

# Revisiting Corruption Control Strategies: Review and Implications for Anti-Corruption Design Policy

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## ABSTRACT

This study provides a desk-research overview of the corruption control strategies, especially on the implementation of rewards and incentive, monitoring, whistleblowing system, anti-corruption agencies and punishment. This study, in essence, use desk-research approach, with reliance on the secondary source of data, notably articles in published journals. This study finds that rigorous empirical evaluation of corruption control strategies is scarce yet promising. From the review, this article implies that corruption is indeed a multifaceted problem, therefore relying on a particular strategy might not be sufficient to curb corrupt acts. The implication for the design of anti-corruption policy is discussed.

**Keywords:** corruption; anti-corruption; corruption control strategy.

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## 1. Introduction

Corruption has been long studied in a myriad of disciplines. Some studies in economics study corruption on its relation with the macro-economic consequences, such as reduce economic growth (Chang and Hao, 2017; Gründler & Potrafke, 2019; Huang, 2016; Mauro, 1995; Mo, 2001; Swaheleen, 2011), impact international and domestic trade (Bjørnskov, 2012; Krueger, 1974) and trap a country in poverty for the long run (Aidt, 2009). Corruption in political science explores the relationship between power and corruption (Gillespie & Okruhlik, 1991), how corruption affects the public's support for the government (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Banerjee, Green et al., 2010; Ferraz & Finan, 2008), and effect democracy (Rock, 2009; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Corruption has also become the subject of interest for the scholars in sociology and management, especially on its relation with culture (Barr & Serra, 2010; Banuri & Eckel, 2012; Fisman & Miguel, 2007), norm (Abbink et al., 2018; Cameron, 2009) and accountability (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006).

Corruption which is considered as a trillion-dollar international financial crime is also one of the appeals of why this topic is a growing field. Despite the inconclusive definition of what constitute corruption (Gorta, 2006), but some scholars argue that the cost of corruption is roughly calculated up to \$2.6 trillion a year, which represents 5 per cent of the global domestic product (Graycar & Sidebottom, 2012). The number might be even higher than what it is reported, but the lack of consensus of what constitutes as corruption has made it very tricky to estimates the prevalence of corruption reliably (Gorta, 2006). Nevertheless, a variety of rules, policies, and tools have been executed in many countries and make anti-corruption as a global campaign or Sampson (2010)

refer it as the anti-corruption industry. This led to the rising awareness of the anti-corruption effort. Many countries and organizations became more conscious of the corruption controls and made it as part of their larger governance agenda. Hence, along with the consensus from policymakers and scholars about the importance of corruption control, it is crucial to understand of which anti-corruption strategies that have been succeeded.

With that being said, the motivation of this paper is to support the evidence-based policymaking on the anti-corruption strategy by providing an overview and scholarly knowledge on corruption control strategies and provide information about the evidence of the relative effectiveness of different types of control to mitigate corruption. To achieve this objective, two research questions were established:

RQ1. What are the types of anti-corruption control strategies have been studied?

RQ2. How is the effectiveness of each type of anti-corruption control strategies?

The article is organized as follows. First, a methodology section details how the desk-research was conducted. Second, the overview of the literature collection on corruption control strategies. Third, the implication for the design of future anti-corruption strategy. Finally, in conclusion, we discuss the lessons learned about anti-corruption control strategies and suggest an outlook for future research.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This paper is, in essence, a desk-research with reliance on the secondary source of data. The data were collected mainly from published journals. Other sources of data include online articles, government and NGO reports. The desk research approach was selected for two reasons. Firstly, it is relatively efficient and cost-effective. Desk research offers a way to explore the different types of control strategies which already being studied and other enormous information available into synthesis. Secondly, one of the advantages of desk-research is its ability to effectively use existing sources, for example, journal publications, books, online articles and government and NGO reports from a variety of sources (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2005). Furthermore, in desk research, there is minimal interference of the researcher with the research situation; therefore, it reduced threats to data validity and reliability (Van Thiel, 2014).

