



Strategic Triangle: The Role of the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman in Corruption Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Corruption and maladministration are two major problems that are interrelated and encompass the principles of good governance. The focus of corruption eradication in Indonesia has thus far been on implementing measures through institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/KPK*), with little attention given to the role of public service supervisory institutions such as the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (*Ombudsman Republik Indonesia/ORI*). In fact, maladministration is often the gateway to corruption. This study aims to analyze the role of ORI in efforts to prevent corruption through a phenomenological approach, by exploring the subjective experiences of Ombudsman employees. The framework analysis used is the Strategic Triangle developed by Mark Moore, which emphasizes three main components in creating public value: public value, legitimacy and support, and operational capacity. The results of the study indicate that ORI has legal legitimacy and a strategic vision in eradicating corruption through preventing maladministration. However, in practice, the effectiveness of supervision is still hampered by limited human resources and budget, weak legal force over the recommendations, and low public awareness of the role of ORI. Although it does not have the authority to take direct action like the KPK, ORI still plays a role in preventing small-scale corruption by monitoring accountable and transparent public service standards.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption and maladministration have become two sides of the same coin that are interrelated in weakening the foundations of good governance (Nkyabonaki, 2019; R. Rifai et al., 2024). Unethical behavior, such as corruption, conflict of interest, and wastage of public resources is a global phenomenon (Valiquette L'Heureux, 2022). In Indonesia, anti-corruption institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/KPK*) have been specifically formed but have been weakened in eradicating corruption (Franklin & Hägerdal, 2024; Price, 2024). Many studies on corruption eradication conducted by the Corruption Eradication Commission in Indonesia have been conducted, such as the effectiveness of punishment imposed for corruption crimes (Cahyani et al., 2023), organizational design (Tauda et al., 2023), and bureaucratic reform of the Corruption Eradication Commission (Yustia & Arifin, 2023). In fact, corruption begins with maladministration (Kroukamp & Cloete, 2018).

Maladministration, on the other hand, can lead to resource waste, poor program outcomes, and office abuse (Zarkasyi Rahman & Lituhayu, 2024). In these situations, public servants might disregard protocols, make erratic choices without taking the facts into account, and spend tax (Graycar, 2020). This constitutes corrupt, unethical, or improper behavior. Maladministration problems in Indonesia are handled by the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman institution (Muazzinah et al., 2022). The formation of the Ombudsman is a sign of hope in eradicating corruption (Sherlock, 2002). Research related to the strategic role of the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman institution in preventing criminal acts of corruption from the public service stage has still received little attention (Ramada & Utari, 2024).

Research on the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia has already been done on the institution's function in upholding good governance and defending human rights (Misbahul Mujib & Muchlas, 2023), restricted power in contrast to the Prosecutor's Office, which leads to disparities in law enforcement (Agus Arfianto & Cahanintyas, 2024), and its institutional authority (Asmara et al., 2018). Research on the development of the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman in preventing criminal acts of corruption has been conducted (Harijanti, 2014), but there are still shortcomings in the form of the absence of empirical data that can limit the robustness of the findings and the application of the conclusions drawn regarding the effectiveness of the Ombudsman and public perception. There is still a lack of performance and public value measurement, and more study is required (Bracci et al., 2019).

In this context, the Strategic Triangle concept becomes a relevant analytical tool to understand the effectiveness of the Ombudsman's performance. Empirical studies are still necessary to verify the Strategic Triangle. One benefit of the strategic triangle is that it takes into account the unique setting of the public (Sobol & Chang, 2024). A strategic triangle that has the potential to add value to the public (Moore, 2021). This model examines the role of public organizations through three main elements: public value, operational capacity, support and legitimacy (Höglund et al., 2021). By using this framework, we can assess the

extent to which the Ombudsman is able to create public value in the form of services that are free from maladministration, have the operational capacity to follow up on public reports, and obtain sufficient political and legal support to act effectively.

