

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.122.126208

BUILDING A CORRUPTION-RESISTANT PUBLIC SECTOR: THE ROLE OF ICAC RESEARCH AND PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

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Received: 20/10/2025
Accepted: 01/12/2025

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ABSTRACT

This article sheds light on the role of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in fighting against corruption within the New South Wales public sector, underlining its sweeping approach and role through investigation, prevention, education, and research. With corruption becoming a globally pressing concern, effective strategies demand addressing where to start and how to address corruption on the whole. In this regard, the ICAC operates to expose and prevent corruption in government departments, statutory bodies, local councils alongside public servants, including judges, magistrates along with elected representatives. Its mandate, in turn, includes investigating corruption allegations, recommending corruption prevention strategies, approaches and educating both the public and public sector employees on ethical conduct as a whole. ICAC's approach extends beyond investigation by focusing on proactive measures that involve using research methods like surveys and focus groups to gather community and employee opinions, identifying patterns in corruption, and offering evidence-based recommendations. In turn, ICAC categorizes corruption into various types, recognizing that different forms of corruption entail customized prevention strategies. By identifying particular corruption risks, such as bribery, favoritism, and abuse of entrusted or special power, ICAC can aim for interventions more effectively. Furthermore, this paper also discusses the importance of identifying what consists of corruption. Public sector employees' perceptions of corrupt conduct play a critical role in ironing out corruption, as individuals must first recognize conduct as corrupt before acting against it, which is because promoting a culture of transparency, integrity and ethical behavior is vitally critical to create

a corruption-resistant public sector. Additionally, highlights the importance of bolstering reporting mechanisms that allow public servants to come forward to report corruption without fear of retaliation. Findings from ICAC surveys represent that while most employees feel responsible for reporting misconduct, they often hesitate due to concerns about the effectiveness of reporting channels and potential retaliation. Ensuring that employees believe their reports will be acted upon is crucially vital in building a corruption-free workplace. Lastly, research, education, and intervention strategies aim to consolidate the integrity of the public sector by handling both the culprits and ramifications of corruption as a whole.⁵

KEYWORDS: Tailored Prevention Strategies, Ethical Conduct, Anticorruption Initiatives, Corrupt Activities, Statutory Bodies, Corruption Allegations, Corruption-Resistant Public Sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no secret that corruption is a pervasive issue that erodes public trust in government institutions and hampers societal progress on the whole. As global attention on corruption intensifies, the urgent need to tackle it has become one of the most pressing issues on global agenda. To effectively fight against corruption, corruption's hidden nature makes early intervention crucial, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to prevent misconduct before it is detected and reported. In this regard, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption plays a crucial role in handling corruption within the New South Wales public sector. The mandate of ICAC is to promote transparency and ethical governance across government agencies, such as local councils, and public officials. Its jurisdiction extends to both public sector employees and private sector individuals interacting with the government. The commission's approach is associated with three core functions, accounting for investigation, prevention, and education. ICAC investigates corruption allegations, exposes misconduct, and consolidate public sector systems to avert potential occurrences. Its prevention efforts focus on mitigating corruption risks by advising public agencies on policies and procedures, while its educational initiatives aim to raise awareness about the negative consequences of corruption.

Basically, research is central to ICAC's strategy. Through surveys, focus groups, and analysis of existing literature, the commission gathers invaluable insights into public attitudes toward corruption and identifies patterns of misconduct within the public sector. This research informs ICAC's investigative efforts and enhances its preventive and educational work. By understanding the particular types of corruption and the areas of public sector vulnerability, ICAC develops targeted strategies to combat corruption more effectively. The success of ICAC's work in terms of addressing corruption and deploying appropriate strategies depends on a comprehensive approach that combines investigation, prevention, education, and research. ICAC's multi-faceted approach anchored in investigation, prevention, education, and research aims to build a corruption-resistant public sector (corruption-free public sector) in NSW [1]. By focusing on specific forms of corruption and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability, ICAC continues to make dramatical strides in the fight against corruption on the whole. Promoting an ethical culture within an organization is crucial in preventing corruption and fostering

long-term success as corruption is often deeply ingrained in organizational contexts, with cultural factors playing a significant role in either encouraging or mitigating unethical behavior. Further, the paper explores the relationship and linkage between ethical culture and organizational effectiveness, underlining the importance of building a workplace environment that encourages ethical decision-making and lessens corruption risks. Via reviewing hands-on evidence, we underscore the impact of ethical culture on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and performance that acts as a catalyst to root out corruption and avert corruption risks in advance [2].

