow us to understand how corruption affects the effectiveness of public administration, which is essential to identify problem areas and seek solutions that improve the management of public affairs. Investigating the impact of corruption on the effectiveness of public administration is critical to improving governance, transparency, and the quality of government services. This not only benefits society at large, but also improves the functioning of governments and the fight against corruption.

The evaluation of corruption and its effects on the effectiveness of public administration are the objective of this research. It seeks to investigate how corruption affects the ability of government institutions to fulfill their functions and effectively serve public interests and to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms that link corruption with administrative effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Research focuses on systematic literature review (RSL), as the name implies, it is a systematic way of collecting, critically evaluating, integrating, and presenting findings from multiple research studies on a research question or topic of interest (Pati & Lorusso, 2018); with respect to the research question, it has been posed following the PICO methodology, which is a tool used to formulate research questions in the clinical field, but it can also be useful to narrow or refine a research question in the social sciences (National University of Singapore [NUS], 2023). For this study, the following PICO questions were formulated for each of its components.

Table 1. Specific questions for each PICO component

PICO Component	PICO Question
Problem / Population	What is the effect of corruption on the population's trust in government institutions?
Intervention	What mechanisms for preventing and combating corruption in public administration have been implemented in different countries?
Results	What is the impact of corruption on government efficiency?

The following table details each component with its search elements and keywords.

Table 2. Search Elements and Keywords for Each PICO Component

PICO Component	Search Items	Keywords
Problem / Population	Government officials, public employees, public sector, public administration.	Government officials, public servants, civil servants, local government, national government, public administration, public sector.
Intervention	Citizen participation, accountability, transparency, corruption prevention, anti-corruption measures.	Citizen participation, accountability, transparency, corruption prevention, anti-corruption measure.
Results	Impacts of corruption on public administration	Impact, consequence, effect.

With regard to the systematic search of publications, this was carried out on the basis of scientific data Scopus and Web Of Science (WOS) taking into account the following inclusion criteria:

Table 3. Inclusion criteria

item	Inclusion Criteria
CI1	The revised publications should focus on the corruption of government officials in the public administration.
CI2	The revised publications should address ways of preventing and combating corruption in public administration.
CI3	The reviewed publications must show results of the impacts of corruption on public administration.

The following exclusion criteria are also applied:

Table 4. Exclusion Criteria

item	Exclusion Criteria
CE1	Non-Open Access Publications
CE2	Publications that do not correspond to scientific articles
CE3	Publications other than English or Spanish
CE4	Publications obtained before 2019 and after 2023

This set up the following canonical search string for both Scopus and WOS.

Table 5. Canonical search strings

Database	Search string
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("public administration" OR "public sector" OR "government officials" OR "public servants" OR "civil servants") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("accountability" OR "corruption prevention" OR "anti-corruption measures" OR "citizen participation") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY

	((corruption OR misconduct OR brib*) AND (impact OR consequence OR effect))) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish"))
WOS	(ALL=("public administration" OR "public sector" OR "government officials" OR "public servants" OR "civil servants") AND ALL=("accountability" OR "corruption prevention" OR "anti-corruption measures" OR "citizen participation") AND ALL=((corruption OR misconduct OR brib*) AND (impact OR consequence OR effect))) AND (OA=("OPEN ACCESS") AND DT=("ARTICLE") AND LA=("ENGLISH" OR "SPANISH"))

Below is a summary table of the process of identification, screening and inclusion of the selected articles

