Chapter

Anti-Corruption Framework for the Ghana Police Service Reform

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Abstract

Corruption remains a pervasive challenge within the Ghana Police Service (GPS), undermining public trust and institutional legitimacy. Despite past reforms, including salary increases, corruption persists, manifesting as bribery, extortion, and case brokering due to systemic pressures, opportunities, and rationalisations embedded in organisational culture. This chapter proposes an anti-corruption framework for GPS reform, integrating new public management (NPM) principles and Cressey's Fraud Triangle to address structural, cultural, and psychological dimensions of corruption. The framework adopts a 'palace' metaphor, with trust and legitimacy as its crown, supported by pillars including new values and norms, meritocracy, disclosure and reporting, rules and procedures, and digitalisation. Foundational elements include capacity building, recruitment, and acknowledgement of corruption. Challenges such as political resistance, capacity gaps, and entrenched patrimonial norms are acknowledged, but opportunities exist through Ghana's National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP), digitalisation, and civil society engagement. The chapter advocates for pilot testing and longitudinal research to refine the framework, emphasising holistic, culturally attuned reforms to restore GPS integrity and public confidence.

Keywords: anti-corruption, new public management, public sector reform, fraud triangle, police, Ghana

1. Introduction

This chapter identifies a chronic problem of corruption in all branches of the Ghanaian public sector, particularly in the Ghana Police Service (GPS). In 2018, Transparency International (TI) released a report indicating that the Ghanaian police were the most corrupt organisation in Ghana [1]. The GPS faces a public trust challenge that can reduce compliance and create social dysfunction due to an integrity problem, which calls for reform within its organisation [2, 3]. Efforts have been made to raise officers' salaries to reduce petty corruption, but this initiative inadvertently led to more severe corruption, including bribery, extortion, selective enforcement, and case brokering [1, 4]. A study by the International Growth Centre (IGC) revealed that after the GPS doubled its officers' salaries in 2015, police officers increased their bribery demands rather

than feeling fulfilled and ceasing corrupt practices [1, 5]. TI concluded that the reason for this situation in the GPS is a combination of family pressure, limited oversight, and small incentives, which create numerous opportunities for corruption [6]. The Fraud Triangle [7], comprising pressure, opportunity, and rationalisation, will be used together with the new public management (NPM) approach to develop a holistic strategy for preventing corruption in the GPS by addressing its structural, psychological, and cultural dimensions. This chapter argues that the GPS requires holistic organisational reform and proposes a culturally tailored anti-corruption framework to reduce corruption within the organisation.

This chapter begins by defining key concepts, including corruption, anti-corruption, public sector reform, and organizational culture, to establish a shared vocabulary and contextualize the GPS's challenges. Next, it explores theoretical foundations, combining NPM and Cressey's Fraud Triangle to analyse corruption's systemic drivers, such as pressure, opportunity, rationalization, and reform levers, like efficiency and accountability. The subsequent section proposes an anti-corruption framework, modeled as a 'palace', with trust and legitimacy as its ultimate goals, supported by actionable pillars, including new values and norms, meritocracy, disclosure and reporting, rules and procedures, and digitalisation. Lastly, the foundational steps, like capacity building, recruitment, and acknowledgement that can become sources of implementation challenges, which involve political resistance and capacity gaps, are then weighed against opportunities like Ghana's National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) and public demand for change. The chapter concludes by advocating pilot testing and future research to refine the framework, emphasizing culturally attuned, evidence-based reform to restore GPS integrity.

2. Concepts

This chapter employs four key concepts, including corruption, anti-corruption, public sector reform, and organisational culture. Through these concepts, this chapter emphasises the importance of addressing corruption within the GPS through a more holistic organisational and cultural transformation in the organisation.

First, corruption in the Ghanaian Criminal Offences Act (Act 29) of 1960 is defined as conduct performed by a person as an officer, juror, or voter 'influenced by the gift, promise, or prospect of any valuable consideration to be received by that person or by any other person, from any other person' [8–10]. The working group behind Ghana's NACAP evaluated that this definition is too narrow, as corruption under Act 29 commonly identifies bribery. Hence, in NACAP, and later used to understand corruption in the Ghanaian government after the document was released in 2011, it is defined as 'the misuse of entrusted power for private gain... (that includes) bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, trading in influence, abuse of office, abuse of power, illicit enrichment, laundering of proceeds of crime, concealment, obstruction of justice, patronage, nepotism, and conflict of interest' [8, 10].