2. METHODOLOGY

This study draws on mixed-methods data originating from ICAC research, including quantitative surveys and, where available, qualitative focus groups. Public sector employee surveys typically included 600-1,200 respondents, while ICAC community attitude surveys involved approximately 620 randomly selected NSW adults through random-digit dialing. Public sector participants were selected using stratified sampling to ensure representation across agencies, roles, and tenure levels. Eligibility required being a current NSW public sector employee or an NSW resident aged over 18. All surveys were anonymous to minimize bias on the whole. When used, focus groups comprised 6-10 participants per group, recruited voluntarily from a range of job levels and high-risk functional areas (e.g., recruitment, procurement). Participants were required to have at least six months of service to ensure contextual familiarity.

Furthermore, survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and subgroup comparisons, while focus group transcripts were examined through thematic coding to identify recurring perceptions, justifications, and barriers to reporting corruption.

Results: The results of this paper identify both strengths and areas that need improvement in building a corruption-resistant public sector (corruption-free). A key finding is that a large majority of public sector employees have a broad understanding of corruption, extending beyond actions strictly prohibited by law. These results suggest a solid ethical foundation within the public sector, though further efforts are needed to clarify "grey" areas where public servants may be unsure about acceptable behavior.

Concerning corruption reporting, the majority of

public sector employees consider that it is their duty to come forward to report misconduct or corrupt behaviour. However, the research reveals dramatical obstacles to reporting, including concerns about the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms, fear of retaliation, and the fear that no decisive action will be taken. Many employees, especially those with lower salaries or shorter tenures, indicated they need more information on how to report corruption. This study also found that individuals in supervisory or recruitment positions are more likely to come forward to report corruption, underscoring the influence of experience and leadership positions on reporting behavior as whole. Additionally, this paper sheds light on the significance of providing precise definitions of corrupt behavior and ensuring that reporting channels are well-communicated and safeguarded. In this regard, managers must take visible and decisive actions against corruption to fortify a culture where public servants feel secure and motivated to report misconduct. Notwithstanding some employees fearing retaliation for reporting, the overall trend represents that the public sector is progressing toward building a corruption-resistant environment. In turn, additional efforts necessitate to foster reporting mechanisms and ensure accountability in terms of eradicating corruption and averting it beforehand.

3. DISCUSSION

As global attention on corruption continues to rise, calls to “combat the cancer of corruption” or “stop the scourge of corruption” have become more common. To begin tackling corruption, two vitally important questions must be addressed:

Where should one start in the fight against corruption?

How should one begin addressing corruption?

The answers to mentioned queries vary widely depending on one’s understanding of corruption’s ramifications and effects, available resources, and the legal framework in place. Corruption’s hidden nature means much of it goes undetected, underscoring the importance of intervening before corrupt activities are formally reported. Proactive measures, in turn, to avert potential corruption and corruption risks (increasing resistance to corruption) are absolutely crucial to complement the investigation of reported cases.

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, well-known in terms of using pragmatic research methods to consolidate efforts in building a corruption-resistant public sector by identifying where and how to intervene, (ICAC) was established

in March 1989 to expose and root out corruption within the New South Wales (NSW) public sector. Its aim is to promote high standards of transparency in public governance as a whole [3]. ICAC’s jurisdiction extends to all public officials within NSW government departments, statutory bodies, local councils, and includes judges, magistrates, along with elected officials. It also covers individuals in the private sector and the general public when they interact with the public sector.

To be specific, ICAC has three main statutory functions provided below:

1. Investigation

Investigating corruption allegations, exposing and deterring corrupt behavior, and identifying weaknesses in systems and procedures that allowed corruption.

2. Corruption Prevention

Lessening opportunities for corruption and corruption risks by advising public sector agencies on honing policies, procedures, work systems, and fostering an ethical culture.

3. Education

Educating the public and public sector employees about the appropriate conduct for those in office, the negative impacts of corruption, and the benefits of reducing corruption.

