Assessing challenges in the implementation of anti-corruption strategies in the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the North-West University

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DECLARATION

I certify that this research project, titled *"Assessing Challenges in the Implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategies in the Public Sector of Gauteng, South Africa"*, is my own and is being presented in partial fulfilment of the Master of Business Administration degree requirements at the North-West University. It has never been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university.

Additionally, I certify that I have obtained all necessary authorisations and consent to conduct this study.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my children, Karabo, Zwiakonadzea, and Oimanarine, who have given me the strength and motivation to push forward and stand firm against all odds. Their presence in my life has constantly reminded me why I strive for success and resilience.

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, who has sustained me through every challenge and given me the strength, courage, and privilege to pursue and complete my MBA degree. His guidance and protection have been constant, and He brought remarkable individuals into my life along this journey, to whom I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude:

- I sincerely thank my supervisor, Prof. Jan Van Romburgh, for your invaluable guidance, thorough evaluations, and insightful advice throughout this research. Your belief in me, even when I doubted myself, gave me the courage to keep going.
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- To my mother, Elisa Matloga, I am deeply grateful for your endless prayers and faith that everything will work together for good.
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I conclude with the promise from Joshua 1:5, “No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses so that I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” This verse carried me throughout this journey, reminding me that God’s presence and faithfulness are constant.

ABSTRACT

Anti-corruption strategies in the public sector are critical for ensuring accountability, transparency, and good governance. However, despite the adoption of numerous frameworks and interventions, public institutions in Gauteng, South Africa, continue to grapple with challenges that hinder the effective implementation of these strategies. This study examined the challenges faced in implementing an anti-corruption strategy in the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa. It aimed to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and the practical realities of combating corruption. The primary objective of this research was to identify the challenges that contribute to implementation gaps and offer recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. An in-depth review of relevant literature identified recurring themes related to organisational culture, political interference, lack of capacity, and weak enforcement mechanisms. To validate these findings and uncover additional challenges specific to the Gauteng public sector, semi-structured interviews were conducted with those in the position of fraud and corruption prevention in the public sector.

The findings revealed that systemic issues such as inadequate accountability frameworks, limited resources, lack of whistleblower protection, political interference and inconsistent policy application contribute to the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption strategies. Additionally, the study emphasised the need for more decisive leadership and a culture of ethical governance to promote consistent compliance.

Based on these findings, the study offers recommendations such as strengthening legal frameworks, promoting transparency and accountability, enhancing institutional capacity, fostering ethical leadership, and engaging civil society. It also underscored the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities and aligning strategies with international standards to bolster anti-corruption efforts. Limitations include the focus on Gauteng, reliance on qualitative data, and the absence of citizen perspectives.

This research provides valuable insights and proposes strategies that, if implemented, could enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, improve public trust, and strengthen governance in Gauteng's public sector. Future studies could explore the role of advanced technologies, whistleblower protections, political leadership, and cross-sector collaborations in combating corruption more effectively.

Key terms: Anti-corruption, Public Sector, Governance, Policy implementation, Accountability, Transparency, Political Influence and Compliance

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACFE	Association of Certified Fraud Examiners
AG	Auditor-General
AML/CFT/CPF	Anti-Money Laundering / Counter Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
EC	Electoral Commission
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
ICFP	Institute of Commercial Forensic Practitioners
NACF	National Anti-Corruption Forum
NACS	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
NWU	North-West University
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PP	Public Protector
PRECCA	Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SIU	Special Investigating Unit
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Corruption within the public sector remains a pervasive challenge, undermining democratic institutions, stunting economic development, and eroding public trust. According to Corruption Watch's 11th annual corruption report for 2023, there were over 2,110 complaints about alleged corruption in the previous year. The report highlights that three metropolitan municipalities in Gauteng have been identified as having a high prevalence of corruption. This coincides with the provincial government reporting the highest volume of corruption cases. The City of Tshwane, City of Johannesburg, and City of Ekurhuleni are particularly concerning, as they account for 71% of reported incidents within the local government sphere. According to Ntoyanto (2019:430), corruption in South Africa is a "cancer" that persistently undermines socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and good governance.

According to Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), South Africa scored 41 out of 100, where 0 indicates high levels of corruption and 100 indicates no levels of corruption. This index evaluates the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector worldwide. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2020-2023 seeks to involve all stakeholders and citizens in South Africa in a commitment to guidelines designed to eliminate corruption, as outlined on page 7 of the document:

"*We champion a new spirit of business, government, labour, and civil society leadership that always upholds professionalism, ethics and anti-corruption practices. We will enforce good governance principles in all spheres and ensure consequences for corrupt individuals and organisations. Our citizens will always act with integrity and will not be hindered from acting against corrupt individuals through whistleblowing and other measures that promote transparency and accountability. State and business procurement systems will be run with high integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness. State law enforcement and anti-corruption bodies will be capacitated and integrated, and all will respect their independence and authority. We will build resilient institutions and go out of our way to protect vulnerable sectors and individuals in society who are at a high risk of experiencing corrupt practices and unethical conduct.*"

Gauteng has witnessed a significant increase in reported corruption cases, particularly within its metropolitan municipalities. The prevalence of corruption in this region underscores the need to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption strategies. Therefore, this research assesses the current anti-corruption strategy within the public sector in Gauteng while seeking to understand these strategies' practical implications and effectiveness by engaging with fraud prevention experts. Fraud experts play a crucial role in addressing corruption within organisations and governments. By leveraging their knowledge of financial systems, internal controls, and investigative techniques, fraud experts can uncover irregularities, such as embezzlement, bribery, and kickbacks, which are indicative of corrupt behaviour (Wells, 2014:76). Fraud experts are trained to detect red flags and anomalies in financial records and transactions, enabling them to follow the money trail and uncover instances of fraud and corruption (Barkan, 2016:112).

Fraud experts are skilled in conducting interviews, interrogations, and forensic examinations to gather evidence and build cases against perpetrators of corrupt activities (Albrecht *et al*., 2018:145). Their role extends beyond mere detection to implementing anti-fraud and anti-corruption measures, including developing robust internal controls, whistleblower hotlines, and fraud awareness training programmes (Singleton *et al.,* 2016:231). By collaborating with law enforcement agencies, regulatory bodies, and internal audit departments, fraud experts contribute to organisations' overall integrity and transparency, mitigating the risk of corruption and financial misconduct (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2019). In essence, the expertise and vigilance of fraud experts serve as a frontline defence against corruption, fostering accountability and ethical conduct in both the public and private sectors (Wells, 2016:98).

The research explored several key areas, mainly the existing legal and institutional frameworks for combating corruption, the role of civil society and the media in supporting anti-corruption efforts, the challenges faced in implementing these strategies, and the impact of these strategies on reducing corruption within the public sector. This research aimed to critically assess the anti-corruption strategies implemented in the South African public sector, offering a unique perspective through the lens of fraud prevention experts. In determining the anti-corruption strategies from this perspective, the research aimed to contribute to the broader discourse on governance and public administration in South Africa. The objective of this study was to provide practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and inform the development of future policies. Ultimately, the study sought to contribute to the establishment of a more transparent, accountable, and corruption-free public sector in South Africa.

1.2 Background to the Study

The scourge of corruption in the public sector is a global phenomenon with particularly acute implications in developing nations. South Africa, despite its robust legal frameworks and democratic institutions, has not been immune to this challenge. Furthermore, numerous high-profile corruption cases and scandals have emerged, implicating government officials, political leaders, and public servants in corrupt activities (Mbatha, 2018:126). According to Pope and Vogl (2000:7), the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures is often hindered by political interference within public offices responsible for implementing and enforcing these measures. Anti-corruption measures are based on classical public administration theory and practices, encompassing ethics, management, accountability, and what Max Weber called "*the systematic ordering of affairs and the calculated use of resources" (Basu, 1998:8).*

Section 195 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) outlines the principles of effective governance in South Africa (Masuku, 2019:18). The post-apartheid era in South Africa signified a new era of democracy and governance, highlighting the necessity for improvement in governance and anti-corruption measures to attain national objectives (Naidoo, 2013:587). This need is further underscored by the fact that a non-functioning public sector not only fails to serve but actively harms the marginalised and vulnerable members of society (Mokoele *et al.,* 2018:106; Eneanya, 2018:2). Several reports and studies have highlighted the pervasive nature of corruption within South Africa's government institutions. One notable example is the "State Capture" report released by the Office of the Public Protector in 2016, which detailed allegations of widespread corruption, influence-peddling, and undue influence by private interests on state affairs during the presidency of former president Mr Jacob Zuma (Public Protector South Africa, 2016).

Scholars such as Rose-Ackerman (1999) have emphasised the importance of a robust legal framework as a cornerstone of anti-corruption efforts. In South Africa, the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 stands out as a significant legislative instrument in the fight against corruption. The Act addresses various corrupt activities, outlining offences, penalties, and enforcement mechanisms to deter and prosecute corrupt practices within the public and private sectors. In South Africa, common law principles also play a significant role in combating corruption alongside statutory legislation such as the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004. These common law principles, rooted in judicial decisions and legal precedents, supplement statutory laws and provide additional avenues for prosecuting corrupt activities and holding perpetrators accountable. While statutory legislation explicitly outlines certain corrupt activities and their penalties, common law principles, such as fraud, theft, and bribery, serve as essential legal frameworks for addressing corrupt practices that statutory laws may not explicitly cover.

The performance of several South African public organisations and state-owned enterprises has been deeply disappointing, failing egregiously to fulfil their mandates (Gumede, 2019). Mokoele *et al.* (2018:118) highlight a pervasive culture of impunity within the government, contributing to a significant lack of transparency and accountability at all governance levels. In tackling issues of corruption within the public sector, it becomes essential to prioritise key legislative instruments. The Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 was implemented to regulate public service funds and promote good governance. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) governs the national and provincial government levels, while the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) regulates local government. These instruments ought to be at the forefront of the anti-corruption agenda. Table 1.1 provides an overview of various pivotal anti-corruption legislations in South Africa, underscoring the nation's commitment to combating corruption.

Table 1.1: Key Anti-Corruption Legislation in South Africa

Legislation	**Institutions under the legislation**	**Types of corruption cases it deals with or aimed at preventing**	**The sphere of government in which it operates**
The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)	The Office of the Public Protector	To investigate government, government departments, government agencies, and government officials who are alleged or suspected to be improper or to result in any impropriety or prejudice; to report on that conduct; and to take appropriate remedial action.	All spheres of the government, including cases reported by citizens and opposition parties
	The Auditor General of South Africa	Conducts performance audits and produces audit reports on all government departments, public entities, municipalities, and public institutions	Operates within the legislative branch of the South African government.
	National Prosecution Authority	Tasked with investigating and prosecuting various forms of corruption, including bribery, fraud, money laundering, public and private sector corruption, asset forfeiture, and organised crime involvement in corrupt activities	Prosecuting criminal cases at the national level

Legislation	Institutions under the legislation	Types of corruption cases it deals with or aimed at preventing	The sphere of government in which it operates
The Public Service Act (1994)	The South African public sector	Regulates conditions of employment and discipline within the public service	
The Witness Protection Act (1998)	The South African Police Service	Deals with cases related to witness protection aimed at safeguarding individuals who provide crucial testimony or evidence in criminal proceedings.	All spheres
The Competition Act (1998)	The Competition Commission and the Competition Tribunal	the investigation of prohibited practices	
The Prevention of Organised Crime Act (1998)	All government and nongovernmental institutions	combatting organised crime, money laundering, criminal gang activities, and racketeering activities.	All spheres of government, all citizens and residents of South Africa
The Public Finance Management Act (1999)	All government and nongovernmental institutions	Obligations on state organs to investigate corruption within the sphere of public procurement.	All spheres of the government
The Protected Disclosures Act (2000)	All government and private sector institutions/ organisations	Enacted to outline procedures through which employees in both the private and public sectors can report unlawful or irregular conduct by their employers or colleagues. Additionally, the Act aims to safeguard employees	Public and private sector employees

Legislation	Institutions under the legislation	Types of corruption cases it deals with or aimed at preventing	The sphere of government in which it operates
		who make protected disclosures and to address related matters.	
The Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000)	Public and private institutions	Promotes transparency in the public and private sector.	
The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (2000)	All organs of the state	Prevents foul play in decision-making.	All spheres of government
The Municipal Finance Management Act (2003)	Local government	Secure sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of among other things, municipalities in the local sphere of government	Local government
The Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act (2004)	Public and private institutions	The general offence of corruption and specific offences	
The Public Audit Act, 2004 (Act No. 25 of 2004)	The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA)	Mandates the AGSA to perform constitutional and other functions	All spheres of government and all state institutions

Source: Ntoyanto (2019:434)

This study examined the gap between the formulation of anti-corruption strategies and their successful implementation. By focusing on the insights of fraud prevention experts, the goal was to gain a practical understanding of the challenges encountered while executing anti-corruption strategies. This approach aimed to provide a well-supported evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies and contribute to developing more resilient anti-corruption frameworks in South Africa.

1.3 Problem Statement

Booysen (2020:607) highlights the widespread nature of corruption in Gauteng and its negative impact on governance, economic development, and public trust. Mokoele *et al.* (2018:126) attribute the issue to bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak enforcement mechanisms. Masuku (2019:23) stresses that good governance is vital in enhancing service delivery and proposes strengthening governance frameworks. Booysen (2020: 606-622) suggests comprehensive remedies to address corruption, while Thebe (2017: 112-125) highlights the need for stronger political will and accountability mechanisms.

The May 2022 report titled *"The State of Ethics, Integrity Management Systems, and Anti-Corruption Strategy in Gauteng*" presents a comprehensive framework designed to address and combat corruption within the province. It includes provisions for enhancing transparency, accountability, and integrity across various governance and public service delivery sectors. Despite establishing various anti-corruption frameworks and initiatives in the post-apartheid era, the persistent prevalence of corruption in South Africa indicates a fundamental issue with the efficacy of existing strategies. The problem is multi-dimensional, encompassing legal, institutional, and societal aspects, thus necessitating a comprehensive evaluation to address it effectively.

Assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies is typically done through quantitative measures such as the number of prosecutions or funds recovered (Klitgaard, 1988:72). However, relying solely on such metrics may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the overall impact of anti-corruption efforts. According to Rose-Ackerman (1999:65), when evaluating the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies, the deterrent effect and reduction of corruption-related risks and the number of prosecutions should also be considered. Despite the recognised importance of evaluating anti-corruption strategy, there is a gap in the literature and practice regarding the perspectives of individuals involved in fraud prevention and anti-corruption efforts. These experts possess unique insights into the complex dynamics of corruption and the practical challenges in implementing anti-corruption measures (Bhatnagar, 2013:112). Therefore, incorporating the perspectives of fraud prevention experts can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies and inform targeted policy interventions.

Evaluating the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies using a broader set of metrics, including the perspectives of fraud prevention experts, is crucial. This approach can lead to more targeted and effective policies better equipped to address the complex nature of corruption (Bhatnagar, 2013:112; Klitgaard, 1988:72; Rose-Ackerman, 1999:65). Brillantes and Perante-Calina (2018), Halligan (2018), Kapucu and Ustun (2018:549), and Neuroni *et al.* (2019) concur that a lack of ethical leadership in the public sector has created a culture of fraud and corruption, where transparency, honesty and accountability are not encouraged but, instead, frowned upon. The significant implications of ongoing corruption underscore the problem.

Corruption undermines the integrity of governmental institutions by eroding public trust and confidence in the fairness and impartiality of government processes and decision-making (Transparency International, 2020). This erosion of trust can lead to a loss of legitimacy for government institutions and undermine their ability to govern effectively. Regarding economic development, corruption distorts markets, hampers competition, and discourages domestic and foreign investment (World Bank, 2019). Therefore, an in-depth understanding and re-evaluation of anti-corruption strategies, informed by the practical experiences of fraud prevention experts, are imperative to enhancing the effectiveness of these measures and fostering a more transparent and accountable public sector in Gauteng.

This study, therefore, seeks to address the following core problem: the apparent gap between the theoretical design of anti-corruption strategies and their practical implementation and effectiveness in the Gauteng public sector, as viewed through the lens of fraud prevention experts. It aims to probe the disconnects and inefficiencies within current strategies, the challenges faced in their implementation, and the real-world impact of these strategies on corruption levels.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector, with a particular emphasis on insights from fraud prevention experts. This investigation was crucial for understanding how well current measures worked and identifying areas needing improvement. The objectives of this study were divided into primary and secondary aims; each focused on exploring different aspects of the anti-corruption framework and its implementation.

1.4.1 Primary Objective

To identify and assess the key challenges hindering the effective implementation of anti-corruption strategies in the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa,

1.4.2 Secondary Objectives

To realise this primary objective, the undermentioned secondary objectives were set:

1. To identify the gaps between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical application.
2. To assess the impact of anti-corruption strategies on public trust and institutional integrity.
3. To provide recommendations for enhancing the anti-corruption framework in Gauteng.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the current state of anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector, and how effective are they in reducing corrupt practices?
2. What are the primary obstacles faced by the public sector in Gauteng when implementing anti-corruption strategies?
3. What are the key differences between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical applications in Gauteng?
4. How do current anti-corruption strategies affect public trust and perceptions of institutional integrity?
5. What specific challenges hinder the effective implementation of anti-corruption measures in Gauteng?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The multifaceted study concentrated on the country's unique socio-political and economic context. Geographically, the research was confined to Gauteng, providing a detailed analysis within a specific national framework, especially relevant in the post-apartheid era. The sectoral focus of the study was primarily on the public sector, encompassing a wide range of government departments, public enterprises, and state agencies. This allowed for examining the implementation and effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies within these entities.

This study focused primarily on recent and current implementations of anti-corruption strategies, providing a contemporary perspective on their effectiveness while analysing recent developments and trends in these efforts. A key aspect of the research was the inclusion of insights from fraud prevention experts, such as those in forensic accounting, compliance, risk management, and law enforcement. Their perspectives highlighted the practical effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, identified challenges in implementation, and suggested potential areas for improvement.

The research examined several key aspects of corruption in the public sector. It focused on the types and manifestations of corruption, the legal and institutional frameworks designed to combat it, and the practical challenges faced in implementing these measures. Additionally, the study evaluated the impact of these strategies on public trust and institutional integrity. Furthermore, the research critically assessed various anti-corruption policies and strategies, concentrating on their design, implementation, and outcomes. This included a review of national strategies, the Gauteng anti-corruption strategy, legal frameworks, international agreements, and institutional mechanisms for combating corruption in South Africa.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

According to Mamaile (2018:139), a research design is a comprehensive strategy that integrates various study components, providing a roadmap that enables researchers to address research questions while considering factors that may impact variable relationships. Creswell (2009:3) underscores the importance of a research design framework, emphasising its role in connecting the research paradigm, inquiry strategies, and research methods. In contrast, a research method represents a systematic approach to inquiry that stems from the foundational assumptions of the research design and data collection process (Myers, 1997:242).

Mohajan (2018:26) defines research methodology as the rationale guiding the development of processes employed to formulate a theory, constituting a procedural framework guiding the research process. The methodology used for the literature review and the emphatical investigations will be elaborated in the following paragraph:

1.7.1 Empirical Investigation

The research paradigm is the philosophical framework that guides a researcher's approach to knowledge creation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:16). Calfee and Chamblis (2005:43) describe empirical research as a systematic approach to answering specific questions by collecting evidence under carefully defined and replicable conditions. It is important to note that qualitative methods are a vital component of empirical research, allowing researchers to explore and understand phenomena in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:3). When designing the empirical investigation, considerations include determining the research paradigm, methodological approach, methodological choice, methodological strategy, time horizon, and data collection and analysis technique (Neuman, 2014:45).

This study utilised an interpretive paradigm, which aligned well with the qualitative nature of the research. The primary aim was to understand fraud prevention experts' subjective experiences and perspectives. Interpretivism emphasised that context significantly shaped meanings, making it particularly relevant when examining the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies within a specific cultural and institutional setting (Guba & Lincoln, 2005:48). This study contributed to the growing body of literature on anti-corruption initiatives and offered valuable insights into how these measures could be enhanced.

1.7.1.1 Research Paradigm

This study employed an interpretive research approach that recognised anti-corruption efforts' complex and subjective nature. By taking this interpretive stance, the research acknowledged the varied perspectives of fraud prevention experts and sought to capture the intricate complexities of their experiences and insights (Creswell, 2014:42). This choice of research methodology facilitated a qualitative investigation that transcended simple quantitative measures, allowing for the collection of nuanced perspectives from experts within the South African public sector. Collis and Hussey (2014:43) suggest that a research paradigm reflects individuals' philosophies and assumptions about the world, subsequently influencing their chosen research methods. As Lincoln and Guba (2005:192) stated, the paradigm encompassed fundamental beliefs and assumptions that guided the study's inquiries.

1.7.1.2 Research Approach

Qualitative research involves a systematic way of collecting and analysing data. According to Gray (2014:26), a research design is a structured approach researchers use to gather, evaluate, and interpret data from different sources. Collis and Hussey (2014:67) further elaborate on this, defining it as a systematic process that guides research execution and the reason behind it. Corbin and Strauss (2015:6) stress that qualitative research produces a more comprehensive understanding of the studied context than quantitative methods. By employing qualitative data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews, the study gathered insights from fraud prevention experts, offering an in-depth and contextual understanding of the research findings.

Researchers primarily employ deductive and inductive approaches (Saunders *et al*., 2016:51). The deductive approach emphasises theory and aims to test specific hypotheses by collecting relevant data. In contrast, the inductive approach takes a more exploratory stance, focusing on data gathering to identify patterns and formulate theoretical explanations (Saunders *et al*., 2016:52). This study adopted an interpretive research paradigm consistent with an inductive methodological approach. This choice reflects a commitment to in-depth exploration of the topic and generating insights that enhance the existing body of knowledge. By prioritising an inductive process, the research remains adaptable and receptive to new findings, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the studied context.

This study adopted Institutional theory and Agency theory as its theoretical foundation, each providing essential insights into the challenges of anti-corruption efforts in Gauteng's public sector. Institutional theory is selected due to its focus on how structures, norms, and cultural systems influence organisational behaviour (Pillay & Kluvers, 2014:97). While Agency theory emphasises the risk of moral hazard, where public officials may act in their interests, enabled by information asymmetry and weak oversight (Shapiro, 2005:264).

1.7.1.3 Methodological Choice

The choice of methodology plays a significant role in shaping research design and informing the approach to data collection. Qualitative research aligns with the interpretivism research paradigm, focusing on understanding subjective views and beliefs within small samples (Wild & Diggines, 2013:87). According to Antwi and Hamza (2015:220), researchers face the initial task of deciding whether their study will adopt a quantitative or qualitative approach. For this case study, a qualitative research design has been chosen. This decision is based on the need to capture the nuanced perspectives and experiences of fraud prevention experts regarding anti-corruption strategies in the South African public sector. Qualitative methods, mainly interviews, facilitate in-depth exploration, enabling participants to share their insights comprehensively. By solely focusing on qualitative techniques, the study aimed to delve deeply into the richness of fraud prevention experts' viewpoints and experiences, providing a thorough understanding of anti-corruption strategies in the targeted context.

1.7.1.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this qualitative study involved a thorough exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and insights of fraud prevention experts regarding anti-corruption strategies in the South African public sector. Qualitative research enabled a detailed examination of individual experiences, perceptions, and behaviours within their natural context (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009:158). The methods employed facilitated in-depth exploration and rich data collection, allowing the researcher to capture participants' nuanced perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:269).

The research followed an interpretive paradigm, which recognised the subjective nature of human experiences and emphasised the importance of understanding these experiences within their social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2014:42). This paradigm aligned with the study's qualitative nature, as it sought to uncover the meanings and interpretations that fraud prevention experts attributed to anti-corruption strategies.

1.7.1.5 Time Horizon

Melnikovas (2018:34) defines a time horizon as the duration of research. In this instance, the research adopts a cross-sectional methodology. Wang and Cheng (2020:65) explain that such studies are observational, examining data from a specific population at a singular time point. This study was scheduled for the short term, from January 2024 to November 2024. Wang and Chang

(2020:65) note that cross-sectional studies are typically cost-effective and straightforward to execute. The study adopted a cross-sectional time horizon, focusing on recent and current implementations of anti-corruption strategies. This approach provided a contemporary perspective, capturing corruption dynamics' evolving nature and strategies' effectiveness in the present context (Bryman, 2015:78).

1.7.1.6 Study Population and Sampling

According to Salkind (2013:185), a population refers to the group of individuals to whom a study's findings can be applied. Elfil and Negida (2017:52) describe sampling as a list of all the subjects within a population. In this study, the population comprised individuals holding roles in fraud prevention within the public sector in South Africa, specifically targeting fraud prevention experts such as internal auditors, risk officers, forensic auditors, law enforcement officers, compliance officers, and chief audit executives. These professionals play pivotal roles in designing, implementing, and assessing anti-corruption strategies within their respective organisations (Gringeri *et al*., 2013:56). To ensure that only qualified participants are included, the study set an inclusion criterion of individuals with a minimum of five years of experience in their current roles (Collis & Hussey, 2014:43).

The sampling strategy for this qualitative study involved exclusively employing purposive sampling methods. Through purposive sampling, fraud prevention experts were deliberately selected based on their expertise and extensive experience in the field (Creswell & Clark, 2007:20). This method ensured that participants possessed the necessary insights and knowledge relevant to the study's objectives. The research aimed to capture diverse perspectives and experiences by focusing solely on purposive sampling, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of individual insights within the qualitative framework.

The sampling frame was developed in collaboration with professionals from the Institute of Commercial Forensic Practitioners (ICFP). Potential participants were drawn from various organisations, including those in government departments, public enterprises, municipalities, and South African State agencies. Accessing the study population posed challenges due to the sensitive nature of fraud prevention activities. Therefore, permission was obtained from relevant participants in different organisations. Collaboration with the ICFP facilitated the establishment of initial contacts, while strict adherence to ethical guidelines ensured respect for privacy and confidentiality. The sample size for this qualitative study was determined based on data saturation, guaranteeing sufficient participants to achieve depth and richness in the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

1.7.1.7 Data Collection Instrument

This research study adopted an interpretive research paradigm and followed an inductive methodological approach. It incorporated qualitative research methodology within a thematic analysis framework based on the guidelines established by Saunders *et al.* (2016:168). A qualitative method was employed to gather insights from fraud prevention experts regarding anti-corruption strategies in the South African public sector.