This article aims to review the role of the Ombudsman in corruption supervision and prevention through the Strategic Triangle perspective, highlighting the contribution of this institution in strengthening public participation, service accountability, and government integrity, especially amidst the challenges of declining Indonesia's corruption perception index in recent years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Triangle corrects the shortcomings of the New Public Management (NPM) approach which puts too much emphasis on individual efficiency and performance (Pereira & Ckagnazaroff, 2021). One of the most important questions for public administration is the public value created (O'Flynn, 2021). New problems in public value management can be better addressed and more precise rules for network management operations can be formulated with the use of public value tools (Page et al., 2015) or process improvement (Alford & Yates, 2014). In order to diagnose a problem, organise what needs to be done, and give a framework for analysing managers' behaviour, the tools of public value can be used in many ways (van der Zwet & Connolly, 2021). The Strategic Triangle concept developed by Mark Moore has become an important theoretical framework in public administration studies, especially in efforts to create public value effectively (Hartley et al., 2019). This framework emphasizes the importance of integration between three main elements: public value, legitimacy and support, and operational capability (Sedlačko, 2020; Thabit et al., 2024). These three elements interact with each other to ensure that government actions are not only operationally efficient, but also politically legitimate and beneficial to society (Poikela et al., 2023).

The primary objective of the strategic triangle is to aid executives in evaluating the environment to identify opportunities to create value (avoid harm or advance good) and to plan specific actions to exploit those opportunities (Moore, 2021). Public value is the first element of the Strategic Triangle and outlines the benefits that public services provide to the community (Kitchener et al., 2023). Moore pointed out that public managers must prioritize producing value that meets the needs and expectations of citizens (Bojang, 2021). This promotes a shift in the paradigm from merely bureaucratic efficiency to a more inclusive and participative value creation (Bojang, 2020). The decision-making process requires public support and trust (Rodríguez-Castro, 2023), which is emphasized in the second component, legitimacy and support (Virtanen & Jalonen, 2024). Engaging the community in governance can enhance the legitimacy of government actions and enhance the quality of services (Lopushynskiy & Filippova, 2024). In this setting, collaborative strategies and stakeholder engagement become crucial for the success of public policies (Wellstead & Howlett, 2024). Operational capability, which is the third

component, encompasses the resources and institutional capacity required to implement policies effectively (Chiwawa et al., 2021). To achieve desired public value, it is necessary to have strong operational capabilities (Höglund et al., 2023). This aspect emphasizes the importance of organizational competence and coordination between institutions in supporting strategy implementation (Boin et al., 2021; Castañer & Oliveira, 2020).

The strategic triangle is a governance model that involves collaboration between the public, private and civil society sectors (Bryson & George, 2020). In the collaborative era, this framework is a valuable tool for tackling complex challenges, where legitimacy and efficiency are not sufficient without clear public value (Dallagnol & Portulhak, 2025). The relevance of this framework lies in its ability to be an adaptive and participatory cross-sectoral approach (Crosby et al., 2017). An imbalance between the three elements in the Strategic Triangle can hinder the creation of public value, weaken organizational capacity, and disrupt public accountability (van Gestel et al., 2024). The Strategic Triangle is not only about tying strategy and implementation together, but it also represents values and integrity in public administration (Bryson et al., 2023).

Public sector organizations can increase the effectiveness of government innovation by utilizing the strategic triangle to identify resource constraints and create public value (Verdenhofa et al., 2024). The public value framework's high flexibility is what makes it advantageous (Williams & Shearer, 2011). Organizations can use defensive, reactive, and proactive strategies to adapt to a dynamic environment and minimize risks, while enhancing competitive advantage and strategic decision-making through gradual adaptation (Spiler et al., 2016). This indicates its relevance and applicability in the current governance system.