Table 6. Summary of the identification, screening and inclusion process

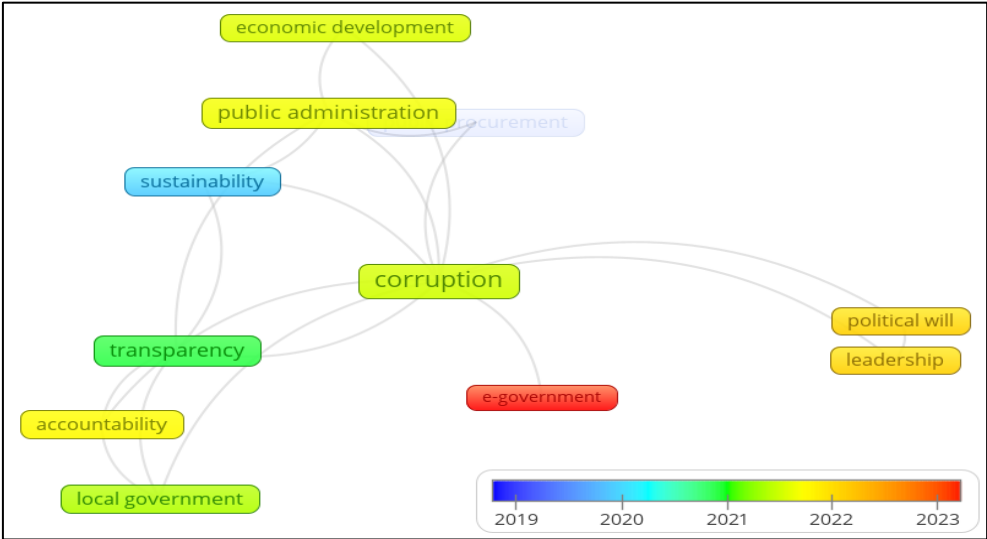
Database	Identified publications	Excluded publications	Eligible Items	Duplicate Items	Included Items
Scopus	165	127	37		
WOS	131	87	41	38	40
Total	296	214	78	38	40

As can be seen in the table, after having applied the corresponding filters and eliminating the duplicate articles, the result is 40 articles, which were analyzed in this systematic review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

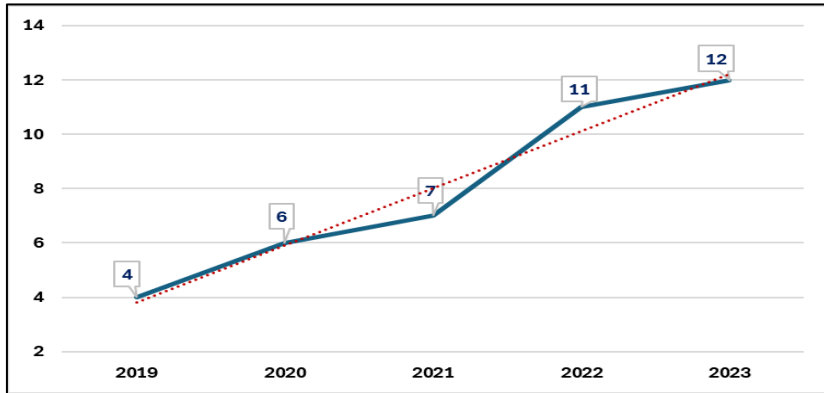
Based on the results of the analysis of co-occurrence of keywords presented in Figure 2, the studies reviewed have corruption as the main keyword with 32% of occurrences followed by the word transparency 18%, public administration 13%, accountability 11%, local government 5% and economic development 4%, among others. It is also evident how corruption is evolving over time and the influence it has been having on electronic government.

Figure 1. Co-occurrences by keywords and the evolution of corruption



The production of scientific articles on corruption in public administration has increased in the last five years. The fact that there are four articles in 2019 and twelve in 2023 indicates a growing interest in this topic. This increase could be the result of increased awareness of the importance of combating government corruption, as well as increased attention from society and the media.

Figure 2. Publication of scientific articles per year



In response to each of the PICO questions, it has been agreed to establish the following subheadings, which are related to the questions posed in Table 1.