Data collection primarily involved in-depth interviews conducted in a semi-structured format. This approach facilitated an open-ended exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions, which resulted in rich and detailed responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:241). By employing a qualitative approach, the study aimed to achieve a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding fraud prevention efforts within the public sector. Through these in-depth interviews, participants conveyed their views, concerns, and recommendations regarding anti-corruption strategies, thereby providing valuable qualitative data. Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed to ensure confidentiality and compliance with ethical standards.

In this study, a qualitative research approach was employed for data collection, specifically through interviews. As outlined by Saunders *et al.* (2016:390), various types of interviews can be effective for gathering data. For this study, the researcher implemented a pilot study in conjunction with semi-structured interviews to ensure comprehensive and meaningful data collection.

1.7.1.8 Designing the Measuring Instrument

Ensuring the precision of measurement instruments was essential for collecting substantial data. This research employed a meticulously designed measuring tool that aligned with the research strategy, which primarily focused on utilising a qualitative framework to investigate the challenges associated with implementing anti-corruption strategies in the public sector. The research objective was to analyse the perspectives of fraud prevention experts in Gauteng. The qualitative instrument was specifically developed to capture the complexities and diverse viewpoints of participants, thereby enriching the understanding of the subject matter (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:144). Descriptive coding was utilised to extract and categorise data into groups of similar interests. This coding process was facilitated using ATLAS. ti software, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the relevant aspects.

The study adopted an inductive design approach, as qualitative research permitted the observation of occurrences and the derivation of broader, generalised theories from the data. Furthermore, the design of the measuring instruments adhered to ethical principles, ensuring participant confidentiality, informed consent, and compliance with ethical guidelines throughout the data collection process.

1.7.1.9 Collection of Data

The interviews were semi-structured to collect detailed narratives about the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding anti-corruption strategies. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and anonymised to ensure accuracy and confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:144). A consent form was sent to participants at least 72 hours before the scheduled interviews, providing them with ample time to review it and ask for clarification on any unclear aspects (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:155). This document clearly outlined the purpose of the research, the nature of the participants' involvement, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation.

1.7.1.10 Data Saturation

In qualitative research, data saturation is an essential milestone in data collection, indicating that researchers have acquired a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated within the sampled population (Guest *et al*., 2006:63). For this thesis, the sample included a diverse group of participants such as internal auditors, risk officers, forensic auditors, law enforcement officers, compliance officers, and chief audit executives. As interviews progressed with each participant group, the researcher analysed the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to anti-corruption strategies in the Gauteng public sector.

Data saturation is recognised through several indicators. Firstly, researchers observe the repetition of themes across multiple interviews, signifying that a comprehensive range of experiences and viewpoints within the sample has been captured (Saunders *et al*., 2018:235). Secondly, subsequent interviews yield diminishing returns regarding new information or insights, indicating that the data pool has been exhausted (Francis *et al*., 2010:127). Finally, researchers achieve theoretical sufficiency, where the data provide detailed descriptions and explanations of critical phenomena, enabling a thorough understanding of the research topic (Fusch & Ness, 2015:42).

Researchers ensure transparency and rigour in the research methodology by documenting the data collection and analysis process. This approach allowed for systematically exploring anti-corruption strategies in the Gauteng public sector while adhering to established qualitative research principles (Creswell & Poth, 2018:141). Ultimately, the attainment of data saturation served as a foundational element in generating meaningful insights and advancing knowledge in the field of fraud prevention and anti-corruption efforts within the public sector.

1.7.1.11 Data Analysis

Considering the range of analytical methods available, a qualitative synthesis was employed to examine, depict, and juxtapose the outcomes of this qualitative investigation. This approach enhanced the credibility of the research findings and reinforced concepts drawn from prior studies, thereby evaluating the qualitative methodologies employed (Greenhalgh *et al*., 2004:582). Employing a systematic qualitative review offers several advantages that can significantly enrich the study. Responses from participants were decoded using ATLAS.ti software, with manual coding conducted by the researcher before being captured into the software for subsequent analysis.

1.7.1.12 Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of measurements taken across different situations and periods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:196). In the past, reliability and validity were concepts mainly associated with quantitative research, but they are now being reconsidered in the context of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003:597). According to Patton (2001), reliability and validity are two factors that any qualitative researcher should consider when designing a study, analysing results, and assessing the quality of the study. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, the study employed a process called member checking, where participants review and validate interpretations (Birt *et al*., 2016:1802). Trustworthiness is significant in qualitative research, and it includes aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). The researcher planned to conduct interviews using normative and descriptive notions to manage relevant aspects.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

According to Klopper (2008:71), ethical considerations in research involve safeguarding the rights of participants, obtaining informed consent, and securing ethical approval through institutional review processes. Researchers have the responsibility to protect participants from any potential harm and to ensure their autonomy, privacy, confidentiality, and fair treatment throughout the study (Klopper, 2008:71). This study adhered to all ethical standards required for academic research, including compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act). The researcher prioritised obtaining informed consent from participants, who received detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. They were given sufficient time to review this information and voluntarily provide their consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, with participant information securely stored and identifiers anonymised in all reporting. The study prioritised privacy and comfort during interviews to encourage open and honest dialogue.

Furthermore, the researcher maintained cultural sensitivity to respect diverse perspectives. This study complied with all relevant legal and ethical regulations, including the POPI Act, and the researcher obtained all necessary permissions. Any emerging ethical issues were promptly addressed through ongoing and honest review to ensure the moral integrity of the study.

1.9 Contributions of the Study

This study sought to enhance theoretical frameworks by incorporating insights from fraud prevention experts, which improved the study's understanding of how anti-corruption strategies functioned in real-world situations. On a practical level, the research provided recommendations for refining anti-corruption measures in South Africa, particularly in Gauteng. It focused on addressing the gaps identified between theoretical design and practical implementation. The insights derived from fraud prevention experts will empower professionals and contribute to strengthened governance, fostering a more transparent and accountable public sector. Ultimately, this research aspired to catalyse positive change, making meaningful contributions to academic scholarship and the real-world effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in South Africa.

1.10 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The limitations of a study are the "weaknesses or deficiencies" in the research process and methodology (Collis & Hussey, 2014:44). The study is delimited to the South African public sector in Gauteng, explicitly focusing on fraud prevention experts. The study is delimited to ensure a focused, feasible investigation within defined parameters. Although the scope of the country is vast, the study opted for a more detailed analysis within the Gauteng region. The study acknowledged certain limitations, such as sampling constraints, challenges in data collection, potential biases, and the dynamic nature of the anti-corruption landscape in Gauteng, which may impact the generalisability of findings to other regions or sectors. Despite these limitations, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into the anti-corruption landscape in the South African public sector.

1.11 Layout of the Study (Chapters)

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

This chapter introduces the research, explaining the study's background, context, and significance. It outlines the research problem, objectives, and the reasoning behind the chosen topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter comprehensively reviews existing literature on anti-corruption strategies in the public sector, focusing on insights from fraud prevention experts. It establishes the theoretical framework and contextualises the research within the broader scholarly discourse.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter details the research design, methodology, and approach adopted for the study. It discusses the rationale for the chosen paradigm, research strategy, data collection methods, and analytical techniques. The chapter also addresses the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the study's data collection and analysis. It offers an in-depth exploration of the perspectives provided by fraud prevention experts and evaluates current anti-corruption strategies in the South African public sector.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter summarises the study's key findings and draws conclusions based on the evidence presented. It provides practical recommendations for refining anti-corruption measures in South Africa, addressing the research objectives, and contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses challenges in implementing anti-corruption strategies using a case study of the public sector in Gauteng, South Africa. The study underscores the indispensable role played by professionals such as internal auditors, compliance officers, investigators, and risk officers. Their extensive expertise and experience are pivotal in effectively addressing these challenges. The primary aim of the review is to assess the efficacy of anti-corruption strategies and elucidate the underlying rationales for their implementation. The study also explores ancillary objectives, such as scrutinising the disjunction between theoretical anti-corruption principles, their practical instantiation, and the anti-corruption framework. Through a review of theoretical models and practical obstacles, this study intends to provide an understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

2.2 Conceptual Framework of Corruption

Corruption in the public sector takes on various forms, such as bribery, nepotism, and fraud. Umar *et al*. (2016:139) highlight that global instances of fraudulent activities have precipitated substantial collapses in businesses, public institutions, and governmental bodies. According to Arasly *et al*. (2006:296), nepotism signifies an unprofessional inclination that bestows exclusive advantages upon family members. This practice of nepotism undermines the effectiveness of human resources protocols and negatively influences employee satisfaction levels. Apke (2001) defines bribery as gaining improper advantage for business, including gaining orders, applications for regulatory permits, customs, taxation concessions, and judicial and legislative rulings. Effectively addressing corruption necessitates a rigorous approach encompassing investigation, detection, and prevention (Umar *et al*., 2016:139). This section will analyse bribery in the public sector, exploring its prevalence at both global and local levels.

2.2.1 Defining Corruption as a Concept

Banerjee *et al.* (2012) define corruption as a bureaucrat (or an elected official) breaking a rule for private gain. Corruption can be broadly understood as the misuse of power entrusted to an individual for private gain (Transparency International, 2019:8). There is a plethora of definitions; for this study, the researcher will lean more toward a definition provided by Svensson (2005:20) which states, "the misuse of public office for private gain" and to Shleifer and Vishny (1993), who define corruption "as the sale by government officials of government property for personal gain." Mafunisa (2007:261) describes corruption as the misuse of public office for personal gain, highlighting its detrimental impact on governance and public trust.

This concept encompasses a wide range of practices that undermine the integrity of public institutions and social policies, extending beyond mere legal violations to include a spectrum of unethical behaviours (Pasculli & Ryder, 2019:11). Pauw *et al*. (2009:344) further elaborate that corruption involves misusing one's position for personal gain or the benefit of an affiliated group, incorporating unethical actions by both public and private sector members.

Bitarabeho (2003:356) provides a more focused definition, describing public sector corruption as deviating from established norms while performing public duties for selfish personal gain. In the context of South Africa, the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004, Section 3 (a) and (b) defines corruption as an act where person A offers "gratification" to person B, who holds a position of authority, to influence person B to use their authority for the benefit of person A. This definition applies across all sectors, including business and civil society. Snyman (2008:411) emphasises that, under South African criminal law, corruption involves accepting gratification from another person or offering or giving gratification to another person to influence the recipient to act in a way that constitutes the unlawful or irregular exercise of their duties.

2.2.2 The Concept of Anti-corruption

Disch *et al.* (2009) state that anti-corruption efforts gained prominence and were officially recognised by the development community after the President of the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn, referred to corruption as *"the cancer of corruption"* during the Bank's Annual Meeting in Hong Kong in October 1996. The fight against corruption is a long-standing and evolving form of modern warfare, adapting to changing strategies and priorities. In 2004, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) UNDP's Anti-corruption Practice Note supported a general argument: *"The negative impact of corruption on development is no longer questioned. Evidence from across the globe confirms that corruption disproportionately impacts the poor. Corruption hinders economic development, reduces social services, and diverts investments in infrastructure, institutions and social services. Moreover, corruption fosters an anti-democratic environment characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability, declining moral values and disrespect for constitutional institutions and authority. Corruption, therefore, reflects a democracy, human rights and governance deficit that negatively impacts poverty and human security"*. In the initial stages, anti-corruption endeavours focus on utilising legal and regulatory tools to forestall and tackle corrupt practices through promoting transparency and accountability (Vian, 2020:2).

2.2.2.1 Transparency

Transparency involves making relevant information available to the public, which can help reduce the risk of corruption by allowing for oversight of public officials and their actions (Vian, 2020). Transparency is seen as a crucial, though not the only, factor in ensuring accountability and preventing corruption (Fox, 2007:664).

2.2.2.2 Accountability

Accountability refers to the duty of individuals in positions of authority to elucidate, render comprehensible, and assume responsibility for their choices, conduct, and achievements (Vian, 2020). Officials must adhere to established rules, regulations, guidelines, procedures, and policies made known to the public (Paschke *et al*., 2018:782). There are three critical components of accountability/responsibility:

- Answerability, or the obligation to justify one's action.
- Enforcement is the consequences imposed if the action and justification are not satisfactory, and
- Responsiveness is the willingness of those held accountable to respond to demands made (Lambert-Mogiliansky, 2015:158).

Enforcement mechanisms should institute substantial repercussions for the corrupt agent to discourage corrupt practices (Klitgaard *et al*., 2000). Social accountability initiatives can encompass the implementation of grievance procedures and social audits aimed at obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data regarding citizen perspectives and real-life encounters with public services (Andersson, 2011).

Early measures were primarily punitive, relying heavily on legislation and law enforcement to tackle corrupt activities (Avila, 2020:10). Odilla (2020:144) describes early anti-corruption efforts as largely reactive and punitive. However, there has been a growing recognition of the systemic nature of corruption, leading to a shift towards preventative measures and the establishment of systems designed to foster integrity and transparency (Hartmann, 2021:29). This evolution is exemplified by international agreements such as the 2003 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which emphasises preventive measures alongside asset recovery (Rose, 2021:85). Mackey *et al*. (2018:636) state that the UNCAC requires signatory countries to make certain forms of corruption illegal, including bribery of national and foreign public officials, embezzlement, misappropriation, diversion of property by public officials, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and illicit enrichment.

Regarding South Africa, anti-corruption policies have displayed a comparable level of adaptability. Chapter 9 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) established six independent institutions. The Chapter 9 institutions include the Public Protector (PP), South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL), Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), the Auditor-General (AG) and Electoral Commission (EC) (Republic of South Africa, 1996). These institutions play a crucial role in maintaining accountability and transparency within the government

(Mafunisa, 2007:261). The 2001 formation of the National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF), a collaborative effort involving the public sector, civil society, and business, marked a significant step in uniting various sectors to combat corruption collectively. This effort led to the adoption of the 2002 Public Service Anti-Corruption Strategy, which includes criminalising corruption, ensuring anti-corruption capacity in public service departments, and improving access to report wrongdoing while protecting whistle-blowers and witnesses (Manyaka & Sebola, 2013:42).

Notwithstanding the endeavours, corruption in South Africa continues to pose a substantial difficulty. Corruption in South Africa affects everyone and "*intersects at points of social, political, economic and ethical discourse with no end in sight and thus remains an elusive malignancy slowly eroding our hard-won democracy*" (Constitutional Court Of South Africa-Case: CCT_280/18, 2020). Anti-corruption strategies in South Africa have evolved to incorporate a broader range of tools, including technological innovations, community engagement, and international collaboration. Villanueva (2022:5) notes that the historical trajectory of anti-corruption efforts has broadened from targeting only public sector officials to involving the civil society and the private sector, promoting a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to combating corruption. Lambert-Mogiliansky (2015:160) underscores the intricate relationship between transparency, accountability, and corruption. Without any indication of the official's behaviour, such as a performance measure, a verification outcome, announcements, and service users' complaints, citizens cannot prevent a corrupt official from misappropriating funds (Lambert-Mogiliansky, 2015:160). This approach shows that effective anti-corruption measures necessitate involvement from all sectors of society to establish an environment where corruption is less likely to happen and more likely to be identified and dealt with when it does (Lambert-Mogiliansky, 2015:160).

2.3 Anti-Corruption Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical anti-corruption models are a pillar in guiding the strategies of the global public sectors. Such a model is of the principal-agent-client type, which regards corruption as an unfaithful agent's (officials') betrayal of public trust for personal advantage and the agent's collusion with the third party (clients). Thus, this model implies that fighting against corruption entails increasing the risk factors involved in getting caught and punished for those acting corruptly or through reforming the institutions (Wawrosz, 2022:326). The "collective action model", a work of Marquette and Peiffer (2015:802), is another perspective that underlines the shift from individual to collective dynamics in corruption. Corruption is not solely an individual's fault but is supported by a broad community's expectations and norms. In line with the model, strategies that change social standards and norms should be implemented apart from just the punishments of individuals (Marquette & Peiffer, 2015:802).

2.3.1 Transparency Frameworks

Public sector management specialists classify transparency into two categories: event transparency, which refers to access to information by recipients, and process openness, which pertains to administrative processes that are transparent, straightforward, and easily understood (Heald, 2006:25). Organisations require transparency in four dimensions (Heald, 2006:27):

- Upward transparency allows a supervisor to observe the conduct or results produced by a subordinate.
- Downward transparency allows subordinates to observe the conduct or results of supervisors.
- Outward transparency refers to when those inside an organisation can see what is happening outside an organisation, for example, benchmarking.
- Inward transparency allows those outside an organisation to see what is going on within.

Public meetings that are open to anyone are a means of enhancing transparency. Meetings serve as a platform for the government to disseminate information and seek opinions from individuals while allowing citizens to express their concerns and demand a response from officials (Piotrowski & Borry, 2010:138). Piotrowski and Borry (2010:138) have developed a transparency framework that may be applied to open public meetings at the local government level. This framework covers essential elements such as providing notice and agenda, keeping minutes, establishing rules for closed sessions, allowing public participation, and maintaining documentation (Piotrowski & Borry, 2010:139).

Paschke *et al.* (2018:784) constructed a model (Figure 2.1) demonstrating how the combination of transparency and engagement might facilitate accountability. Citizens and oversight bodies rely on data regarding standards, commitments, decisions, and outcomes, as well as the measures taken by the government in response, to request explanations (answerability) and impose penalties (sanctions) (Paschke *et al.*, 2018:784).

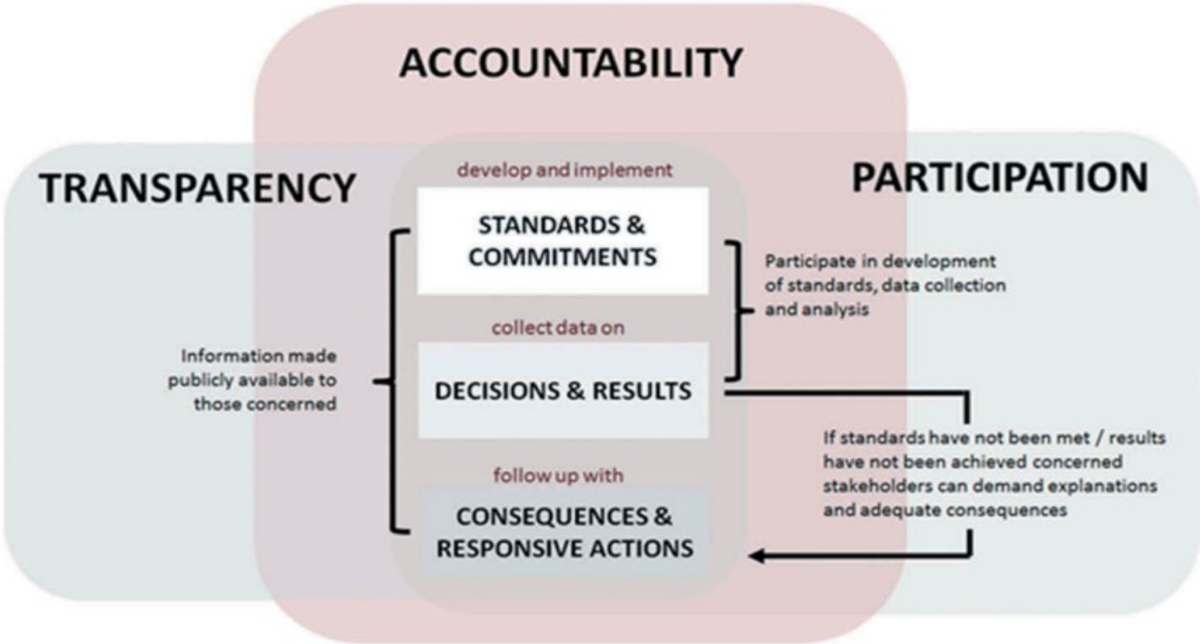

Figure 2.1: Transparency and Participation Enable Accountability

Source: Paschke *et al*. **(**2018**)**.

2.3.2 Accountability Frameworks

According to Brinkerhoff (2004:372), answerability is the core aspect of accountability. It refers to the responsibility of public officials to offer information about their activities and justify these acts to oversight actors. Justification of actions entails a reciprocal exchange of information between responsible individuals and those in supervisory roles (Brinkerhof, 2004:373). The conceptual accountability model delineates financial, performance, and political categories.

- Financial accountability assures proper allocation and use of resources through budget or accounting controls and participatory budget processes.
- Performance accountability examines how outputs align with pre-determined performance targets.
- Political or democratic accountability monitors the degree to which governments and institutions deliver on promises, act in the best interest of citizens, and respond effectively to societal needs (Brinkerhoff, 2004).

One major drawback of this model is its assumption of equal power and influence; in reality, providers and state actors typically possess more authority than clients or citizens (Baez-Camargo & Jacobs, 2012; Buckland-Merrett *et al*., 2017). Fox (2007:663) analyses the tactical and strategic methods used in social accountability, which involve the participation of individuals and civil society organisations. Fox (2007:664) proposed a paradigm called the "sandwich strategy", which aimed to empower both state actors (namely reformists who have authority in policy execution and may offer chances for citizens to voice their opinions) and citizens (who actively advocate for public interests and take collective action). The potential for change can arise from societal or governmental forces that promote accountability. The key to achieving success is the capacity and willingness of individuals in various sectors to offer support and empower others to act.

Nonetheless, these models have been subject to severe criticism. Scholars such as Dilger (2019:1939) claim that the principal-agent-client model misrepresents complexities associated with corruption because it fails to appropriate the systemic nature and embeddedness of corrupt practices in society and political systems. According to Chakravorty (2017:188), the model does not recognise the power and patronage methods that underpin corruption, which are often more pivotal than individual agents' personalities. Persson *et al.* (2019:6) pointed out some flaws in the collective action model for neglecting the role of power and elite capture in perpetuating corruption, demonstrating that anti-corruption efforts may be futile as long as elites enjoy the benefits of the existing order. It is suggested that the most effective anti-corruption strategies should involve a combination of actions targeting individuals' behaviours on a micro-level and addressing societal and institutional frameworks contributing to corruption (Sotola & Pillay, 2022:374).

2.3.3 Selection and Justification of Theory for the Study

2.3.3.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory is central to this study, providing all the essential components for understanding and analysing anti-corruption efforts within the public sector (Pillay & Kluvers, 2014:21). This theory was selected because it can address how structures, norms, and cultural systems impact organisational behaviour. This theory contributes to implementing policies, particularly within governance and anti-corruption efforts.

Institutional theory is the most relevant theory for public administration as it is based on the theory of institutions, which include norms, values, and established routines and their impact on the behaviour of the people within the organisation (Thompson, 2018:497). Thompson (2018:501) believes that the institutional theory implies that, in most cases, organisational actions tend to be shaped by prevailing norms and regulations of the environment. Although Gauteng is the centre of public utilities that are always in the headlines due to the increased risk of corruption, knowing the institutional factors that either help or hinder anti-corruption initiatives may be very useful.

Institutional theory aims to understand the phenomenon of the isomorphic processes that result in organisations growing more alike over time since they respond to pressure from their environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983:149). This idea is particularly significant in understanding why anti-corruption policies may be ineffective if they do not reflect the prevailing norms and behavioural patterns within public service institutions and society. In the context of Gauteng, where existing systems are hesitant and resistant to adopting new ideas, Institutional theory provides insight into the obstacles that prevent the successful implementation of new anti-corruption measures (Pillay & Kluvers, 2014:96).

Institutional theory represents cultural systems and organisational cognitive scripts as factors influencing organisational behaviour (Meyer & Rowan, 1977:344). This is true in countries where social values and perceptions affect the extent of corruption and the success of strategies to eradicate it (Gould, 2019:763). The importance of these cultural dimensions is enormous, considering that societal attitudes towards corruption would otherwise undermine the victory of anti-corruption initiatives.

This theory creates an analytical platform for broadening the systemic changes needed for organisational integrity and public credibility. It means that to make the anti-corruption efforts realistic, they should provide for both individual behaviour and the institutional logic that supports them (Dixit, 2018:31). This is the only approach that will facilitate the devising of suggestions that will not only offer reforms but also address the deep-seated causes of corruption in the public sector in Gauteng (Pillay & Kluvers, 2014:97)

It is important to note that both Agency and Institutional theories are essential in analysing anti-corruption efforts within the public sector. According to Scott (2008), Institutional theory focuses on how norms, structures, and systems shape organisational behaviour, while Agency theory focuses on the relationship between principals (citizens or the state) and agents (public officials). In contrast, Agency theory emphasises the potential for conflict when agents act in their interests rather than the principals (Jensen & Meckling, 1976:306). Corruption is more likely to occur when information asymmetry allows agents to engage in corrupt activities without detection. Both theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between institutional structures and individual behaviours that drive corruption.

2.3.4 Application of Institutional and Agent Theory in the Study

The Institutional theory was applied to this study by focusing on the interaction of institutional norms, regulations, and procedures with the anti-corruption strategy in the Gauteng province's public sector. The research entailed evaluating how the current structure of institutions hinders and furthers the introduction of productive anti-corruption mechanisms. Another point that the study's focus addresses relates to the institutional pressures within the public sector and society as a whole and how they affect the strategies' outcomes.

Using Institutional theory, the study aimed to identify the main institutional barriers and facilitators that stand in the way of implementing anti-corruption strategies, examine the impact of these strategies on institutional integrity and public confidence, and provide grounded advice on how the anti-corruption framework in Gauteng can be improved. This theoretical approach goes beyond the broad issues of corruption within the system. Also, it plunges into a more in-depth analysis of anti-corruption reforms that could be applicable in fighting corruption.

The study also used Agency theory to examine the relationship between public officials (agents) and the public or government (principals) within Gauteng's public sector. Agency theory is regarded as one of the most significant theoretical foundations, as it constructs relationships regarding principal-agent problems (Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000:14).

Agency theory helps understand how corruption can occur when agents exploit information asymmetry to engage in corrupt practices without detection. This happens when they have greater access to critical information than the principals (Shapiro, 2005:266). Additionally, the study explored the moral hazard present in the public sector, where agents use inadequate monitoring and lack of accountability to misuse their positions for personal gain. The study analysed the principal-agent problem in the Gauteng public sector to identify deficiencies in monitoring and accountability. The lack of effective monitoring mechanisms and misaligned incentives create an environment conducive to corruption. By applying Agency theory, the study explored how improved monitoring systems, increased transparency, and better alignment of incentives between agents and principals could help reduce corrupt practices.

