

Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Strategies in Restoring Public Trust in Government Institutions in Uganda

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400610>

Received: 17 April 2026; Accepted: 22 April 2026; Published: 20 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in restoring public trust in government institutions in Uganda. Specifically, it analyzed the anti-corruption strategies implemented, assessed their effectiveness in reducing corruption, and examined their influence on public trust. A mixed-methods approach based on a cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were collected from a sample of 278 respondents drawn from public officials and citizens, using structured questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that although anti-corruption strategies such as legal frameworks, transparency initiatives, whistleblowing mechanisms, and institutional oversight structures were in place, their effectiveness was uneven. Transparency initiatives showed relatively positive outcomes, while enforcement of laws, institutional independence, and reporting mechanisms were perceived as less effective. Corruption was found to persist, particularly in procurement and administrative processes, while public trust in government institutions remained low. The study concluded that the existence of anti-corruption strategies alone was insufficient to restore public trust without consistent enforcement, institutional autonomy, and visible accountability. It recommended strengthening enforcement mechanisms, enhancing institutional independence, improving public awareness and reporting systems, and linking anti-corruption efforts to improved service delivery to rebuild public confidence.

Keywords: Anti-corruption strategies; Public trust; Government institutions; Transparency and accountability; Institutional effectiveness; Corruption; Governance; Uganda; Public administration; Whistleblowing mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is defined as the abuse of power entrusted onto you for individual benefit (Transparency International, 2025). It remains one of the most persistent challenges undermining governance, service delivery, and democratic legitimacy in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda, despite the establishment of multiple anti-corruption frameworks and institutions such as the Inspectorate of Government and the Office of the Auditor General, public perception surveys consistently indicate low levels of trust in government institutions. According to Transparency International, Uganda continues to rank relatively poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, suggesting that corruption remains deeply embedded in public administration systems.

Public trust is a fundamental pillar of effective governance, influencing citizen compliance, policy legitimacy, and institutional performance. When corruption persists despite the presence of formal anti-corruption mechanisms, it raises critical questions about the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving their intended outcomes, particularly restoring citizens' confidence in public institutions. Existing reforms in Uganda, including legal frameworks such as the Anti-Corruption Act (2009), Leadership Code, and institutional oversight mechanisms, have focused on detection, punishment, and prevention. However, the extent to which these strategies translate into increased public trust remains indistinct.

Scholarly discourse suggests that anti-corruption strategies are only effective when they not only reduce corrupt practices, but also improve citizens' perceptions of fairness, accountability, and transparency (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). In most cases, there is disconnect between institutional reforms and public perceptions, where citizens continue to doubt institutions despite formal improvements. This contradiction highlights the need to examine anti-corruption efforts beyond compliance and enforcement, but instead focusing on broader governance outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in restoring public trust in government institutions in Uganda. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i) Analyze the major anti-corruption strategies implemented in Uganda,
- (ii) Assess their effectiveness in reducing corruption, and
- (iii) Evaluate their impact on public trust in government institutions.

The study focuses on selected public institutions in Uganda and considers the period of intensified anti-corruption reforms in the last two decades.

This study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge connecting governance reforms to public trust outcomes, particularly in developing countries contexts. Practically, the findings may inform policymakers, oversight institutions, and development partners on how to design anti-corruption strategies that not only curb corruption, but also rebuild citizen confidence in government organizations.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Principal-Agent Theory

Principal-Agent Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding corruption in public administration. The theory conceptualizes governance as a relationship between principals (citizens) and agents (public officials), where agents are entrusted with authority to act on behalf of the principals. Corruption arises when agents pursue personal interests at the expense of the public good due to information asymmetry and weak accountability mechanisms (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Within the context of Uganda, public officials may exploit discretionary power in procurement, service delivery, and regulatory processes, particularly where monitoring systems are weak. Anti-corruption strategies such as audits, sanctions, and transparency initiatives are designed to align agent behavior with principal interests by increasing accountability and reducing opportunities for misconduct. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the strength of monitoring institutions and the enforcement of sanctions. Principal-Agent Theory is particularly relevant to this study because it explains why anti-corruption mechanisms often fail when institutional controls are weak or compromised. It also highlights the importance of designing systems that reduce information asymmetry and strengthen oversight. However, critics argue that the theory assumes that principals are inherently honest, which may not always hold true in contexts where corruption is systemic (Persson et al., 2013).

