

## Deliberation on continuous spread of corruption in South Africa

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**Abstract:** Corruption is widely spread in South Africa and is against the norms of honesty, morals, values, ethics, and good governance. The reasons of corruption may be individual (personal greed for luxury, power, authority), organisational (inadequate monitoring and evaluation, reporting processes), legislative (no compliance), strategic (lack of ethical culture), to state a few. The study is aimed to find answers to the following guiding research question, such as: what is the extent of corruption in South Africa? The qualitative study utilised secondary sources through the literature review of articles and document review of annual/official reports to gather relevant information. The information was further assessed using document analysis. The findings show that corruption is spreading at every level of government, and even public and private sectors are getting exposed to cases of misconduct. The country has established various legislative frameworks to combat corruption. The objectives of anti-corruption frameworks are operationalised through the establishment of anti-corruption organisations. Some of them are Corruption Watch; National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council; Financial Intelligence Centre; Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse; and National Anti-Corruption Hotline. The findings show that although there are anti-corruption measures in place, the inadequate compliance may create implementation gaps, hence corruption keeps on spreading at political level, bureaucratic offices, and even in municipalities. The study suggests policy measures to minimise the scope and spread of corruption.

**Keywords:** *Corruption, Local government, Public sector, Qualitative, South Africa.*

### 1. Introduction

Corruption is the unethical use of one's position of power or influence in society for one's own gain. It involves the abuse of power, sometimes by extortion or bribery, and can be witnessed in the form of embezzlement, nepotism, bribery and favoritism, as highlighted by Rose-Ackerman (1975:187). Additionally, it can be argued that corruption undermines legal respect and discourages honorable individuals from pursuing careers in public service, as further emphasised by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2007:285; 2022:15). A nation's populace loses faith in its government and those in charge when public servants and government leaders engage in corruption. Additionally, it undermines societal and governmental ethics (Heymans & Lipietz, 1999:10). South Africa has established various anti-corruption agencies and implemented legislative frameworks to minimise the extent of corruption, however organisations need to ensure “compliance with ethical standards”, as emphasised by the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) (2021: 1) and adapted by Mothabi and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:1) and Maile and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:79) as part of obligatory practice to reduce corruption within their environment. The level of corruption in South Africa's national government is not the only increasing problem; corruption is also evident in the local government sector. The public's trust in the government and its policies has been undermined, leading to injustice and inefficiencies (Ramgoolam, 2016:47). Professionals leaving the country in search of better job

opportunities that are available overseas, may have also resulted in a skills deficit that contributes to weak leadership and poor management in government departments, bureaucratic offices, and also in several local entities. But, as highlighted in the reports of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA, 2016:24), it is important to remember that municipalities are not just limited by a lack of skilled workers; hiring officials for high-level positions without the necessary training and experience is also a problem. For most municipalities that reported unfavorable audit results, the rate of turnover and the time it takes to fill open positions with the necessary qualifications are additional causes for concern.

The study is qualitative and based on desktop review of secondary information available in the public domain. The approaches used to collect significant information are literature and document reviews. An assessment of previous studies on a particular academic subject matter, concept, or topic is called a literature review, and its purpose is to identify knowledge gaps and suggest future research directions, as suggested by Chigbu, Atiku and Du Plessis (2023:1). Various sources of literature were used to compile information, such as journal articles, internet sources, newspaper articles, etc. A document review is the process of analyzing documents that provide details about a phenomenon of interest, as defined by Mogalakwe (2006 in Nyikadzino, 2020:33). Documents used to gather data includes annual reports of public service departments, official reports of Corruption Watch, Transparency International, Public Service Commission, Auditor-General Reports, legislative frameworks, Acts, etc. Document analysis, as suggested by Creswell (2013) and cited by Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:236) is used to analyse the data, which involves reading analytically and reviewing a significant amount of written material.