This in-depth analysis of the relationship between public officials and the broader governance system will enhance the study's institutional analysis and provide a comprehensive understanding of the individual and systemic factors contributing to the persistence of corruption in Gauteng.

2.4 Anti-Corruption Legislation and Policies

Global anti-corruption policies have changed significantly in the past decades, and cooperation and multilateralism have gained more importance in the efforts to curb corruption across borders (Kerusauskaite, 2018:16). These guidelines not only prescribe standards but also stimulate cooperation among countries to have more vigorous enforcement and compliance.

South Africa has implemented several legislative measures to combat corruption. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 is a pivotal legislation that criminalises public and private corruption. Unlike the previous Corruption Act of 1992 covering past acts, it also addresses future corrupt actions or inactions (Snyman, 2008:411). The Promotion of Access to

Information Act 2 of 2000 and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 help combat corruption by enabling individuals to obtain information from government and business entities (Snyman, 2008:411). These measures enhance transparency, accountability, and integrity in governance and public service delivery.

Low (2006) states that the UN Convention is the most comprehensive and intricately detailed international anti-corruption treaty. This includes the requirements to criminalise specific actions, duties to take preventive measures in public and private sectors, collaboration across countries in investigations and enforcement, steps to provide technical support, and rules for recovering assets (Low, 2006). The document comprises 71 items, significantly more than the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Convention's 17 articles. These articles are organised into eight chapters as follows:

- Chapter I, General Provisions (Articles 1-4)
- Chapter II, Preventive Measures (Articles 5-14)
- Chapter III, Criminalization and Law Enforcement (Articles 15-42)
- Chapter IV, International Cooperation (Articles 43-50)
- Chapter V, Asset Recovery (Articles 50-59)
- Chapter VI, Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (Articles 60-62)
- Chapter VII, Mechanisms for Implementation (Articles 63-64), and
- Chapter VIII, Final Provisions (Articles 65-71).

The UN Convention on Asset Recovery significantly advances multilateral treaty regimes. Furthermore, compared to other conventions, the UN Convention addresses a broader scope of subjects, including criminalisation, prevention, and international cooperation (Low, 2006). It offers a more comprehensive and detailed treatment of these issues than its predecessor conventions. The breadth and depth of the document demonstrate the drafters' objective to address deficiencies in standards and requirements and provide a worldwide framework that will streamline enforcement (Low, 2006).

At the same time, it provides the most comprehensive rules, indicators, and instruments that all nations can employ in strengthening their legal systems in fighting corruption (Van Hooff, 2020:7). The UNCAC is effective because its main framework is universal which emphasises prevention, criminalisation, international cooperation, and asset recovery (Galtsyan, 2018:239). Nonetheless, different countries have contrasting implementations of the UNCAC because it sets a global standard. Galtsyan (2018:239) argues that the main reason for the lack of efficiency in implementing the UNCAC is the divergent interests and capacities of the countries involved and their distinct legal systems. This necessitates the customisation of UNCAC's universal instructions to suit the specific conditions of each country. The OECD Convention addressing the problem of bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions was developed precisely for that (OECD, 2021:6). The OECD Convention was adopted in 1997 to create a legal framework that obligatorily punishes the bribery of foreign public officials and further incorporates measures to criminalise such practices under national laws. The greatest virtue of the OECD Convention is its targeted manner, which narrows the focus on corruption issues, allowing enforcement and compliance to be carried out quickly.

De Koker *et al*. (2023:81) examine the economic risks and repercussions faced by nations designated as "jurisdictions under increased monitoring", commonly known as the "grey list" by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF is the global benchmark-setter for Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation (AML/CFT/CPF). According to De Koker *et al.* (2023:81), countries placed on the grey list have demonstrated failures to comply with FATF standards fully but have committed to rectifying the identified strategic deficiencies within specified timeframes. Throughout this period, they are subjected to heightened scrutiny and monitoring by the FATF (De Koker *et al*., 2023:81). The first quarter of 2023, 24 jurisdictions were listed on the FATF grey list, including Nigeria, South Africa, and Türkiye (FATF, 2023). Research has shown that FATF usually succeeds in pushing countries, especially those with developing economies, to improve their compliance with FATF standards in a relatively short timeframe (Sharman 2009; Morse 2022; FATF 2015). This is because governments are worried about the adverse economic consequences of being listed by the FATF.

According to Soreide (2016:3), narrowing the convention's definition of bribery to poorly address different forms of corruption outside of bribery, such as embezzlement and fraud, which are also common in global transactions, remains a concern. Like these informal legislative frameworks, non-governmental organisations such as Transparency International are critical players in shaping global anti-corruption policies (Chang *et al*., 2021:8). Transparency International helps create policy decisions and raise public awareness about corruption by releasing data and analysing the Corruption Perceptions Index and Global Corruption Barometer (Transparency International, 2016:13). These tools show very clearly the levels of accomplishment of different countries and, at the same time, stress the areas which need further improvement. The inherent uncertainty of perceived indices is brought up by Gilman (2018:82), where such indices may not precisely express actual levels of corruption.

The design and usage of governance indicators have experienced a significant increase in attention. Users can access over 140 governance indicators, containing thousands of unique indicators (Arndt & Oman, 2006). Malito (2014) states that the creation of corruption indicators has undergone normative and methodological modifications, and researchers have seldom examined the historical development of this creation process. Three categories of measures have been condensed in Table 1.1 to navigate the complex array of governance indicators. These categories encompass survey-based measures of corruption (i), corruption indicators derived from (global) governance indices (ii), and corruption indicators derived from state capacity indices (iii) (Malito, 2014).

The initial category, consisting of corruption measures based on surveys (i), arose in the mid-1990s in response to the need for effective anti-corruption policies. This led to the development of ad hoc corruption measures, budget transparency and accountability indices, and commercial surveys (Malito, 2014). These indices include the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the Bribery Perception Index (BPI), and the Bribe Payers Index, which Transparency International publishes (Malito, 2014). Additionally, the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) is conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank (Kaufmann *et al*., 2012).

Simultaneously, during the mid-1990s, a second group (ii) was established. This group includes indicators derived using governance indices, with corruption often being one of the critical factors used to assess overall levels of governance (Malito, 2014). The second category of corruption measures consists of many regional surveys and indicators, such as the Eurobarometer, the European Values Study, the Asia barometer, the Latino barometer, the Africa Governance Indicator (AGI), the African Integrity Indicator, the Afrobarometer, and the Index of African Governance (Malito, 2014).

State-capacity indices have offered a third set of corruption indicators. These indices assess a country's performance in critical areas crucial for ensuring government obligations' integrity. These indicators have multiplied since the 2000s when the discussion concerning state capacity gained significant focus in the governance debate (Malito, 2014). Indicators of corruption within state-capacity indexes include, at least: the State Capacity Survey developed by Columbia University; the State Fragility Index published by the Center for Systemic Peace and Center for Global Policy at George Mason University (Goldstone *et al*., 2010:191); the Sovereignty Index elaborated by the joint-venture between the Brookings Institution, the Institute for State Effectiveness, the Institute for State Effectiveness, and the Australian National University (Ghani *et al*., 2005); the Country Indicators for foreign policy project delivered by the Canadian International Development Agency (Carment *et al*., 2006; The World Bank, 1997); the Political Instability Task Force launched by the Centre for Global Policy at George Mason University (Goldstone *et al*., 2010:191), the Index of State Weakness in the Developing World published by the Brooking institute (Rice & Patrick, 2008); the Failed States Index produced by the Fund for Peace and published by Foreign Policy (Haken *et al*., 2012) and the list of LICUS countries (Chase & Rogers, 2002), generated by the World Bank.

Table 2.1: Measures of Corruption: Indices and Indicators

	Provider	Measures
Corruption survey-based	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) & World Bank	Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS);
	Gallup International	Voice of the People Survey (VOPS);
	Global Business Media Limited	Business International Index; Corruption Experience Index
	International Budget Partnership	Open Budget Survey
	Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index
	Transparency International & Gallup International	Bribery perception index (BPI). Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)
(Global) Governance Indices (II)	European Commission	Eurobarometer
	EU ICS Research Consortium	International Crime Victimization Surveys (ICVS)
	European Values Study	European Values Study
	Freedom House	Nation in Transit (NIT)
	Global Integrity & Mo 'Ibrahim Foundation	Africa Integrity Indicators. Index of African Governance. The Corruption Notebooks. Global Integrity Index
	HIS Global Insight	Global Insight
	Institute for Management	The Global Competitiveness Report (GRC)

	Provider	Measures
	Development (IMD)	
	Latino barometro Corporation	Latino barometer
	Michigan State University	Afrobarometer
	The Political Risk Service Group	The International Country Risk Guide (ICRG)
	UNECA	Africa Governance Indicator (AGI)
	World Bank	World Governance Indicators (WGI). WB Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
	World Economic Forum	Executive Opinion Survey. World Competitiveness Yearbook. Global Competitiveness Report (GRC).
	WVS Association	World Value Survey (WVS)
State Capacity Indices (III)	Brooking institute	Index of State Weakness in the Developing World
	Brooking Institute, the Institute for State Effectiveness, the Institute for State Effectiveness, and the Australian National University	Sovereignty Index
	Canadian International Development Agency	Country Indicators for Foreign Policy Project

	Provider	Measures
	Centre for Global Policy, George Mason University	Political Instability Task Force
	Centre for Systemic Peace and Center for Global Policy at George Mason University	State Fragility Index
	Columbia University	State Capacity Survey
	Fund for Peace, Foreign Policy	Failed States Index
	World Bank	Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS)

Source: (Malito, 2014)

The data presented in Table 2.1 above is compiled from organisations such as the World Bank, Transparency International, Freedom House, and the Brookings Institution. These sources provide critical insights into corruption, governance, and state capacity through comprehensive surveys, indices, and analytical tools like the Corruption Perceptions Index, World Governance Indicators, and State Fragility Index. The initial set of corruption indicators has encountered several challenges that prompted scholars and policymakers to reassess crucial methodological and theoretical elements (Malito, 2014). There is a growing trend to develop more precise and detailed corruption indicators. This is known as the second generation of good governance indicators. These new indicators consider a different understanding of corruption as a “state of default equilibrium,” whereby adopting this perspective can create instruments with a more effective diagnostic purpose (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2011).

There is a new trend to combine broader metrics with detailed studies of individual countries to understand corruption within a specific context and make specific intervention proposals based on evidence (Heidenheimer *et al.*, 2009). This new generation of studies, emerging from the third wave of quantitative research, encompasses The Corruption Notebook, published by Global Integrity since 2007, The Global Corruption Report (GCR), initiated by TI in 2001, and national and transnational reports, established by institutions such as the European Commission's EU Anti-Corruption Report in 2014 (Malito, 2014). These case studies and national evaluations may not be essential to corruption indicators or indices. However, it is crucial to consider this as a significant shift in methodology regarding the utilisation and misuse of governance indicators (Arndt & Oman, 2006).

The success of the global effort to combat corruption relies on the precise nature of national legal systems, the capabilities of national institutions, and the involvement of international and non-governmental organisations in enforcing and ensuring compliance (Vaitsekhovska *et al.*, 2021:16). Ambler and Leger (2021:311) state that the UNCAC has a comprehensive framework that sets rigorous requirements. However, effective implementation of the agreement relies on solid national measures, which may not be present in every country that has signed it. As stated by Hartmann (2021:32), the OECD Convention, although concise and unambiguous, may not be sufficient on its own due to the intricate nature of corruption. Similarly, Transparency International demonstrates the significance of accountability and international pressure in combating corruption. Using perception-based measures allows national goals to potentially prioritise increasing rankings over addressing corruption issues (Lang, 2021:159).

South Africa implemented a comprehensive anti-corruption law framework to mitigate corruption in both the public and private sectors (Pillay, 2017:8). As stated by the South African government (2020:2), this plan combines global standards with tailored approaches to tackle specific societal issues. South Africa employs a range of crucial legislation and regulatory bodies to combat corruption, which are essential for ensuring effective execution.

International cooperation in anti-corruption is essential for establishing the structure and guidance necessary to combat corruption. However, each country must take the steps needed to execute these measures within its own legal and institutional systems. In Gauteng, global policies serve as a framework for assessing and enhancing local initiatives, considering both exemplary and deficient practices. This guarantees that Gauteng adheres to global benchmarks and embraces international conventions, rendering them appropriate for the local context.

2.4.1 Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECAA), 2004

The (Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECCA) (2004) serves as the legal foundation for combating corruption in South Africa. The text delineates corruption as distinct from other illicit acts and proposes sanctions for those responsible (South African Government, 2005:3). This can be ascribed to the comprehensive nature of the scope, which encompasses nearly all types of corrupt actions, including bribery, corruption, and abuse of power (South African Government, 2005:5). Pillay (2017:11) criticises the complexity of the procedure and the resulting implementation issues it can cause. Section 23 of the new Judicial Matters Amendment Act 15 of 2023 introduces an amendment to the PRECCA, establishing a criminal offence for failing to prevent corrupt activities. Specifically, members of the private sector or state-owned entities may be held liable if an associated individual offers a bribe for personal or business gain and they cannot demonstrate that reasonable internal measures were implemented to prevent such misconduct. The amendment to Section 34 specifies that any member of the private sector or an incorporated state-owned entity is guilty of an offence if a person associated with them gives, agrees to provide, or offers any prohibited gratification under Chapter 2 to another person, with the intent to obtain or retain business for that member or to gain an advantage in the conduct of business for that member.

Corruption Watch is a non-profit organisation based in South Africa that monitors and exposes corruption concerning public resources and charitable donations within the country. The organisation presents the PRECCA application as follows:

Figure 2.2 Who is affected by PRECCA?

Source: Adopted from Corruption Watch Presentations, 2023.

2.4.2 The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2020-2030

Established in 2020, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) endeavours to consolidate anti-corruption across various sectors, fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical standards (South African Government, 2020:2). According to the South African Government (2020:8), the strategy is underpinned by a participatory approach involving key stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector. This inclusive framework is essential for the identification and prosecution of corruption, as well as the implementation of preventative measures. Pillay (2017:12) acknowledges the comprehensive nature of the process while highlighting challenges such as stakeholder coordination, bureaucratic inertia, and a lack of political will.

2.4.3 Public Service Anti-Corruption Strategy

Through this strategy, which explicitly focuses on public sector corruption, the aim is to promote integrity and reduce corruption in the public sector by improving the ethics of public service, establishing capacity-building systems, and promoting a professional service ethos (SA Government, 2020:7). Your role in the consistent implementation of this strategy at the departmental level of government is crucial. The fact that critics such as Pillay (2017:12) emphasise that without comprehensive implementation and monitoring frameworks, approaches run the risk of ending up as mere policy statements rather than valuable tools is telling.

South Africa has been putting different institutions together to apply its anti-corruption laws effectively. The Corruption Watch (2015:2) points out that some of these are the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), the Public Protector, and the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID). These institutions are practical tools to combat corruption and ensure adherence to the law. However, the effectiveness of these bodies depends strongly on the political context, which has problems, including funding, independence, and political interference, that negatively impact the organisations (Pillay, 2017:14).

South Africa’s legislative framework to curb corruption is well articulated and encompasses a variety of punitive and proactive measures. Nonetheless, the performance of the plan lies on the police and the politicians who are willing to follow the rule of law (Pillay, 2017:14). The sections above depict the need for measures that are clear, specific and consistent, both in theory and practice which surpass the already existing legislature. In addition, the professionalism of independent investigative bodies is essential, but independence from political interventions is required for efficient investigation.

2.5 Anti-Corruption Strategies and Their Implementation

Booysen (2020:606-622) and Thebe (2017:13) propose extensive solutions to combat corruption, highlighting the importance of increased political determination and accountability measures. The 2022 report on Ethics, Integrity Management Systems, and Anti-Corruption Strategy in Gauteng suggests a framework to tackle corruption and improve transparency, accountability, and integrity in the government and public service delivery sectors. Despite these initiatives, the multi-dimensional nature of corruption necessitates a comprehensive evaluation. Effective anti-corruption strategies require broader metrics, including the perspectives of fraud prevention experts, to develop targeted and effective policies (Bhatnagar, 2013:112). Bhatnagar (2013:112), Klitgaard (1988:72) and Rose-Ackerman (1999:65) advocate for this inclusive approach to better address the complex nature of corruption.

2.5.1 Components of Effective Anti-Corruption Strategies

Potent anti-corruption strategies are critical in preventing corruption within the global public sector. The strategy consists of approaches with crucial elements for efficacy and longevity. This paragraph focuses on these elements, explaining why they are essential and how they are involved in curbing corruption.

2.5.1.1 Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Tomić (2019:25) asserted that a robust legal framework is the most crucial element of any anti-corruption strategy. This is not only a matter of having encompassing laws and regulations that designate punishable corrupt acts but also involves an environment to enforce these laws (Ouahmane & Ouahmane, 2023:64). The existence of such a framework, like the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004, Section 3 in South Africa, is a cornerstone in the fight against corruption. Transparency International (2020:33) asserts that for the laws to be effective in the fight against corruption, judicial systems should be able to enforce them consistently and transparently, underscoring the importance of these structures.

2.5.1.2 Institutional Integrity

Desta and Asmara (2020:4) argue that ensuring a system is free from fraudulent actions depends on the transparency of the systems and procedures involved. Implementing a transparent procurement procedure consists of applying merit-based hiring standards and asset disclosure systems (UNDP, 2018:2). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2017:1), these tools discourage corruption and foster a culture of accountability and transparent governance. For example, Botswana has maintained low levels of corruption because of its well-established institutional framework prioritising integrity and transparency (Desta & Asmara, 2020:7).

2.5.1.3 Preventative Measures

Preventive measures are proactive steps done to prevent the occurrence of corruption. Corruption prevention involves acting before the occurrence of corrupt behaviour. Lombardi *et al*. (2019:669) contend that these tactics are proactive instead of reactive. To mitigate corruption and other forms of significant misconduct, it is necessary to determine the most effective methods and locations for intervention. According to the UNODC (2017:3), these activities encompass a variety of actions, including establishing codes of conduct and ethical training for public officials, as well as formulating anti-corruption policies.

Following the introduction of liberalism into society in 1991, individuals started to develop a strong desire to accumulate wealth and enjoy a life of luxury. While unlawful money hoarding has occurred in the past, the extravagant and opulent exhibition witnessed in the last three decades is unprecedented. According to Transparency International (2022:32), the education and training of individuals play a crucial role in establishing a culture of integrity and ethical conduct, which forms the foundation for effective anti-corruption initiatives. Lombardi *et al.* (2019:671) recommend conducting periodic anti-corruption risk assessments to detect and mitigate corruption risks across all government agencies, each with distinct requirements for anti-corruption measures.

According to Venumadhava and Sahay (2014:110), corruption is perceived as a systemic problem that necessitates the involvement of donors and a strategic approach to promote good governance. This includes measures such as prevention to assist recipient countries in reducing corruption, enhancing integrity, and ultimately enhancing public services and creating a favourable environment for the private sector. The governance and anti-corruption initiative consists of three main areas of activity (Venumadhava & Sahay, 2014:110):

- Improving public sector service delivery by focusing on public sector accountability and legal reform to re-introduce the rule of law;
- Building integrity by promoting governmental accountability and transparency; and
- Building a prevention and anti-corruption capacity of the public sector and civil society, particularly by strengthening non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media.

The programme aligns with other initiatives, such as the Public Sector Management programme, which emphasises prevention through civil-services reform and planning and managing public expenditures (Venumadhava & Sahay, 2014:110). It also supports governance activities, research, and the dissemination of findings. Proposing legislative measures to strengthen the parliament's authority in overseeing the executive branch, along with introducing new anti-corruption legislation, holds considerable significance (Venumadhava & Sahay, 2014:110). However, it is imperative to recognise that the effective enforcement of these legislative provisions predominantly hinges on appointing qualified human resources.

2.5.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Commissions of inquiry have become widespread and shared in the political system, especially in the South African post-apartheid government. Their primary purpose is to present an objective and accurate description of events that are in dispute; however, they frequently include a legal analysis that influences political and judicial actions (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:51). In recent years, there has been a proliferation of commissions of inquiry constituted to investigate a wide range of complex problems in public debate (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:51). A plethora of literary works argue that commissions of inquiry are widely seen as a fundamental aspect of justice, to address, overcome, and to improve accountability among those entrusted with managing public resources (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:51).

Koenane and Mangena (2017:68) assert that accountability is a fundamental tenet of ethics and the central aspect of effective governance, and it cannot be examined without considering the discourse on public accountability. Moreover, accountability is crucial in advancing good governance and contemporary democracy, which is the purpose of commissions. Fombad (2014:74) identifies several key components that contribute to accountability, including answerability, the capacity to provide an account, assuming and acknowledging obligations and punishments and seeking redress. Public accountability encompasses the responsibility of the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities to uphold proper conduct and ensure efficient service delivery to serve the public's best interests (Van der Waldt & Du Toit, 1999:42). According to Mfene (2013:8), accountability is the state in which officials are held accountable and responsible for their acts, hence supporting the concept of democracy. Mfene (2013:8) contends that for this to occur, elected public officials must possess the qualities of honesty, responsiveness, fairness, and accountability in their management of public goods and services to enhance the well-being of individuals. Dorasamy (2010:59) argues that promoting public accountability among public officials and politicians is a fundamental feature of a developing, efficient, and competent State that is responsive to the requirements of its citizens.

The Zondo Commission of Inquiry (known as the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture) is an example, founded on February 8, 2018. From the beginning, it gained popular confidence by promising to enhance public accountability and protect democracy (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:58). The commission published its conclusive report in 2022. The impact of defending democracy was to be assessed based on the ability of other State entities, like the National Prosecuting Authority, to implement the recommendations effectively (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:58). Despite the widespread acceptance and the anticipated high standards of behaviour from public officials, South Africa's public sector is marked by numerous charges of unethical conduct (Mudau & Takalani, 2024:58).

Constant monitoring and evaluation are just as essential to determine the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and develop new action plans (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2019:528). McDevitt (2022:41) repeats the aspect that this component involves the establishment of an independent oversight body, which may be in the form of an anticorruption commission or an ombudsman office, and that these commissions are tasked with monitoring government activities and ensuring compliance with anti-corruption measures. As an illustration, the role played by the South African Public Protector in exposing some of the high-profile corruption cases through the oversight mechanisms highlights the importance of checks and balances in the framework of implementing anti-corruption laws (Kanyane, 2024:84).

2.5.1.5 Public Engagement and Participation

According to Ardigó (2022:6), public engagement and active participation in setting governance processes are essential to counter corruption. Mlambo *et al.* (2020:1989) argue that voice and accountability are promoted through public education campaigns that civil society organisations support and where citizens regularly report corruption to the government. Wenyah (2022:133) illustrates the potency of public participation in anti-corruption initiatives, explaining that citizen engagement can create enormous pressure on governments to decisive on corruption. The media is crucial in amplifying the voices of the public and exposing corrupt practices, empowering the community to combat corruption. The media serves as a vigilant observer, overseeing the operations of both commercial and government institutions, providing society with a platform to express diverse perspectives and arguments (Srivastava, 2016:170). Media has a significant role in marking cultural changes, impacting behaviours and conventions, and ultimately stimulating policymaking and lawmaking alterations (Srivastava, 2016:170).

2.5.1.6 International Cooperation

Given the global nature of numerous corrupt activities, particularly those involving money laundering and illegal transfers of assets, international cooperation is essential (OECD, 2017:3). Khan *et al.* (2024:286) highlight that international agreements such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation between different countries' legal systems. This cooperation includes cross-border assistance in legal matters, transferring individuals accused of crimes, and collaborative investigations. These measures are vital in effectively combating corruption. The FATF is charged with establishing standards and ensuring the effective enforcement of legal, regulatory, and operational measures to address money laundering, terrorist financing, and related threats to the integrity of the global financial system (FATF, 2023:4).

2.5.1.7 Public Trust

Ivory (2014) suggests that methods aimed at combating corruption, which promotes fair practices and merit-based systems in public administration, enhance the government's standing with the public. Aminuzzaman (2017:13) suggests that providing jobs and government contracts based on merit instead of political connections or corruption will result in a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for potential candidates. This situation adversely affects how the public views the fairness and integrity of institutions. Implementing measures to eliminate nepotism and favouritism in the recruitment process will greatly influence how the public views the government and the overall integrity of institutions. Agu *et al.* (2024) note that anti-corruption measures tend to fail in environments where there is a lack of trust and a prevailing sense of suspicion towards the government. Applying these methods might take considerable time and effort to build trust and confidence in the government within the broader community. Additionally, it is essential to keep engaging and communicating with the government and society to help change the current narrative and ultimately build trust within the community (Brown & Marsden, 2023).

It is important to focus on building public trust, but it is also important to recognise that some specific limitations and challenges come with anti-corruption efforts. At first, revealing widespread corruption through transparency efforts will likely erode public trust even more, but over time, it will help build a more reliable foundation. Furthermore, suppose anti-corruption measures are seen as being poorly executed or as instruments for politically driven persecution. In that case, they can erode public confidence in the institutions that these measures are intended to support (Davis, de Assis Machado*, et al.*, 2021). The term “public opinion” denotes the viewpoint that appears to be the most prevalent, widespread, or favoured among a variety of existing perspectives. It is created through the collaboration of three primary elements: influential opinion leaders, statistical data, and the perceptions of individuals. Influential individuals share and disseminate their views, utilise various media platforms and technologies, and possess significant social impact or authority within institutions. The general perception of what constitutes the prevailing viewpoint is shaped by the phenomenon known as the spiral of silence.

2.5.2 Challenges in Implementing Anti-Corruption Strategies

The fight against corruption is complex and filled with obstacles. These factors have the potential to perplex and, to some extent, weaken initiatives, regardless of their effectiveness. Recognising these challenges is essential as it allows for the development of more efficient anti-corruption measures and enhanced governance. The work at hand is very complex and primarily involves political and organisational efforts to change the fundamental nature of the political agreement (Khan *et al.*, 2019). There is limited comprehension of the policies that can potentially alter political settlements and measures aimed at establishing fresh political agreements in areas of conflict and post-conflict, which have frequently led to detrimental and unforeseen outcomes (Khan *et al.*, 2019). Considering current knowledge limitations, addressing high predatory corruption poses significant difficulties in developing effective policy solutions (Khan *et al.*, 2019).