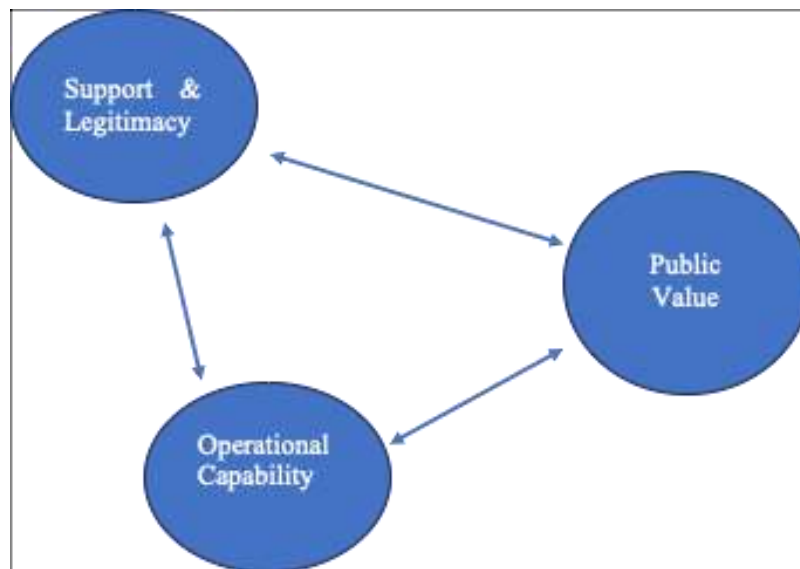


Figure 1. Strategic Triangel
(Source: Moore, 2013)

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was used by the researcher. Through this approach, one or more individuals' experience related

to a particular phenomenon is aimed to be understood. This involves comprehending how individuals perceive and interpret their social worlds, and how these perceptions influence their behaviors and actions (Tulegenova, 2023). The research process begins with observing and investigating the phenomenon that is the center of attention, emphasizing the subjective aspects of the behavior of the object being investigated. Furthermore, the researcher explores information that can provide a deeper understanding or meaning of the phenomenon. The research is concentrated on understanding the meaning and experience, felt by the Ombudsman supervisory parties, specifically the Ombudsman employees. In this study, research was conducted by conducting direct interviews. In this study, the informants were:

Table 1: List of Informants

No	Code	Region	Position
1	U1	National	Vice Chair of the Indonesian Ombudsman
2	U2	National	Member of the Indonesian Ombudsman
3	U3	South Kalimantan	Head of Regional Office
4	U4	South Kalimantan	Assistant Ombudsman
5	U5	Papua	Assistant Ombudsman
6	T1	West Sulawesi	Assistant Ombudsman

(Source: Author, 2024)

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In its broadest sense, corruption is the misuse of official authority for private benefit (Gong & Xiao, 2017), and it represents a serious barrier to social and economic development. Corruption is considered unethical behavior within the bureaucracy (al Halbusi et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Nieto-Morales & Ríos, 2021). Ombudsman institutions are often characterized by weak authority, limited resources, symbolic political support, and disconnection from investigative or law enforcement bodies in corruption prevention efforts (Sherlock, 2002). In several countries, Ombudsman offices lack the capacity to adjudicate corruption cases (Diaw, 2008).

In Indonesia, despite the Ombudsman's vital role in addressing maladministration and supporting anti-corruption initiatives, its effectiveness is hindered by multiple factors—such as insufficient resources, low public awareness, and the absence of legal enforceability for its recommendations (A. Rifai et al., 2023). As noted by (Ifejika, 2023), the Ombudsman can only investigate but not prosecute, which reduces its direct contribution to resolving corruption.

This is consistent with the findings of this study, where the Ombudsman's contribution to corruption prevention remains relatively low. As stated by one key informant (U2):

"We do have an important role, but the Ombudsman's direct contribution to the improvement of the CPI (Corruption Perception Index) is still minimal. Up to now, our impact remains below 10%."

To further analyze the role of the Indonesian Ombudsman (ORI) in corruption prevention as a form of public value, this study applies Moore's (2013) Strategic Triangle framework, which conceptualizes public value through three interrelated elements: Legitimacy and Support, Operational Capabilities, and Substantively Valuable.

Legitimacy and Support

The legitimacy of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in the national anti-corruption framework has been reinforced through various legal and institutional instruments, including:

- 1) Presidential Decree No. 44 of 2000 on the Establishment of the National Ombudsman Commission;
- 2) People's Consultative Assembly Decree No. VIII/MPR/2001 concerning the National Strategy for Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism Eradication;
- 3) Law No. 37 of 2008 on the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia; Ombudsman Decree No. 026.1/ORI-SK/IV/2016 on the Strategic Plan for 2016–2021.