## 2. Corruption in South Africa

This section tries to explore some of the cases to validate the fact that corruption exists in the country. Every case mentioned is accessible in the public domain. The types of corruption vary such as individual greed, favouritism, nepotism, inconsistency in recruitment and appointment, misuse of power, mismanagement of finances, to state a few. According to Geldenhuys (2022:34) the Hawks are managing 22 477 cases totaling more than 500 000 charges and more than R1.5 trillion (R1 574 874 806 355.57) in value. About 23 519 individuals are involved in these cases, 12 360 of whom have already been arrested at court while the remaining 11 159 are still waiting to be contacted. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) is considering whether to pursue prosecution or more inquiry in 1998 instances that are still being investigated. The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) detained 12 157 people throughout the 2018/2019 and 2021/2022 fiscal years, who were then taken before the courts (Geldenhuys, 2022:34). This is a realistic scenario illustrating the extent of corruption in the nation. Investigations into fraud, corruption, and bad administration inside and against the public sector have benefited from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU)'s work. Over the years, the SIU has been able to retrieve ill-gotten gains from discovered fraudsters and tainted public servants, encourage swift criminal proceedings, and recommend sanctions against government workers alleged of defrauding public service, this is done through a multiple agencies' strategy with the National Prosecuting Authority and the Scorpions/Hawks (Pillay & Chetty, 2017:108-109). However, more anti-corruption agencies need to be established and work in a coordinated manner to ensure corruption is removed from every level-national, provincial, local governments, private sector, corporates, state-owned enterprises, businesses and entities.

A situation showing that by February 2021, the majority of the 9 477 public sector senior managers who registered on Persal—of which 3301 did not meet the requirements for the role and position—were employed by health departments in the provinces (Spotlight, 19 April 2021) validates the flaws in the human resource processes. In another scenario, a city manager resigned amid allegations of bribing legislators and businesspeople over an R320 million rubbish collection contract (South African Anti Money Laundering Integrated Taskforce [SAMLIT], 2023:38). It is claimed that seventeen individuals and organisations were involved in this case and through the account of his wife, a bribe was paid

(SAMLIT, 2023: 38). Additionally, the Tembisa hospital scandal made headlines where different families amassed several contracts. As a result, Gauteng Health was hit with an unusual expenditure bill. More than R436 million in contracts were awarded to Stefan Govindraj; R226 million to the Morgan and Aluwani Maumela family; R249 million to Rudolf and Lihle Mazibuko (Dlamini, 2022). It is also given that R1.7 million in tenders were irregularly awarded to the Ekurhuleni regional treasurer, Sekhokho (Ndaba, 2022). These are the situations showing the flaws in the procurement processes.

Critics aver that because, over the years, the African National Congress (ANC) majority in Parliament prevented probes into misconduct at Eskom, therefore the fight against corruption is just talk with no action (cited in Felton, van Wyk-Khosa & Mpani, 2023:1). This was the case on the widely publicised Phala Phala controversy over the purported \$4 million cash heist from the President Ramaphosa's game reserve (cited in Felton et. al., 2023:1). This is a case of political corruption and misuse of authority. Also, to note that the State capture committee of investigation found Gwede Mantashe, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy guilty of corruption after accepting security installations from the facilities management company Bosasa at no cost to him (Stone, 2022). At the time, Mantashe served as Secretary-General of the ANC. In South Africa, corruption has spread across society, affecting the public and business sectors at all levels, national, provincial, and municipal (German Agency for International Cooperation [GIZ], 2024). The most reported kinds of corruption are bribery and improper public procurement, and individuals who expose these practices and raise the alarm still face persecution (GIZ, 2024). Tshifhiwa Matodzi, the Chair of VBS Bank revealed that Shivambu and Malema were connected to the bank's illicit benefit acceptance. He said that through a front company called Sgameka Projects, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a political party, has been receiving monthly donations and a purported business loan from the bank totaling millions of Rands since 2017 (Moichela, 2024). The EFF allegedly accepted the funds as a bribe, with Malema and Shivambu in particular, profiting financially, according to Matodzi's accusations (Moichela, 2024). This means corruption has also encroached even in politicians from the opposition bench. It is not possible to cover all cases of corruption in one article, hence the aim is to state a few significant cases that draws the attention towards the South Africa's level of corruption at political and bureaucratic levels.