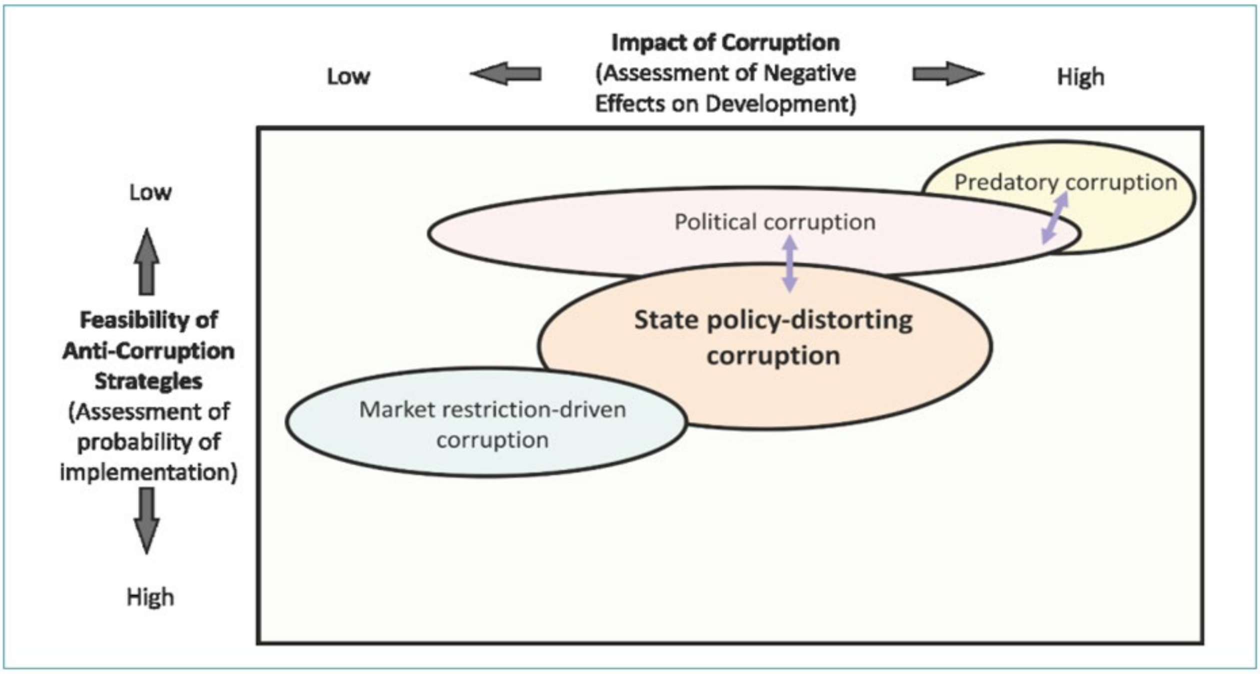

Figure 2.3: Positioning of Anti-Corruption Tactics: Impact versus Practicality

Source: Khan (2014)

Figure 2.3 above illustrates the positioning of anti-corruption tactics and their relative impact and practicality concerning each form of corruption. It is essential to consider that the anti-corruption strategies addressed thus far may contain multiple forms that overlap. Equally, it is pivotal to think that corruption within specific sectors can have different features when evaluating the practicality of implementing an efficient anti-corruption strategy for that industry (Khan *et al*., 2019). For example, if corruption in a sector distorts policy and involves political or predatory corruption, implementing an anti-corruption policy may be difficult, even if its predicted impact is significant (Khan *et al*., 2019).

2.5.2.1 Lack of Political Will

The notion of political will is intricate due to various factors. Brinkerhoff (2010) states:

"Political will encompasses the concepts of aim and motivation, which are intrinsically intangible phenomena. Assessing them accurately or objectively is challenging, as they are susceptible to manipulation and deception. Furthermore, it can manifest itself at both the individual and social levels. Political will, for individuals, can be understood as a personal trait that reflects their values, objectives, and desires. While political will can be articulated verbally or in writing through speeches, manifestos and legal documents, it is ultimately demonstrated through tangible actions". (page 1)

Political will can be defined as the will of individuals or groups to carry out specific activities to achieve a particular set of goals, such as reducing corruption and bearing the associated costs of these acts over an extended period (Brinkerhoff, 2010:2).

Owusu *et al.* (2020:8) emphasise that the lack of political will is the primary barrier to success in anti-corruption efforts. Political leaders can make commitments to eradicate public corruption; however, they may secretly work against efforts to bring about change to preserve their authority or the existing state of affairs. According to Kingsford *et al*. (2019:14), if political leaders lack a sincere determination to combat corruption, implementing anti-corruption laws and policies may not be practical, resulting in the persistence of corruption. Venter (2020:69) states that there are cases, especially in South Africa, when authoritative organisations such as the Public Protector lack independence, which hampers their ability to apprehend corrupt politicians.

Studies on the history of European political evolution indicate that essential occurrences, such as the possibility of war or a significant military loss, frequently preceded major attempts to reduce corruption (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015; Tilly, 1985). Examples of contemporary success stories, such as Botswana, Hong Kong, Rwanda, and Singapore, have occurred under authoritarian administrations when political decisions are influenced mainly by the preferences of a single ruler (Post *et al*. 2010; Quah 2017). Although visually appealing, these examples lack substantial value as sources of policy strategies (autocracy and war). Research is scarce regarding the factors and mechanisms that could facilitate favourable transformation in democratic environments.

2.5.2.2 Institutional Inadequacy

According to Owusu *et al.* (2020:13), effective anti-corruption methods are executed by solid institutions that are responsible for impartially enforcing laws and regulations. However, the presence of institutional backwardness poses a significant obstacle in the majority of areas. The issues vary from limited resources and inefficient capabilities to the lack of knowledge that enforcement personnel may possess. Arsad (2023:33) asserts that institutions with a deficient level of integrity face significant challenges in combating corruption and may disregard anti-corruption regulations due to the absence of effective deterrents. As a result, illicit activities persist.

2.5.2.3 Corruption Normalisation

Changing the culture can be particularly challenging in societies where corruption has been normalised. When corrupt practices are deeply entrenched in the social and political fabric, efforts to combat them can be met with resistance or apathy from the public and officials alike (Harford, 2022:5). Sam (2023:44) discusses how entrenched corruption leads to a vicious cycle where the public expects corrupt behaviour, which in turn perpetuates the practice. Breaking this cycle requires comprehensive cultural change, a slow and challenging process.

2.5.2.4 Legal and Procedural Loopholes

Senu (2020:669) observed that even with robust legal frameworks, loopholes can significantly hinder the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies. Legal ambiguity or poorly drafted laws provide opportunities for corruption to continue unchallenged. Page (2021:42) states that addressing these loopholes requires continuous legal reform and adaptation to close gaps that corrupt individuals exploit.

2.5.2.5 Inadequate Public Engagement

Schoeberlein (2022:4) emphasises that public engagement is crucial for the success of anti-corruption strategies as it fosters transparency and accountability. However, inadequate public involvement mechanisms can limit these strategies' effectiveness. Majiga (2024:279) suggests that governments must actively involve citizens in anti-corruption efforts through education, transparent communication, and whistleblower protection. Without active public participation, detecting and preventing corruption becomes significantly more difficult (Schoeberlein, 2022:9).

2.5.2.6 Bribery

Bribery is often a borderless phenomenon, so collective efforts are recommended to tackle it (Bismuth *et al.*, 2021:19). As the FATF notes, the challenge is to coordinate the laws of countries and their cooperation to effectively combat money laundering and other corruption-related crimes that have a global impact (FATF, 2023:6).

2.6 Role of Fraud Prevention Experts in Anti-Corruption

Professionals specialising in countering corruption play a crucial role in the framework of anti-corruption strategies in both the public and private sectors (Wierzynska *et al.*, 2020:3). Sipayung *et al.*, (2022) emphasise that their function is crucial in detecting, preventing, and mitigating instances of fraud and corruption. These experts encompass various responsibilities crucial for attaining organisational openness and integrity.

The core duty of fraud prevention experts entails the execution of comprehensive risk evaluations that flag places likely to be prone to corruption. However, Wierzynska *et al*. (2020:15) remind us that this activity encompasses assessing processes, controls, and environments to identify each of these vulnerabilities that can be exploited using corrupt activities. Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) (2018:4) reported that risk management involves planning risk strategies that address the identified risks and round-the-clock monitoring and re-tooling preventive measures during implementation. This reactive approach is essential to anticipate and prevent corruption rather than cure it after it happens.

Corruption prevention professionals also create and implement comprehensive anti-fraud policies and procedures (Rafay, 2021:39). These policies serve as both a guide for people’s conduct and a description of the repercussions of participating in corrupt practices. Sibley *et al.* (2024:58) concentrate on guaranteeing that these policies adhere to both domestic and international standards and are appropriate for the organisation’s particular requirements and vulnerabilities. These experts promote establishing clear and enforceable policies, which serve as the basis for ethical norms and deter corruption (Philippou, 2023:427).

Maulidi and Ansell (2021:498) advise that fraud and corruption education and techniques for recognising and reporting suspicious activities should be another crucial duty of fraud prevention experts. Routine sessions help the organisation’s workers familiarise themselves with the anti-corruption policies and understand their role in corruption prevention (Hauser, 2019:284). According to Modise and Modise (2023), anti-corruption education programmes help augment organisations’ honesty and robustness in the fight against corruption.

Experts in corruption prevention are often responsible for investigating corruption scandals (Rustiarini *et al*., 2019:348). This entails the gathering and meticulous examination of evidence, questioning the relevant authorities, and collaborating with law enforcement, if necessary. Saleh *et al.* (2020:339) emphasise the importance of their expertise in financial accounting, auditing, and investigation procedures. They utilise their skills to ascertain the events and the magnitude of corruption. In his study, Caiden (2019:433) discovered that investigators are tasked with various duties, such as enforcing penalties and bringing legal action against persons implicated in corrupt practices.

Senior executives and governing bodies frequently seek guidance from specialists in the corruption prevention field to ensure compliance with ethical standards (Friedlander, 2019:1472). According to the authors of a paper by Jones *et al*. (2020:173), improvements in internal control and structure are necessary to prevent corruption. Additionally, they may participate in anti-corruption discussions and work on measures to address this challenge, demonstrating significant influence in policymaking and society (Bartsiotas & Achamkulangare, 2016:8).

The continuous monitoring of the implementation of anti-corruption policies is equally important as the ability to control. Abu and Abu (2020:6) suggest that multiple monitoring tools exist in the professional field of corruption prevention, including internal and external audits and compliance reviews, to ensure that the code of ethics is followed. The individuals are responsible for composing reports about their discoveries in the battle against corruption and performance; these reports are crucial for maintaining transparency and holding individuals accountable (Sudirman et al., 2021:11).

2.6.1 The Multifaceted Role in Shaping Anti-Corruption Strategies

The effect of fraud prevention experts on anti-corruption strategies is complex and multidimensional. Harahap *et al*. (2021:6) argue that in addition to detecting risks and eliminating them, experts' contribution also facilitates the increase in the quality and efficiency of implementing public policy against corruption. One should remember that these functions do not pertain to one level of the organisation but to different levels. They influence both strategic and operational aspects of anti-corruption initiatives to some extent.

According to the OECD (2017:5), anti-corruption professionals play a crucial role in developing effective internal procedures that enable organisations to maintain their integrity. The Global Fraud Study conducted by the ACFE (2018:7) found that organisations with adequate internal controls experience fewer financial losses due to fraud than those with insufficient controls. The rapid shift to digital operations during the COVID-19 pandemic left many companies susceptible to fraudulent activities. However, the 2018 and 2022 ACFE Report to Nations analysis indicates a decrease in fraud and corruption, as shown in Table 2.2. The OECD (2017:6) highlights that corruption prevention specialists oversee the ongoing monitoring and internal auditing of compliance controls, allowing the system to detect any irregularities promptly.

Table 2.2: Comparison of 2022 and 2018 ACFE Report Findings

	2022	2018
Number of Cases	2110 cases	2690 cases
Total Losses of more than	$3.6 billion	$7 billion
Median Loss per case	$117,000	$130,000
Asset Misappropriation (Median Loss)	$100,000	$114,000
Financial Statement Fraud (Median Loss)	$593,000	$800,000
Corruption (Median Loss)	$150,000	$250,000
Median Duration of Fraud	12 months	16 months

Source: Galbraith *et al*. (2024:77)

The fundamental principles in the battle against corruption are accountability and openness, and the primary participants in this endeavour are the professionals in corruption prevention (Kuwali, 2024:291). By endorsing and facilitating the adoption of transparent procurement, bidding, and financial transaction protocols, the experts reduce the chances of corrupt behaviours. The research conducted by Smith (2021:4) indicates that implementing open bidding processes overseen by fraud prevention teams can effectively discourage bribery and collusion attempts. In addition, Rotberg (2019:7) contends that this is accomplished by establishing a system for reporting and investigating corruption that holds persons at all levels responsible for their acts. This, in turn, strengthens a culture of honesty and moral uprightness.

Besides the technical safeguards, fraud prevention specialists remarkably contribute to the ethics culture of an organisation (Suh & Shim, 2020:13). Following Suh and Shim (2020:14), they train and educate their employees on standards and expect them to adhere to compliance. This educational task is crucial as it helps to develop an anti-corruption mindset in the organisation, which in turn makes employees unlikely to be involved in corrupt acts and are ready to point out these acts. As per the research by the Ethics & Compliance Initiative (ECI) in 2020, such institutions with practical and long-term ethics training are less susceptible to corruption and respond promptly when issues arise.

Experts in fraud prevention have a broader policy-making impact, as Findley *et al.* (2020:1446) point out: their expertise helps design and amend anti-corruption systems and strategies. Findley *et al.* (2020:1452) substantiate more and convey that their real-life exposure allows them to identify loopholes in the current policies and recommend corrections. For instance, the contribution of experts in South Africa to fraud prevention issues was significant in advocating for public finance management reforms, as mentioned in the reports written by Madonsela (2019:116). Apart from proposing more detailed and enforceable anti-corruption policies, their recommendations often echo the international best practices.

Findley *et al.* (2020:1558) argue that fraud prevention experts do so by facilitating international cooperation by making regulators ensure that organisations follow global anti-corruption protocols, such as those defined by the OECD and the UN. Their knowledge helps organisations to follow competitive international rules and participate in border anti-corruption programmes. This role is vital when global companies pursue business activities with different laws and operational practices. The FATF (2023:2) notes the necessity of international cooperation with the intermediary of fraud prevention experts with particular skills to guide compliance.

The task of fraud prevention experts is not without its issues, some of which can undermine their effectiveness. Khan *et al*. (2019:5) indicate the types of opposition that emerge within organisations, especially in the context of the top management or other influential stakeholders who may have some personal interests. Furthermore, in environments where corruption is institutionalised, these individuals' ideas can be met with scepticism or hostility, as explained by Cuellar and Stephenson (2022:4). Furthermore, fraud prevention effectiveness relies on a broader socio-political situation that goes beyond the power of an individual organisation or expert to affect (Morino, 2022:13).

2.7 Evaluation of Anti-Corruption Strategies

Traditional anti-corruption approaches have aimed to combat corruption by enhancing compliance with general rules, with a specific focus on adherence to regulations by public officials. One of the primary techniques used in traditional anticorruption efforts is to enhance the overall implementation of the rule of law and protect property rights (Rauch & Evans, 2000). This strategy has been backed by evidence that indicated correlations between the institutional characteristics of societies, such as the extent to which the rule of law is enforced, and their levels of corruption (Ades & Di Tella, 1996; Lambsdorff 2005; Rauch & Evans, 2000; Treisman 2000; World Bank 2000). Another approach that has influenced traditional methods is based on microeconomic principal-agent models, which suggest that asymmetric knowledge enables public officials to undermine the public interest by participating in corruption for their benefit (Treisman, 2000). The recommended policy response based on this viewpoint is to seek to modify the conduct of bureaucrats through alterations in incentives, such as improved remuneration systems, enhanced oversight, and more stringent penalties (Ackerman 1978; Andvig & Moene 1990; Huther & Shah 2000; Klitgaard 1988; Spector 2005).

2.7.1 Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Strategies

Corruption is a pervasive challenge in numerous countries worldwide, prompting the Commonwealth of Nations to commit to its eradication. The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), also referred to as the Merida Convention, stands as the singular legally binding international anti-corruption multilateral treaty (Kesiranon, 2023). The treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2003 and came into force in 2005 (UNODC, 2004). As of 2024, 190 countries, including South Africa, have ratified the Convention, signifying a solid global consensus on addressing corruption.

Assessing the efficacy of anti-corruption techniques is vital to guarantee that the implemented measures accomplish their desired results and aid in diminishing corruption inside an organisation or government entity. Anti-corruption strategies are often assessed by using both quantitative and qualitative assessment tools (Leonov *et al.*, 2024:14). Langseth (2016:8) says that the quantitative data might include the number of cases of corruption reported and solved, the amount of money collected from the corrupt activities, or several officials be prosecuted for the corrupt practices. On the same line, the South African government usually publishes yearly statistics regarding corruption-related arrests and prosecutions that serve as indicators of proactive actions that have been implemented (Ivkovich *et al.*, 2020:17). As Bello and Villarino (2021:711) state, quantitative appraisals might focus on the specific direction of corruption within a sector, the degree of satisfaction with the transparency of the processes or the overall trust in the corporate and governmental institutions, in surveys conducted by organisations like Transparency International.

Adelopo and Rufai (2020:429) suggest that a significant indicator of the success of anti-corruption policies is the improvement in integrity and public faith in public service (Adelopo & Rufai, 2020:431). Successful strategies should increase the reliability of public institutions and one’s brand. The Global Corruption Barometer typically comes up with data about citizens’ opinions on corruption and their trust in various public sectors, and providing facts on the social effect of anti-corruption measures is usually one of its parts (Transparency International, 2017:14). For instance, the reduction of the perception of corrupt officials from the police or judiciary system could be a sign of the effectiveness of the anti-corruption strategies that were put in place in these sectors.

Despite the implementation of the best anti-corruption strategies, the implication hurdles are also the determinants of the effectiveness of those strategies. These challenges can arise in other ways, such as the scarcity of resources, inadequate training, resistance from within the organisation, and weak legal frameworks (Kingsford & Chan, 2019:16). Pillay (2017:2) points out that in many cases, the practical implementation of anti-corruption programmes is impeded because of the absence of cohesion between different branches of the government or between various departments belonging to a big organisation. The competence to tackle these problems will necessitate periodic evaluation and revision of methods to ensure they are dynamic and responsive to the evolving nature of corruption.

According to Adam and Fazekas (2018:21), technology and innovations enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. Thommandru *et al.* (2025:1) emphasised that using digital tools in conjunction with data analytics enhances transparency, streamlines operations, and reduces the likelihood of corruption. The circumplex encompasses numerous concurrent operational control systems, offering a perspective to examine the roles of Information Technology (IT) and blockchain in combating corruption. Bernstein (2017:217) examines different forms of transparency, some of which are not essential for tackling corruption and could serve as a foundation for theorising the real impact of blockchain technology. A more pertinent approach is to adopt a theoretical framework that considers the interaction *between* "institutional logics, resources, and institutional entrepreneurs" (Misangyi et al., 2008:752).

Judging between anti-corruption strategies in different regions or countries will give much-needed information and lessons. Kohler and Bowra (2020:8) state that regions that succeeded in mainly bogus reduction tend to implement robust legal frameworks, effective enforcement mechanisms, active civil society participation, and high transparency and accountability levels in service provision. Through studying these cases, regions such as Gauteng can learn how to tailor their anti-corruption programmes to fit their individual conditions and cultural specificities.

2.7.1.1 Political Will and Leadership Commitment

Owusu *et al.* (2020:14) assert that the dedication of political leaders to combat corruption is the critical determinant of the effectiveness of any anti-corruption approach. Competent leadership can establish a setting favourable to honesty and responsibility, especially when executing these tactics (Kingsford *et al.*, 2019:32). Political will facilitate the process by giving ample resources, upholding legislation, and safeguarding the autonomy of judicial and investigative entities. Without political will, even well-crafted anti-corruption measures may prove ineffective in their execution. For instance, Singapore and Denmark have substantially reduced corruption levels due to their robust governmental leadership in anti-corruption endeavours (Rotberg, 2020:3).

National anti-corruption agencies ought to be managed by impartial individuals rather than those chosen by political leaders, as this could lead to the use of these positions to intimidate rivals (Faccia & Beebeejaun, 2023). There needs to be consistency: it cannot exist only now and then or just for a limited time. These organisations should also possess the authority to centralise information, encompassing its collection, storage, processing, and dissemination – essentially functioning as an information hub (Galstyan, 2018). In South Africa, the agencies focused on combating corruption are responsible to the Executive. Chapter 14 of the 2030 National Development Plan (2011:448) indicates that this situation undermines the autonomy of anticorruption agencies, potentially exposing them to political influence and interference. The responses might suggest that the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies relies on the ruling party.

2.7.1.2 Institutional Capacity

Among factors noted by Amengual and Dargent (2020:168) is the ability of institutions to implement and enforce anti-corruption measures efficiently. This involves having well-equipped personnel with sufficient financial resources and a solid legal basis (Arsad, 2023:3336). Weak institutions might not have enough capacity to implement their mandates and will fall prey to corruption. Schoeberlein (2022:13) points out that building institutional capacity can be achieved by improving public sector management, enhancing the quality of public services and ensuring transparency in institutional operations.

2.7.1.3 Legal and Regulatory Framework

Senu (2020:675) argues that a thorough and open legal framework is crucial in addressing corruption by clearly identifying it and outlining the appropriate sanctions and procedures. Ukey and Aiyer (2023:2051) assert that the efficacy of these legal regulations is contingent upon their level of specificity and unbiased implementation by the legal system. The exploitation of loopholes in legislative provisions or the broad application of corruption-related articles can be used to hinder attempts to combat corruption (Pillay, 2017:5). However, it is essential to not only possess a comprehensive legal framework but also to possess a versatile legal system capable of adjusting to developing types of corrupt practices. This will guarantee the ongoing efficacy of anti-corruption initiatives.

2.7.1.4 Cultural Norms and Public Attitudes

In their turn, Persson *et al.* (2013:803) underlined that cultural norms and social attitudes towards corruption are key factors determining the level of success of anti-corruption measures. When it comes to societies where minor forms of corruption are either encouraged or seen as a regular part of conducting business, it is difficult to abolish corrupt practices (Harford, 2022:7). The successful strategy usually relies on the combined effort of educational campaigns to change people’s attitudes and public engagement initiatives to establish a culture of integrity (Powell *et al.* 2020:351).

2.7.1.5 Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms

According to Chang *et al*. (2021:4), robust transparency and accountability procedures are crucial in thwarting public and private corruption. As indicated by Abdulai and Abdulai (2020:244), these mechanisms are encompassed in activities such as regular audits, public disclosure of government contracts, and freedom of information laws that enable citizens to access public records. They ensure that public officers are always accountable for what they do, discouraging corrupt actions. For instance, open data projects like those used to fight corruption by enhancing public scrutiny of government activities have proven very effective (Žuffová, 2020:4).

2.7.1.6 International Cooperation

International cooperation is crucial for the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives since corruption frequently extends across national boundaries (Bismuth *et al*., 2021:23). This collaboration can streamline the transfer of information, extradition of individuals suspected of wrongdoing, and retrieval of unlawfully obtained assets. According to Topchii *et al*. (2021:281), active involvement in international anti-corruption initiatives can pressure governments to maintain high standards and adopt optimal approaches in their national anti-corruption measures.

2.8 Impact of Anti-Corruption Strategies on Public Trust and Institutional Integrity

The diverse and extensive impacts of anti-corruption tactics on public trust are profound and far-reaching. Xiao *et al*. (2022:151) argue that confidence in public institutions is crucial for the effective operation of democracy and the economic well-being of a society. According to Graycar (2020:3), corrective techniques aimed at combating corruption are highly effective and can significantly enhance public trust by promoting accountability, transparency, and ethical practices in government. As noted by Powell *et al.* (2020:352), the depiction of a corrupt public institution has a detrimental effect on institutional confidence, hindering the advancement of democracy and the economy.

Anti-corruption policies gain the public's trust by implementing openness and accountability in governance (OECD, 2017:9). Transparency in government acts and accountability of officials can foster trust among citizens, who perceive their government as acting in their best interests. Furthermore, government-led open data projects can promote transparency and accountability while reducing corruption. They provide the public with real-time access to information on government decision-making and spending (Žuffová, 2020:16).

Ensuring compliance with corruption regulations is equally crucial to establishing public confidence. Evidence indicates that when anti-corruption legislation is effectively implemented, there is a rise in public confidence in the government (Uslaner, 2018:22). The fact that citizens witness government officials involved in corruption being held accountable demonstrates that no individual is exempt from legal repercussions. This perspective is crucial for restoring the prevailing confidence in institutions that may have been perceived as tainted by corruption.

Yates (2020:142) proposes that anti-corruption methods that advocate for fair practices and meritocracy in public administration improve the government's reputation among citizens. David-Barrett (2021:16) argues that offering employment and government contracts based on merit rather than partisanship or bribery will lead to a fairer allocation of resources and chances for prospective candidates. This equality negatively impacts the way the public perceives the fairness and integrity of institutions. Specifically, implementing measures to eradicate nepotism and favouritism in the recruitment process will significantly impact public perception of the government and the overall integrity of institutions (Musmar, 2022:9).

According to Rajan (2020:22), anti-corruption measures are unsuccessful in societies with distrust and suspicion towards the government. Implementing these techniques may require significant time and effort to establish trust and confidence in the government among the general population. Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain ongoing interaction and communication with the government and society to facilitate a shift in the prevailing narrative and ultimately foster the development of trust among the population (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015:11).

While it is crucial to prioritise the improvement of public trust, it is essential to acknowledge that anti-corruption initiatives face certain limitations and challenges. Initially, the exposure of extensive corruption through transparency initiatives will further diminish public trust until it gradually establishes a more dependable foundation (Carothers, 2022:6). Moreover, if anti-corruption measures are perceived as being improperly implemented or used as a tool for politically motivated persecution, they can undermine public trust in the institutions that are meant to be bolstered by such measures (Hogic, 2024:12).