To conduct desk research, several steps are employed. First, is to set the research question. The research question is an essential early step to guide as well as to help focus the search of data or information. As already mention in the Introduction section, the research questions in this study are "What are the types of anti-corruption control strategies? and "How effective the anti-corruption control strategies being implemented?". Moving on to the second step is to identify the sources of information. For the purpose of this study, I largely rely on Google Scholar to find relevant information. The Google Scholar was chosen because it helps navigate the study of anti-corruption control strategies across disciplines. Next is to set relevant keywords. Very specific keywords had undertaken since the beginning to produce the most effective thread using Boolean logic. The umbrella term "corruption" is used so that the search will not erroneously with other

types of crimes. Last but not least is the data analysis and review. On this stage, previously collected literature was sorted into two categories according to the research questions.

### **3. Results and Analysis: Corruption Control Strategies**

While there is an enormous number of corruption studies, the lack of consensus of corruption definition persists. It leads a challenge to academics and policymakers to definitely state what corruption actually is, and it may undermine efforts to control corruption. Hence, to avoid confusion, in this paper, the corruption definition from Transparency International is used, that is, "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain".

One of the particular aims of this study is to overview the corruption control strategies and the effectiveness of such control in a particular condition. Based on the desk-research study, there are (at least) two approaches to corruption control. First, ex-ante control, in which the organizations establish appropriate systems, procedures and protocols to discourage individuals or agencies from engaging in corrupt behaviour. Second, ex-post control, in which the government or authorities conduct an action, which is mostly by capturing and punishing the corruptor after the corruption occurs.

#### *3.1 Ex-Ante Control Strategy*

Pre control strategy advocates that to reduce corruption, the elimination of opportunities is a must, as such individuals who benefit from them cease to be able to do so. This strategy attempts to provide one set of rules to deter motivated individuals from engaging in corrupt behaviour. There are myriad of tools found in the literature for corruption prevention approach.

##### *3.1.1 Rewards and Incentives*

The underlying argument for a relationship between rewards and incentives with corruption level is relatively straightforward, that corruption is perceived as morally acceptable when the incentives are low, therefore, increasing rewards and incentives is legitimate to deter corruption. There is a line of research that highlight the lack of incentives as the factor that flourish corruption (Hanlon, 2004; Polese, 2008). A very critical paper from Hanlon (2004) describes how donors organizations contributed to the cycle of a never-ending corruption in Mozambique. For the country to meet the requirements to the donor's organization, it has to cut wages of its civil servants. He argues that the civil servants in Mozambique were paid very low even to provide basic services. This situation caused many civil servants to inquired additional payments or otherwise took the day off to get more money due to the desperation to feed their families. In parallel with these circumstances, the donor's organizations started to give a higher stipend to civil servants to work with them. Therefore, instead of committed fully to work to the government, these civil servants have to split their work commitment to the donor organizations that pay them. Hanlon (2004) argues that the aforementioned situation plainly degrades the capacity while at the same time weakening the government.

Polese (2008), in his ethnographic study, also describes how the socio-economic network in a country could contribute to the corruption epidemic. In his study, he illustrates that as of 2008, the Ukrainian government is still willing to unofficially tolerate bribery as long as this avoids demands for higher wages. This leads to the spread of corruption acts in many forms as the cause of the inability of public servants to provide their needs.

These above mention papers illustrate how the austerity of the state's capacity to wage its civil servants cause corruption to flourish. However, there is another stream of research which indicate that increasing wages do not automatically reduce corruption (Fjeldstad, 2003; Gong & Wu, 2012; Shore, 2005). Fjeldstad (2003) illustrates that as an attempt for reformation in the tax administration, the Tanzania Revenue Authority is formed. One of the reform acts is to raise the salary of tax officials. As a consequence, there is a dramatic increase in pay rates for tax officials up to ten times higher than the similar position for other public servants. However, his study found that despite the high incentives, corruption still continues to thrive. Further, he argues that as long as the demand for corrupt service is high, the wage increase will end up as an extra bonus for the corrupt officers.