Additionally, ICAC makes use of hands-on research to better grasp how hazardous the impact of corruption are. In this regard, ICAC’s research intensify its three statutory functions by carrying out original research on corruption and related dilemmas, providing support for major investigations, evaluating anti-corruption initiatives, and linking with researchers in related fields on the whole. This research that has been conducted by ICAC might consists of surveys or focus groups to gather community or public sector opinions, as well as analyzing existing academic literature. In turn, research methodology is vital for its efficacy, ensuring that results can be generalized to the entire public sector through careful sample selection alongside survey design. It is a glaring example that ICAC surveys may emphasize exploring personal viewpoints on corruption, with responses returned directly to researchers to ensure anonymity and minimize bias as well. Further, ICAC researchers also have access to operational data not available to other corruption researchers, such as those in academic institutions. ICAC’s research allows for decision-making on corruption resistance strategies associated with tested data, rather than anecdotal evidence or unverified assumptions about public sector behavior [4].

Through a multi-faceted approach, encompassing investigation, prevention, education, and research, ICAC desperate desire to make the NSW public sector more resistant to corruption and corruption issues.

In broad terms, "corruption", as defined by the ICAC Act, refers to actions by any person that negatively impact the honest and impartial performance of the duties of NSW public officials (abuse of special or entrusted power). Corruption constitutes the abuse of public office or the misuse of information acquired while performing public duties as a whole. In a sense, it often accounts for the dishonest or biased use of power or position, leading to one individual benefiting at the expense of another. In turn, the ICAC defines corruption based on the seriousness of the conduct; only actions that are criminal offenses, disciplinary violations, or warrant dismissal are considered corrupt [5]. The ICAC's definition also covers private sector workers or community members whose actions aim to weaken a public official's duties.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF CATEGORIZING "CORRUPTION" INTO ITS VARIOUS FORMS

It is commonplace for discussions about corruption to treat it as a single issue, but in reality, corruption amounts to different forms of misdemeanour. It is not one problem, but many diverse types of abuse of power or office. Corruption can involve bribing an inspector to allow an unqualified individual to operate dangerous machinery, stealing office resources for personal use or private gain, or police aiding criminals, for example. To effectively eliminate corruption, it is critical to target specific forms of corruption rather than trying to address the broad, ambiguous concept or nature of "corruption". When corruption is seen as a singular issue, it can appear too large and undefined to address effectively on a large scale.

It is important to note that criminologists recommend a crime-specific approach when aiming to lessening offence, tailoring prevention strategies to each type of crime. Similarly, to reduce corruption, it's vital to recognize that various types of corruption entail different strategies. Identifying the specific types of corruption that pose the greatest risks is crucial before one can commence to take over it. As there is no universally accepted classification of corrupt conduct, the first step is to foster a useful system to categorize diverse types of corruption. The ICAC has created a system for categorizing corruption allegations to help identify patterns. This

system pairs areas of public sector activity (such as "tendering", "licensing", "use of government information") with specific forms of corrupt conduct ("bribery", "favouritism") [6]. This approach helps us clarify the specific types of corruption not only within public sectors but also other private ones as well.

To effectively intervene, it is necessary to understand the nature of the corruption arising or potentially occurring. However, corruption is often hidden, making it difficult to detect with a remarkable ease. Unlike many other crimes, the victim of corruption is typically unaware that the offense has taken place. The process of reporting corruption makes up several steps:

- The corrupt activity must be witnessed or otherwise detected;
- The conduct must be identified as corrupt;
- The witness must decide that action is needed;
- The decision to report the corruption must be made.

One way to foster the understanding of corruption is to analyze the allegations received by anti-corruption agencies like the ICAC. However, reports of corruption are only a subset of the total occurrences of corruption, as only the more detectable and identifiable cases are reported. Since corruption is often hidden, relying solely on investigating and prosecuting reported corruption is insufficient for preventing potential corruption. Such strategies are limited because they depend on the corruption being detected and labeled as corrupt before it can be addressed. Furthermore, this approach can never uncover all instances of corrupt behavior as a whole[7].

ICAC has found that surveys of employees' opinions can help us improve strategies to minimize corruption. Employees' views, in turn, are important for several reasons. Personal perceptions of corruption (social definitions) have been shown to have a stronger impact than laws or organizational policies in determining what behaviors are identified as corrupt and in motivating action against such behavior. If employees do not recognize an activity as corrupt or undesirable, they are unlikely to fight against it. In addition, if they believe such conduct is acceptable under certain circumstances, they are less likely to try to swap their actions. Since employees are in the best position to engage in or witness corruption and to take action against it, their attitudes and beliefs are vitally crucial to consider.