Institutional integrity is the fundamental basis on which nations and organisations are established, regardless of whether they are governmental or private institutions (Michel, 2020:8). Michel (2020:11) asserts that anti-corruption methods directly impact institutional integrity by setting benchmarks, enforcing regulations, and shaping perceptions of appropriate conduct. Khan *et al.* (2019:9) propose that implementing effective anti-corruption initiatives can strengthen governance frameworks. This procedure may involve using control tools, implementing precise accountability mechanisms, and establishing transparent decision-making and resource allocation systems. Rothstein (2021:8) asserts that robust government institutions encompass two essential elements that might effectively deter corruption: reducing opportunities for misconduct and establishing rigorous auditing protocols. However, the operational efficiency of these structures is compromised by the flaws in their design and the conditions in which they operate. Larsson and Grimes (2023:1324) argue that legally established governance mechanisms may not be effective if there is no accompanying legal framework and an engaged civil society, as this can undermine their intended purpose.

Tunde and Adekunle (2023:1024) note that legal systems can be developed or modified within the framework of anti-corruption tactics to enhance institutional integrity. These frameworks include regulations that serve as the legal foundation for combating corruption, which prosecutes corrupt activities and safeguards individuals who report wrongdoing. According to Mungiu-Pippidi (2015:13), adequate legal frameworks impose severe penalties for corruption and promote a culture of inclusivity, transparency, and honesty. Nevertheless, according to Schiavo-Campo (2017:3), the presence of laws alone is inadequate; the reliability of their implementation is essential for their efficacy. Inconsistencies in the application of rules and regulations can result in doubt and distrust, which weakens the perceived honesty and reliability of institutions (Oliveira & Jackson, 2021:115).

Michel (2020:13) acknowledges that at the core of institutional integrity is the ethical culture within the institution. Graycar (2020:17) notes that anti-corruption strategies often include components aimed at cultivating ethical norms and behaviours achieved through training programmes, codes of conduct, and the promotion of a values-based approach to decision-making. Rothstein (2021) emphasises the importance of an ingrained ethical culture to deter corruption. However, establishing such a culture can be challenging, especially in settings where corruption has been normalised (Zahari *et al.*, 2022:339). The success of these initiatives often depends on continuous reinforcement and the personal commitment of institutional leaders to uphold these standards.

Enforcing anti-corruption measures and maintaining their effectiveness in the long term poses considerable difficulties. According to Graycar and Cochrane (2019:4), individuals within the system significantly impede the execution of anti-corruption policies. Furthermore, Bellows (2020:4) observes that sustainability issues arise as the initial enthusiasm for anti-corruption movements wanes, typically due to a change in leadership or a shift in political determination. In his work, Cochrane (2018:7) introduced the concept of institutional integrity as a crucial component of anti-corruption efforts. The impact of incorporating the strategy into the institution's daily operations and securing a commitment from all levels of the institution will be significant.

Implementing strict procedures is crucial in combating corruption; however, it is also essential to ensure that staff and officials are knowledgeable about behaving with integrity (World Bank, 2019:2). The maintenance of this equilibrium is crucial in preventing the emergence of a culture of apprehension that hinders both creativity and constructive risk-taking. Rothstein (2021:18) argues that a harmonious combination of control mechanisms and empowering policies is necessary to ensure that officials' ethics are motivated by internal factors rather than fear of punishment. To effectively promote advancement, it is crucial to implement balanced anti-corruption strategies that unite integrity and innovation as two essential pillars.

2.9 Conclusions

The literature review chapter meticulously examined the critical challenges associated with the implementation of anti-corruption strategies, focusing on both conceptual frameworks and practical applications. This analysis directly supports the primary objective established in Chapter 1: to identify and assess the obstacles that impede effective anti-corruption efforts within Gauteng's public sector. The review investigated the theoretical underpinnings of anti-corruption frameworks and their applications across various contexts, including both global and South African instances, thereby bolstering the study's first secondary objective. By highlighting the gaps that exist between theoretical frameworks and their practical implementation, the chapter underscored the notion that while anti-corruption strategies may be robust in theory, they frequently encounter significant shortcomings when applied in real-world settings. This identified gap serves as a central focus of the study, aiming to illuminate and comprehend these discrepancies, particularly in the context of Gauteng's public institutions.

Furthermore, the chapter addressed the second secondary objective by evaluating how anti-corruption measures impact public trust and institutional integrity. Case studies, including the Zondo Commission and findings from the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) reports, provided illustrative examples that demonstrate how both effective and deficient anti-corruption strategies influence public perceptions. By analysing international practices and juxtaposing them with local challenges, the chapter emphasised the conditions under which anti-corruption initiatives can either enhance or undermine institutional credibility. In addition, the literature review established a foundation for the third secondary objective: to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing Gauteng's anti-corruption framework. The chapter presented insights into international best practices and theoretical constructs, such as institutional theory that could inform potential improvements. This groundwork serves to guide the recommendations section, with the aim of bridging the identified gaps in implementation and fostering increased public trust in Gauteng's public institutions.

In summary, this chapter not only established a framework for understanding the challenges posed to anti-corruption efforts but also directly supported each research objective by exploring theoretical discrepancies, examining impacts on public trust, and identifying areas for enhancement. This comprehensive analysis sets the stage for the empirical research in Gauteng, as elaborated upon in the subsequent methodology chapter.

This literature evaluation addressed two of the secondary objectives in detail, specifically:

- To identify the gaps between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical application.
- To assess the impact of anti-corruption strategies on public trust and institutional integrity.

The following chapter will discuss the methodological technique and rationale for the strategy used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research approach and technique used in this study to evaluate the challenges associated with implementing anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng, South Africa, within the public sector. This will involve gathering input from individuals directly involved in the daily tasks of fraud prevention. It provides direction on addressing research questions, data gathering, analysis, and interpretation more coherently.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework that plays a crucial role in guiding a researcher's approach to knowledge creation, encompassing the foundational assumptions and principles that shape the research process (Omodan, 2024:1). Paradigms act as a filter through which researchers understand their object of study, influencing the selection of methods, approaches, and instruments for data collection and analysis. They offer different viewpoints on meaningful knowledge and how one can achieve it (Ngoepe *et al.,* 2022:213). Some well-known paradigms are positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and interpretivism (Jackson, 2020:17).

This work adopted the interpretivism paradigm, which is very similar to constructivism but with a stronger focus on the research subject’s interpretation of the phenomenon. Interpretivism asserts that reality is not out there but created through people’s interactions and involvement (Duffy *et al.,* 2022:103). In this paradigm, researchers are interested in the meanings that people attach to their daily experiences. This approach is particularly relevant when exploring complex social issues where context and personal perspectives are crucial (Pope & Mays, 2020:16).

The decision to adopt the interpretivism paradigm for this study was based on the unique insights it can provide. By utilising an interpretive research design, the study uncovered the diverse and context-specific attitudes towards anti-corruption initiatives within the South African public sector. This approach, which focuses on the meanings people attribute to their daily experiences, also allowed for an in-depth exploration of the complexity of questions about these professionals’ roles and responsibilities, leveraging the richness of information provided in the qualitative data that quantitative methods may overlook. The study’s value and insights are thus significantly enriched by this paradigm, which played a pivotal role in shaping the research process and influencing the study’s objectives and outcomes.

The chosen interpretive method provided a perspective on the complex aptitude of anti-corruption measures and replied to the research questions regarding people and institutions. The emphasis in this paradigm on understanding and interpreting social realities was also compatible with this study's objective of gaining insight from fraud prevention experts who operate in environments that may inform their experiences and perceptions, even if in ways that are not entirely inconsequential (Duffy *et al*., 2022:105).

3.3 Research Approach

A research approach entails the link between the general assumption and hypothesis and the general research process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:6). It provides a guideline for conducting research. There are several steps to solve the research issue systematically. Research approaches are typically categorised into three main types divided into the methods used in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research. Each procedure has advantages and is optimal for a study's questions and objectives (Mohajan, 2020:58).

The qualitative research approach was adopted based on the interpretive paradigm in this research. Qualitative research provides non-numeric information to understand ideas, perceptions, or events (Adedoyin, 2020:79). It is an exploratory research strategy that tries to establish familiarity with the context of the phenomenon under study. According to Corbin and England (2021:86), using participants' experiences and views enriches and broadens the context under study, which is why qualitative research is superior to quantitative research.

The rationale for choosing the qualitative study method in this research was based on the nature of the research questions, which aim to evaluate the level of success in implementing the anti-corruption strategies and explore the factors that hinder the implementation of the plan from the perspective of experts in fraud prevention in Gauteng. Since corruption and anti-corruption activities are unclear and cannot use generic solutions, a strategy was chosen that fit the contingencies and experiences of the participants. Conducting semi-structured interviews makes it possible to grasp these experiences and understand the context that cannot be easily quantifiable (Changder, 2022:13).

Semi-structured interviews were suitable for this study because the researcher could pose questions on different themes and factors that conform with the study's objectives. This was because it gave the researcher the leeway to probe deeper into the participants' responses and get extra information that might not be gleaned if the structured techniques were used. Furthermore, the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews encouraged participants to share their experiences and perspectives openly, leading to a richer and more detailed understanding of the implementation challenges and effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:241).

Selecting the qualitative research method aligns with the interpretive paradigm as it postulates that reality is not objective but instead constructed. It is crucial to be aware of the backgrounds of corruption experts. It shows various contextual factors that shape their view on anti-corruption initiatives (Changder, 2022:13). Thus, to meet the objectives of understanding the complexity and identification of problems faced by these experts, an interpretive approach was used as this type of approach offers deeper qualitative data that may not be uncovered by quantitative analysis (Lasisi, 2023:4).

3.4 Research Design

In essence, a research design could be defined as a roadmap that outlines how data are to be gathered and analysed to answer the research question and meet the objectives of the study (Hennink *et al*., 2020:4). It is a plan of what would be done in the course of conducting a survey and the actions that would be made when implementing every stage of the research. As Tomaszewski (2020:10) stated, the research design helps to reasonably align the various parts of the study to address the research problem. It involves all activities and strategies relating to data collection and analysis, which form the general framework of the study (Popenoe *et al*., 2021:175).

Research designs vary depending on the research questions and objectives set. Primary research has three basic forms: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. A descriptive research design is carried out to describe characteristics of a phenomenon or a population in a systematic and planned fashion (Doyle *et al*., 2020:48). It is usually used to answer questions like “What?”. It can involve tactics like surveys and observations. On the other hand, the explanatory research design seeks to establish causality, and therefore, it relies on experiments and longitudinal studies to establish cause and effect (Hamaker *et al*., 2020:10).

Exploratory research design, used in this study, is used in a situation whereby the research problem is not well understood and, therefore, needs to ask more questions to get more ideas and hypotheses. It is helpful in investigations involving fresh or where conventional theory or existing knowledge cannot go. Exploratory research is more flexible than other forms of research in that the researcher can go astray as far as they deem fit during the research process. It often employs interviews, focus groups, and case studies to collect descriptive and rich data (Popenoe *et al*., 2021:183).

The rationale for employing the exploratory research design for this study can be appreciated from the context of the research questions, which seek to establish the challenges that prevailed in the execution of anti-corruption strategies within Gauteng’s public sector as identified by fraud prevention experts. Considering the proposed study type, an exploratory research design was deemed suitable for the finer and contextual data required to capture these challenges' extent effectively. This approach helped the researcher to gain detailed insights into the participants' subjective experiences and views, which is essential for further evaluation of the anti-corruption efforts (Gray *et al*., 2014:729).

Therefore, the research design was primarily qualitative, and the author did not expect new information discovery to be limited during the research process. This flexibility was essential because corruption and anti-corruption processes are somewhat flexible and sometimes not very transparent (Hamaker *et al*., 2020:10). Semi-structured interviews with the participants as the primary source of data gathering allowed for a rich discussion and investigation of the problem from multiple angles that the researcher may not have initially considered (Mottus *et al*., 2020:11).

However, the exploratory design was beneficial for developing new hypotheses and theoretical ideas that may form the base for following studies and plans. This is important in exploratory research, as the primary purpose is not only to identify the phenomenon but also to establish the foundation for subsequent investigation and treatment (Pope & Mays, 2020:24).

3.5 Time Horizon

The time horizon has been defined as the period that is taken to conduct a given research study (Zhao *et al.*, 2021:89). The time horizon chosen for the research is relevant as it defines the sort of information that is collected in the survey and the results that are derived from the research. Research time horizons can be broadly categorised into cross-sectional and longitudinal. Longitudinal studies involve taking data at different points in time, thus enabling one to track the development of a particular phenomenon (Ajzen, 2020:24). Such studies are also helpful for analysing causal mechanisms and tendencies. Cross-sectional studies, in contrast, collect their data at a specific time and, therefore, only provide a "census" of a particular event (Pan, 2022:42)

The current study adopted a cross-sectional approach, which was relevant as it offered a contemporary view of the status of the fight against corruption in Gauteng's public sector. The cross-sectional approach is most appropriate in exploratory studies where the aim is to establish the current state of affairs without any intention of longitudinally measuring change. Cross-sectional studies are non-experimental as they focus on a particular population at a specific time (Gebel, 2023:9). This approach was cheap, easily implementable, and suitable for the current context of capturing the dynamics of corruption and anti-corruption endeavours.

The research was planned for the short term, from January 2024 to November 2024. This period was chosen to ensure that the study is coherent with the current social, political and economic climate in which combating strategies are being developed. Surveying within this period meant that the data gathered was recent and portrays the current and ongoing fight against corruption within the public sector. By focusing on a specific timeframe, the research aimed to provide a clear and detailed understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of anti-corruption strategies as they currently stand (Zhao *et al*., 2021:89)

The choice of a cross-sectional time horizon was appropriate given the study's goals, which aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the existing anti-corruption strategies and investigating the problems encountered by fraud prevention experts in Gauteng. This method allowed the researcher to examine the state of anti-corruption efforts at the time of the study and understand how these strategies are executed and perceived today. The data collected within this timeframe were important for finding out the gaps and directions for developing the policy and strategy in the future.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional design used in this study enabled a concise and targeted research approach that enhanced the study's timely conduct and reporting. Since corruption constantly evolves and the consequences of this phenomenon are so dire, a cross-sectional study offered value in delivering information that could be acted upon by policymakers and stakeholders. This approach meant that the research results were timely and could be used to further existing debates and improvements to combating corruption in Gauteng's public sector (Bryman, 2015:78).

3.6 Study Population and Sampling

3.6.1 Target Population

A population in research is the whole group of individuals or objects for which conclusions drawn in research are generalised (Levitt, 2021:95). In this study, the target population included people occupying positions involved in fraud in the South African public sector. This particular sample was selected because these individuals are central to developing, executing, and evaluating anti-corruption initiatives in their organisations. The professionals of interest for this study were internal auditors, chief risk officers, forensic auditors, compliance officers and chief audit executives. This is because fraud prevention professionals have adequate corruption prevention experience and knowledge. Their work involves understanding financial and accounting systems, risk assessment, internal controls and investigative skills; hence, their input is crucial for evaluating tendencies of anti-corruption initiatives (Khelil *et al*., 2024:9). Practitioners working in different roles ensured that all aspects of strategies and issues observed in various positions within the public sector was covered in anti-fraud activities.

It was thus imperative to set an inclusion criterion that would make the study applicable to this particular category. The study employed professionals who had worked for more than five years in fraud- and anti-corruption-related matters. This criterion was established to make sure that participants were knowledgeable in anti-corruption strategies and practices to give out informed opinions that would be reliable (Collis & Hussey, 2014:141). The respondents were self-selected employees from government departments, public corporations, municipalities and state agencies, which probably gave the study a broad and representative view of the public sector who opted in voluntarily.

3.6.2 Sampling

Sampling is the technique of choosing several people from the population to be involved in the study (Casteel and Bridier, 2021:7). Ideally, this subset or sample should represent the larger population to advance the generalisation of the study's results. Some sampling methods include random, stratified, cluster, and purposive sampling (Hamaker *et al*., 2020:10). All the methods have advantages and should be used depending on the nature of the research question and the objectives set.

In random sampling, all the participants are chosen unthinkingly so that each population participant will have an equal likelihood of being picked. It is particularly appropriate when the objective of the research is to generalise the findings from a sample to a larger population (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:6). Stratified sampling involves categorisation of the population based on specific attributes and then the selection of the sample from the various categories that have been created randomly (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:8). Cluster sampling involves categorising the population into groups like geographical and then take a random sample of these groups. This can be particularly relevant in cases where a disconnected and unorganised population needs to be reached (Howell *et al*., 2020:7).

The sample selection method adopted in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, also called judgmental or selective sampling, involves deliberately selecting participants based on their expertise or the relevance of their involvement in the study context (Cash *et al*., 2022:10). This method ensures that the sample contains only participants who have sufficient knowledge and experience of the research area.

The choice of purposive sampling for this study was made to achieve a deep and specific understanding of the perceptions of the participants, including individuals and organisations involved in the fight against fraud and corruption (Mabulana, 2021:17). The specificity of the study was to interview with professionals that would enable obtaining relatively rich and extensive data regarding anti-corruption measures in the public sector. This approach enabled the researcher to select participants who could provide valuable insights into the issues examined and assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. The insights gained were intended to assist the researcher in developing recommendations for enhancing public sector anti-corruption initiatives, ultimately contributing to a more transparent and accountable government.

The study aimed to offer practical and effective solutions to prevent fraudulent activities in the future by focusing on experts with direct experience of the challenges and successes encountered in combating corruption. Through targeted interviews and data analysis, the researcher sought to identify best practices for promoting honesty and accountability within the public sector.

3.6.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Participation

In research, inclusion criteria are crucial in determining the appropriate number of participants to address the research questions (Poponoe *et al.*, 2021:184). Individuals were required to meet specific criteria to be eligible for participation in this study. They needed to work in the public sector within the Gauteng province, and their job involved fraud prevention and detection functions such as forensic audit investigation, compliance, risk management, and internal audit. Moreover, they were expected to have at least five years of experience in fraud prevention or detection responsibilities. These criteria ensured that participants had the knowledge and expertise to provide valuable insights.

Exclusion criteria were also employed to ensure the collection of high-quality and relevant data. Individuals with less than five years of experience in fraud prevention or detection and those not involved in fraud prevention or detection activities were excluded. This approach focused on engaging experienced professionals who could contribute meaningfully to the research process.

3.6.4 Research Setting

The study was conducted among employees of public sector organisations in Gauteng province, including government departments, public enterprises, municipalities, and State agencies in South Africa. These settings were chosen because they depict major environments where anti-corruption gear is deployed, and its impact is evaluated. The varying contexts made it possible to compare the efficacy and issues of these approaches across multiple organisational contexts.

3.6.5 Sample Size and Saturation

The sample size for this research was decided based on the guidelines for data saturation as a form of qualitative research. On the other hand, data saturation refers to the stage at which data collection does not provide any further valuable data or results (Braun & Clarke, 2021:16). It means that the researcher has collected enough information to give a detailed analysis of the research questions (Mwita, 2022:20).

This study achieved data saturation with a sample size of approximately eleven participants, strategically selected from critical roles to ensure comprehensive insights. The participants held significant positions within the fields of forensics, ethics, compliance, risk management, and anti-corruption. The specific positions represented in the sample included the Head of Forensics, Compliance, and Risk; Fraud Manager; Compliance Manager; Audit and Compliance Specialist; Law Enforcement Forensic Investigator; Forensic and Risk Director; Fraud Investigation Specialist; Data Privacy and Compliance Officer; Senior Risk and Ethics Officer; SAPS Forensic Investigator; Chief Director of Risk, Compliance, and Investigation; Fraud Strategy Manager; and Director and Owner of Fraud Check. This diverse representation ensured that various perspectives on auditing, forensic investigation, risk management, and compliance were adequately captured.

Sample saturation takes place when no new information or data is revealed, thus meaning that the researcher has included enough data to satisfactorily answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021:16). In this study, data saturation was achieved through a well-structured method of data gathering and analysis. Using interviews drawn from a diverse sample of fraud prevention experts and open coding of the data consistently throughout the study, the researcher realised patterned themes. Interviewing proceeded until no further new information was obtained, according to the rationale of data saturation and data corroboration methods.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaires are measuring tools employed by researchers to ensure that the collected data are reliable, valid, and appropriate for answering the research questions (Taherdoost, 2021:15). Such instruments can range from surveys to questionnaires, observation checklists, and interviews. The selection of the data collection tool depends on the nature of the study, the goals, and the type of data needed for analysis.

As such, qualitative research data were collected from fraud prevention experts on combating corruption in the South African public sector. In particular, the semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection tool. This approach enabled the researcher to pose questions to the participants that did not have pre-designated set answers, thus encouraging elaborated and nuanced accounts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:82). Semi-structured interviews are standard in qualitative research because they allow researchers to obtain data systematically and in a structured manner (Mwita, 2022:20). The interview guide used for these semi-structured interviews is attached in Annexure B.

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a type of data collection in which the researcher must ask some prepared questions while the respondent can raise other issues of interest. Hence, having fixed questions and the opportunity to ask follow-up questions on matters of interest can be considered more effective in identifying features and richness of participants' experiences (Aital & Aithal, 2020:23).

Structured interviews usually comprise a set of questions as well as cues. These are carefully formulated questions, which are meant to guide the discussion and offer the participants a certain amount of leeway (Changder, 2022:13). The predefined questions guarantee that each topic related to the research is covered, while the ability and permission to ask additional questions allow the researcher to delve deeper into the issues under discussion (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:8).

This type of interviewing was appropriate for this research for the following reasons. First, it allowed the researcher to concentrate on the discursive representation of fraud prevention and the participation of experts in specific contexts. Given the nature of the subject and its particular aim of fighting corruption, it is essential to use a methodology that enables the collection of a vast amount of different and detailed information. Second, the choice of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to focus on the flow of the conversation with the participants and adjust the further discussion related to the given topic to the answers of the participants (Bryman, 2015). The researcher used ATLAS.ti software to analyse the transcribed interviews. A total of eleven documents were imported and analysed. ATLAS.ti AI coding was used to code the nine documents. After the AI coding was completed, the researcher used the concept function within ATLAS.ti to identify the most relevant themes and codes, which enabled the researcher to address the research objectives listed in Chapter 1.

3.7.2 Data Collection: Step-by-Step

1) Preparation: The interview guide was carefully constructed before the interviews. Such a guide contains a set of predetermined questions and prompts that will help address all essential aspects of the researched theme (Roberts, 2020:8). Open-ended questions were used to elicit detailed responses and also for the respondent to introduce new topics that emerged during the interaction.
2) Pilot Study: A pilot test was conducted with two participants to test the interview guide and identify possible functional problems. The pilot study was conducted to confirm the validity of the questions that were used in the study in a way that can provide the correct answers. The pilot study outcomes were then used to review the interview guide and make necessary adaptations to enhance the flow and usability of the research instrument. This process

assisted in improving the quality of the data collection instrument and ensuring that it was well-suited for the main study (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021:35).

3) Recruitment: The research engaged the Institute of Commercial Forensic Practitioners (ICFP) as gatekeepers to facilitate the selection of appropriate participants for the study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify individuals for the interviews based on their roles and experiences in fraud prevention and anti-corruption initiatives. All invited subjects provided their written informed consent to participate in the study. The consent form outlined the study's rationale, participants' roles and obligations, potential hazards and advantages, means of maintaining anonymity, and voluntary participation.
4) Conducting Interviews: The interviews were open-ended because this increases the amount and quality of information collected. All the interviews conducted in this research were recorded with the participant's consent to enable accuracy. The interviews typically lasted 45 minutes to an hour, providing ample time to explore the topics in detail.
5) Transcription and Anonymisation: Subsequently, all the interviews were recorded, and transcription was also done in detail. The participants' identities were also removed from the transcripts to maintain anonymity. This process entailed eliminating any sources of identity and assigning the subjects fake names to allow for maximum anonymity. In the analysis, it is essential to emphasise what the participants said and how they said it (thus verbal and non-verbal communication) (Saunders *et al*., 2016:392).
6) Data Analysis: The collected data was transcribed and analysed qualitatively through descriptive coding with the help of the ATLAS.ti software. This involved categorising the data under similar or related interests to handle each aspect comprehensively. The research method used was inductive design, whereby the researcher observed events and developed more general theories from the collected data (Amadi, 2023:21). ATLAS.ti is a tool designed for qualitative research that facilitates the coding and analysis of transcripts and field notes, aids in constructing literature reviews, allows for the creation of network diagrams, and supports data visualisation. ATLAS.ti software was crucial in structuring the data into themes and patterns, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the research findings. Throughout this journey, essential insights and patterns surfaced, leading to a more profound comprehension of the subject at hand. Overall, utilising ATLAS.ti alongside qualitative analysis methods demonstrated its effectiveness in revealing significant insights from the data. ATLAS.ti is a robust tool for analysing qualitative data, especially for extensive text segments, as well as visual and audio materials. This software assists the researcher throughout the data analysis phase, where texts are examined and understood through coding and annotating tasks.
7) Additionally, it offers a thorough summary of a research initiative known as the Hermeneutic Unit (HU) in ATLAS.ti and provides quick search and retrieval capabilities (Amadi, 2023:21). This programme also includes a network-building tool, enabling users to link chosen text notes,

and visual representations of codes visually. Historically, researchers have manually analysed their data, utilising cut-and-paste and colour-coding techniques. Researchers utilised data analysis software as valuable tools for organising and examining large volumes of raw data.

3.7.3 Justification of Semi-Structured Interviews

Several considerations informed the choice of semi-structured interviews for this study. First, the questions incorporated in the survey were mainly parallel to the open-ended questions. Therefore, the participants were able to offer large quantities of qualitative information. This was crucial for understanding the processes and differences in combating corruption with anti-corruption measures in the context of State administration. Second, because the interviews were semi-structured, the researcher could follow up with questions about all topics. This flexibility was crucial because the subject of choice constantly evolved and depended on context.

In addition, using semi-structured interviews was crucial in getting more detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and their perspectives on the phenomenon under study. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain the perception of fraud prevention specialists regarding the obstacles and impact of anti-corruption measures, getting more accurate and comprehensive qualitative data that would be difficult to collect using more formal approaches.