Second, the Ghanaian government [2, 8], through NACAP, understands anti-corruption as an integrated action to 'fight against corruption' across the country, as reflected in the strategic action plans endorsed by the public and private sectors

during the national consultation period. These actions aim to reduce the pervasive problems that have caused corruption to flourish in Ghana, such as a minimal commitment to positive values that promote good governance, like integrity and self-discipline; the culture of gift-giving; ineffective incentive mechanisms; and weak law enforcement in the patrimonial environment, which undermines good governance in favour of maintaining informal relations, like family connections and social reciprocity [8, 11].

Third, public sector reform, as observed by Boyne (2003) and further elaborated upon by Marsh and McConnell [12], encompasses every attempt that includes, but is not limited to, the reorganisation and restructuring of public organisations to deliver better services to the people. Reform is different from changes. Reform refers to deliberate, often externally initiated changes guided by a clear plan aimed at transforming an organisation, whereas change can occur spontaneously as a natural response to new circumstances without a predefined goal [13]. Generally, in the Ghanaian government context, public sector reforms intended to address corruption have faced failures due to several reasons. These include low organisational participation in the formulation and implementation stages, which generated minimal organisational ownership, ineffective coordination across organisations, limited support for strategic implementation by the government, and a simplistic view of corruption as a problem of greed and weak laws rather than a complex combination of economic pressures, weak organisation, cultural norms, and social expectations [8]. This fact invites organisational reform within the GPS that considers a more holistic approach, intervening in the police as both an organisation and as individuals. Tankebe [14] argues that for a successful police reform in Ghana, it should be part of the wider Ghanaian public sector reform. While Pollitt [9] suggests that a successful reform is hard to measure, this chapter defines a successful anti-corruption reform in the GPS as one marked by a consistently declining perception of corruption, as reported by Global InfoAnalytics, which began at 6.43 [15] based on their national poll in 2025.

Fourth, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1961), in Bouckaert [16, 17], explain that 'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of future action.' The explanation about culture that this chapter aims to emphasise comes from Adler (1933), as cited in [16], which suggests that culture has an element of heredity. This means that what people in a particular community believe to be acceptable is often a result of learning from the previous generation. Hence, when it comes to organisational culture reform, Bouckaert [16] suggests that organisational culture sometimes shapes the way a professional community, such as the police, behaves and makes decisions. For an effective GPS anti-corruption reform, an understanding of organisational culture helps to examine whether the culture within the organisation, like gift-giving and patrimonial cultures, tolerates corruption. When NAPAC was first introduced in Ghana, the working group acknowledged that this cultural issue must be addressed beyond using formal rules to change Ghanaian officers' behaviour that inclines them towards an anti-corruption mindset.

3. Theories

This chapter assumes that corruption in the GPS is deeply embedded in its organisational culture, which is influenced by patrimonial norms and individual preferences that tolerate and normalise corrupt practices. To understand and potentially reform this environment, the chapter draws on the NPM model from the field of public administration and Cressey's [7] Fraud Triangle to assess the problems that the proposed anti-corruption framework for the GPS aims to address.

First, NPM advocates for greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability by applying private sector management principles to the public sector [9, 18]. They mention that the key features of NPM include performance measurement, decentralisation, competition, and customer-oriented service delivery, which characterise how private businesses work. When applied to the GPS, NPM suggests that implementing more measurable outcomes, citizen accountability, and transparency in the reform processes taken within the organisation could weaken the entrenched cultures that permit corruption [19]. However, for NPM to be effective in this context, this chapter argues that it must be implemented with sensitivity to local culture, political dynamics, and institutional constraints; otherwise, it risks becoming another technocratic exercise that fails to influence underlying value systems.

Second, Cressey's [7] Fraud Triangle, on the other hand, identifies three key conditions that must be present for corruption to occur: pressure, opportunity, and rationalisation. First, pressure refers to the motivation or stress that drives someone to commit fraud. In the context of the GPS, pressure commonly arises from low wages and family expectations [8]. Second, opportunity is the condition that allows the fraud to occur. Rahman [1] and the Ghanaian government [8] found that the concerning problem of corruption among GPS officers stems from weak oversight or unchecked discretion. Third, rationalisation involves the fraudster's internal justification, convincing themselves that they deserve the benefit and that their offending behaviours are necessary or harmless within their organisation.