Another approach is to learn from those who have considerable experience in reducing corruption. By gathering advice from managers who have

successfully handled corruption within their agencies, these strategies can be shared with others in the public sector. This encourages the spread of useful strategies alongside approaches and promotes discussion on how to minimize corruption dramatically [8].

Believing a community that rejects corruption is crucially important in the fight against public sector corruption, the ICAC conducts community attitude surveys to gather informed input. These surveys help shape efforts to enhance public sector corruption resistance. ICAC collects information for these surveys through random telephone interviews with about 620 NSW adults. Each survey typically consists of two sets of questions, one of which examines general attitudes toward corruption and the other one evaluates awareness of and support for the ICAC's existence [9]. Over the course of time, these surveys have explored a wide range of issues, including:

- Perceptions of the ramifications of public sector corruption;
- Comparisons of what is considered acceptable in the public sectors and private ones;
- Attitudes toward corruption and corrupt practices;
- Consciousness of prospective responses to corruption;
- Attitudes toward reporting corruption and factors that influence whether people take decisive action to root out corruption.

The type of research conducted by the ICAC for each project depends on the questions it aims at addressing. This might encompass quantitative or qualitative empirical research, and the use of primary or secondary sources on the whole. There is no secret that, the research methodology is pivotal to its efficiency. ICAC research may account for:

- Surveys or focus groups with public sector servants or community members;
- Literature reviews to gather invaluable insights from another research;
- Constructive analysis of the types of corruption allegations gained by ICAC.

In this regard, ICAC research enables us to build a more corruption-resistant (corruption-free) public sector by identifying existing strengths and areas in need of transformation or improvement [10]. Below are some examples of strengths and areas for intervention, framed around the following queries:

- What helps identify conduct as "corrupt"?
- How can action against corrupt conduct be encouraged widely?
- What promotes an ethical culture in a society

to curb corruption?

- How can broader corruption resistance be built?

It is worthwhile to delve into every query to grasp the importance of the them respectively.

A. Identifying corruption conduct

As previously pointed out, public sector employees' perceptions of what accounts for corrupt conduct influence the persistence of corruption. If individuals do not recognize conduct as corrupt or harmful, they are unlikely to attempt to change it. Some strengths identified in the NSW public sector include:

- The majority of employees (73%) do not limit their definition of corruption to actions explicitly banned by law;
- The overwhelming majority (94%) reject the idea that corrupt practices should be excused simply because "everyone commits it" or that "the ends justify the means";
- A large number (92%) do not condone petty theft from the government;
- Addressing "grey" areas where employees are unclear about the appropriate behavior;
- Focusing on the harmfulness or ramifications of certain behaviors as an educational strategy for communicating messages about corruption;
- Identifying and challenging justifications used to excuse or ignore corrupt conduct;
- Providing tailored training for those got involved in selection panels;
- Ensuring that educational messages reach all subgroups within the public sector.

Public sector agencies, in turn, are supposed to raise awareness among contractors about the ethical expectations of the public sector (public servants) when they are hired to carry out public sector work. NSW public sector servants differ in their views on what behaviors are perceived as corrupt. This suggests that simply citing messages like "this organization does not tolerate corruption" or "report corruption" is insufficient. Such messages may lead to responses like, "I know corruption shouldn't be tolerated or condoned, but what I'm doing isn't corrupt, it's just..." [11]. A key first step is to establish a shared common understanding of what "corruption" means across the organization. Further, there were instances in which respondents were unclear if certain behaviors should be regarded "corrupt", such as theft with alleviating situations or circumstances where rules were not followed, but a "reasonable" outcome was achieved. The perceived harmfulness of an action was the most common

factor distinguishing between those who viewed a behavior as corrupt and those who did not. This suggests that corruption, as an abstract notion, is better understood when placed in the context of the behavior's consequences. In this regard, the research revealed the criteria and justifications some employees use when determining if behavior is corrupt [12]. For instance, some equate corruption with breaking the rules, while others are concerned that if there is no personal gain (private ill-gains), the behavior cannot be corrupt. ICAC surveys also presented a clear linkage between justifying a behavior and choosing not to take action against it. Research on corruption and workplace crime that are usually committed by the white-collar workers shows that a lack of clear guidelines on acceptable conduct allows for more deviance, amounting to corruption [13].