3.8 Data Management

Research data management encompasses the processes of acquiring, securing, storing, backing up, sharing, organising, archiving, and disposing of data from the commencement to the conclusion of the research process (Ashiq et al., 2022:12). Records management is crucial for maintaining impartiality during research and providing reliable records for analysis while upholding legal and ethical standards (Willoughby & Frey, 2022:18). This section outlines the measures taken in handling data in this study, including data collection, storage, analysis, and security.

3.8.1 Data Collection and Recording

The data collection method adopted was a semi-structured interview with fraud prevention experts to add depth to data collected about South African public sector anti-corruption measures. Each interview was conducted with the participant's consent and recorded as audio for proper documentation. These recordings were then transcribed word by word, providing textual accounts that served as a source of analysis.

After every interview, all the recordings were backed up in another password-protected digital recorder to increase the data's credibility. The corrections in the transcripts were made based on the comparison with the recorded data to reduce the number of errors. This systematic approach helped prevent data loss, and the collected raw scores were as close to the actual participants' answers as possible, which was crucial for further analysis.

3.8.2 Data Anonymisation and Confidentiality

Specific measures were taken while carrying out this study to maintain participant anonymity. Any information regarding identity, such as names, was either obscured, or participants used fake names where possible during transcription. This anonymisation process entailed a systematic approach to washing out the names, places, and other associated details from the transcripts. In this way, the researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants, which was in line with the recommendation on ethical practices in research by Creswell and Poth (2018:43).

In addition, all the other digital files generated from the recordings, transcriptions, and codes were encrypted on the secure server. They were closed, and only the researcher was allowed to work on them; every effort was made to ensure that other people did not come across these files. This level of data security helped to protect the identity of the participants and the information they submitted during the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:19).

3.9 Data Analysis

In qualitative research, analysis entails transforming data into meaningful information by identifying patterned interpretations of the text-based data that answer the research questions (Mezmir, 2020:19). It increases awareness of the study subject since it turns the raw data into useful information. This is useful to the research process as it helps produce significant findings and conclusions that contribute to the body of knowledge (Alam, 2021:29). Among the most common qualitative data analysis techniques used is thematic analysis, which was employed in this study.

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a way of analysing data, identifying patterns or themes, and reporting the findings (Morgan & Nica, 2020:14). It offers a less strict form of qualitative data analysis where researchers can gain broad, intricate and nuanced insights into the data. Braun and Clarke (2021:18) identified several phases that comprise thematic data analysis: data familiarisation, code generation, theme search, theme retrieval, definition and naming of the theme, and preparing the final report. This structured yet flexible process makes thematic analysis a robust methodology for analysing qualitative data.

Therefore, the first procedure of the thematic analysis approach is to understand the data being used. This involves going through the data more than once until the analyst is familiar with the data set (Mezmir, 2020:20). This stage comprises the development of the first hypotheses and possibly the trends to be tracked. The next step is, of course, the generation of initial codes. This involves labelling some aspects of the data considered attractive in the entire data and clustering the data into valuable units (Vila-Henninger *et al*., 2024:24). These codes are essential in sensitive and meaningful patterns in the data.

Following coding, the next step is to search for themes. This entails identifying possible themes from the codes and compiling all the information related to each potential theme (Peel, 2020:2). The themes are then considered and adjusted to align them with the data collected efficiently. This step may call for aggregation, decomposition or elimination of themes to arrive at a logical, integrated and harmonious thematic structure of the data (Mezmir, 2020:21). The last step is naming the themes: Before naming a theme, a definition of the theme allows one to not only discover what it is but the sides of the data it possesses. This process culminates in producing the final report, where the themes are presented and discussed in line with the research questions (Morgan & Nica, 2020:14).

3.9.2 Suitability and Justification of Thematic Analysis

The use of thematic analysis was particularly appropriate in this research because it provided an opportunity to carry out methodical and controlled work with the data and find results that could be objective and trustworthy. Since the current study was interested in the complete and complex picture of the fraud prevention experts' experiences, thematic analysis was the best approach to qualitative data. This approach enabled the researcher to get insight into the strategies the participants thought about that have been put in place to fight corruption and challenges in the South African public sector in Gauteng since it offered detailed data.

Thematic analysis was particularly useful for this research. It is relevant to grasp that both the anti-corruption endeavours and the fraud prevention experts' accounts are context-dependent and constructed (Kannabiran *et al*., 2021). Thus, thematic analysis was deemed suitable because of its versatility in applying to all qualitative data and questions. This flexibility in the data made the researcher look at other angles that may not have been considered at the beginning of the research.

Thematic analysis is particularly useful for capturing and reconstructing the voices and experiences of the participants. This method focuses more on the participants' views, which is consistent with the study's aim of capturing the perceptions of fraud prevention experts (Finlay, 2021:11). Therefore, it was easier for the researcher to capture the essence of anti-corruption strategies by focusing on themes that emerged from the data. Such an understanding was necessary to answer the research questions and fulfil this study's purpose and the Atlas.ti findings. This will be presented in Chapter 4.

3.10 Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility and dependability are equally crucial in qualitative research to justify the reliability of research. Trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses four critical elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Collectively, the mentioned aspects enhance the objectivity of the findings, their credibility, and their generalisability to other studies and settings (Alam, 2021:29).

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to confidence in the outcome of the data collected and analysis tested on the data (Shufutinsky, 2020:51). The time spent with the participants helped build their confidence and allowed them to provide detailed and exhaustive responses. In addition, to increase the credibility of the study, a method known as triangulation was employed. This was accomplished through the employment of various techniques in the collection of data, the use of different analytical methods and the use of theoretical frameworks as a way of cross-checking. For example, the study employed interviews that collected information from internal auditors, forensic auditors, and compliance officers to obtain a general perspective on the measures against corruption.

Another critical process was member checking. After the data collection and the initial analysis, the researcher shared the findings with participants and assessed their consensus. This feedback loop also ensured that the participants' views were captured correctly and addressed any misunderstandings that may have occurred (Birt *et al*., 2016:1807). Furthermore, the peer debriefing of the analysis was done with other researchers, and it felt logical and unbiased.

3.10.2 Transferability

Generalisability or external validity can be defined as the extent to which a study's findings can be exported to another population or context (Hays & McKibben, 2021:17). To increase the transferability; the researcher explained the background of the study, the participants, and the phenomenon under study. Some aspects of the participants' location and background were presented to enable the readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings in similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1982:316).

Transferability was somewhat assisted by purposive sampling as well. This way, the study ensured transferability and generalisability to similar audiences, as it recruited participants with prior specialised knowledge in the field of fraud prevention. It also allowed the readers to think about the generalisability of the present study's findings to other contexts because it provided them with comprehensive information about the research process and its limitations (Maxwell, 2021:111).

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability is another procedural quality because it seeks to establish that the whole research process is logical, sequential, and adequately documented (Sumrin & Gupta, 2021:121). For dependability in this study, an audit trail was created to document any decisions and alterations to the research process. The audit trail comprised field notes, interview transcripts, coding schemes, and analysis logs, providing a transparent account of the research process.

Furthermore, a detailed procedure for conducting the study should be provided if someone desires to replicate the study. The systems of peer review and debriefings were used to remind the participants about the set of norms and to justify the presence of deviations from them if needed. All these measures helped increase the study's dependability to ensure that the study's results could be replicated (Shenton, 2004:70).

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability has to do with whether the findings of the study are shaped more by the participants than by the interests of the researcher (Amin *et al.*, 2020:18). One way of maintaining confirmability that the researcher employed is reflexivity through having a personal journal that captured characteristics, impressions, and decisions of the researcher in the course of the study. This practice helped to identify and mitigate potential biases, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' perspectives (Enworo, 2023:72)

Triangulation played a pivotal role in ensuring confirmability, as it facilitated the comparison of findings from different techniques. This approach and the involvement of an external peer reviewer bolstered the reliability of the research process and findings. The external validation provided by the peer reviewer was instrumental in ensuring that the interpretations derived from the data were not influenced by the researcher's personal bias (Shenton, 2004:72).

3.11 Ethical Considerations

One of the fundamental pillars of any research endeavour is the meticulous consideration of ethical aspects, especially when dealing with issues such as anti-corruption strategies in the public sector (Newman *et al.*, 2021:19). This study adhered to stringent ethical standards in its commitment to upholding the rights of the participants and the integrity of the research process (ethics number: NWU-00576-24-A4).

3.11.1 Informed Consent

Another ethical consideration in this study concerned informed consent, which is attached in Annexure A. During the consent process, the participants were informed of the aims and purpose of the study, potential risks, and advantages of the research. They were told that they were not coerced into the study and that they had the right to withdraw at any time without the risk of any penalty. Written informed consent was sought before the administration of the interviews, and participants signed consent forms, thus being fully informed about their participation in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:84). This process engaged the participants' rights and ability to make choices about themselves.

3.11.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The participants' identity and anonymity were strictly maintained since the discourse focused on sensitive issues. In order to ensure the participants' rights, the data collected during the study were modified: the participants' real names and other specific information were replaced. This process helped safeguard the individual's identity when preparing research reports and publications. Data collected was stored in files with password access to keep off other people, and only the researcher was allowed to access them. Such measures were deemed necessary to ensure the anonymity of the participants and establish a set environment that would enable them to disclose their stories voluntarily and comprehensively (Creswell & Poth, 2016:32)

3.11.3 Ethical Approval

It is also important to note that the given study was reviewed and cleared by the Research Ethics Committee before the data collection process. This approval process entailed assessing the research proposal and addressing all matters related to ethical approval. In this way, the committee could check if the study conformed to the set ethical standards to reduce harm to the participants and enhance the conduct of ethical research (Lincoln & Guba, 1982:282).

3.11.4 Respect for Participants

It was necessary for the ethical process of this study to always respect the dignity and rights of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted willingly at the participants' preferred time and place; thus, no discomfort was caused. The rights of the participants were observed, and their opinions were appreciated throughout the research. This respect included ensuring that their contributions were heard and that the final report properly presented their views, opinions, and feelings.

3.11.5 Mitigating Harm

Due to the risks likely to arise from discussing anti-corruption strategies, precautionary measures were taken to avoid harm to the participants. The interview questions were designed not to cross the participants' professional or personal boundaries. The participants were freely allowed to reveal what they felt at ease discussing, and the researcher was ready to offer counselling or direct the participant to counselling services in case the interviews triggered emotional upset.

3.11.6 Transparency and Integrity

Participant interaction in the study was transparent, with the participants being informed of the study's progress and results. In order to minimise the risk of data distortion through researchers' interpretation, participants were allowed to review the transcripts of the interviews and give feedback on how their data was interpreted. This practice not only reinforced the credibility of the data but also demonstrated respect for the participants' input (Miguel, 2021:14).

3.12 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an essential component of qualitative research as it calls for the investigator to consider their involvement, position and influence in the research process (Jamieson *et al*., 2023:1) with regard to the current research on the challenges of implementing anti-corruption strategies with the South African public sector. Therefore, reflexivity was maintained with the highest level of awareness to avoid compromising the research results.

3.12.1 Researcher's Role

Typically, in qualitative research, the researcher was closely involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes (Nassaji, 2020:21). This study embraced semi-structured interviews in which the researcher interviewed fraud prevention experts, the data was transcribed, and the researcher analysed the answers. Considering this intensive involvement, the researcher declared any prejudice that might align with the study. Researchers can also unintentionally impose their background, experiences, and biases into the research enterprise (Guttormsen & Moore, 2023:31).

The researcher in this study had practical working experience with public sector governance and anti-corruption programmes, which offered helpful background information and perception. This experience gave the researcher a distinctive viewpoint and insight into the intricacies of implementing effective governance and anti-corruption measures. The researcher's direct understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this area enhanced the study's findings. The blend of knowledge and hands-on experience enhanced the trustworthiness and significance of the research outcomes. Furthermore, the researcher utilised real-world examples and case studies to highlight essential concepts and offer practical suggestions for those in decision-making roles. This comprehensive method deepened the analysis and ensured the suggestions were practical and achievable. The researcher's combined viewpoint on governance and anti-corruption led to a more thorough and influential study that could foster positive developments in the area. However, this specialisation meant that extra effort had to be made to maintain an objective view and not project one's paradigms onto the material. Being aware of this dual process, the researcher implemented reflexive practice to avoid possible bias and provide a voice to participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 327).

3.12.2 Reflexive Process

In order to ensure reflexivity in the research process, several measures were made deliberately.

- Firstly, a reflective journal was used to record the researcher's subjective experience, including thoughts, feelings, and decisions made throughout the study. This journal also effectively prevented biases from arising by making one conscious of them when they appeared. The reflective journal enabled the researcher to document their assumptions and feelings constantly to ensure that these interfered with the emergent themes as little as possible (Madondo, 2021:53)
- Second, member checking was used as a reflexive technique. Subsequently, the data collected was discussed with the participants to cross-check its validity and relevance. This reflection process ensured that the interpretations were from the participants, not the researcher. Besides increasing the rigour of the study's findings, member checking also supported the reflexive process by engaging the participants in the source of validation (Birt *et al.*, 2016:1802).
- Third, peer debriefing sessions were conducted with colleagues and field experts in the respective field. These sessions gave an outside view of the data findings and interpretations, allowing the researcher to get feedback and other perceptions. Peer debriefing made the researcher question herself and expand her perspective beyond her pre-established biases, thus decreasing the likelihood of bias in the results (Paquay *et al.*, 2022:26).

3.13 Impact on Findings

It is worthwhile to ask how the researchers' views may have shaped the result of these reflexive practices. The researcher has been involved in anti-corruption initiatives, which may have influenced the richness and direction of the questions posed to the interviewees, thereby influencing the interview flow. This was advantageous in enriching the data collection endeavour but posed a challenge that required adequate self-awareness to avoid asking leading questions or providing biased interpretations.

The recording of the reflective journal demonstrated instances where the researcher's expectations converged with the participants' responses. In this way, the researcher did not bring bias when analysing the incidents of witnesses, as the aim was to represent the participants' views. Engaging in reflective practice made it easier to reduce the researcher's biases on the findings, improving the overall analysis quality.

3.14 Conclusion

Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the research approach focused on the challenges facing anti-corruption strategies in the South African public sector. It details the research methods used, including the qualitative paradigm, data collection techniques, and data analysis process, highlighting the scientific and systematic nature of the study. The chapter also addresses ethical considerations and outlines the steps to ensure the research is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. This robust methodological framework is designed to yield meaningful and accurate results, thereby enhancing the understanding of anti-corruption efforts in Gauteng.

Additionally, this chapter emphasises the specific research methods employed for data collection and analysis. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach, gathering data through semi-structured interviews. The software application ATLAS.ti was used to facilitate the analysis of the transcribed data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from a thematic analysis based on interviews addressing the research objectives. The study's primary objective was to assess and identify the challenges faced in implementing anti-corruption strategies within the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa. The secondary objectives included identifying the gaps between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical application, assessing the impact of these strategies on public trust and institutional integrity, and providing recommendations for enhancing the anti-corruption framework in Gauteng.

The thematic analysis explored the qualitative data from the interviews, highlighting a broad range of themes and experiences. The findings extracted from the analysis demonstrate that various obstacles have been met when implementing these strategies. The identified themes capture the significant issues raised during the interviews, including overall challenges, discrepancies, the effectiveness of the approach, future outlook, inter-agency coordination, international standards, legislative environment, political developments, public trust, recommendations for improvements, socioeconomic factors, successful strategy, theoretical versus practical of anti-corruption measures.

4.2 Coding Process

The researcher utilised ATLAS.ti to analyse the transcribed interviews. Eleven documents were imported for this analysis. The AI coding feature in ATLAS.ti was employed to code these documents. Once the AI coding was completed, the researcher used the concept function within ATLAS.ti to identify the most relevant themes and codes, which helped address the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. The thematic analysis and coding process followed a structured format, as seen in Figure 4.1

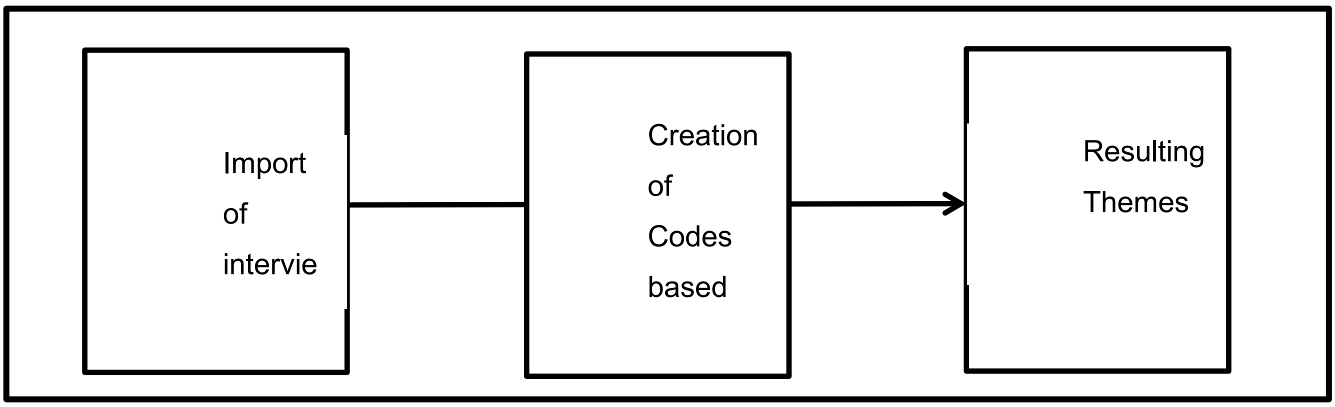

Figure 4.1: Coding Process

4.2.1 Import of Interview Data

Before the coding process began, the interview data, which was initially in Excel format and contained responses from all participants, had to be converted to PDF files for each participant, which ATLAS.ti can read. This resulted in multiple documents, each representing a different interview. These documents were then uploaded into ATLAS.ti software, making it easy to access and code them.

4.3 Coding Process Based on Themes

In ATLAS.ti, codes label parts of the interview transcripts, marking where specific themes or ideas appear. For this study, codes were created to match repeating themes and patterns observed during analysis. Each code represented a thematic topic, allowing for systematic data organisation by tagging relevant text sections. Additionally, ATLAS.ti's word cloud feature visually showed how often certain words appeared in the interviews, as seen in Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2: Word Cloud

4.4 Resulting Themes and Development of Primary and Sub-Themes

The coding phase identified eight main themes: discrepancies, inter-agency coordination, international standards, legislative environment, political developments, public trust, socioeconomic factors, and theoretical versus practical anti-corruption measures. These themes, shown in Figure 4.3, were based on recurring patterns found in the research.

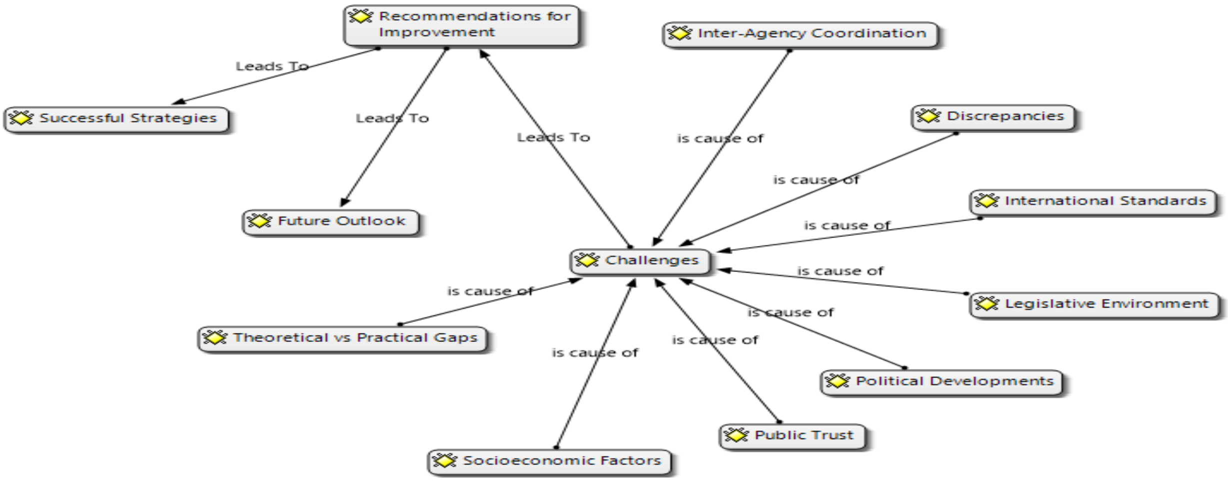

Figure 4.3: Themes

4.5 Presentation of Findings

In this section, the study discusses the identified themes and sub-themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews. These findings are integral in answering the research question that guided this study.

4.5.1 Discrepancies Challenge

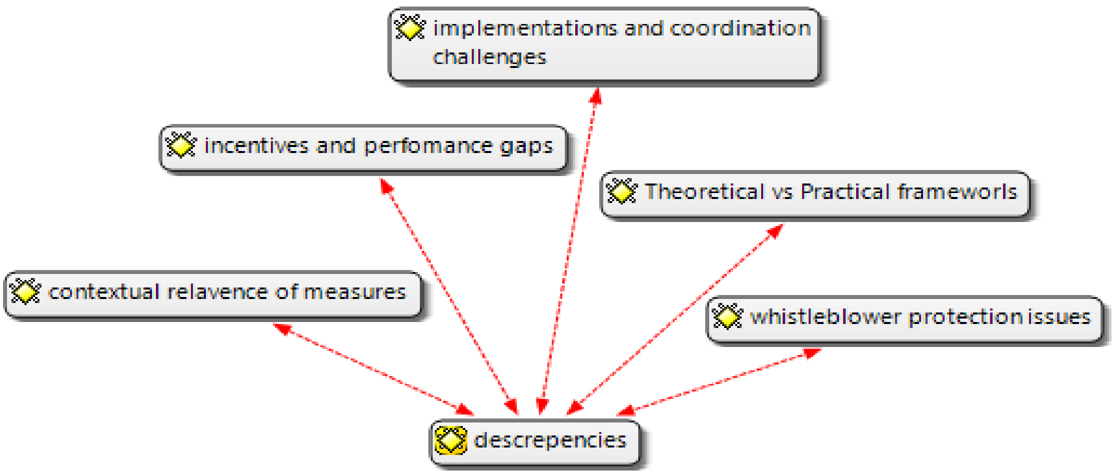

Figure 4.4: Overview of Discrepancies in Anti-Corruption Strategies

It is essential to examine the perceptions of various stakeholders involved to comprehensively analyse the discrepancies in anti-corruption strategies within the South African public sector. The responses highlight a significant gap between theoretical frameworks and their practical applications. Although many frameworks appear robust on paper, they often falter in practice due to several key challenges, such as inadequate whistleblower protection, the ineffective application of Western laws in an African context, reliance on incentives, and limited inter-agency coordination.

One of the major themes that emerged while analysing the discrepancies is the disconnect between policy and practice, more precisely regarding anti-corruption measures and their legislative enforcement. As an example, the Corruption Protection Index (CPI) was criticised by some respondents for failing to define the scope of corruption in South Africa accurately. At the same time, while policies like the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) set forth solid principles in theory, the participants highlighted how the responsible authorities rarely enforce these principles. One participant mentions the following:

> P1: "*The PFMA outlines solid principles, but in practice, there's little enforcement*," underscoring the limited impact these frameworks have. As some fraud prevention experts mentioned, many of these policies are modelled after the international standards of Western countries, and their application is limited in addressing local corruption issues.
>
> P2: "*Western laws and concepts are ineffective in the African context,*" one participant mentioned, underscoring the persistent challenge of applying these universal anti-corruption models to diverse sociopolitical environments.
>
> P3: "Anti-corruption policies might seem sound in theory, but they are implemented as a mere response to audit findings, resulting in a 'tick-box' approach rather than a genuine effort to cultivate integrity."
>
> P4: "Our anti-corruption measures look good on paper but lack real-world impact. Even the government, an Information Regulator supposed to enforce compliance, sometimes falls short of its standards. This inconsistency sends a message that corruption can be tolerated."
>
> P5: "The current anti-corruption strategies are well-structured on paper but falter in practice. A stark lack of consistency, resource allocation, and coordination between agencies allows corruption to persist unchecked."
>
> P9: "Our strategies are ineffective not only because of inadequate enforcement but also due to political connections that shield corrupt individuals. During emergency procurements in COVID-19, we saw tenders granted to non-existent companies; when questioned, people were shown the door."

Whistle-blower protection also emerged as one of the significant discrepancies. The participants stressed that despite the current provisions to protect the various individuals who report corruption, the safeguard needs to be improved, discouraging many from coming forward. Participants mentioned a lack of confidentiality, the need to remain anonymous, and legal support as primary reasons whistle-blowers remain vulnerable.

> P5: "…*whistle-blowers are left vulnerable, and confidentiality is rarely maintained,*" which exposes the failure of the current frameworks. Discouraging public employees from reporting anticorruption is the fear of being exposed, further excavated by the limited support available for whistleblowers, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.

> *P10:* "*Public sector employees often expect tokens of appreciation to fulfil their duties,*" one participant observed, highlighting how compliance is often promoted by incentives rather than a genuine commitment to some code of conduct, which weakens the overall integrity of anti-corruption efforts. Additionally, many participants highlighted the reliance on incentives for compliance as one of the barriers to sustainable anti-corruption practices. Ideally, public sector employees should be driven by ethical standards, but often, material incentives are required to encourage them to perform their primary duties.

Further compounding these anti-corruption measures' ineffectiveness are the resource limitation and coordination challenges. Participants highlighted that insufficient legal authority hinders agencies' enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

> P1: "*We don't have the legal powers or resources to enforce these laws properly,*" pointing out one of the challenges authorities face in the fight against corruption. The analysis also revealed legislative gaps, such as those found in the PRECCA, which lacks a detailed guide for reporting corruption.

> P4: "*Section 34A of PRECCA requires reporting but lacks specific guidelines,*" which leaves ambiguity in the enforcement process as the framework fails to specify the protocols to ensure effective compliance. The legislative vagueness creates loopholes, leaving room for non-compliance and reducing accountability.

> P5: "*Despite clear guidelines, many tenders are awarded without CIPC and tax compliance,*" another participant stated, suggesting non-compliance in public procurement processes is a common issue, revealing a significant enforcement gap.