These instruments provide a formal foundation for the Ombudsman's mandate in promoting good governance and combating corruption. The MPR Decree and subsequent legislation established the Ombudsman as a response to systemic maladministration and as part of national anti-corruption efforts. Beyond legal legitimacy, the institution also gains normative legitimacy through its role in protecting citizens' rights and improving administrative accountability. As stated by informants:

"We must uphold integrity and professionalism as the core values of the Ombudsman." (U3)

"The Ombudsman plays a key role in ensuring that public service delivery adheres to the principles of good governance." (U4)

Public trust and civic participation serve as further indicators of legitimacy and institutional support. These aspects have become strategic priorities in the Ombudsman's planning documents. Although the volume of public complaints received is high, the institution's reach remains limited when compared to the total population that depends on public services. Informants emphasized this constraint:

"We handle thousands of reports, but the problems in society are in the millions. Our scale is still relatively small when compared to the population that needs quality public services." (U1)

"The public is starting to recognize the Ombudsman's role in improving services, but challenges remain in reaching more remote areas." (T1)

Although the Ombudsman does not have direct investigative powers for major corruption cases, its focus on preventing maladministration is a critical strategy in curbing corruption from the ground up. Maladministration is widely

acknowledged as the entry point for corrupt practices. As such, the Ombudsman's preventive function – while indirect – remains vital.

Operational Capabilities

The operational capability of the Indonesian Ombudsman refers to its institutional capacity to manage human resources, infrastructure, and financial resources in carrying out its mandate. One of the core performance indicators is the effectiveness of handling public complaints, as well as the institution's transparency and accountability mechanisms. Organizational effectiveness is closely linked to the quality of human resources. Human capital constitutes a critical input in the organizational process that shapes performance outcomes (Apascaritei & Elvira, 2022). Performance is not only measured financially, but also through internal processes, customer perspectives, and employee learning and development (Van Thuong & Singh, 2023).

According to the Indonesian Ombudsman's 2023 Performance Report, the number of personnel increased consistently from 2020 to 2022, before declining slightly in 2023. The reduction in staff was attributed to retirements, resignations, staff transfers, and disciplinary dismissals. This fluctuation is reflected in the institution's ability to resolve public complaints. As shown in the following figure, the rate of report resolution appears to grow proportionally with changes in staffing and budget allocations:

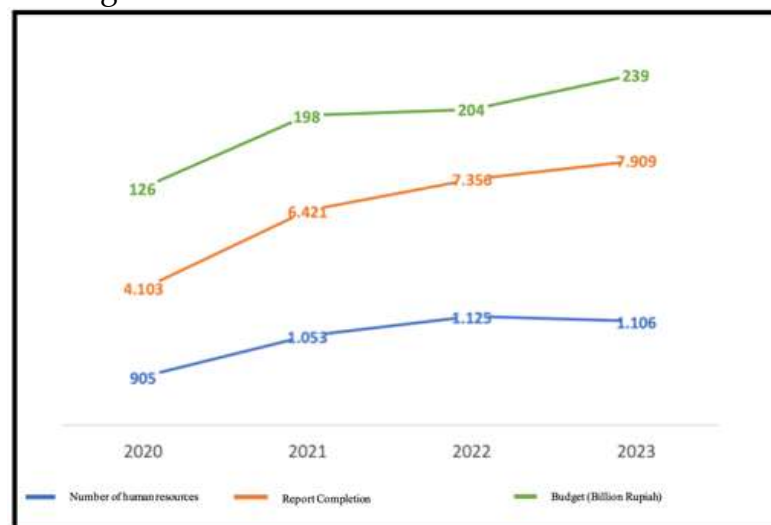


Figure 2. Comparison of the Number of Report Completions and Human Resources of the Indonesian Ombudsman 2020-2023

(Source: Annual Report of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021-2024)

These findings suggest that the Indonesian Ombudsman has managed its resources relatively well. The alignment between human resources, budget allocation, and service output demonstrates institutional responsiveness. Nevertheless, the organization still faces several operational challenges:

"With limited resources, we must rely on innovation to achieve better outcomes."