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory offers a complementary perspective by emphasizing the role of formal and informal rules, norms, and organizational practices in shaping behavior within public institutions. According to this theory, corruption persists not only due to individual incentives but also because it is embedded within institutional structures and cultural norms (North, 1990). In Uganda, anti-corruption strategies such as legal reforms, establishment of oversight bodies, and promotion of transparency are aimed at strengthening institutional frameworks. However, Institutional Theory suggests that the mere presence of formal rules is insufficient if informal practices such as patronage, nepotism, and political interference undermine their implementation. This explains why corruption may persist even in the presence of robust legal frameworks. Furthermore, Institutional Theory highlights the importance of legitimacy in governance. Public trust is influenced not only by the

effectiveness of institutions, but also by citizens' perceptions of their fairness and integrity. Anti-corruption strategies that fail to address the underlying institutional norms may therefore have limited impact on restoring trust. This theory is particularly relevant to the study since it shifts the focus from individual behavior to systemic factors, enabling a deeper understanding of why anti-corruption efforts may succeed or fail in restoring public trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between corruption, anti-corruption strategies, and public trust has attracted extensive scholarly attention within public administration and governance studies. Corruption is widely recognized as a critical factor undermining institutional legitimacy, weakening service delivery, and eroding citizens' confidence in government systems. Empirical studies indicate that perceptions of corruption significantly reduce public trust in government institutions, particularly in developing countries where governance systems are still evolving (Gebrihet, 2024). This underscores the importance of addressing corruption not only as a legal or administrative issue, but also as a central factor of government legitimacy.

Globally, anti-corruption strategies have evolved from traditional enforcement-based approaches such as criminal prosecution and audits to more comprehensive frameworks that emphasize transparency, accountability, and citizen participations. These strategies include mechanisms such as declaration of assets by all civil and public servants, whistleblower protections, public financial management reforms, and the establishment of independent oversight institutions. However, evidence suggests that the effectiveness of these strategies largely depend on their implementation rather than their mere existence. For example, corruption in public procurement remains a major challenge, with studies indicating that significant financial losses occur despite the presence of regulatory frameworks (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020; UNODC, n.d.). This highlights the persistent gap between formal anti-corruption measures and actual governance outcomes.

In the Ugandan context, the government has implemented a range of anti-corruption strategies aimed at promoting transparency and accountability. These include legal frameworks such as the Anti-Corruption Act (2009), institutional mechanisms like the Inspectorate of Government, and policy reforms targeting public sector management. Despite these efforts, corruption remains prevalent across multiple sectors, including procurement, public service delivery, and the judiciary. Studies have shown that the persistence of corruption in Uganda is largely attributed to weak institutional capacity, political interference, and selective enforcement of anti-corruption laws (Gumisiriza & Mukobi, 2019).

Further empirical research highlights the challenges associated with corruption prosecution and enforcement in Uganda. Although legal frameworks have been strengthened over time, the number of successful prosecutions remains relatively low, often due to institutional weaknesses and lack of political will (Zimmermann & Riegner, 2023). This implementation gap suggests that anti-corruption strategies may be ineffective when they are not supported by strong enforcement mechanisms and institutional independence.

In addition, corruption in Uganda is often embedded within social and institutional norms, making it more difficult to address through formal mechanisms alone. The concept of "quiet corruption," which refers to the failure of public officials to deliver services without necessarily engaging in overt bribery, illustrates how corruption can manifest in subtle yet impactful ways (Baez-Camargo et al., 2017). This form of corruption is particularly detrimental because it directly affects service delivery outcomes and reinforces negative public perceptions of government institutions.

At the local level, studies have also identified socio-economic and cultural factors that contribute to the persistence of corruption. Factors such as economic hardship, weak governance structures, and the normalization of unethical practices have been found to sustain corrupt behavior in public institutions. These dynamics not only affect institutional performance, but also shape citizens' perceptions and trust in government systems.