Similarly, Gong & Wu (2012) study found that increasing civil servants salary does not automatically reduce corruption. His case-study based in China found that even when civil service pay has steadily and substantially increased, the corruption in the country remains uncontrolled. He further argues that corruption should not be viewed as an individual level problem in which economic needs and personal greediness were caused by the lack of resource. Corruption should be seen as complex social problems. Therefore corruption control needs more than just solution at the individual levels but also improvement at the legal institutions and the oversight systems. The reformation should be focusing on the improvement of the systems that lower the social demand for corrupt services.

A survey study by Kwon (2012) suggests that performance-based pay or promotion may reduce corruption level. In his study, he shows that public servant who perceived that their promotion depends on their performance tend to have a stricter standard for corruption. This study implies that public servants are willing to be more engaged with their job as long as their public service efforts are properly rewarded.

However, the salary increase is only one type of rewards and incentives, which targeting extrinsic motivation (Morse et al., 2018). Another type of rewards and incentive, which intrinsic targeting motivation also being discussed in several limited studies. A qualitative study by Davis (2004) illustrates how altering accountability networks in service provision and make changes in the work environment reduced corruption in service delivery. He describes that when workers are made to be accountable for their work, they will instil a sense of pride for the job. The motivating work environment also has helped prevent misconduct in the workplace because changing the work condition may limit opportunities for the collusion of misconduct behaviour.

A survey-based study of 800 central government bureaucrats in Korea by Kwon (2012) shows that intrinsic motivation reduces bureaucrats' corrupt behaviour. He argues that the bureaucrats who perceived their job to be interesting have a stricter standard for corruption. He refers to the intrinsic motivation that drives these bureaucrats is related to their public service motivation, which is the

desire to work for the public interest. Aside from the previously mentioned studies, there is a lack of empirical research supporting the effects of employing intrinsic motivation to reduce corruption. This indicates a call for more research attention on this particular venue.

### *3.1.2 Monitoring*

Another type of policies categorized as ex-ante control is monitoring. Research on this issue provides mixed results on the effectiveness of monitoring on reducing corruption. Of those studies show the positive effect of monitoring is from Schütte (2012) in which describes how the role of monitoring and prosecution are essential in supporting Georgia's anti-corruption reform. On his ethnographic study, he illustrates that the attempt to confront the guilty government apparatus by intimidating them with audit procedure and imprisonment for the former financial crime was effective in impelled desired behaviour. Further, these techniques have reshaped and recoded boundaries between the public and private as well as state and society relationships.

Another positive effect of monitoring is shown through an experimental field study conducted by Olken (2007). On his study, he compares official village expenditure reports with the estimation produces by the independent engineers. A randomly assigned 600 village road projects in Indonesia is chosen to face government audits. The study found that the government audit reduced missing expenditure by around 8 per cent. However, he argues that the government audit might provide minor effect for the reduced missing expenditure because it does not automatically link with the probability of detecting corruption and imposing punishment. As a complementary tool to reduce corruption, he suggests that severer punishment based on prosecution should be in place and that providing audit results to the public may also serve as complementary punishment as it will impact the electoral choices.

One of the concerns of the use of monitoring is the effectiveness in the long run. A study by Di Tella & Franceschelli (2011) shows that extensive audits of public hospitals' procurement in Argentina make the cost of basic medical supplies fell by around 15 per cent. However, as the intensity of audit is minimized, prices increased again but stayed below their initial level. Similarly, another study by Bobonis, Camara Fuertes & Schwabe (2016) shows that audits were conducted before the election, then corruption levels are approximately 67 per cent lower than corruption level when audits were conducted after the election. This study shows that while monitoring might be effective to reduce corruption in the short term, its effectiveness to reduce corruption, in the long run, is still questionable.