4. Framework overview

This chapter proposes an anti-corruption framework built upon the concepts and theories presented in the previous sections and tailored with a case study from the GPS. The framework employs metaphors such as a crown, pillars, and foundation, likened to a palace-form that is commonly used as an analogy in organisational performance improvement [20], to help users – in this context, the GPS – understand complex ideas around anti-corruption reform by relating them to familiar concepts. Firstly, the crown represents the purpose or outcome that is expected from the reform agenda. Secondly, the pillars depict the primary elements that play key roles in achieving the ultimate goal. Thirdly, the foundation outlines core principles essential for initiating the reform. All the layers work together, from the bottom up, creating a strong base that allows the layers above it to stand firm and be fully realised.

In general, these are the components of each part of the palace. First, the crown is built on trust and legitimacy as the purpose of anti-corruption reform within the GPS. Second, the pillars contain new values and norms, meritocracy, disclosure and

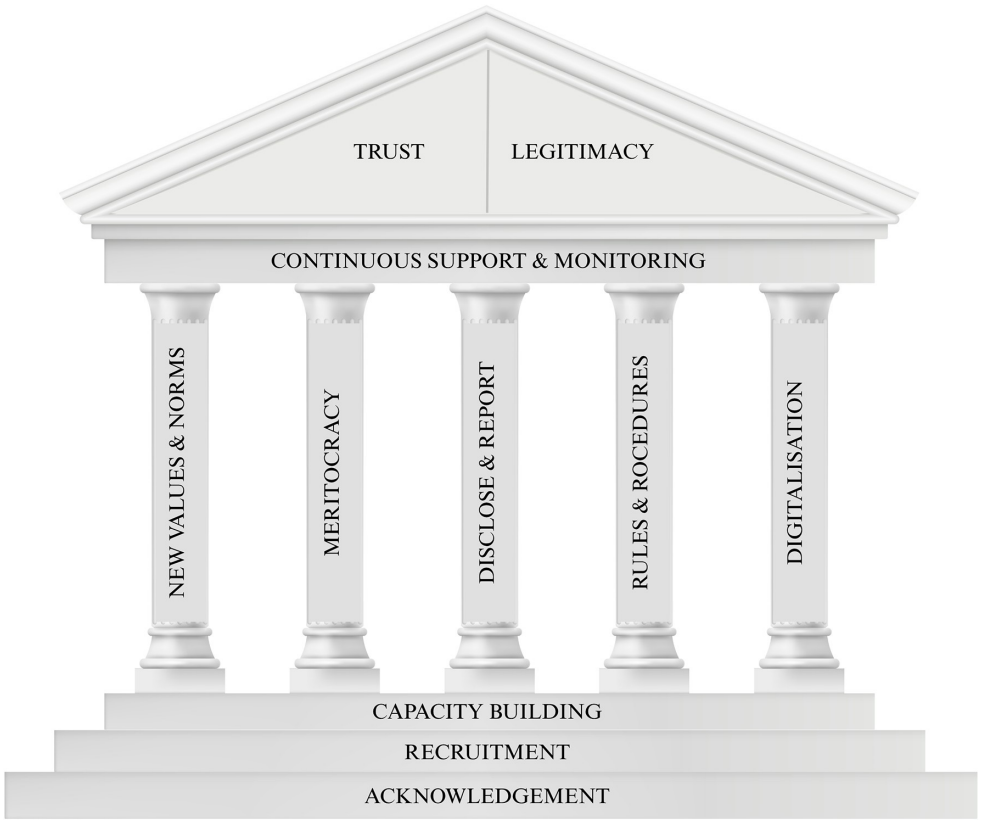

Figure 1.
Anti-corruption framework for the Ghana police service reform.

reporting, rules and procedures, and digitalisation as actionable elements that can take the form of practice, policy, or standard to guide user behaviour in achieving the purpose of reform. Between the pillars and the crown, the framework emphasises the importance of ongoing support and monitoring, underscoring the need for consistent evaluation and continuous improvement by the GPS. Third, the foundation incorporates capacity building, recruitment, and acknowledgement, which represent the initial actions needed to activate anti-corruption reform and ensure the pillars are implemented effectively across all functions within the organisation. The illustration of the proposed framework is shown below (**Figure 1**).