One survey identified recruitment as a key decision-making area needing more attention to reducing corruption and corruption risks. Approximately one-third of respondents thought that it was not corrupt to use one's public sector position to help a friend get a job, irrespective of their recruitment experience. This view resists the NSW public sector recruitment system, which aims for fairness or justice and transparency on the whole. Handling this conception in agency policies and training for recruitment panel members is absolutely vital to eliminate corruption and its potential risks [14]. In turn, the minimal impact of respondents' background characteristics on perceptions of corruption phenomenon suggests that educational messages and corruption resistance strategies should be aimed at all public sector employees.

4.1. Promoting Anti-Corruption Conduct

To build a corruption-resistant public sector, employees (public servants) must be aware of the options available to report misconduct and be willing to take action if they witness unethical conduct.

In this regard, strengths for the public sector to build on in addressing workplace misbehavior include:

- The majority of NSW public sector employees believe it is their responsibility to report corruption;
- ICAC survey results strenuously challenge the idea that reluctance to report corruption is due to peer pressure or an Australian cultural resistance to reporting corruption [15];
- The majority of employees take the view that it is worth reporting corruption because they believe action will be taken and something will

be done about it;

- Supervisors, higher-paid public servants, and those got involved in recruitment and tender selection are the most likely to believe that corruption can and will be tackled;
- Individuals with experience in specific work areas (such as recruitment and tendering), and thus more likely to run into corruption in these areas, are more likely to report corrupt conduct within their organization than those without such experience;

Further and even more importantly, to equip employees with the ability to act when witnessing workplace misconduct, individual agencies must make sure that they:

- Have reporting mechanisms and strategies in place;
- Provide protection for those who use these reporting mechanisms;
- Inform all employees concerning the internal reporting channels, external reporting options, and the Protected Disclosures Act 1994, with special attention to induction training;
- Management must take effective and decisive action against corrupt behavior (including implementing systemic changes) and demonstrate these actions in order to convince public servants that reporting corruption is valuable and win-win approaches to root out corruption.

A lack of proper understanding about how to report corruption was associated with negative attitudes toward coming forward to report it. Furthermore, a plethora of survey results represented that individuals who are not supervisors, get lower salaries, and have shorter tenures are those who feel they need more information about how and where to report corruption. The belief that reporting corruption is pointless because nothing will be done about it is a major obstacle. To encourage action to eliminate corruption, individuals must believe that their reports do make a difference. While safe reporting channels necessitate, they are not sufficient on their own. A significant impediment to reporting corruption for most public sector employees is not being sure whether their report will be taken seriously or into consideration. In addition, a good number of workers asserted the belief that reporting would not ease the situation and not help us stop corruption as a major barrier for transparency and development [16].

Further and even more importantly, managers recognized that visible punishment of defenders is

crucial for establishing acceptable behavior within a particular organization. Conversely, workers who believe their organization does nothing about corruption perceive this as signaling that corruption is tolerated on the whole. Behaviors seen as promoting honesty in the workplace include taking appropriate action when wrongdoing is reported and holding those who act dishonestly accountable in any case without a conflict of interest. Although a good few employees agreed that people who come forward to report corruption cases are likely to suffer, a significant number still believed this, suggesting that much work remains for public sector managers to build a corruption-free culture where employees feel safe and are strenuously protected when reporting corruption instances. However, lack of faith, in turn, in how their organization handles reports was associated with perceptions that dishonest behavior arose and went unpunished [17].

4.2. Promoting an Ethical Culture

Corruption arises within a particular context, and diverse facets of an organization's culture can either encourage or vice versa. The empirical practices summarized above describe steps for bolstering a culture that averts corruption rather than upholds it.

A literature review was carried out to gather hands-on evidence (not only opinions) on how ethical culture affects an organization's efficacy and to identify the organizational factors that influence ethical culture. This constructive analysis represented that prioritizing ethical work practices efficiently affects an organization's overall functioning. It found that an ethical tone of organization impacts efficacy, decision-making, employee commitment, job satisfaction, stress levels along with turnover. Moreover, this review revealed that, in making workplace decisions, the organization's culture has a greater impact on individual ethical behavior than personal values on the whole. This, in turn, underlines that the significant role organizations can play a dramatical role in shaping the behavior of their members [18].