The relationship between anti-corruption strategies and public trust is complex and multifaceted. While effective anti-corruption measures can enhance transparency and accountability, they do not automatically result in increased public trust. In some cases, intensified anti-corruption efforts may initially lead to decreased trust by

exposing the extent of corruption within institutions. However, over time, consistent enforcement and visible accountability can contribute to rebuilding trust. This suggests that the credibility and consistency of anti-corruption initiatives are critical factors in influencing public perceptions.

Moreover, literature on governance and public trust emphasizes that citizens' trust is shaped not only by the actual level of corruption, but also by their direct experiences with public institutions. Persistent corruption in key sectors such as the judiciary and law enforcement has been shown to undermine the rule of law and reduce public confidence in government (Kirunda *et al.*, 2024). When citizens perceive institutions as corrupt or ineffective, they are less likely to comply with laws, participate in governance processes, or support public policies.

Despite the growing body of literature, several gaps remain. Many studies focus on the existence and design of anti-corruption strategies rather than their effectiveness in achieving broader governance outcomes such as public trust. There is limited empirical research that explicitly examines the relationship between anti-corruption strategies and public trust in the Ugandan context. Studies often analyze corruption at a general level without examining the specific impact of different anti-corruption interventions.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in restoring public trust in government institutions in Uganda. By focusing on both institutional mechanisms and citizen perceptions, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how anti-corruption efforts can contribute to improved governance outcomes.

METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time from selected public institutions and citizens in order to assess the current state of anti-corruption effectiveness and trust levels. The adopted mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it enables the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a more robust understanding of both the measurable outcomes of anti-corruption interventions and the underlying perceptions shaping public trust.

In this study, the target population was defined as approximately 1,000 individuals, comprising of public officials from selected government institutions involved in anti-corruption efforts. These include; ministries, oversight bodies, and local government units and citizens who regularly interact with those institutions in selected urban and peri-urban areas. The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for proportions and adjusted for a finite population of 1,000, assuming a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, resulting in a final sample size of 278 respondents.

Data was collected using a combination of structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. The questionnaires were administered to citizens and lower to mid-level public officials to generate quantitative data on perceptions of corruption, awareness of anti-corruption strategies, and levels of trust in government institutions. Key informant interviews were conducted with senior officials, policymakers, and representatives from oversight institutions to obtain in-depth qualitative insights into the implementation, challenges, and effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies. The instruments were pre-tested to ensure validity and reliability, with necessary adjustments made prior to full data collection.

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing both descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) to examine the relationship between anti-corruption strategies and public trust. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through triangulation to enhance the validity and credibility of the results.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that participation was voluntary and based on adequate understanding of the study's purpose. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding the use of identifiable information and

securely storing all data. Additionally, the study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines and obtained necessary approvals from relevant authorities before data collection. The researcher also ensured neutrality and minimized bias during data collection and analysis to maintain the integrity and credibility of the study findings.

RESULTS

Fig 1: Anti-Corruption Strategies Implemented in Uganda

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Anti-corruption laws are effectively enforced in public institutions	32	58	40	96	52	278	3.28	1.21
Transparency initiatives have improved accountability in government institutions	18	42	36	118	64	278	3.60	1.09
Whistleblowing mechanisms are accessible and effective	40	66	44	78	50	278	3.12	1.24
Asset declaration systems promote accountability among public officials	36	60	42	88	52	278	3.22	1.18
Public awareness of anti-corruption strategies is adequate	48	70	38	76	46	278	3.01	1.27

Source: Primary Data 2026

The findings in the table above show that 32 respondents strongly disagreed and 58 disagreed that anti-corruption laws are effectively enforced in public institutions, while 96 agreed and 52 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.28 and standard deviation of 1.21, indicating moderate agreement. This implied that enforcement existed, but was inconsistently applied across institutions. Interview findings indicated that enforcement was often selective, particularly disadvantaging lower-level officials.