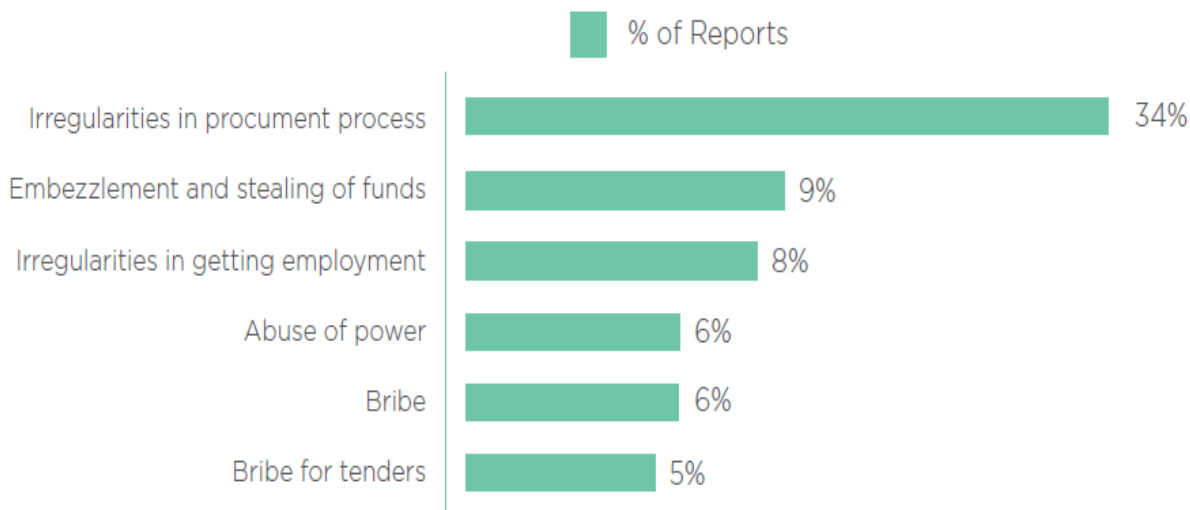
### 3. Corruption in South Africa's Local Government

The impact of corruption has been particularly severe within municipalities that are closer to the people (Chelin, 2021; Ndasana, Vallabh & Mxunyelwa, 2022). Despite multiple anti-corruption reform initiatives and political pronouncements, corruption remains widespread in South African municipalities, hampering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Mlambo, Mphurpi & Makgoba (2023:35), corruption is a significant barrier to national and local socio-economic development. Over the past two decades, corruption in municipalities has diverted public resources intended for development projects, leaving very little for service delivery. Public frustration and mistrust as a result have given rise to protests throughout South Africa (Ndasana et. al., 2022; Du Plessis & Andries, 2018). While corruption may not be the sole cause, it is a key contributing factor that needs scholarly attention.

In South African municipalities, corruption has been perpetrated by both politicians and administrative officials. According to de Visser, Steytler, Chigwata & Beukes (2020) council members and other local officials occasionally collude to misappropriate funds, and occasionally they collaborate with private parties. Corruption Watch (CW) (2021) revealed that, since its establishment in 2012, the organisation has received approximately 5,000 whistleblowers with corruption complaints in municipalities. The report highlighted several corruption cases within municipalities, including elite capture of municipalities, management abuse of municipal powers, resources, and positions, as well as procurement and human resources-related scandals. Most complaints about corruption came from the following cities: Tshwane (325), eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (166), Johannesburg (700), Ekurhuleni (354), and Cape Town (125), as documented in the reports of the Corruption Watch (2021: 2). Some of the departments implicated in corruption and the forms of corruption are stated as: Office of

the Municipal Manager (30%) as the highest, followed by Metro/Local Police (27%). Housing and Human Settlements reported as 9%, and Traffic and Licensing at 5%. The lowest percentage is recorded for the Office of the Executive, and Public Works and Infrastructure Development (both at 4%) (Corruption Watch, 2021:8).