Ultimately, the discrepancy between theoretical frameworks and practical application in South Africa's anti-corruption strategies is multifaceted, encompassing issues of whistle-blower vulnerability, resource limitations, lack of inter-agency coordination, legislative gaps and incentive-based compliance. While frameworks exist that align perfectly with international standards, they frequently fail when it comes to local application due to contextual challenges and limitations in enforcement. Addressing these discrepancies will require more than just reforming policies; it will involve creating a context-sensitive approach that aligns with the local sociopolitical landscape. Increased practical protection for whistle-blowers is essential to ensure a more cohesive anti-corruption strategy.

4.5.2 Inter-Agent Coordination

The analysis of inter-agency coordination responses highlights significant challenges hindering practical anti-corruption efforts. While a multidisciplinary approach is deemed essential, it often lacks practical implementation, resulting in oversight during investigations. The lack of effective communication among stakeholders, including police, forensic investigators, and the judiciary, leads to fragmented efforts and inter-departmental politics undermining collaboration. Furthermore, competition among agencies distracts from their collective mission, with the absence of an integrated system for information sharing resulting in inefficiencies.

> P1 stated that "*While there is some level of cooperation, it is often undermined by inter-departmental politics and competition for resources*". However, examples of successful cooperation, notably between forensic experts, the SIU, and the NPA, demonstrate that effective inter-agency partnerships are possible.
>
> P4: "*Forensic experts collaborate with various agencies, including the SIU and NPA, to raise awareness of corruption and share findings".* Addressing these communication gaps and fostering collaboration is crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector.

Figure 4.5 below outlines the themes related to inter-agency coordination, including communication challenges, competition, the need for enhanced collaboration, and examples of coordination.

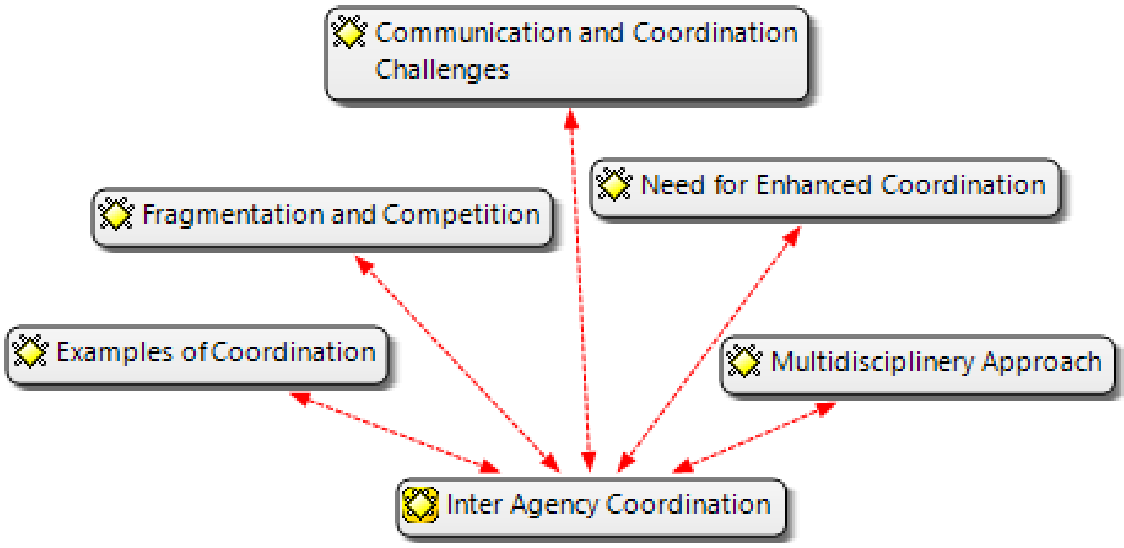

Figure 4.5: Key Themes in Inter-Agency Coordination

Addressing corruption and its associated activities can be intricate and demanding in terms of resources. The corruption cases might involve complex schemes with various participants and are made even more challenging by their reach across different jurisdictions. Addressing corruption and the laundering of its proceeds requires a collaborative effort; no single organisation, regardless of its expertise and capabilities, can tackle this issue alone. It is essential to recognise that a jurisdiction's legal and criminal justice history will determine its authority over the underlying crime of corruption. There must be collaboration in the fight against corruption, especially since this authority may be concentrated in only a few agencies.

Notably, the absence of an effective inter-agency collaboration creates significant issues, as highlighted by P1: "*Different agencies, including the Hawks, the SIU, and local municipal bodies, often do not communicate effectively.*" This often results in fragmented enforcement and missed opportunities for sharing intelligence and building on each other's efforts. Through collaboration, relevant government agencies can be tasked with addressing corruption and engage with one another at both the policy and operational levels. The engagement should involve sharing information, collaborating on joint investigations across different agencies, exchanging personnel to leverage their expertise, and actively participating in inter-agency forums regularly and continuously. Large government projects usually involve multiple ministries, and as shown in the examples above, information that could help identify corrupt activities may originate from various sources. However, without ongoing oversight from anti-corruption agencies over public officials and private sector participants in these projects, it becomes challenging to identify corrupt officials engaging in unethical behaviour and private individuals who may be influencing them. To effectively tackle corruption, governments have set up specialised agencies dedicated to this cause. However, these agencies must collaborate with other institutions, whether to refer potential criminal activities, report suspicious behaviours, or gather evidence to construct a robust case against corruption.

The institutions listed below would definitely contribute to addressing the issue of corruption. Depending on the area of law, each has a particular function based on the legal authority assigned. Despite the differences in responsibilities, there is a shared focus on the main goal, which is to combat corruption. This includes the efforts of the Audit Office, the Public Prosecutors Office, Integrity Commissions, the Anti-Corruption Agency, Police/Investigative Agencies, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Judiciary, and others (Amanquandor, 2024:10). However, as highlighted by P7 "…a *significant lack of coordination exists between these agencies, making it challenging to tackle corruption seamlessly*".

When coordination proves difficult, creating special committees or institutions might be necessary to enhance cooperation between different agencies. They may include members from the executive, judiciary, and legislature, as well as civil servants in essential departments like customs, procurements, revenue collection, law enforcement, and local governments. They may also involve individuals from various sectors, including business representatives, non-governmental organisations, and religious leaders, among others. According to P7, *"This collaborative approach can help overcome the communication and coordination challenges encountered among diverse stakeholders such as the police, forensic investigators, and the judiciary, who often face barriers to effective collaboration. In every situation, it is essential to possess adequate power, resources, and capacity to engage with influential ministries effectively".*

4.5.3 International Standards

Figure 4.6 below illustrates the relationship among various factors related to international standards.

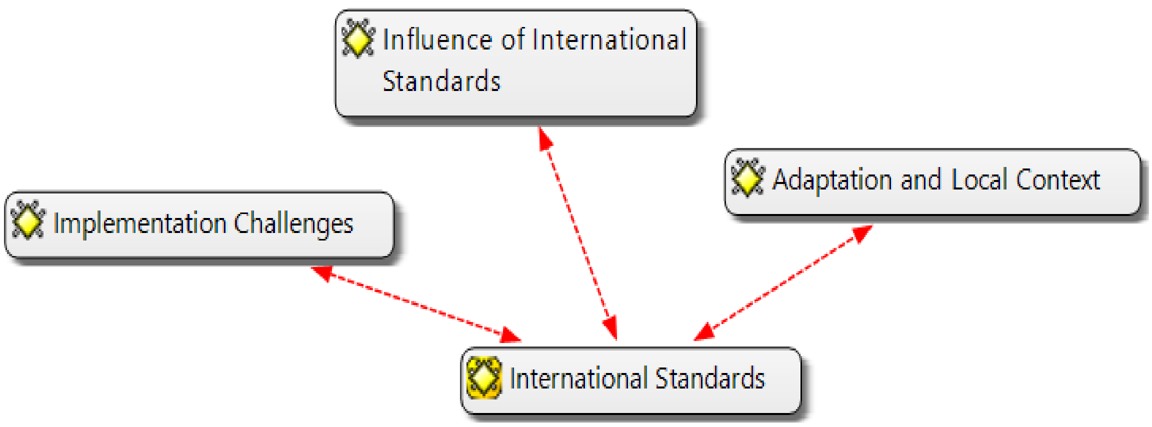

Figure 4.6: Relationship Between Key Factors in International Standards

While it is true that international standards provide a framework, as the other participant put it, "*It is important to tailor strategies to fit the unique socio-political context of Gauteng*". International anti-corruption standards, such as those from the United Nations, have influenced local strategies. However, *"…local adaptation is lacking, particularly in areas like monitoring and reporting mechanisms",* as the other participant highlighted. Many of the principles in international frameworks are reflected in the laws of South Africa. Still, as highlighted by a P4,

> "*…they are not consistently applied. Political will is lacking to ensure that these standards are upheld.*"

> P1: *"International anti-corruption standards, such as those from Transparency International and the United Nations, have influenced local strategies. However, local adaptation is lacking, particularly in areas like monitoring and reporting mechanisms." it is important to consider the reality in SA."*

> P2: *"While international standards exist, their adaptation to local contexts is often insufficient. For Gauteng to align with these standards, there needs to be a more committed effort to tailor these frameworks to address specific local challenges."*

> P6: *"International standards have a positive impact on local practices. Higher international standards often lead to the discovery of new methods and systems that can be applied locally. However, budget constraints within the government present a significant barrier to the effective implementation of these standards."*

> P9: *"International anti-corruption standards provide valuable frameworks and benchmarks for local strategies. However, their successful adaptation requires context-specific adjustments to address unique challenges in Gauteng's public sector. Merely adopting these standards without localising them may result in ineffective practices."*

On the other hand, P10 noted that:

> *"International standards, such as those set by the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), are incorporated into South African frameworks. However, the issue is not with the standards themselves but with the failure to align practice with these global benchmarks. We fall short in implementing the standards due to local political dynamics and resource constraints."*

The other participants explained that to understand the scope of a nation's corruption issue, those creating strategies refer to global indexes that evaluate the degree of corruption or the standard of governance across various countries in a region or worldwide. Strategy creators (and others) might find it especially engaging to see how their nation measures up against others in the same area or with a similar economic status. These global rankings usually rely on the views or perceptions of experts in the field, although some also include additional data. Two of the most frequently referenced indexes are Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators.

When linking to Chapter 2, a variety of extra measures have been compiled by the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, the World Bank, the Vera Institute of Justice, and Transparency International's Gateway Project (Van Schoor, 2017:15). The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre has put together a guide featuring prominent comparative corruption indicators and a summary of what each aims to measure. The World Bank has pinpointed indicators related to corruption or integrity across nations, while the Vera Institute has gathered diverse sources that assess governance performance globally.

Galstyan (2018:55) suggests that the primary cause of inefficiency in the implementation of UNCAC stems from the varying interests and capabilities of the participating countries, along with their unique legal frameworks. This requires adapting UNCAC's universal guidelines to fit the unique circumstances of each nation. The OECD Convention was explicitly created to tackle the issue of bribery involving foreign public officials in international business dealings (OECD, 2021:6). The OECD Convention, established in 1997, aims to provide a legal framework that mandates penalties for the bribery of foreign public officials and includes measures to criminalise these actions within national legislation. The main strength of the OECD Convention lies in its specific approach, which homes in on corruption matters, enabling swift enforcement and compliance actions.

4.5.4 Legislative Environment

Analysing the legislative environment surrounding anti-corruption measures reveals a significant discrepancy between the effectiveness of legislative frameworks and the enforcement challenges faced in practice. P3 noted,

> "*While the legislative framework provides a solid foundation, the enforcement is weak, emphasising the existing disparity between what these laws intend to do and their actual impact in practice.*"

There are several instances in which the legislative frameworks are recognised for their theoretical strengths, but the challenges encountered in enforcing these measures undermine their effectiveness.

Table 4.1 below summarises the findings related to the legislative environment surrounding anti-corruption measures.

Table 4.1: Analysis of the Legislative Environment

	Effectiveness of Legislative Frameworks	Enforcement Challenges	Perceptions of Legislative Effectiveness
Quantity	5	8	4

Table 4.1 above illustrates the interrelated components of the legislative environment, including the effectiveness of legislative frameworks, the challenges in enforcement, and the perceptions of legislative effectiveness.

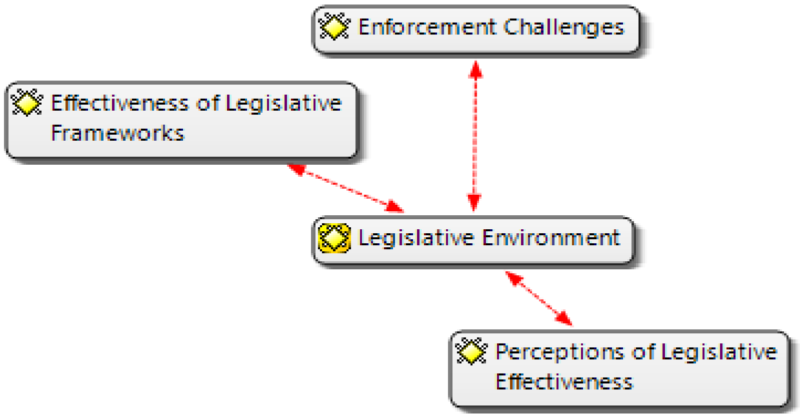

Figure 4.7: Key Components of the Legislative Environment

South Africa has put in place various laws to tackle corruption. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 (PRECCA) is an essential piece of legislation that makes public and private corruption a criminal offence. In April 2024, an amendment to PRECCA was introduced, establishing Section 34A, which mandates that members of the private sector and incorporated state-owned entities will be criminally liable if individuals associated with them offer, give, or agree to give prohibited gratification to obtain or retain business or gain an advantage in business, thereby strengthening anti-corruption frameworks by holding both sectors accountable and reinforcing the duty to monitor and report corrupt activities.

P3 noted that:

> *"The legislative environment offers support through Acts such as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA). However, the implementation plans and enforcement of these acts have not been effective for the country."* Additionally, the other participant highlights the Public Procurement Bill of 2023,

which aims to enhance transparency and accountability in public sector procurement. This bill addresses irregularities, improves oversight, and promotes fair competition.

P5: *"The practical enforcement of these laws often falls short, signalling the need for more robust enforcement mechanisms.*" The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 play a crucial role in fighting corruption by allowing individuals to access information from government and business entities (Snyman, 2022:23). These actions improve clarity, responsibility, and honesty in management and the provision of public services.

P7: *"The government has enacted the POPIA Act and the Protection of Disclosures Act. However, the government continues to utilise the Z83 form for job applications, which requires applicants to disclose their ID numbers and cell phone numbers, including those of their references. This practice violates its legislation and demonstrates a lack of commitment to protecting citizens' personal information. Instances of Z83 forms being found discarded in public spaces further underscore the potential risks associated with this requirement. While efforts are underway to reform government practices, it is imperative that the government also be held accountable for its adherence to legal standards."*

4.5.5 Political Developments

The efforts to Restore Trust and Improve Governance focus on public-private partnerships, capacity-building, and public awareness to enhance governance and fight corruption. As noted by the below participant:

P5: *"Ongoing training and capacity-building for officials, combined with public-private partnerships, can help bridge this gap, emphasising the collaborative nature of effective anti-corruption strategies."* P7 adds that *"The effectiveness of anti-corruption measures is closely tied to public trust in the government."*

On the other hand, *"*Political Instability and Its Impacts*"* highlights how factors like State capture, interference in investigations, and power vacuums undermine anti-corruption measures.

P1: "*Political power is often used to obstruct investigations, especially when high-ranking officials are implicated. There is a prevailing perception that certain individuals are "untouchable," which significantly hinders efforts to cleanse the public sector. The focus in the public sector tends to be on political gain rather than genuine service delivery. Regarding the GNU, it is still early to assess its impact, and it may take up to 10 years to see significant results."*

P9: *“Political instability and State capture lead to a deterioration of anti-corruption efforts,”* highlighting the indirect long-lasting effects of political instability. Despite positive rhetoric, instability creates challenges that hinder long-term success in addressing corruption. The participant adds, *“The continued occurrence of high-profile corruption cases, despite anti-corruption measures, indicates that political developments may not have significantly improved the effectiveness of these strategies. GNU had failed before it started, but we will give them five years to see what happens.”*

P9: “*It is crucial that whistleblowers, particularly those working directly with law enforcement, receive adequate protection to safeguard their safety and career prospects. The tragic case of Babita Deokaran, a senior finance official in the Gauteng health department, powerfully highlights whistleblowers’ immense challenges and dangers. Their lives can be difficult, and without proper support, they risk losing their jobs and lives.”*

P11: *“Politicians often interfere with investigations, and witnesses fear coming forward due to potential retaliation,”* adding to the concerns over the effectiveness of current anti-corruption initiatives.

Figure 4.8 illustrates the relationship between critical political developments and their impact on anti-corruption efforts.

Figure 4.8: Political Developments Affecting Anti-Corruption Efforts

As Kingsford Owusu and Chan (2019:14) noted that without a genuine commitment from political leaders to address corruption, enacting anti-corruption laws and policies could be ineffective, leading to its ongoing presence.

P4: *"Politicians often interfere with investigations, and witnesses fear coming forward due to potential retaliation, which also underscores the challenges faced by experts when trying to curb corruption where political interests are involved."* Chapter 2 supports this assertion, noting that in South Africa, there are instances where authoritative organisations, such as the Public Protector, do not operate independently, and this lack of independence undermines their ability to hold corrupt politicians accountable, as noted by Galstyan (2018:6).

P6: "*One of the major challenges is political interference, where key individuals in governance manipulate processes to protect corrupt activities, creating an environment where accountability is virtually absent."*

P7: *"Political power and influence allow for evasion of accountability, making it extremely difficult for investigators to hold those in management positions accountable, particularly within the tendering system."*

P11: *"The public sector is more focused on political gain than on actual service delivery", which* raises concern about such examples' limitations in a democratic setting. Limited research exists on the factors and mechanisms that might promote positive change in democratic settings.

P11 raised the point that:

"There is a consistent pattern of using public resources for personal gain, highlighting the ongoing issue of resource misallocation. Furthermore, the involvement of non-state actors, focussing on transparency and accountability, along with efforts in capacity-building and organisational development aimed at enhancing anti-corruption capabilities, should be included in the scope of an anti-corruption campaign".

While the complexity factor is frequently referenced in discussions about corruption, there are limited studies that thoroughly examine its characteristics. Creating compelling and practical initiatives to combat corruption is improbable without grasping the intricacies of the issue. The study found that, besides gaps in implementation, the enforcement of anticorruption laws is becoming politicised. The enforcement of laws appropriately ultimately hinges on the will and determination of those in political leadership positions. Political power can be employed to protect the dishonest actions of relatives, acquaintances, political allies, or a combination of these. Current anti-corruption agencies cannot fully dedicate their resources to combat corruption effectively.

4.5.6 Public Trust

P1 stated, "Public trust in government institutions remains low, primarily due to high-profile corruption scandals that erode confidence. However, some incremental improvements in certain departments have restored partial trust, especially where transparency initiatives have been implemented." The participant further emphasises,

> P1: *"Fear of victimisation and lack of protection are major deterrents for individuals involved in anti-corruption efforts. Many choose personal safety over fighting corruption due to insufficient safeguards."*
>
> P2: *"Public trust in anti-corruption strategies is eroding, especially when individuals who expose corruption face life-threatening consequences."*
>
> P3: *"The public has lost faith in these strategies. There's a widespread belief that government institutions are corrupt and that reporting or investigating corruption is futile."*
>
> P11: *"When we request assistance from law enforcement, the response often feels inadequate. I have witnessed police officers interacting casually with those accused of misconduct instead of taking decisive action. This lack of accountability creates a situation where community members feel powerless and frustrated."*
>
> P10: *"The targeting and killing of whistleblowers have undermined institutional integrity, making it difficult for people to trust the system."*
>
> P11 states, *"If political interference and resource shortages continue, anti-corruption efforts will remain ineffective, and public trust will continue to decline."*

An interesting observation was the perception of ineffective strategies, which appeared to constitute a significant portion of public sentiment.

> P2 remarked: *"There is a prevailing belief that these strategies are ineffective, with protracted delays in the justice process further fuelling public cynicism."*

Figure 4.9 below illustrates the factors affecting public trust.

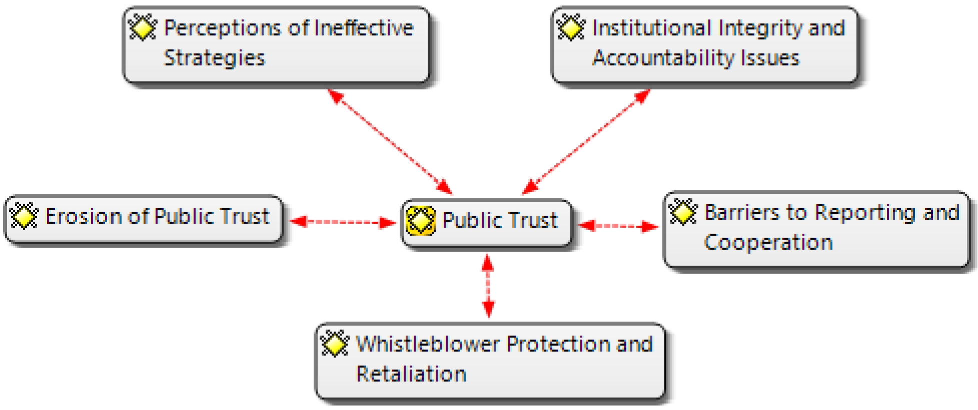

Figure 4.9: Relationship of Factors Affecting Public Trust in Anti-Corruption Efforts

Policies aimed at combating corruption foster public trust by establishing transparency and responsibility in governance (OECD, 2017:9). Clear government actions and responsible behaviour from officials can build confidence among people who see their government as working for their benefit.

> P1 states "Political interference and resource shortages continue to undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, creating significant obstacles to restoring public trust."

> P3 highlights, "*The inconsistency in applying anti-corruption measures has significantly damaged public trust, leading citizens to doubt the government's commitment to transparency and accountability.*" This inconsistency fuels scepticism among citizens, as it suggests a lack of genuine intent to uphold principles of good governance. Adding to this, many anti-corruption policies suffer from poor implementation or are deliberately manipulated, leaving exploitable loopholes.

> P9 notes that: *"The approval of new laws like the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill and revisions to education policies was rushed, lacking comprehensive implementation strategies. This approach raises concerns about the sincerity and efficacy of the government's efforts to combat corruption."*

Ensuring that the country adheres to anti-corruption regulations is crucial for fostering public trust. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, research indicates that the effective implementation of anti-corruption laws generally increases public confidence in the government (Aminuzzaman, 2017; Del Monte & Pennacchio, 2020; Pacini *et al.*, 2002). This highlights consistency's crucial role in restoring trust, as inconsistent enforcement can lead to scepticism and a lack of faith in anti-corruption efforts. Seeing government officials who engage in corruption face consequences shows that everyone is subject to the law. This viewpoint is essential for rebuilding the trust in organisations that might have been seen as compromised by unethical practices.

From the research findings, participants presented that the core idea of the spiral of silence is that individuals fear isolation, leading them to modify their views based on what they believe to be the prevailing opinion among the majority. As a result, individuals tend to voice their thoughts assertively only when they feel those thoughts align with the majority in their surroundings; if not, they choose to stay quiet. When many individuals raise their voices against wrongdoing, it encourages even more individuals to join in and take action. A similar outcome occurs when a few individuals speak at a high volume while the rest remain quiet. If agencies focused on combating corruption can engage the media effectively and the media take a stand against corruption, the public will likely view this perspective as a common viewpoint. The following quote supports this view,

> P9 indicated, "*Public trust in anti-corruption strategies is eroding, especially when individuals who expose corruption face life-threatening consequences.*"

Consequently, they will voice their opposition to corruption on their own. For example, a community publication features multiple articles and opinion pieces highlighting the practical efforts of the anti-corruption agency. If no other media outlet expresses negative opinions about the agency, individuals will likely assume that it is widely recognised that it performs well.

The following Table 4.2 highlights the discrepancies between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical implementation.

Table 4.2: Theoretical versus Practical Frameworks

Comprehensive Frameworks vs. Practical Failures	Anti-corruption frameworks appear solid in theory but fail in real-world application due to a lack of accountability and protection for whistleblowers and witnesses.
CPI Limitations	The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) does not accurately reflect South Africa's corruption level.
Theoretical vs. Practical Application	While frameworks align with international standards, their practical implementation is lacking.
Discrepancies between Theory and Practice	There are significant gaps between what is outlined in theoretical frameworks and how these are applied in reality.
Lack of Safeguards and Deterrents	Theoretical frameworks do not offer sufficient measures to prevent corruption or protect whistleblowers.
Implementation Gaps	There is a major disconnect between policies in documents like the PFMA and their execution in practice.

Table 4.2 is positioned within the discussion of themes to underscore the critical discrepancies between anti-corruption frameworks and their practical implementation. It aligns with the current chapter's focus on exploring the challenges in translating theoretical frameworks into actionable measures within the South African public sector. This integration highlights how theoretical anti-corruption frameworks often fail to address systemic weaknesses, such as poor enforcement mechanisms and a lack of accountability, which are discussed in detail within the themes. By visually summarising these gaps, Table 4.2 enhances the argument that meaningful progress requires bridging the theory-practice divide, reinforcing the current chapter's exploration of practical reforms needed to combat corruption effectively.

Table 4.2 highlights the consistent challenge of bridging the gap between anti-corruption frameworks that appear well-structured on paper and their inadequate application in reality. The lack of protection for whistleblowers and the inaccurate portrayal of corruption by the CPI suggests systemic weaknesses. The gap between policy and practice, especially in enforcing laws like the PFMA, indicates that anti-corruption efforts will continue to struggle without practical adjustments and effective deterrents. Addressing these discrepancies is essential to ensure that frameworks align with best practices theoretically and function effectively in the real world.

4.6 Recommendations for Improvement

The recommendations from various individuals reflect a few consistent themes, with some variation in emphasis. Five participants indicated that whistleblower protection is a key concern, with many advocating for more robust legal safeguards and supportive environments. Three participants also prominently emphasise training and capacity building for enforcement personnel, highlighting the need for improved understanding and better resource allocation. On the other hand, the other three participants suggest integrating technology to improve accountability, streamline processes, and monitor corruption more effectively. Most participants also emphasised that political will and leadership are essential for real change, with several calling for better role models and more decisive leadership in the public sector. At the same time, the other two participants believe that public engagement is also vital, with suggestions for awareness campaigns to involve citizens in anti-corruption efforts.