Another point which is important to note is that the government surveillance and or audit are focussing on the top-down approach in which the initiative to control corruption comes from the central government. Another stream of research on monitoring highlights the importance to employ the bottom-up approach for corruption monitoring. The bottom-up approach relies on the participation from society to control and observe their public officials or elites, especially in terms of budget utilization.

Serra (2012) points out that the failure of the top-down approach in many countries for anti-corruption interventions is caused by systemic corruption. This leads to the attempt of academics

and practitioners to advocate the implementation of a bottom-up approach. However, there are only a few studies that investigate the effect of bottom-up approach intervention to control corruption. Olken (2007) shows that even though increasing grassroots participation reduced missing expenditure in village road construction projects, but this effect is limited. A case study by Veron, Williams, Corbridge & Srivastava (2006) revealed that participatory community-based monitoring could give drawbacks. They argue that since the economic and political interest within the communities is vary, some factions within the communities are willing to build a relationship with bureaucrats and politicians which makes them involved in the corruption network, in which they refer it as *corrupt decentralization*. Therefore, they suggest that to employ effective community-monitoring participation, strong centralized government institutions and or strong centralized political party is needed.

As part of addressing the concern on the use of a bottom-up approach, Serra's (2012) laboratory experimental study indicates that combining bottom-up approach monitoring with top-down approach might be an effective tool to reduce corruption. Using the experimental bribery game, participants in the role of citizen have the power to report bribery which might be done by other participants. This condition statistically significant reduces the willingness of those playing the role of public officials to request a bribe. She argues that social disapproval of others that motivates the participants in the role of public officials to request bribery. However, a line of research on the effectiveness of bottom-up monitoring is relatively very few. This indicates a call for more research on this topic.

### *3.1.3 Whistleblowing*

One of the most prominent types of policies in the anti-corruption effort is the use of a whistleblowing system (WBS) (Gans-Morse, et al., 2018). However, there is a handful of existing study focusing on the effectiveness of the WBS in the anti-corruption attempt. Goel & Nelson's (2014) study was one of the few studies highlighting the effect of WBS to anti-corruption level. In their study, they employ the internet-based awareness measure of US whistleblower laws. They compare the search hits related to the whistleblowing laws and corruption conviction using two search engines (Google and Yahoo). The result of their study shows that a higher number of corruption conviction in the US states was attributed to the high level of citizen's awareness in whistleblowing laws.

Other studies on whistleblowing typically focus on to investigates the factors that discourage people from blowing the whistle. Gundlach, Douglas and Martinko (2003) offer the model to illustrates behind the decision of why people blow or do not blow the whistle. In their model, individuals' attributions and responsible judgement of wrongdoing as well as the cost-benefit analysis of blowing the whistle influence individuals' emotions and therefore, their decision to blow or not blow the whistle. In another study, Rose, Brink & Norman (2018) with their experimental study, argue that compensation structure and monetary rewards affect the managers' decision to do whistleblowing. Chen & Lai (2014) argue that potential harm and organizational commitment correlated with individuals' intention to blow the whistle. The higher the level of potential harm and organizational commitment, the higher the whistleblowing intention.

Despite the contribution of those above-mentioned studies, the empirical study on the direct evidence of the effectiveness of whistleblowing on corruption level is very limited. One of the possible reason is that the difficulty in measuring the prevalence of WBS, which is comparable across the region. In other words, even though WBS has been suggested in numerous anti-corruption design, but the study that relates to the implementation of WBS with corruption level is almost non-existence.

#### *3.1.4 Anti-Corruption Agency*

Due to the success of the implementation of anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) in Hong Kong and Singapore, such organization gained the spotlight as prominence tool to curb corruption (Quah, 2011). There is a spark in the increasing number of ACAs formation around the world. As calculated by Mungiu-Pippidi (2015), in 2008, there were 100 countries had ACAs compared to only 12 countries in 1990. However, the effectiveness of these ACAs has been relatively underexplored. Gans-Moore et al., (2018) argue that this is due to the numerous factors that contribute to national corruption levels and therefore make a causal link between the ACAs and corruption level is challenging.