The most prevalent forms of corruption occurring in these offices/departments are revealed by a closer examination of the top three hotspots. The procurement irregularities (34%) and embezzlement (9%), as well as employment irregularities (8%), are the prevalent types of corruption reported to the office of the municipal manager, as further highlighted by the Corruption Watch (2021:8) (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.**

Major corruption types.

**Source:** Corruption watch, 2021:8.

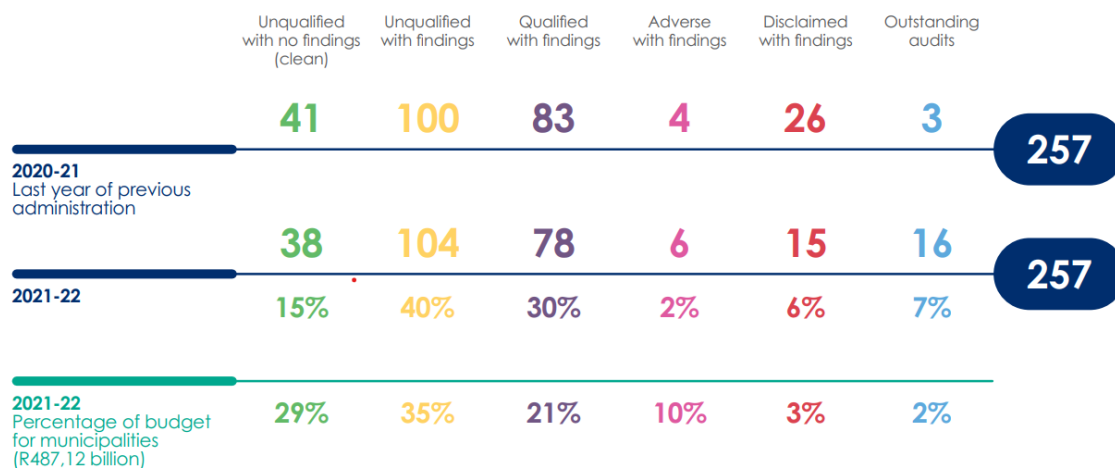
The Corruption Watch (2021) report, which is currently available, examined a few noteworthy discoveries. In 2020, there were a record 857 complaints of corruption in local government, the highest amount ever. In comparison to the previous year, there was a rise of 50% cases originating from the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Free State. Large metropolitan municipalities are the ones most frequently mentioned in reports pertaining to corruption, according to Corruption Watch (2021). The highest number of reports, 700, is attributed to the City of Johannesburg, followed by Ekurhuleni at 354, Tshwane at 325, eThekweni at 166, and Cape Town at 125 (Corruption Watch, 2021). Based on a review of Corruption Watch's reports, bribery is the most common kind of corruption at the local level, which is followed by irregularities in hiring and procurement, power abuse, and embezzlement of funds. Remarkably, 34% of all reports received indicate that most of the corruption takes place in the municipal manager's office. Thirty percent of the reports involve the local/metro police, with housing and human settlements coming in second (10%). According to the report, these are the top three areas in local government where corruption is most prevalent (Corruption Watch, 2021).

It has been determined that municipalities are a sector that is susceptible to corruption. There is a Local Government Anti-Corruption Forum in place, chaired by the SIU. The Hawks are looking into 123 cases of corruption out of the 257 municipalities in the nation (Ensor, 2023:1). With 64 cases involving 18 municipalities, North-West had the highest number. The Free State (60, 20), Eastern Cape (46, 17), Gauteng (39, 7), Mpumalanga (35, 12), Limpopo (30, 21), KwaZulu-Natal (19, 10), Western Cape (21, 12), and Northern Cape (11.6) had the next highest numbers. Twenty of the 39 Gauteng cases are connected to the City of Tshwane (Ensor, 2023:2).

The Auditor General's reports for the past four audit periods have exposed the extent of corruption in South African municipalities. Several audit reports have highlighted high unauthorised, irregular,

fruitless and wasteful expenditure (UIFW) levels in South African municipalities. Although not all UIFW expenditure cases could be classified as corruption, high levels of such cases show rampant financial misconduct and abuse of public offices. UIFW expenditure cases have been on the rise (Thusi & Selepe, 2023).