Effects of corruption on public confidence

In recent years, the lack of trust in Spanish public institutions has worsened significantly as a result of the consequences of corruption (Vaquero & Cadaval, 2022). The annual trust report, known as Trust Barometer and published by the consulting firm Adelman, already indicated in 2014 that the level of trust in the Spanish government was at 18 points on a scale of 0 to 90 (where 90 represents maximum trust), while the average was 45 points. By 2017, the average of the index fell by 4 points, and of the 27 countries analysed, in 20 of them citizens distrusted their governments, placing Spain as one of the countries with the greatest distrust in its executive, surpassed only by South Africa, Poland, Mexico and Brazil. Faced with this situation, policies aimed at transparency, Responsible Public Management, and citizens' access to public information become essential as measures to address the lack of connection with citizens. Growing distrust in public administrations has given rise to a new approach based on transparency, through which governments try to regain the legitimacy they have lost (Rodríguez-Martín et al., 2020). Many people are aware of widespread corruption in the public sphere and consider it a significant problem. Despite this, there are obstacles that make it difficult to report cases of corruption, such as lack of information, fear of reprisals, lack of adequate support, and fear of the authorities (Klopp et al., 2022).

The study of Dinh Thanh et al. (2023), notes that corruption is a significant problem in Vietnam, adversely affecting attempts to improve the quality of governance and public administration. This phenomenon has the potential to undermine the population's trust in government institutions, as citizens may perceive that public officials are not acting in their best interest and

that the system is designed to favour the few rather than the many. It also generates a decrease in the credibility of government institutions and affects the social pact between the state and its citizens (Hoa et al., 2023; Dung & Thanh, 2023). A lack of trust in government entities can have a negative impact on the nation's political stability and economic progress. The absence of knowledge generates feelings of frustration and helplessness among the population. A study conducted in South Africa for the implementation of e-government found that citizens lack trust in the local municipality and believe it is full of corruption (Galushi & Malatji, 2022). For its part Jones (2022), indicates that public trust in government institutions in Malaysia has been undermined due to corruption. The widespread presence of corruption, especially at high levels of government, has led to a decline in the population's confidence in the integrity and transparency of government institutions. This loss of trust can have significant consequences on the stability and legitimacy of the government, as well as on the perception of the effectiveness of government policies and programs.

The Peruvian case is not unrelated to this distrust, the public administration and its government entities from the national level to regional and local governments, participate in areas such as education, health, security, infrastructure, among others. They face various challenges that impact their effectiveness and ability to meet the needs of society. Corruption is one of these persistent challenges in Peruvian public administration. Lack of transparency, inadequate management of resources, and impunity have undermined trust in government institutions, making it difficult to implement effective policies and programs. In addition, excessive bureaucracy and slow administrative processes have hindered efficiency and agile decision-making. These situations have caused delays in the provision of services and have had a negative impact on the quality of customer service (Sánchez-Huamán et al., 2023).

Table 7. Effects of corruption on public trust, additional comments

Appointment	Feedback
De Oliveira (2023)	The organizational aspects of public administration are fundamental to its effectiveness in providing services to society, but they are not decisive on their own.
Elicin (2020)	Corrupt and clientele practices in Turkish municipalities have weakened democracy, harmed the efficiency of local governments, and negatively impacted the rights and representation of local citizens.
Mansour et al. (2021)	In societies where power is delegated for public spending, there is a risk that resources will be allocated to projects that benefit officials rather than the public interest.

The confidence of the population is negatively affected by various forms of corruption in government institutions. Corruption can negatively affect trust in government institutions, which could have a negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies. Corruption also has an impact on the country's political stability and economic progress, as well as on the credibility of government institutions and the social pact between the state and its citizens. Corruption can weaken the effectiveness of government policies, halt economic progress and contribute to the persistence of poverty and underdevelopment throughout the country.

Mechanisms to prevent and combat corruption in public administration

When autonomous bureaucrats exert control over politicians, for example, by expressing criticism against the lack of efficiency in a public works project, there is the potential to redirect public resources from poorly managed projects to growth-promoting initiatives, such as well-

planned public infrastructure (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2022). Supreme audit institutions are not officially designated as anti-corruption agencies, but theoretical and empirical research shows that their activities have a beneficial effect on reducing corruption.