Some strategies and approaches to promote ethical culture within an organization can be derived from ICAC research, constituting:

- Evaluating the organizational culture, as an organization's ethical culture is crucially vital to its performance or function;
- Ensuring management sets a rigid example;
- Identifying potential corruption risks within the organization, instilling potential corruption risks into employees, and taking steps to lessen them;
- Making use of tools like codes of conduct

and clear values to communicate the ethical stance of organization.

Survey results further underscore the importance of cultivating a workplace that focuses on ethical values and conduct. Workers that perceived their workplace as ethical reported better work relationships (productivity), higher job satisfaction, greater confidence to speak up, and a lower likelihood of quitting the organization.

To create an ethical culture, public sector managers focus on the importance of setting the "tone at the top". Proper conduct must commence at the highest levels and be conveyed throughout the hierarchy on the whole. Public sector managers invariably stated that anti-corruption strategies or approaches entail commitment and strenuous effort from top management. In this regard, key behaviors related to a perception of workplace honesty include senior executives and supervisors acting honestly, leading by example, promoting and underlining ethical conduct, treating all staff fairly, allowing employees to make decisions about their own work on their own, and encouraging staff to share new ideas. Furthermore, the most crucial factor in creating an ethical workplace is the behavior of leadership, especially senior executives and managers. The perception that leaders are honest is closely tied to positive staff perceptions about their colleagues, their jobs, and the workplace on the whole.

Being able to understand corruption risk factors is important as they underline areas where corruption-resistance strategies and approaches can be focused. A review of the literature identified some risk factors, accounting for:

- The nature of the work, such as the discretion allowed by the position, the position's role in the organization, and whether the work or services provided involve delays;
- Working conditions, such as the role of wage, workers' dissatisfaction, lack of benefits for staying with the employer, work pressures, and unmet needs;
- Individual histories and dependencies, including prior ethical decision-making, reliance on the employer, and addiction to substances like alcohol, drugs, or gambling;
- Organizational culture, amounting to vague guidelines on what is acceptable, peer attitudes, management's example, lack of reinforcement for ethical conduct alongside other work practices.

Some organizational factors affect whether decisive action is taken against corruption, making up failure to recognize the behavior as wrong, awareness of organizational reporting mechanisms,

employee responsibility, and the organization's history and approaches in addressing corruption reports. Other factors that determine whether action is taken account for individual beliefs about taking on responsibility for taking action, the appropriateness of reporting, whether the benefits of reporting far outweigh the costs, whether the employee has clear and convincing evidence of the wrongdoing, the severity of the misconduct, and whether it directly impacts the worker on the whole [19].

Survey results represented that knowledge of codes of conduct, ethical values, rules, and procedures aligned with workers' perceptions that their organization which underscored integrity, maintained high levels of honesty among supervisors, executives, and staff, appropriately handled reports of misconduct, treated staff equally (fairly), and shared values with employees.

D. Building Corruption Resistance

The crime prevention literature suggests both general and specific lessons for mitigating corruption. The general approach advocates for an informed method to address corruption by catching how corrupt conduct occurs. It underlines considering the perpetrator's perspective and analyzing different sorts of corruption solely to grasp the factors that results in corrupt conduct. This approach enables us to customize particular prevention strategies to deal with each type of corruption effectively.

Some particular approaches from the crime prevention literature constitute:

- Avoid presuming that people with particular positions or backgrounds are immune to corruption or corruption risks;
- Ask lawbreakers why they get involved in corrupt conduct to identify circumstances that encourage kind actions. Understanding how the corruption arose enable to identify crucial and sufficient conditions, which can inform where and how to intervene;
- Cross-exam criminals concerning whether they contemplated their actions acceptable, and if they did, why, to identify justifications that can later be challenged. After obtaining a deeper understanding of corrupt behaviour's dynamics, examine applying recognized crime prevention techniques or practices compiled with approaches to address particular types of corruption and its nuances.

Further and even more importantly, building resistance to corruption within government is a long-term challenge, not a quick remedy to the situation.

It entails systemic reforms, rigid legal structures, and the active participation of all stakeholders, accounting for government officials, civil society, and the public on the whole. The foundation of anti-corruption efforts lies in creating a transparent, accountable environment where government actions are subject to scrutiny, and public officials are held to high ethical standards as a whole. For governments to effectively fight against corruption, they must boost their institutions, particularly judicial bodies and oversight mechanisms like anti-corruption commissions [20]. These institutions must have the authority and independence to investigate, prosecute, and hold those in power accountable without any political interference or pressure. A strong, fairly compensated civil service is also vitally important to avert public servants from turning to corrupt practices because of financial pressures or institutional shortcomings along with loopholes in the legislations.