A decline in local governance was noted in the Auditor-General Report (2020), which may be ascribed to misconduct and corruption. According to the report (quoted in Chelin, 2021), just 28% of the nation's 257 municipalities were able to give the Auditor-General quality financial statements to audit, and only 11% of them had clean audits. The Auditor-General's (2020) report also indicated that local governments spent R3.47 billion on unnecessary and wasteful expenses and R26 billion on irregular expenses. Another Auditor General Report (2021) revealed that most local governments were in worse positions compared to the situation four years ago. For instance, the report showed that, for the 2016-2017 audit period, 33 municipalities had clean audit outcomes as compared to 27 for the 2019-2020 period and 114 local governments had unqualified audit outcomes in 2016-2017, a number that decreased drastically to 89 in the 2019-2020 period (Auditor General, 2021:17). In the 2020-2021 audit period, South Africa 25 municipalities got disclaimed audit opinions, which in auditing terms is the worst outcome. The Auditor General (2022) found 185 material irregularities in local government that resulted in financial losses of around R3.9 billion. The recorded nature of material irregularities involved cases of misuse of material public resources, failure to keep proper and full records, failure to submit financial statements, fraud and disregard for rules and regulations, unrecorded receipts, failure to safeguard assets, violation and neglecting procurement guidelines and protocols, and payments for undelivered or poor-quality goods (Auditor General, 2022). According to the Auditor General's Consolidated General Report on Local Government Audit Outcomes Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) 2021–2022, which was released in 2023, the audit outcomes were in poor condition at the conclusion of the previous administration's tenure and did not get any better in 2021–2022. Given the central role municipalities play in South Africa's development, these outcomes are discouraging. The Figure 2 below displays a gloomy picture of the outcomes for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 audit periods.

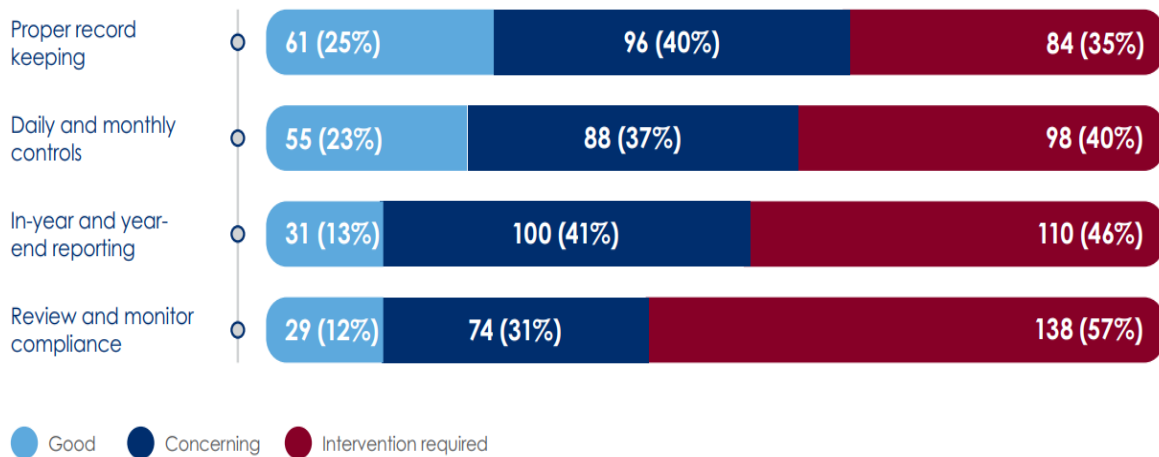


**Figure 2.**  
Municipal audit outcomes trend.  
**Source:** Auditor general, 2023:2.

The Auditor General (2021) pointed out three main deficiencies that drive corruption and misuse of municipal powers and resources in South Africa: inadequate financial statements, inadequate reporting on performance, and failure to abide to legislation. The Figure 3 below shows the worrying status of



municipal financial control systems. Corruption finds fertile breeding space in municipalities with weak financial control systems.