5. Explanation of the anti-corruption framework's components

The framework proposed in this chapter is designed to address problems that have been identified in the GPS. From top to bottom, trust and legitimacy are placed as the highest outcomes of the reform, based on the nature of the organisation. The nature of the organisation here is the GPS's ultimate function to maintain social order [21], which requires cooperation with the people they serve [3]. The fact that corruption in the GPS reduces public confidence in the institution [14] arguably signals, although it requires more empirical study, that the GPS needs to reform its

institution. A reform that considers public perception, aiming to satisfy the public, aligns with the spirit of NPM, which puts attention on customer satisfaction [18]. To achieve its core mission, the GPS must rekindle public trust, which has been diminished in part due to pervasive corruption. This effort is expected to generate the legitimacy of the police when they exercise their power to maintain Ghanaian social order. Police legitimacy is highly crucial in this context because when people perceive the police as legitimate, they prefer to follow rather than reject the work of police officers in the community [22]. Additionally, under the crown, the framework calls for the GPS to perform continuous support and monitoring as a means of long-term improvement to achieve the purpose of the anti-corruption reform in the future. This approach in the reform serves as a stimulus to introduce the concept of a learning organisation, which encourages organisations to regularly reflect on their actions to identify areas that need improvement, as proven effective in police reform [23].

Next, the pillars involve, firstly, values and norms that address the problem of organisational culture, which is identified by Rahman [1] and the Ghanaian government [8] as a factor that induces corruption to persist in the GPS. Kubbe et al. [24] explain that values represent what is right or wrong, while norms imply a consensus between parties on what is acceptable or unacceptable. They emphasise that a strategy to combat corruption, in which the norms are in contrast with anti-corruption values, will lead to its failure. New norms help shape a culture of integrity [24] that enables the GPS to establish a pro-anti-corruption organisational culture. The new values and norms are expected to break the vicious cycle of corruption when the reform is applied within the organisation.

Secondly, a meritocracy ensures that recruitment, promotion, and rewards within the GPS are based on competence and performance rather than personal connections or favouritism, which perpetuates nepotism. This is a common problem in the GPS, stemming from family expectations and pressure. While several studies have found that certain career paths and generous salaries have no significant effect on reducing corruption [1, 5, 25, 26], studies by Dahlström et al. [26] and Pyman [27] highlight the success and relevance of meritocratic human capital management strategies in anti-corruption reform, particularly in police institutions. In the context of human capital management, this includes, but is not limited to, recruitment and capacity building as fundamental measures to prepare human capital that upholds integrity and professionalism in their job while combating nepotism in the GPS.

Thirdly, disclosure and reporting mechanisms reflect the need for holistic oversight that enables both internal and external stakeholders, such as police officers themselves, the public, parliament, and the judiciary, to participate in reducing opportunities through transparent and accountable checks and balances mechanisms. The promotion of transparent and accountable disclosure and reporting, such as police whistleblowing [28], is an inevitable facet of effective anti-corruption strategies. When clear channels exist for reporting misconduct, and when such reports are acted upon, Taylor et al. [28] suggest that this effort creates a deterrent effect and signals a genuine commitment to the realisation of cultural change in the organisation. This mechanism in the GPS can be encouraged by creating a safe and supportive environment where officers know that reporting corruption will lead to real consequences for wrongdoers and will not harm their own careers. Miller [29] advises that this action requires a trusted internal investigations unit, a culture that values reporting, and strong protections for whistleblowers for the mechanism to be effective.

Fourthly, codified rules and procedures are central to addressing uncertainty and preventing rationalisation that allows police officers to justify their corrupt behaviours. Schoeberlein [11] suggests that codified standards of conduct and well-defined operational procedures limit the discretionary power of individual officers. The High-Level Advisory Group [30] notes that this effort can mitigate the risk of arbitrary decision-making and corruption, aligning with the spirit of anti-corruption reform within organisations. Standardisation ensures that all officers are held to the same expectations and that deviations can be identified and addressed consistently. This certainty discourages irrationality among GPS officers that leads them to commit corruption, as it results in a higher cost than the benefit they receive. de Graaf [31] argues that establishing an environment where the consequences of engaging in corruption are clear and consistently enforced is an effective way to reduce corrupt behaviour.