In this regard, transparency should be embedded within government operations. By encouraging open data and ensuring public access to information, governments allow citizens to track public spending and make sure decisions are made with integrity [21]. Further, public participation mechanisms, such as consultations and feedback platforms, not only enhance civic engagement but also create a natural impediment to corruption. When citizens are actively involved, they become critical players in identifying and challenging corrupt practices, ensuring greater oversight and accountability. Furthermore, to build corruption resistance, legislative and policy reforms are key in this fight. Anti-corruption laws must be clear, strict, and strenuously enforced. Requiring regular asset declarations and audits for public officials helps prevent the accumulation of illicit wealth and fosters transparency as establishing consistent rules for public office and bringing in severe penalties on those guilty of corruption signals the government's commitment to fairness and justice.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Tackling corruption is a complicated and multifaceted issue that demands a combination of proactive efforts, research-driven interventions alongside solid institutional frameworks. The approach taken by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in New South Wales offers invaluable lessons (hands-on approaches) on how to fight against corruption effectively through a sweeping strategy that makes up investigation, prevention, education, and research. ICAC's success

lies in its broad approach to the problem, focusing not just on detecting and prosecuting corruption but also on averting it before it occurs and educating public sector employees about ethical conduct.

One of the major obstacles in handling corruption is its hidden nature, which makes it difficult to identify and eliminate. Often, the victims of corruption are unaware of it, making detection a major hurdle. This highlights the importance of proactive, research-based strategies. ICAC's use of surveys, focus groups, and community outreach provides invaluable insights into how public sector employees perceive and react to corruption, helping to either reinforce or lessen corrupt behaviors. By understanding how individuals define and rationalize corruption, authorities can tailor their approaches to target specific types of misconduct rather than treating corruption as a solo, monolithic issue. Additionally, ICAC's classification of corruption into diverse sorts, such as bribery and favoritism which demonstrates that not all types of corruption are the same. Addressing corruption requires a focused approach that identifies the specific behaviors that pose the greatest threat to public trust and governance. This nuanced understanding allows for more effective prevention and intervention efforts, customized to the weaknesses of several sectors in both the public and private domains. Education and awareness, in turn, play a critical role in bolstering a culture resistant to corruption. In this regard, ICAC's surveys reveal that employees who are well educated about what constitutes corruption and its drastic ramifications are less likely to engage in or tolerate corrupt practices. The educational process must also instill a sense of responsibility among public sector employees to come forward report misconduct and actively work to prevent it in advance. ICAC's efforts to promote ethical behavior through training, public sector engagement, and clear communication about reporting mechanisms are pivotal. By fostering a culture of integrity, transparency, accountability, and

ethics, public sector organizations can create an environment where corruption is less likely to flourish. In addition, it is worthwhile for employees to know how to report it and feel confident that their reports will be taken seriously and lead to action promptly. ICAC's research emphasizes the need for clear reporting channels, protection for whistleblowers, and consistent enforcement of anti-corruption policies. Without a belief that their actions will lead to meaningful transformation, workers are less likely to come forward to report unethical conduct. Thus, creating a culture that encourages and protects whistleblowers is essential for the success of any anti-corruption initiative in public government.

There is no secret that the effectiveness of these aforementioned strategies relies on the ability of public sector organizations to boost a strong ethical culture throughout all levels of the institution. As demonstrated by ICAC, promoting a corruption-free environment requires more than just enforcing rules - it necessitates a change in mindset as well. Public servants are supposed to see corruption as a threat to both the integrity of the organization and the society it serves. Achieving this requires ongoing education, strong leadership, and the creation of an environment where ethical behavior is rewarded and corruption is unequivocally condemned.

Ultimately, the fight against corruption is a continuous and evolving process. It entails not only a commitment to enforcing laws but also a cultural shift that encourages transparency, accountability, and ethical governance at all levels. Through research-driven strategies, effective prevention programs, and the involvement of all stakeholders, constituting the public, the experience in New South Wales represents that significant progress can be made in minimizing corruption. While the challenge is formidable, a structured, proactive, and collaborative approach can build a public sector that resists corruption and upholds the values of fairness, justice, and integrity in governance as a whole.

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