A total of 18 respondents strongly disagreed and 42 disagreed that transparency initiatives have improved accountability, while 118 agreed and 64 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.60 and standard deviation of 1.09, indicating strong agreement. This implied that transparency initiatives were relatively effective in strengthening accountability. Qualitative findings highlighted improvements in access to information, although accessibility challenges remained for ordinary citizens.

A total of 40 respondents strongly disagreed and 66 disagreed that whistleblowing mechanisms are accessible and effective, while 78 agreed and 50 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.24, indicating moderate agreement. This implied that whistleblowing systems existed but were not fully trusted or utilized. Interview responses suggested fear of retaliation as a major barrier to their effectiveness.

The 36 respondents strongly disagreed and 60 disagreed that asset declaration systems promote accountability, while 88 agreed and 52 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.22 and standard deviation of 1.18, indicating moderate agreement. This implied that asset declaration mechanisms contributed to accountability, but faced challenges in enforcement and verification. Qualitative data indicated limited follow-up on declared assets.

Out of the respondents interviewed, 48 strongly disagreed and 70 disagreed that public awareness of anti-corruption strategies is adequate, while 76 agreed and 46 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.01 and standard deviation of 1.27, indicating mixed perceptions. This implied that awareness levels were insufficient to fully support anti-corruption efforts.

The quantitative findings indicated moderate effectiveness of existing anti-corruption strategies, particularly in areas such as transparency and enforcement. To further understand these patterns, qualitative insights were explored to capture participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of these strategies.

A Public Official provided that *“Anti-corruption laws are there, but enforcement depends on who is involved.*

Some cases are pursued while others are ignored.”

A citizen also said that *“We hear about reporting corruption, but many people don’t know where to report or fear what might happen after reporting.”*

A Local Government Officer provided that *“Transparency has improved in terms of information sharing, but most citizens do not access or understand the information provided.”*

This explanation by the Public Official supported the quantitative finding that enforcement of anti-corruption laws was inconsistent, while the response of citizen indicated limited accessibility and trust in whistleblowing mechanisms, aligning with moderate ratings on their effectiveness. The response from the Local Government Official indicated that although transparency initiatives were positively perceived, their practical impact was constrained by limited public awareness. This implied that while anti-corruption strategies existed and showed some effectiveness, their implementation and accessibility remained uneven, limiting their overall impact.

Fig 2: Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Strategies in Reducing Corruption

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Corruption levels have reduced due to existing anti-corruption strategies	54	72	38	74	40	278	2.91	1.26
Anti-corruption institutions operate independently and without political interference	66	80	30	64	38	278	2.74	1.30
Sanctions against corrupt officials are consistently applied	60	78	34	66	40	278	2.81	1.28
Public procurement processes are transparent and free from corruption	58	74	36	70	40	278	2.88	1.25
Reporting corruption cases leads to meaningful action	62	76	32	68	40	278	2.83	1.27

Source: Primary Data 2026

The findings showed that 54 respondents strongly disagreed and 72 disagreed that corruption levels have reduced due to existing strategies, while 74 agreed and 40 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.91 and standard deviation of 1.26, indicating overall disagreement. This implied that anti-corruption strategies had limited impact on reducing corruption. Interview findings suggested that corruption had become more complex and less visible.

66 respondents strongly disagreed and 80 disagreed that anti-corruption institutions operate independently, while 64 agreed and 38 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.74 and standard deviation of 1.30. This implied that political interference undermined institutional effectiveness. Qualitative responses emphasized external influence in decision-making processes.

60 respondents strongly disagreed and 78 disagreed that sanctions are consistently applied, while 66 agreed and 40 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.81 and standard deviation of 1.28. This implied that enforcement of penalties was inconsistent. Interview findings indicated selective punishment and delays in prosecution.

58 respondents strongly disagreed and 74 disagreed that procurement processes are transparent, while 70 agreed and 40 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.88 and standard deviation of 1.25. This implied that procurement remained a key area vulnerable to corruption. Qualitative data highlighted manipulation of bidding processes.