Lastly, in the age of the internet, digitalisation – the adoption of digital technology to transform public service delivery processes [32] – should play a role as an enabler of anti-corruption plans across the GPS. Several studies have found that digitalisation helps the government reduce corruption, but only if the officers are well-trained, the public is familiar with the technology, and the government is fully committed to transparency and accountability from the beginning [10, 33]. Unfortunately, a study by Abdul-Salam et al. [32] concluded that relatively new digitalisation in the Ghanaian public sector has not shown a linear benefit in reducing corruption. However, learning from their research, which emphasises that when leaders commit to transparency and accountability, and stakeholders are ready to use digital tools, digitalisation remains essential in the proposed anti-corruption framework to ensure future relevance for the GPS.

Finally, the base of the structure in the framework indicates that capacity building, recruitment, and acknowledgement are the starting points for reforming corrupt practices within the institution. In an anti-corruption police reform, Chêne [17] advises that officers at all levels require training to understand how to react when they encounter misconduct and to work together in combating corruption. She highlights the importance of training for the managerial level, as she considers them to have the power to influence numerous subordinates to lean more towards pro-anti-corruption behaviour. This leader–member relationship highlights the importance of both the commitment and the capacity of GPS leaders to act as the first line of reform. Ward [18] argues that successful reform depends on leaders' ability to foster a sense of unity by promoting mutual influence grounded in shared values aligned with the anti-corruption agenda.

Furthermore, one step behind the training – not to mention that it is ineffective to do in parallel – recruitment of the new police officers must follow the meritocratic principle. Several studies, as mentioned earlier, underscore the importance of this action in preparing future leaders who can sustain the purpose of the anti-corruption reform in the GPS [26, 27].

Last but not least, the first step of the reform is an acknowledgement of corruption as a serious crime that exists in the organisation, which serves as a critical first step in rebuilding legitimacy and fostering a culture of accountability. O'Brien and Tyler [22] argue that when police fail to meet public expectations – in this case, becoming a nest of corruption – they must first rebuild trust by sincerely acknowledging their shortcomings and offering a genuine apology to the

communities they serve. Therefore, before advancing to the next stage of meaningful reform, the GPS needs to take reconciliatory action that begins with a sincere acknowledgement.

6. Conclusion, limitations, opportunities, and future research

This chapter found that corruption within the GPS is a systemic and cultural problem that requires improvement, both in the GPS and its surrounding Ghanaian public sector environment. In addition, the anti-corruption framework, prepared in consideration of the GPS's culture and institutional realities, offers a holistic approach that addresses individual, organisational, and societal drivers of corruption. Its implementation comes with several challenges. First, the structural dependence of the GPS on other government executives compromises sustained reform, making it vulnerable to shifts in political will [2]. Second, contrasting interests, especially among senior officers who benefit from the status quo, may resist reforms that threaten existing power structures [34]. Third, generally, the Ghanaian public sector lacks the operational capacity to enforce digitalisation uniformly, particularly in rural or under-resourced offices [32]. These limitations underscore the importance of coupling reform design with long-term institutional investment and stakeholder alignment.

Despite these limitations, several opportunities exist that provide prospects for sustainable reform. First, NAPAC signals political will and creates space for ongoing dialogue, monitoring, and coordination among anti-corruption stakeholders [8]. Second, digitalisation efforts across the broader Ghanaian public service have helped reduce face-to-face interactions that often facilitate bribery while promoting greater transparency and data integrity [32]. Third, strong public demand for change, driven by media scrutiny and civil activism in a democratic society, places sustained pressure on the GPS to take the reform agenda seriously [35]. These developments offer strategic entry points for operationalising the Anti-Corruption Framework in the GPS.

After all, as the framework's formulation relied on limited secondary data, during implementation, GPS is encouraged to conduct an empirical experiment as a pilot project that guides the massive implementation across its organisation in order to anticipate problems and failures. Future research could expand this model through comparative studies, difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis, or longitudinal evaluation to assess the long-term impact of anti-corruption reforms in policing in Ghana and in different jurisdictions.

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Conflict of interest

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