Nevertheless, the participants expressed optimism that meaningful change is achievable if those in positions of power demonstrate accountability and prioritise the interests of taxpayers. The progress observed from State capture inquiries represents a positive step toward reform. In summary, the recommendations advocate for a multifaceted approach integrating structural reforms, enhanced governance, technology, and public engagement as essential for effectively tackling corruption and achieving sustainable change.

Figure 4.10 below outlines the key recommendations for improving anti-corruption initiatives, highlighting their interconnections.

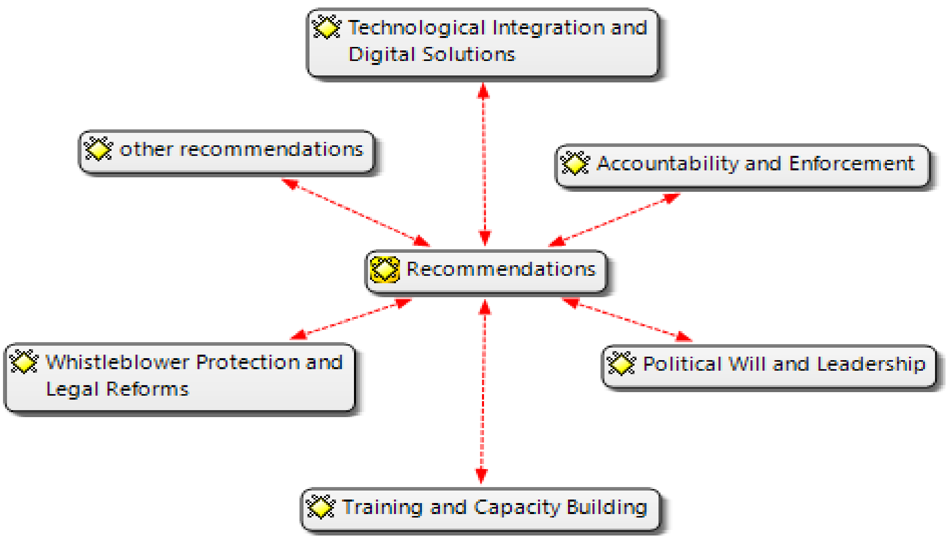

Figure 4.10: Key Recommendations for Enhancing Anti-Corruption Efforts

4.6.1 Accountability and Enforcement

Accountability is a cornerstone in the fight against corruption, demanding leaders clarify, take responsibility for, and justify their decisions and actions. Critical components of accountability include answerability, enforcement, and responsiveness. Enforcement mechanisms are essential to impose meaningful consequences on those engaging in dishonest practices, which deters unethical behaviour. South Africa has taken steps toward accountability by establishing Chapter 9 institutions, which promote transparency and hold government entities accountable. Moreover, platforms like the National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF) and the Public Service Anti-Corruption Strategy are foundational initiatives that aim to unify the public sector, civil society, and business in the fight against corruption. However, persistent corruption issues reveal gaps between policy and practice, emphasising the need for robust enforcement and continuous evaluation of accountability mechanisms.

> P7: "…*establishing a clear line of accountability for the implementation of anti-corruption measures. There needs to be transparency in how funds are allocated and spent, regular audits of public institutions, and a public-facing platform where citizens can report corruption anonymously. Additionally, ensuring that anti-corruption efforts are free from political interference is crucial.*"

> P8: "*The legislative framework and strategies in place are excellent in theory; the actual practical execution is where the system falters*."

The participant indicated that this is a widespread issue, with various anti-corruption acts and strategies appearing sound on paper but stumbling during their implementation. This is particularly evident in the processes carried out by law enforcement, where inefficiency, delays, and a lack of political will result in system failure.

Enforcement mechanisms ought to establish significant consequences for dishonest individuals to deter unethical behaviours (De Koker, 2024:24). Social accountability initiatives can include establishing grievance procedures and social audits to gather qualitative and quantitative data about citizen views and real-life experiences with public services.

4.6.2 Whistleblower Protection

Effective whistleblower protection is crucial in uncovering corrupt activities and ensuring that individuals can report misconduct without fear of retaliation. Countries vary widely in the scope of protections offered, with some safeguarding both public and private sector whistleblowers while others only protect specific categories. South Africa's existing legal framework, particularly the Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2000, has notable limitations, as highlighted by the Zondo Commission, which identified insufficient protections and a lack of transparent reporting processes.

Recent proposals from the Department of Justice advocate for reforms to strengthen whistleblower protection, recognising the risks whistleblowers face, including harassment, intimidation, and career setbacks. These reforms should prioritise creating safe reporting channels and enhancing protections to encourage the reporting of corruption.

> P7 emphasised three recommendations to enhance anti-corruption strategies: *"Promote continuous education on corruption for all staff. Establish transparent monitoring and reporting systems to evaluate the impact of anti-corruption initiatives and ensure leadership is held accountable for enforcing these measures."*
>
> P8 highlighted that "lasting change requires commitment from both leaders and citizens."
>
> P11 notes that *"the instances of whistleblower killings illustrate the urgent need for protective measures to ensure that those who come forward are safe and supported."*

As indicated in Chapter 2, whistle-blowing is immensely important. A study from Australia revealed that employee whistle-blowing was "the single most important way in which wrongdoing was brought to light in public sector organisations" (UNODC, 2015). Additional efforts are necessary from lawmakers and public and private organisations to promote whistle-blowing and related reports of corruption, effectively manage allegations of corruption, misconduct, and undue risks, and ensure adequate protection for those who come forward.

4.6.3 Political Will and Leadership

Political will is a critical determinant of successful anti-corruption efforts. Effective anti-corruption reforms require initial political support and sustained commitment from leaders who prioritise the public good over personal gain. In South Africa, the lack of consistent political will has often hindered the implementation of anti-corruption strategies. Political leaders must set an example and create a culture that discourages corruption. This includes holding leaders accountable and ensuring that reforms are supported with necessary resources, institutional capacities, and engagement from all relevant stakeholders. The absence of political commitment is frequently cited as a reason for the shortcomings of anti-corruption reforms. It is a significant barrier to economic performance and the realisation of development objectives. Therefore, the essential role of political will in determining the success or failure of governance and anti-corruption reforms has been widely acknowledged in recent times.

4.6.4 Training and Capacity Development

Enhancing public sector capacity is vital to effectively empowering officials to prevent and address corruption. Capacity development initiatives should focus on ethics, integrity management, governance, and risk management. This requires training public servants, particularly those involved in procurement and other vulnerable areas, to uphold ethical standards and execute their duties transparently. Additionally, the King IV Code on Corporate Governance provides guidance on governance and moral leadership, which can serve as a framework for training private and public sector leaders. There is also a need to train those responsible for fraud investigation work daily to be relevant and move with the time and type of corruption taking place in South Africa.

> P1: "*There is a need for practical training and education on ethics and accountability for public servants. Bridging this gap also requires ongoing assessments of anti-corruption initiatives to ensure that they remain relevant and effective in real-world scenarios."*

> P5: *"Better resource allocation, enforcement, and accountability for senior-level officials would help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The public wants to see the consequences of fraud and corruption. The government should walk the talk*."

> P9: "*There must be a focus on capacity building, ensuring that agencies have the necessary expertise and tools to investigate and prosecute corruption. There also needs to be greater accountability, where political figures and government officials face real consequences for unethical conduct."*

It is crucial to ensure that board members, whether in the private or public sectors, receive training and development in ethics, integrity management, governance, and risk and undergo integrity testing before their appointment. Officials at every level of government should also receive training in these areas. Proper training and professional development programmes should be established to empower individuals responsible for the procurement process to perform their duties effectively and ethically. In order to enhance the effectiveness of fraud investigations in South Africa, it is recommended that a comprehensive training programme be established for personnel involved in daily fraud investigation work. This programme should focus on the latest trends in corruption, investigative techniques, and technological advancements. Regular training sessions will ensure that investigators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to tackle the evolving landscape of fraud and corruption effectively.

4.6.5 Technological Integration and Digital Solutions

Technological advancements hold immense potential in enhancing anti-corruption efforts by improving transparency, streamlining processes, and reducing opportunities for corrupt practices. South Africa can benefit from integrating digital tools for real-time monitoring, data analytics, and online reporting mechanisms that facilitate efficient detection and reporting of corruption. However, with digital solutions, new risks also arise, such as cybersecurity threats and the misuse of digital platforms. Therefore, it is essential to adopt digital solutions within a framework that emphasises security and is tailored to the country's specific socio-political and economic context.

P10 stressed the importance of digitizing the vetting and verification process, stating, *"A digital transformation of the vetting and verification process is essential to ensure transparency."* The participant recommended mandatory audits and checks for all government employees and suppliers, alongside legal consequences for public officials who obstruct investigations. Additionally, the government should create an environment where individuals can report fraud and corruption without fear of retaliation.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Despite the establishment of various frameworks, significant gaps persist between policy and practice in South Africa's anti-corruption efforts. The analysis highlighted that although numerous frameworks appear strong in theory, they frequently fail in practice, primarily because of insufficient safeguards for whistle-blowers and the difficulties in preserving the confidentiality of individuals who expose corruption. Inadequate communication between various parties, such as law enforcement, forensic teams, and the legal system, results in disjointed efforts and internal politics that hinder teamwork. Although adapting international standards to fit local contexts is crucial, tackling implementation challenges is vital for effectively incorporating anti-corruption measures into local systems.

The situation regarding anti-corruption measures shows a notable gap between how well the laws are designed and the difficulties encountered in implementing them. Ensuring adherence to corruption regulations is crucial for fostering trust in the community. The suggestions from different people show a few common themes, though there are some differences in focus. Whistle-blower protection is an important issue many are pushing for, emphasising the need for enhanced legal safeguards and supportive environments. Enhancing skills and knowledge for enforcement personnel is crucial, highlighting the importance of a deeper understanding and more effective resource distribution.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarising and offering recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa. It directly addresses the primary and secondary objectives established in Chapter 1 by identifying gaps in implementation, assessing the impact on public trust, and suggesting actionable improvements.

5.1.1 Primary Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to identify and evaluate the core challenges affecting the implementation of anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector. The findings presented in Chapter 4 uncovered a series of critical obstacles that significantly impede the effectiveness of these strategies. Among these challenges is a considerable gap between the theoretical framework of anti-corruption measures and their practical application. Although the theoretical foundation for combating corruption is robust, systemic issues hinder its execution.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, highlighted that while the principles and theories underlying anti-corruption efforts are sound, systemic and contextual challenges in the public sector limit their practical success. Addressing this objective also included evaluating the perceived effectiveness of current anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector. Alarmingly, data from Chapter 4 revealed that 100% of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the existing anti-corruption efforts, citing multiple reasons for the perceived ineffectiveness as follows:

- Inadequate protection for whistle-blowers is a significant barrier to anti-corruption efforts. Participants noted that individuals are often deterred from reporting corrupt practices due to concerns about personal safety and confidentiality.
- A shortage of resources needed to adequately equip anti-corruption agencies, including funding, training, and access to technology, which limits the agencies' operational capacity.
- A general lack of public awareness about anti-corruption mechanisms weakens these strategies, as people are often unaware of the avenues available for reporting corruption.
- Participants consistently identified a lack of accountability within public institutions, with minimal repercussions for those implicated in corrupt practices. Thus, this undermines the legitimacy and impact of anti-corruption strategies.

- Weaknesses within the legislative framework, including outdated laws and ambiguities, enable certain corrupt practices to continue without penalty, further limiting the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.

Political influence was also identified as a significant factor affecting the success of anti-corruption strategies, with inconsistent commitment from leadership serving as a critical barrier to sustained progress. Additionally, the data analysis in Chapter 4 underscored fragmented coordination among agencies, which leads to resource misallocation and weakened enforcement. Interview findings revealed that ineffective inter-agency collaboration further contributes to these inefficiencies, impeding resource optimisation and alignment.

5.1.2 Secondary Research Objectives

The following secondary objectives of this study were designed to deepen the analysis by focusing on specific gaps in anti-corruption strategy implementation, assessing their impact on public trust and institutional integrity, and proposing recommendations for improvement.

The first objective was to identify gaps between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical application. The following were the findings of objective 1:

- Lack of coherence between the theoretical frameworks of the approaches against corruption and their real-life practices. These issues often manifest in the form of practical shortfalls that are responsible for the fight against corruption. All the research participants indicated that while anti-corruption efforts are thoroughly documented in policy, their implementation remains inadequate.
- Inadequate policy implementation, whereby though anti-corruption policies are well-documented, is hindered by insufficient resources and ineffective enforcement.
- The need for genuine leadership emerged as a central issue. Effective anti-corruption initiatives rely on dedicated leaders who model integrity and hold others accountable.
- The existence of competition instead of coordination between different agencies responsible for implementing anti-corruption strategies was also mentioned as an obstacle to effective enforcement. This competition results in fragmented enforcement and poor resource allocation.

The second objective was to assess the impact of anti-corruption strategies on public trust and institutional integrity. Data analysis in Chapter 4 supported the literature review in Chapter 2, indicating that:

- The study found that political determination and leadership dedication are the main drivers of the fight against corruption's success. Non-genuine leadership or political leaders can corrupt a country's solid anti-corruption systems, leading to a deterioration in public trust. Hence, this highlights the supreme importance of taking leading steps and actively supporting proper conduct by leaders.
- The research also confirmed that transparency, accountability, and a commitment to ethical conduct play crucial roles in fostering public confidence in government entities. On the other hand, corruption weakens public trust, destroying institutions' reputations and obstructing good governance.
- The research recognises the impact of socioeconomic factors on corruption. Poverty and inequality can create an environment where corruption thrives. Addressing these issues is critical to building a less susceptible society to corrupt practices.

The final objective was to provide recommendations for enhancing the anti-corruption framework in Gauteng. Based on the findings in Chapter 4, the following key recommendations were developed:

- It is essential to review and adapt anti-corruption laws to address existing loopholes, ensuring they are comprehensive and flexible enough to counter emerging corrupt practices. Additionally, anti-corruption bodies should have adequate resources, training, and digital tools to improve their efficiency and accountability.
- Implementing transparent reporting mechanisms and platforms will increase public access to information, thereby enhancing trust and accountability among citizens. Moreover, developing ethical training programmes and codes of conduct is crucial to promoting integrity among leaders and staff within public institutions.
- Strengthening partnerships with civil society organisations and community groups will help monitor government activities, advocate for reforms, and raise public awareness of anti-corruption initiatives. Acknowledging the socioeconomic factors contributing to corruption and implementing targeted programs to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality is also essential.
- Finally, collaborating with international organisations to share intelligence and best practices will bolster anti-corruption strategies across borders.

5.2 Recommendations

After conducting extensive research, the researcher now presents the following recommendations.

5.2.1 Strengthening Legal Frameworks

There is a need for persistent review and strengthening of legal frameworks. This is crucial in addressing existing loopholes and adapting to increasingly sophisticated corrupt practices. These measures must be flexible to adapt to evolving corrupt practices quickly. This should involve closing existing gaps and ensuring that the laws are clear, comprehensive, and adaptable to the evolving nature of corruption. The implementation of these laws must be aggressive, ensuring they are enforced effectively to prevent manipulation or circumvention by those engaged in corrupt practices.

5.2.2 Enhancing Institutional Capacity

Anti-corruption organisations should be well-equipped to operate effectively. The challenges arising from their inadequate equipping can be rectified by digitising some processes and training programmes through capacity-building initiatives. This will improve operational efficiency, reduce manual errors, and allow for more effective monitoring of corrupt activities. Expanding capacity-building programmes to train staff in advanced anti-corruption tools and techniques will better equip these institutions to confront and prevent corruption.

5.2.3 Promoting Transparency and Accountability

Accountability and transparency should be prioritised in the operations of public sector organisations. In order to address this, it is recommended that public participation platforms be established and that information accessibility be improved to ensure that citizens can monitor and assess government activities. By implementing more robust accountability frameworks, public officials can be held responsible for their actions, thereby creating a more transparent environment where the public has the tools to demand greater accountability from their leaders.

5.2.4 Fostering Ethical Culture

Public sector organisations must operate ethically. In order to cultivate a culture of ethics, it is essential to develop and enforce comprehensive codes of conduct for public officials. Additionally, continuous ethics training programmes should be implemented for employees at all levels of government. These initiatives will help instil a culture of integrity, ensuring that leadership exemplifies ethical values and that employees are equipped to follow these standards. This approach directly addresses the gaps identified in the research, promoting a government that operates honestly and transparently.

5.2.5 Engaging Civil Society

Engaging actively in social media platforms, civil society organisations, and community groups can strengthen anti-corruption efforts. These stakeholders can monitor government activities, advocate for reforms, and raise public awareness. In order to bolster anti-corruption efforts, it is recommended that civil society organisations, community groups, and social media platforms be actively engaged in monitoring government activities. These groups can be crucial in advocating for reforms, raising public awareness, and holding government institutions accountable. Strengthening these relationships will amplify anti-corruption efforts and ensure broad public support for the necessary reforms to reduce corruption.

5.2.6 Addressing Socioeconomic Factors

The research indicates that socioeconomic factors such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment are critical drivers of corruption. In order to tackle these root causes, targeted policies must be implemented to reduce poverty and inequality, often leading individuals to engage in corrupt practices as a survival mechanism. Furthermore, promoting ethical leadership through ongoing training and clear codes of conduct is crucial for setting standards of integrity within the public sector. Strengthening protections for whistle-blowers will also be vital in encouraging individuals to report corrupt activities without fear of retaliation. Additionally, enhancing international cooperation will help address cross-border corruption that often affects local governance.

5.2.7 Strengthening International Cooperation

Collaboration with international organisations is crucial in fighting transnational corruption. This could include sharing intelligence on cross-border corruption activities to improve investigations, supporting capacity-building initiatives in developing countries, and ensuring mutual legal assistance to address corruption that spans multiple jurisdictions. Strengthening these international ties will help combat the broader, transnational nature of corruption that affects South Africa and other nations.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study recognises several limitations. The focus on Gauteng restricts the generalisability of the findings to other regions. The research primarily relied on qualitative data obtained through interviews with fraud prevention experts. While these interviews provided valuable insights, they also introduced a degree of subjectivity. Furthermore, relying solely on interviews with fraud prevention, mitigation, and investigation experts may not capture the complexities of the situation, as it lacks the viewpoints of ordinary citizens who experience the consequences of corruption firsthand. Additionally, the research did not consider the historical context, which is significant since corruption often has deep roots in a society’s history, politics, and cultural evolution.

5.4 Future Research

In the future, research can fill in some gaps that this study did not by having a broader geographical coverage, a more diverse set of perspectives, and an in-depth exploration of the historical context. The following topics can also be considered for future research:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Judicial Matters Amendment Act 15 of 2023, particularly the impact of Section 34A of PRECCA on private and public sector accountability.
- Studies should also explore how enhanced whistle-blower protection influences reporting rates and whether current legal safeguards are sufficient to foster transparency.
- Additionally, investigating the role of technology such as AI, blockchain, and digital reporting platforms could provide insights into improving accountability and monitoring corruption.
- Research on the correlation between political will, leadership quality, and practical reforms would offer a deeper understanding of leadership's role in driving systemic change.
- Lastly, analysing cross-sector collaboration among government, private enterprises, and civil society will help identify best practices and enhance policy implementation for sustainable progress in combating corruption.

5.5 Conclusion

This concluding chapter synthesises the study's findings, aligning them with the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. Through careful integration of insights from interviews and literature, this study presents a comprehensive understanding of the practical challenges Gauteng's public sector faced in implementing anti-corruption strategies while formulating actionable recommendations to address these issues.

The research highlights the intricate and multifaceted nature of anti-corruption efforts in Gauteng, emphasising the necessity for a coordinated, strategic, and ethically driven approach to establish an effective anti-corruption environment. It is evident that the commitment of government officials and public servants, paired with active engagement from civil society, is essential for achieving meaningful progress. Key challenges, such as inadequate policy implementation, weak inter-agency coordination, and a lack of transparent reporting mechanisms, obstruct anti-corruption efforts, underscoring the need for a stronger and more cohesive framework.

By tackling these challenges and implementing the suggested recommendations—including enhancing institutional capacity, strengthening legal frameworks, promoting transparency, and fostering ethical leadership—the Gauteng public sector can significantly improve transparency, accountability, and integrity. These enhancements contribute to operational efficiency and are critical in restoring public trust and reinforcing the governance framework. Ultimately, this study concludes that a sustainable approach to anti-corruption is vital for the long-term health and stability of the public sector, providing a pathway to rebuild confidence and strengthen institutional integrity throughout Gauteng.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Consent Form

MBA Research Consent Form

Title of the Research: Assessing Challenges in the Implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategies in the Public Sector of Gauteng, South Africa

Researcher: Precious Rapea

Affiliation: North-West University

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study by Precious Rapea, a graduate student at North-West University. This study aims to assess the challenges of implementing anti-corruption strategies in the public sector of Gauteng, South Africa.

Purpose of the Research

This research aims to gain insights into the opinions and experiences of fraud prevention experts regarding the anti-corruption measures implemented in the South African public sector. Your participation will contribute valuable information to the study, helping to enhance the understanding of anti-corruption efforts in the country. Specifically, the data collected will be used for research purposes, including analysis, publication, and dissemination of findings to academic and professional communities. The research findings will be published in scholarly journals and may be shared with relevant stakeholders to inform policy and practice related to anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector.

Collection of Biographical Information

As part of the research process, we will collect biographical information from participants. This information is essential to provide context to the perspectives shared during the interviews and ensure a comprehensive data analysis. Biographical information such as age, educational background, and professional experience will provide valuable insights into how various factors may influence perceptions and experiences of anti-corruption strategies.

Procedure

If you agree to participate, you will be scheduled for an interview session. The interview is expected to last approximately 45 minutes. All meetings will be audio-recorded for accuracy in data analysis. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw without consequences.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be kept confidential in all research reports and publications in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) (Act 4 of 2013). Personal information will be anonymised, and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity and data privacy (POPIA, 2013). Only the researcher and authorised individuals may have access to the raw data, and stringent measures will be in place to safeguard its confidentiality and integrity. Transparency is crucial for ethical considerations, and data sharing will prioritise the privacy and security of participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate or wish to withdraw at any stage, there will be no negative consequences, and you will not be disadvantaged.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, contact Precious Rapea at 31558917@mynwu.ac.za or 082 290 5893. Additionally, you can get the research supervisor, Jan Van Romburgh, e-mail jan.vanromburgh@nwu.ac.za or +27182852416.

Consent

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Participant's Full Name: ___________________________

Participant's Signature: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

Annexure B: Interview Questions

Section A: Biographical Information

Please complete the information below:

1. Age

18 – 25	
26 – 38	
39 – 45	
46 - 55	
56 - 65	
66 +	

2. Qualification Completed

Grade 12 (Standard 10)	
National Diploma (N6)	
Bachelor's Degree (B-Tech)	
Honour's Degree (Post-Grad: Diploma)	
Master's Degree	
PhD	
Other certifications (CA, CISA, CIA, CFE, CFA, etc)	

3. Position (Job Title)

Specialist	
Line Manager (Deputy Director)	
Senior Manager (Director)	
Top Manager (Chief Director/ Executive)	
Other: ………………………………………………..	

4. Where are you based (location of work)?

5. Work Experience:

1 – 4 years	
5 – 8 years	
9 – 16 years	
17 – 25 years	
+ 26 years	

Section B: Classification and roles of the participant(s)

Describe your current role:

………
………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………….

1. What is your opinion on the effectiveness of current anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector?

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2. What unique challenges do you identify as a fraud prevention expert in implementing anti-corruption measures in Gauteng?

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3. Can you provide examples of anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng's public sector that you deem successful from a fraud prevention expert perspective?

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……………………………………………………………………………………

4. As a fraud prevention expert, what discrepancies do you notice between theoretical anti-corruption frameworks and their practical application in Gauteng?

………
………
……………………………………………………………………………………

5. How, in your experience, have anti-corruption strategies affected public trust and institutional integrity in Gauteng?

………
………
……………………………………………………………………………………

6. Based on your expertise, what enhancements would you recommend for the anti-corruption strategies/ framework in Gauteng's public sector?

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………

7. How does the legislative environment in Gauteng support or impede the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies, according to your forensic experience?

   ………
   ………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

8. As a forensic expert, how do you view the influence of international anti-corruption standards on Gauteng's strategies?

   ………
   ………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

9. Can you discuss the coordination between various agencies in Gauteng from a forensic perspective, particularly in implementing anti-corruption measures?

   ………
   ………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

10. From a forensic viewpoint, what impact have recent political developments in Gauteng had on the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies?

   ………
   ………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

11. What suggestions do you have, as a forensic expert, to bridge the gap between theory and practice in anti-corruption strategies in Gauteng?

   ………
   ………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

12. Considering the current trends and challenges, how do you, as a forensic expert, foresee the future of anti-corruption efforts in Gauteng's public sector?

   ………
   ………

13. Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share regarding the anti-corruption landscape in South Africa?

……
……
………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your input is highly valued and will be used to further the research study.

Annexure C: NWU Ethics Approval Letter Of Study

NWU®
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11 March 2024

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on, 08 March 2024 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Assessing Challenges in the Implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategies in the Public Sector: A Perspective from Fraud Prevention Experts in Gauteng

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher): Prof J. Van Romburgh

Student: P. Rapea (31558917)

N	W	U	-	0	0	5	7	6	-	2	4	-	A	4
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:
Commencement date: 08/03/2024 **Risk:** Minimal
Expiry date: 08/03/2024
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- None.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*

n the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:

- *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
- *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
- *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
  - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
  - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
  - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
  - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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25 November 2024

Dear Sir/madam

Re: Confirmation of editing and proofreading

This letter informs the responsible authorities that our team proofread and edited the work authored by **Nnana Nesira Precious Rapea (31558917)**to the best of its ability. Our editing involves spelling check, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, word reduction, cross reference citations, basic formatting (general layout), presentation style, indexing, and other mechanics of the English language. No technical alterations have been made.

Corrections were made using track changes, which have been clearly outlined for the author's reference. It is the onus of the author to accept or reject the suggested changes.

Please do not hesitate to contact us using the details provided above for more information.

Disclaimer: The editor will not be held responsible for any errors introduced due to the changes made after editing.

Yours,

B. Mutsvene (Coordinator)

Affiliation: International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG)

IAWG