62 respondents strongly disagreed and 76 disagreed that reporting corruption leads to meaningful action, while 68 agreed and 40 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.83 and standard deviation of 1.27. This implied that reporting mechanisms lacked effectiveness. Interview responses revealed frustration over lack of follow-up and feedback.

The quantitative results revealed that anti-corruption strategies had limited impact on reducing corruption, with

concerns about institutional independence and enforcement consistency. To complement these findings, qualitative data were used to provide deeper insights into the underlying challenges affecting the effectiveness of these strategies.

A Senior Public Official provided that *“Corruption has not reduced; it has only changed form. It is now more hidden and difficult to detect.”*

Additionally, a Civil Society Representative said that *“Institutions meant to fight corruption are sometimes influenced by political interests, which affects their independence.”*

Furthermore, Procurement Officer said that *“Procurement processes are often manipulated behind the scenes, even when procedures appear transparent.”*

The response of the Senior Public Official indicated that corruption persisted despite existing strategies, supporting the quantitative finding that corruption levels had not significantly reduced. This explanation by Civil Society Representative supported the observed lack of institutional independence, while the response from the Procurement Officer reinforced concerns about corruption in procurement processes. This implied that anti-corruption strategies were limited in effectiveness due to systemic challenges such as political interference and evolving forms of corruption.

Fig 3: Influence of Anti-Corruption Strategies on Public Trust

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public trust in government institutions has improved in recent years	70	82	28	62	36	278	2.68	1.29
Citizens believe government institutions are committed to fighting corruption	64	78	30	70	36	278	2.79	1.26
Government actions against corruption are perceived as credible	66	80	28	66	38	278	2.77	1.28
Citizens are willing to report corruption cases	40	62	36	90	50	278	3.17	1.22
Service delivery in public institutions has improved due to anti-corruption efforts	58	76	32	70	42	278	2.86	1.27

Source: Primary Data 2026

The results showed that 70 respondents strongly disagreed and 82 disagreed that public trust has improved, while 62 agreed and 36 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.68 and standard deviation of 1.29. This implied that public trust remained low. Interview findings reflected widespread skepticism toward government institutions.

64 respondents strongly disagreed and 78 disagreed that institutions are committed to fighting corruption, while 70 agreed and 36 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.79 and standard deviation of 1.26. This implied that perceived commitment was weak. Qualitative data pointed to a gap between policy rhetoric and action.

66 respondents strongly disagreed and 80 disagreed that government actions are credible, while 66 agreed and 38 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.77 and standard deviation of 1.28. This implied that credibility of anti-corruption efforts was low. Interview responses highlighted distrust due to lack of visible results.

40 respondents strongly disagreed and 62 disagreed that citizens are willing to report corruption, while 90 agreed and 50 strongly agreed, with a mean of 3.17 and standard deviation of 1.22. This implied that willingness to report existed but was constrained. Qualitative findings indicated fear of retaliation and lack of protection.

58 respondents strongly disagreed and 76 disagreed that service delivery has improved, while 70 agreed and 42 strongly agreed, with a mean of 2.86 and standard deviation of 1.27. This implied that anti-corruption strategies had limited impact on service delivery. Interview data confirmed continued dissatisfaction with public services.

The quantitative findings showed low levels of public trust in government institutions despite the presence of anti-corruption measures. To enrich this understanding, qualitative responses were examined to explore citizens' perceptions and experiences influencing trust in public institutions.

A Citizen responded that *"People have lost trust because they don't see real punishment for those involved in corruption."*

A Business Owner said that *"Government talks about fighting corruption, but the actions don't match what is said."*

A Community Leader said that *"Many people are willing to report corruption, but they fear retaliation or nothing being done."*

The response from Citizen indicated that lack of visible accountability contributed to low public trust, supporting the quantitative finding that trust levels remained low. The response of Business Owner highlighted a credibility gap between policy statements and actual implementation, while the explanation by the Community Leader supported the finding that willingness to report corruption existed but was constrained by fear and inefficiency. This implied that public trust was undermined not only by corruption itself but also by perceived ineffectiveness and lack of protection in anti-corruption efforts.