From a theoretical point of view, it is argued that supreme audit institutions have the ability to discourage public officials from engaging in irregular practices, due to the transparency and accountability required in their audit processes (Nonki Tadida, 2023). The transparency and oversight procedure for spending on European Union Funds involves more detailed requirements, such as the obligation to submit spending data to national transparency portals or to submit reports to the European Commission. In addition, the use of European Union Funds is subject to additional monitoring by both national and European supervisory bodies, such as the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) or the European Court of Auditors. These are efforts implemented to prevent and combat corruption in public administration in the area of spending of European Union Funds in beneficiary countries (Fazekas & King, 2019).

There are many programs and measures in the administrative reform of governments in various countries, where theories related to governance are widely discussed and in fact improve public administration by changing traditional practice and transforming government in recent years (Liu et al., 2021). A greater degree of transparency in the budget implies more advanced governance management, which translates into greater accountability on the part of the government, providing crucial information to the public and reducing corruption. The Open Budget Index (OBI) is a widely used tool for assessing budget transparency. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and the International Budget Association (IBP) are working with civil society globally to use budget analysis as a tool to improve the efficiency of the use of public funds (Stanimirović, 2022).

In Slovakia, during the electoral period between 2012 and 2016, several allegations of corruption emerged both in the public administration and in the highest political spheres. Sectors affected by corruption in this period included health care, information technology services, and e-government. At the same time, the government implemented anti-corruption measures, such as the establishment of a state-owned electronic marketplace for public procurement, with the aim of eliminating clientelism in government and local institutions. In addition, amendments were made to the law on public procurement, new electoral codes were established with a focus on the financing of political parties, and the law on the protection of whistleblowers of anti-social or corrupt activities was enacted. In addition, the participation of Shell companies with unidentified owners in public procurement processes. All these initiatives can be seen as measures aimed at combating corruption (Lendvorský et al., 2022).

Leadership and culture are key factors in the fight against corruption. Countries that have managed to minimize corruption, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, have shown strong leadership and implemented zero-tolerance policies. In addition, they have worked to change the culture of corruption through effective measures. On the other hand, countries with corrupt leadership and a culture of corruption, such as Japan, Taiwan, and Malaysia, have faced difficulties in combating this problem (Quah, 2022).

Table 8. Anti-corruption mechanisms, additional comments

Appointment	Feedback
Brás & Dowley (2021)	Transparency in local governments benefits civic engagement and accountability, preventing corruption and mismanagement by making government activities and decisions visible to the public.
Fedotov & Voloshyna (2019); Kotukov et al. (2023)	To combat corruption, the Ukrainian government has implemented institutional reforms, established an anti-corruption system, specific legislation, public education programs, and civil servants. These measures aim to improve transparency, eliminate conditions that favor corruption, and strengthen the legal system.
Ingrams & Schachter (2019)	City administrators can combat corruption through electronic participation tools, the effective levels of which are based on physical resources, such as financing, internet access, as well as social capital and public demand for accountability.
Kolomoiets & Makarenkov (2021); Zou et al. (2023); Zumofen et al. (2022)	Digital technologies such as e-government or open data are effective in preventing corruption in the public sector by facilitating contactless interactions between officials and citizens, eliminating the giving of gifts and bribes, formalizing procedures, and neutralizing corruption risks through legal mechanisms.
Lee et al. (2019); Matheus & Janssen (2020)	The rule of law and the control of corruption are essential to mediate open government and prosperity, especially in social capital and the environment. Open government alone will not have a full impact on prosperity if efforts are not made to build or maintain these mechanisms.

Several countries have implemented various mechanisms to combat corruption in public administration. The use of digital technologies and e-government, the participation of supreme audit institutions, specific institutional reforms and policies of transparency and access to public information are some of the measures. These mechanisms aim to increase transparency, eradicate situations that encourage corruption and strengthen the legal system. To effectively address this challenge, each country can adapt these measures to its particular context.