**Figure 3.**

Status of key financial management controls.

Source: Auditor general, 2023:2.

Some of the notable drivers include:

- Weak and ineffective internal control mechanisms. These have been due to municipalities' failure to leverage technology in maintaining and managing financial records. The failure to embrace technology in governance processes subjected municipalities to misuse and even abuse of municipal resources (Mishi, Mbaleki & Mushonga, 2022)
- Lack of adequate policies and procedures to track and monitor human resources management processes; weak and ineffective revenue control systems; weak and ineffective liability control systems; non-compliance with key legislations and procedures relating to procurement, financial-based reporting and financial management, management of employment process; disregard to the supply chain management standards. Weak control systems and disobey with key policies, standards, regulations, procedures and guidelines point to governance failure in municipalities. Governance failures are evident in unstable councils and ineffective municipal committees, including audit committees, public accounts committees, and internal auditors (Auditor General, 2023; Thusi & Selepe, 2023).
- Slow response in addressing corporate risk; high vacancy rate in key management positions and lack of competencies. Vacancies for senior administrative positions such as municipal managers and chief financial officers undermine sound municipal governance (Auditor General, 2023). South African municipalities are also grappling with skills and capacity inadequacies. This has resulted in heavy reliance on consultants (Thusi & Selepe, 2023).
- Lack of consequences and accountability have also been highlighted as key corruption drivers in municipalities. Studies have shown that no to limited action is taken against local government officials and leadership for transgressions and unethical conduct (Soopal, 2022).

#### 4. Corruption During Covid-19

There is evidence that State funds have been embezzled during the Covid 19 public health crisis in South Africa (Mthethwa, Ndebele & Thusi, 2023:273). Financial leakages brought on by corruption and

poor state fund management were heightened by the relaxation of procurement laws. Audits found numerous examples of contracts being given to companies that have no prior experience supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) (Auditor General of South Africa Report, 2020:11). These companies usually operated in unrelated industries or were just founded or registered shortly before the contracts were given (Mlambo & Masuku, 2021:558). According to the findings of the South African special investigation team, millions of cash intended to support the Ministry of Health's efforts to combat COVID-19 were embezzled, corrupted, or misappropriated (Magome, 2021; Fihlani, 2021). It was discovered that Mkhize meddled in the procurement process to have a close ally awarded a \$10 million COVID-19 communications contract (Fihlani, 2021).

The Eastern Cape Health Department's attempt to purchase 100 scooters for use as mobile clinics was marred by irregularity, dishonesty, and maybe collusion, as the SIU has revealed (Maughan, 2020; Ellis, 2020). It is given that only 10 of the bikes meant for mobile ambulances were ready for delivery two months after they were bought (Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020:477). Elsewhere, the unethical handling of food packages for the underprivileged during the COVID-19 pandemic was documented. According to the evaluations, the council members discriminated against recipients favouring those who had backed them politically (SA News, 2020; Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020:476). Food parcels meant for the underprivileged were also diverted by these individuals and their families (SA News, 2020). Elsewhere, of the R147 billion spent between April and the end of July 2020, the audit covered about R69 billion (Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020:470). Several issues, including payments made through sundry payments, bank account numbers that differed from those on the Central Securities Depository (CSD) system, large amounts paid to suppliers for the first time during the COVID-19 period, were unearthed (Nkwanyanah & Agbenyegah, 2024:5). There was also evidence of excessive spending compared to pre-COVID-19 spending, and significant doubts about the tax compliance status of several large suppliers (Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020:470). Corruption was also reflected in the overpricing, tender awards to contractors not on the CSD approved by National Treasury, and suppliers who were paid significantly more than the amount signed in the award letter (Mantzaris & Ngcamu 2020:473-4). There was also evidence of improper budget allocation for special COVID-19 cases for regular operations to justify emergency funding (Chukwudi & Ojakorotu, 2022:7). In 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic posed novel obstacles to South African lawmakers and governmental personnel. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only shown inequities in South African society, however it additionally revealed how successive South African government administrations have been unable to address corruption, which has become deeply ingrained in every sphere of society (Mlambo & Masuku, 2020: 553). Nonetheless, while the government was engaged with efforts to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, certain government employees perceived this as a chance for personal enrichment, which hampered South Africa's ability to contain the pandemic. Research demonstrates that inappropriate procurement and excessive pricing of personal protection equipment led to benefits for public and private sector personnel, according to media reports (Modipa & Moses, 2022: 980).