DISCUSSION

Anti-Corruption Strategies Implemented in Uganda

The findings revealed that Uganda has established a range of anti-corruption strategies, including legal frameworks, transparency initiatives, whistleblowing mechanisms, and asset declaration systems, which were moderately perceived as effective. The relatively higher rating of transparency initiatives suggests that efforts to promote openness and information sharing have contributed positively to accountability. This finding is consistent with governance literature which emphasizes transparency as a critical tool in reducing information asymmetry between public officials and citizens, as explained in Principal-Agent Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). By increasing access to information, transparency mechanisms reduce opportunities for discretionary abuse of power.

However, the moderate perceptions regarding enforcement of anti-corruption laws, whistleblowing effectiveness, and public awareness indicate that these strategies are not fully optimized. This aligns with Institutional Theory, which posits that formal rules and structures are often undermined by informal practices and weak institutional norms (North, 1990). The qualitative insights highlighting selective enforcement and fear of retaliation further reinforce the argument that institutional effectiveness depends not only on formal mechanisms but also on the broader governance environment. Limited public awareness of anti-corruption measures also suggests that citizen participation a key component of modern anti-corruption frameworks, remains underdeveloped.

These findings correspond with earlier studies in Uganda, which have documented gaps between policy design and implementation of anti-corruption strategies (Gumisiriza & Mukobi, 2019). The persistence of such gaps indicates that while institutional frameworks are present, their effectiveness is constrained by weak enforcement, limited accessibility, and insufficient citizen engagement. Strengthening these strategies therefore requires not only legal reforms but also efforts to enhance institutional capacity, public awareness, and trust in reporting mechanisms.

Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Strategies in Reducing Corruption

The study found that anti-corruption strategies have had limited success in reducing corruption levels, with respondents expressing skepticism about institutional independence, enforcement consistency, and the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. These findings support the argument advanced by (Persson et al., 2013) that corruption in many developing countries operates as a collective action problem, where systemic practices

persist despite formal anti-corruption efforts. The persistence of corruption, particularly in procurement and administrative processes, reflects deeply entrenched institutional and social norms that are resistant to change.

The low ratings regarding institutional independence highlight the influence of political interference in anti-corruption efforts. This is consistent with Institutional Theory, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of formal institutions is shaped by power dynamics and informal practices. When anti-corruption institutions are perceived as lacking autonomy, their legitimacy and ability to enforce accountability are significantly weakened. Qualitative findings indicating external influence and selective enforcement further reinforce this perspective.

In addition, the inconsistency in applying sanctions and the perceived ineffectiveness of reporting mechanisms suggest weaknesses in the enforcement chain. According to Principal-Agent Theory, effective monitoring and credible sanctions are essential for aligning the behavior of agents with the interests of principals. The absence of consistent punishment reduces the deterrent effect of anti-corruption strategies, allowing corrupt practices to persist. These findings are supported by empirical studies which indicate that weak enforcement and lack of political will are major barriers to effective anti-corruption in Uganda and similar contexts (Zimmermann & Riegner, 2023).

The continued prevalence of corruption despite existing strategies suggests that current approaches may be overly focused on formal compliance rather than addressing underlying systemic issues. This calls for a shift toward more comprehensive strategies that incorporate institutional reform, behavioral change, and stronger accountability mechanisms.

Influence of Anti-Corruption Strategies on Public Trust in Government Institutions

The findings indicated that public trust in government institutions remains low, despite the presence of anti-corruption strategies. This outcome reflects a critical disconnect between institutional reforms and citizens' perceptions, which has been widely documented in governance literature. Studies have shown that public trust is influenced not only by the existence of anti-corruption measures but also by their perceived effectiveness and fairness (Persson et al., 2013). When citizens do not observe tangible outcomes, such as reduced corruption or visible accountability, trust is unlikely to improve.

The low levels of perceived credibility and commitment in government anti-corruption efforts further explain the persistence of distrust. These findings align with Institutional Theory, which emphasizes the importance of legitimacy in shaping public confidence in institutions. When institutions are perceived as ineffective or biased, citizens are less likely to trust them, regardless of the formal structures in place. Qualitative insights highlighting lack of visible punishment and inconsistencies in enforcement reinforce this argument.