Impact of corruption on government efficiency

The study conducted by Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2020) in Spain, it highlights that corruption exerts a substantial influence on the effectiveness of government. It indicates that the global crisis, coupled with inadequate organizational practices, has exposed disturbing problems of corruption in public administration at the local level, specifically in sectors such as urban planning, construction, and public procurement. These instances of corruption have given rise to notable risks and have impacted government efficiency and administration. Corruption has an adverse impact on the effectiveness of government. It can result in inefficient allocation of resources, distortions in political decisions and poor governance. In addition, corruption has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of government policies and hinder economic development (Tawiah, 2023; Gonçalves de Godoi, 2020).

Poor and ineffective oversight of the public sector leads to a decline in the efficiency of the economy as a whole. This scenario is likely to have a significant and multiplying impact on market failures, contributing to the persistence of extreme poverty and underdevelopment at the national level (Muzurura & Mutambara, 2022). Combating corruption is essential to achieving sustainable development, as this practice hinders economic progress, deepens income disparity, contributes to the proliferation of poverty and deteriorates human development indicators (Castro & Lopes, 2023).

According to Andrade (2021), corruption has the potential to influence the allocation of resources, being diverted to lower priority projects or individuals who do not need them, rather

than to initiatives that benefit society as a whole. In addition, corruption can increase the costs associated with government projects, as corrupt officials could solicit bribes to approve projects or award contracts. This behavior could result in the choice of less efficient suppliers or in the execution of superfluous or low-quality projects. Corruption in government is recognized as a serious problem that impacts both developing and developed nations. This corruption has evolved in its style and methods, challenging the ability of prosecutors to handle cases, which has generated distrust in the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures implemented by governments. In addition, corruption in the governmental sphere affects social stability and security, damages national and international reputation, and undermines democratic values, ethics, and justice (Huang et al., 2021). Corruption also has the potential to erode trust in government institutions, which, in turn, could affect the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies (Wenzel, 2021).

Acts of corruption in public procurement undermine the effectiveness of the use of public funds. This is because corruption can result in contracts being awarded to companies that do not offer the best prices or services, thus causing an inefficient use of public resources. In addition, corruption can lead to a lack of competition in bidding processes, which also affects the efficiency in the allocation of contracts and the use of public funds (Psota et al., 2020).

Table 9. Impact of Corruption on Government Efficiency, Additional Comments

Appointment	Feedback
Anggono & Wahanisa, (2022)	Corruption is divided into state capture, which involves bribing officials to draft policies that benefit one party, and administrative corruption, which involves bribing officials to implement policies that favor a specific party.
Bergh & Erlingsson, (2023)	The complex organizational structure of municipalities can lead to governance and accountability problems, which in turn constitutes a risk of corruption.
Fan et al. (2023)	The symptom of crime is an unaddressed problem for city administrators, who feel powerless in the face of crime or are so involved in it that they are unlikely to contribute to the enactment of effective anti-corruption laws.

The impact of corruption on government efficiency can be measured using a variety of indicators and observable effects. Some of these include an inefficient allocation of resources, poor governance, a weakening of the effectiveness of government policies, an obstacle to economic development, and a decline in overall economic efficiency. Lack of transparency, citizens' perceptions of the integrity and effectiveness of government institutions, and the quality of public services can be examples of these effects. In addition, corruption can negatively affect people's trust in government, which could affect the effectiveness and efficiency of policies.

CONCLUSIONS

Education plays a key role in preventing corruption. Promoting ethical values from an early age and fostering a culture of integrity can help prevent corruption in the future. It is important that young people are taught about the importance of honesty, responsibility and respect for the law. Corruption is a serious problem that affects many societies around the world. Combating it requires a joint effort by society, government and institutions. It is encouraging to see that many countries have implemented measures to strengthen controls and prevent corruption. The creation of specialized anti-corruption agencies, the implementation of stricter laws, and the promotion of transparency in public management are important steps in the right direction.

However, there is still much to be done. It is essential that citizens are informed and actively involved in the fight against corruption. Denouncing any suspicious acts and holding public officials accountable are key actions. In addition, governments must continue to strengthen control and sanction mechanisms, as well as promote transparency and ethics in public management.

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