Perhaps, to see how comparable the effectiveness of ACAs is by looking at the lens of comparative case studies. Quah (2017) investigates the performance of 42 ACAs in 27 Asia-Pacific countries. He argues that among the 42 ACAs, there were only 24 ACAs that were more effective. He attributes the success of these 24 ACAs to their dedicated focus on anti-corruption functions. In another study, Quah (2007) illustrates how ACAs in Singapore and Hongkong were proved to be more effective than that in South Korea and Thailand. He investigates that there are six conditions necessary for the success of ACAs: (1) the incorruptibility of the ACAs itself; (2) the independence of the ACAs from politics and other law enforcement bodies; (3) embeddedness in comprehensive anti-corruption legislation; (4) adequate staffing and funding; (5) the ACAs capability to impartially enforce the law; (6) the political will from the country's top leaders to support ACAs.

Advocating ACAs as the panacea in corruption could be misleading. Indeed, even advocates of ACAs such as Quah urge caution about the feasibility of mirroring the Singapore and Hong Kong models as the policy context would be different for different countries. In addition, Doig et al. (2006) find that explicit emphasis on the Hong Kong Model give horrendous effect, as it leads to unrealistic expectations. Schütte (2012) suggests that not following the exact model of successful ACAs such as in Hongkong, may set expectations more realistically and even perform quite good. This suggestion is based on the case study of the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi [KPK]) that even tough follow the same approach of education, prevention and investigations as the ICAC Hong Kong, the organizational structure as well as accountability mechanism and powers are different.

The role of ACAs has also been challenged, as countries such as Estonia and Georgia that do not have central ACAs perform very well in term of corruption level. Rather they employed decentralized anti-corruption strategies (see Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). In summary, despite the extensive adoption of such agencies, there is a limited study exploring its effectiveness as anti-corruption measures.

### *3.2 Ex-Post Control Strategy*

Another way to control corruption is when the government or authorities take actions after corruption occur. The word control in this sense is more like hoping that the effect will spill over, to create the effect that after people understand of corruption consequences, the corrupt activities will not be repeated and therefore can be controlled.

#### *3.2.1 Punishment*

Similar to the logic of using rewards and incentives to reduce corruption, the use of penalties to deter corrupt behaviour is also straightforward; raising penalties for corrupt behaviour may outweigh the benefit of committing it. A laboratory study conducted by Abbink, Irlenbusch & Renner (2002) is in accordance with this notion. Participants become less willing to engage in bribery corruption games as penalties for corruption is rising. However, another empirical evidence that supports the effect of penalties to deter corruption is very limited.

A study by Zhu (2012) demonstrates that increasing the severity of penalties does not reduce the level of corruption. Moreover, it will only reduce the frequency of corruption monitoring. Moreover, a study by Fjeldstad (2003) found that tax officers suspension in Tanzanian tax bureaucracy could backfire. The reason is that tax officers are often involved in networks of collaborators that include public and private sectors, and tax officers who are dismissed from the office are frequently recruited by private companies to act as intermediaries in facilitating corruption.

As suggested by Zhu (2012) to make penalties effective in preventing corruption, promoting anti-corruption incentive is an important tool. Linking the payoffs of the officials in charge of anti-corruption with corruption punishment could be one of the ways to promote anti-corruption incentives.

#### *3.2.2 Voter Punishment*

The argument for employing electoral accountability as an important tool to curb corruption has been proposed in several studies. A study by Anderson & Tverdova (2003) finds that corruption is an important component for people to judge government performance and political institutions. Ferraz & Finan (2008) also find that in a study of municipal government in Brazil, exploiting randomized corruption audits give a relatively large impact that decreases the probability of incumbent politicians being reelected.