The government's efforts to combat the global epidemic of COVID-19 have been seized by criminals operating within the administration and the corporate sector with decision-making power to guarantee that relatives and close associates of politicians obtain unlawful contracts. This pandemic triggered many graft instances, as private and public leaders violated their code of ethics (Modipa & Moses, 2022: 981). According to Aikins (2022: 2), South Africa's Minister of Health at the time was placed on leave as questionable tenders totalling \$10 million were probed. There was also widespread public outrage in the country over the alleged inflating of government tenders for the acquisition of healthcare equipment worth US\$900 million.

The SIU, which headed the probe, had previously reported that it had discovered incidences of costly personal safety gear, rules regarding procurement violations, and products not being provided despite payment (Reuters, 2022: 1). The SIU referred 224 people in departments of government or companies for disciplinary proceedings after discovering 2,803 improper contracts. It identified some of individuals facing charges and estimated that the total amount of cash and assets to be retrieved was

roughly 552 million rand (Reuters, 2022: 1). As a particular instance of corrupt behaviour during the global epidemic, the national government increased welfare payouts to some disadvantaged individuals. In this vein, from May to October 2020, the government increased spending by ZAR50 billion (about USD3.5 billion) through new and existing unconditional transfers of money (Chetty, 2021: 93). More specifically, the Child Support Grant was raised in amount. At the same time, the government established a unique COVID-19 award to aid the poorest 50 percent of households not previously assisted by the grants system (Bhorat, Köhler, Oosthuizen, Stanwix, Steenkamp & Thornton, 2020, in Chetty 2021). However, despite the severe condition that poor households face in South Africa, the influence of unethical practices has outweighed the impact of these programmes. The Auditor-General indicated that misconduct was ‘amplified’ throughout this time, stating that 30,000 recipients of these grants warranted additional examination (Chetty, 2021: 93).

Other programmes that provide ZAR500 billion (USD35 billion) for food parcels, personal protection equipment, and Temporary Employer / Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) were additionally targeted by unscrupulous interests, resulting in billions of rands in losses. By establishing urgent contracting procedures, the government's procurement system expanded the number of eligible vendors who may bid on contract tenders. This flexibility has enabled for bogus claims, which were difficult to detect. The entire impact of this corruption has yet to be determined (Corruption Watch, 2020; in Chetty 2021). To combat the looting, President Ramaphosa announced the formation of a special law enforcement team to investigate charges of corruption, particularly against government leaders or relatives of public figures who benefited during this time. Their efforts failed to aid 4.5 million residents who were scheduled to receive food parcels and 7.8 million persons who sought for social relief payments (Chutel, 2020, in Chetty 2021).

During the COVID-19 era, corruption in South African municipalities, particularly procurement corruption, hit headlines. Mantzaris & Ngcamu’ (2020) empirical study on municipal corruption during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed malicious manipulation of supply chain management procedures by local government officials. Such corrupt behavior resulted in overpricing of goods and services. Some suppliers were paid more than the agreed amounts, and some of the tenders were not on the National Treasury-approved Central Supplier Database (Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020). For instance, Cederberg Municipality’s municipal manager was arrested for COVID-19-related procurement corruption (South African Government News Agency, 2020 quoted in Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2020:463). In addition, a study by de Visser et. al. (2020) revealed cases where big municipalities (City of Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay, City of Cape Town, Ugu District Municipality, among others) could not avail critical tender documents to the public. This is supported by Mantzaris & Ngcamu (2020:469) who found that “only four out of the 32 municipalities kept tender specifications available after awarding the contract, while five municipalities kept only some tender specifications available”. Such lack of transparency demonstrates deliberate efforts by municipal officers to conceal and obscure corruption.