Interestingly, the findings also revealed that citizens demonstrated a moderate willingness to report corruption, suggesting that trust in the idea of accountability mechanisms still exists. However, this willingness is constrained by fear of retaliation and lack of confidence in the system. This reflects a critical gap between citizen intention and institutional response, which undermines the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted in similar contexts, which indicate that persistent corruption and weak institutional performance significantly erode public trust (Gebrihet, 2024). The limited improvement in service delivery further compounds this issue, as citizens often evaluate government performance based on their direct experiences with public services.

Overall, the findings suggest that restoring public trust requires more than the existence of anti-corruption strategies; it requires consistent enforcement, institutional independence, and visible accountability. Without these elements, anti-corruption efforts are unlikely to achieve their broader objective of strengthening public confidence in government institutions.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings on anti-corruption strategies implemented in Uganda indicated that although a range of mechanisms

exists including legal frameworks, transparency initiatives, whistleblowing systems, and asset declaration processes their effectiveness remains uneven. The relatively stronger performance of transparency initiatives suggests that information disclosure contributes to accountability; however, limited public awareness and accessibility constrain its full impact. This implied that anti-corruption strategies require not only institutional presence but also effective communication and citizen engagement to function as intended.

The findings on the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in reducing corruption revealed that corruption remains persistent despite existing interventions. Weak enforcement, political interference, and evolving forms of corruption, particularly in procurement and administrative systems, limit the effectiveness of these strategies. This implied that corruption in Uganda is systemic and cannot be addressed solely through formal legal and institutional mechanisms without tackling underlying governance and behavioral factors.

The findings on the influence of anti-corruption strategies on public trust demonstrated that trust in government institutions remains low. The lack of visible accountability, perceived inconsistency in enforcement, and limited institutional independence contribute to negative public perceptions. Although some willingness to report corruption was observed, it was constrained by fear of retaliation and lack of confidence in reporting systems. This implied that restoring public trust requires credible, consistent, and visible anti-corruption efforts that translate into tangible governance outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study examined the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in restoring public trust in government institutions in Uganda. The findings showed that while various anti-corruption strategies have been established, their effectiveness varies across different areas. Transparency initiatives demonstrated relatively positive outcomes in promoting accountability, but other mechanisms such as enforcement of laws, whistleblowing systems, and institutional independence were perceived as less effective.

The persistence of corruption highlighted structural and systemic challenges, including weak enforcement, political interference, and the adaptive nature of corrupt practices. These challenges limit the ability of anti-corruption strategies to achieve meaningful reductions in corruption levels. At the same time, public trust in government institutions remained low, indicating that existing interventions have not yet translated into improved citizen confidence.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies should not be assessed solely based on their existence but rather on their ability to produce visible, consistent, and credible outcomes. Public trust appears to depend on the extent to which citizens perceive fairness, accountability, and tangible improvements in governance and service delivery.

Recommendations

In relation to anti-corruption strategies implemented in Uganda, there is a need to strengthen public awareness and accessibility of existing mechanisms. Citizens should be better informed about reporting channels, transparency initiatives, and institutional roles, while efforts should be made to ensure that information is accessible and understandable to diverse groups. Strengthening whistleblowing systems through protection mechanisms and clear reporting procedures would enhance their utilization and effectiveness.

With regard to the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in reducing corruption, greater emphasis should be placed on consistent enforcement of laws and strengthening institutional capacity. Anti-corruption institutions require enhanced autonomy, adequate resources, and protection from political interference to operate effectively. Reforms in public procurement systems, including increased transparency and digitalization, would address one of the most vulnerable areas to corruption.

Concerning the influence of anti-corruption strategies on public trust, efforts should focus on improving the

credibility and visibility of anti-corruption actions. Demonstrating consistent accountability, ensuring timely resolution of corruption cases, and improving service delivery would contribute to rebuilding public confidence. Strengthening feedback mechanisms and protecting individuals who report corruption would further enhance trust in governance processes.

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