The study that examines the effect of corruption on voting behaviour is likely on the field experiments. Banerjee, Green, Green & Pande (2010) distributed 80,000 newspaper along with report cards that reveal information on legislator attributes and performance, such as attendance at legislative and committee sessions, spending performance, education levels and pending criminal charges, in Delhi prior to the 2008 election. This treatment effect 3.6 percentage point in voter turnout, but no effect on incumbent vote share. Another similar study by Chong et al. (2010)



conducted in three states in Mexico. Their study finds that informing voters with corruption audit reports resulted in an 11 percentage point decrease in voter turnout.

The difference in the effect of Voter punishment also found in the study of De Figueiredo, Hidalgo & Kasahara (2011). In their experimental field study, they distribute 187,177 fliers to individuals to 200 voting locations that detail corruption conviction of candidate from a centre-right party and a left-party candidate. The flier for the centre-right candidate had no effect on vote choice or turnout. In contrast, the flier for the other candidate moved 2.6 per cent of the votes relative to the control group and negative 1.2 per cent average on voter turnout. In summary, there is a contrasting result of the effectiveness of electoral accountability. Future research on the mechanism that explains this variation is a promising avenue for future research.

#### **4. Implications for the Design of Anti-Corruption Policy**

Overall, this paper finds that many of the prescribed anti-corruption policies have yet rigorously evaluated. However, the finding from the desk research on this paper highlight what are some of the anti-corruption policies that might work and outlook for future research. On this section, I would like to briefly discuss the implication for the design of anti-corruption strategies.

The existing empirical evidence on rewards and incentives as anti-corruption policies indicates that adequate salaries are necessary but is not enough for reducing corruption. Instead of just pointing the importance of the higher salary, which targeted extrinsic motivation, the policymakers must also take into account how to trigger anti-corruption spirit through intrinsic motivation. Internalization of the sense of duty to serve and or induce the concern about harming others could serve as complementary.

Our finding on monitoring policy notes the importance of the effectiveness of this method in the long run. While monitoring might give an immediate effect to reduce corruption, but its effectiveness, in the long run, remains questionable. Further, while relying on the monitoring policy, which is top-down in nature, employing bottom-up approach monitoring as the combination might be a promising tool to curb corruption.

The design of the anti-corruption agency might also contribute to its effectiveness as an anti-corruption tool. Therefore, mere establishing anti-corruption agency will not automatically reduce corruption. To be effective, political will from the top leaders is prominent for the success of the anti-corruption agency, which also has to be sustained and supported by other stakeholders (i.e. private sectors) and the people of the country. However, it does not stop there, equipping anti-corruption agency with adequate budget and personnel as well as providing operational autonomy without political interference are also significant ingredients for the triumph of the anti-corruption agency. The use of anti-corruption strategy based on punishment has yet come in many forms, and the empirical evidence shows mixed results on its efficacy. Yet, the raise of concern on the use of electoral accountability through voter punishment is worth to be tested.

As the findings of this study categorize anti-corruption strategy into ex-ante and ex-post, it is expected that the balance between the two is essential in the anti-corruption attempt. Excessive

focus on ex-post measures such as punishment at the expense of the ex-ante approach will not be an effective endeavour to curb corruption.

Such implication is subject to the complex nature of corruption as the collective action problem. Therefore, the successful anti-corruption policy and design will require collective collaboration. Advocating to implement or rely on a particular strategy might be a challenging standard to achieve.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the corruption control strategies with a focus on two distinct categories: ex-ante and ex-post. Our findings suggest that adequate salaries are necessary but insufficient to address corruption issue, the use of policies based monitoring also be highlighted with the emphasis on the use of a combination between top-down and bottom-up monitoring approach. Our review has also pointed out the lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of whistleblowing system with the corruption level. This in fact, a promising fruitful avenue for future research. Anti-corruption agencies which are implemented across countries immensely, by contrast, face a significant challenge to prove its effectiveness. The evidence is relatively too limited to provide sufficient pronouncement on its performance. Similarly, there is also a notable lack of empirical research about the effectiveness of punishment or forms of punishments to reduce corrupt acts.

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