## 5. Conclusion

The effectiveness of South African law enforcement agencies in battling corruption is suspect (Ncala, 2024:36). Lack of political will is also blamed in the weak fight against corruption and the ANC had been unwilling to start and support a parliamentary investigation into the claims of state capture, even though Parliament (Public Service Commission [PSC], 2024:137). It has used its majority to suppress such initiatives. The effectiveness of current anticorruption laws and initiatives is noticeably low and institutional attention exclusively serves the interests of the wealthy, neglecting the needs of regular citizens (Ncala, 2024:36). There is also a notable lack of public awareness of South Africa’s anti-corruption laws. The efficacy of South African law enforcement agencies in combating corruption is suspect (Ncala, 2024:36). The government is also complicit in its inaction in addressing corruption in the provision of crucial services.

Whistleblower protection is also a source of concern because public sector employees continue to victimise them and betray their confidential information (Ncala, 2024:36). The public needs to be made



more aware of the responsibilities of important anti-corruption organisations such the judiciary, parliament, South African Police Service (SAPS), Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), and Hawks (Ncala, 2024:36). The Public Service Commission documents that numerous factors explain the continuation of corruption. These include a network of people operating both inside and outside the government who support state capture in an unethical and illegal manner; and have improper influence over appointments and removals (including strategic appointments and dismissals); manipulation of government rules and procedures to facilitate corrupt advantage (particularly the re-organisation of procurement processes) (PSC, 2024:135).

To address the highlighted gaps, there is a need for the following:

- Designate competent and trained and experienced individuals to strategic positions to guarantee that they comprehend the organisation's problems and can, therefore, make well-informed decisions to ameliorate the circumstances. Even those appointed to strategic positions must complete ethics training to comprehend organisational culture, values, and codes of conduct and to better align their work with the organisation's business plan, vision, and mission. Appointing the right people to right positions can change atmosphere and create an ethical culture within the organisation.
- To educate staff members about the importance of ethics, human resource managers should host workshops for middle and lower management levels. It is equally crucial to assign competent individuals to lower management positions. To close the competency and skill gaps, interventions aimed at strengthening capacity may be taken into consideration. Attendance at these workshops on ethics and capacity building should be connected to the Key Performance Areas (KPA's) at both the vertical and horizontal performance levels. This could lead to more lucrative promotion opportunities. These kinds of interventions could help staff members operate morally and make valuable contributions to the organisation.
- It is important to regularly assess internal systems that link reporting, audits, asset and financial management, monitoring, and evaluation to close any gaps or loopholes that could allow corrupt behavior to flourish.
- Technology, specifically electronic governance, can be important since it can synchronise all institutional processes. This might eliminate any remaining opportunities for unethical behaviour. Every employee must also have knowledge to use digital equipment(s). Therefore, to achieve productive outputs, organisations should think about implementing training programmes to improve the use of technology.

The recommendations are supported by the fact that there is a need to foster accountability and consequence management. This can be done through strengthening internal control systems to detect corporate risk early. Preventive mechanisms are crucial in curbing corruption and other financial irregularities rampant in municipalities. As part of accountability, those guilty of corruption and related irregularities should be punished accordingly (Thusi & Selepe, 2023; Mishi, Mbaleki & Mushonga, 2022). Municipalities need to be rewarded with clean audits and strong control systems.

There are several laws in South Africa that are intended to prevent corruption in the country or, at the very least, to lessen it. Acts in South Africa specify how to spot and report corruption; these policies also allow the government to establish departments that hold the public administration accountable and responsible for all actions carried out in the name of providing services. The acts should be more practicable to implement to guarantee a favourable result, namely the fight against corruption.

The lack of an empirical approach is the study's limitation. The reasoning behind this is that interviewing government and municipal employees about corruption is a delicate subject and may not go well. Employees might feel uncomfortable discussing corruption within their organisations.

Subsequent research endeavours will likewise rely on qualitative desktop analysis of accessible data. To gather data on instances of misconduct, the study may, nevertheless, choose a small number of national departments or local municipalities. This could lead to a comparative analysis and benefit the field of public administration and governance.

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