(U3)

"Our human resources are stretched thin, which hampers our ability to monitor remote areas effectively." (U5)

"Due to budget limitations, we prioritize strategic sectors that are in most need of oversight." (T1)

Indonesia's vast geography and the wide scope of public service oversight present significant challenges. Despite incremental improvements in staffing and budget, the resources at the Ombudsman's disposal remain insufficient—particularly for conducting effective supervision in remote and underserved regions.

Substantively Valuable

Something that is of public value is called substantial value. In this study, what is meant is a benefit received by users or target groups, whether in terms of economic value, political value, social and cultural value, educational value and ecological value. In the Strategic Triangle perspective put forward by Mark Moore (2013), public value is one of the fundamental elements that determine the effectiveness and legitimacy of a public institution. The Indonesian Ombudsman, as an institution that monitors public services, has a strategic role in preventing corruption through monitoring service standards and preventing maladministration. The Ombudsman's commitment in carrying out its role can be seen from various statements from informants that reflect the public values that are upheld. Key informant 3 stated that integrity and professionalism are the basic values of the Ombudsman. Ethical and effective efforts to achieve political goals spread throughout the social, economic, cultural, legal, and political organizations of the country will be encouraged in an environment that supports good governance by elements that support good governance (Aulich, 2011). Promoting integrity is partly a way to minimize embezzlement and violations, but ultimately can increase the quality of democratic accountability (Durachman et al., 2020; Verhoest et al., 2004). Professional ethics are important because good governance is generally needed to support ethical institutions (Argyriades, 2006). The Ombudsman's role as a supervisory institution is effectively carried out by imposing administrative sanctions on parties who ignore its Recommendations (Setiawan Aji & Cahyaningtyas, 2021). In realizing this, there are obstacles, especially many reported parties who do not implement the Ombudsman's recommendations because they believe the recommendations are not mandatory (Amancik et al., 2024). This was expressed by key informant 5, *"The Ombudsman's corrective actions have been widely accepted by the ministry, although the implementation is not 100 percent."*

Executive power should be granted to the Ombudsman if their recommendations have final and binding legal force (Asmara et al., 2018). After the Ombudsman's report is submitted to the President, the DPR, and published to the media, the law's follow-up to resolve the issue has not been effective in ensuring that recommendations that were not complied with will be implemented (Khairiyati et al., 2022). The Ombudsman's responsibility to monitor public services implementation has been inadequate, particularly in relation to recommendations issued that are not met by the reported institution (Ispriyarso & Badriyah, 2021). The Ombudsman needs to be strengthened by allowing them to impose administrative sanctions directly on the reported institution in the future (Panjaitan, 2022). A Presidential Regulation that further

regulates this matter is necessary to be issued immediately. Commitment to Preventing Small-Scale Corruption through Supervision of Service Standards As part of the public value created by the Ombudsman, the role in preventing corruption, even on a small scale, is very important. This is confirmed by informant U1's statement: *"When I launched the Hybrid Ombudsman Corruption, it was more about the division of tasks between the KPK and the Ombudsman ... even though we do not have the same authority as the KPK, we still play a role in small-scale corruption related to service standards."* (U1)

This statement shows that although the Ombudsman does not have the authority to take action like the KPK, this institution still contributes to preventing corruption through monitoring public services, by ensuring transparent and accountable service standards. As a supervisory institution, the Ombudsman is oriented towards creating real public value for the community. Informant U2 emphasized the importance of making the Ombudsman a large institution that contributes nationally:

"We have to think about how the Ombudsman can become a large institution that can make a real contribution nationally." (U2)

This is reinforced by U3's statement which emphasizes the positive impact on the community:

"I personally feel that the Ombudsman must continue to have a positive impact on the community. That is the commitment that we carry." (U3)

This statement reflects that the public value created by the Ombudsman is not only in the form of administrative supervision, but also how this institution can provide real benefits to the wider community. Every recommendation issued by the Ombudsman must provide benefits to the community. This was emphasized by U5:

"We feel that every recommendation issued must be beneficial to the community." (U5)

In addition, T1 added that despite major challenges in its implementation, the commitment to work for the benefit of the community remains a priority:

"We are very committed to working for the benefit of the community, despite major challenges in its implementation." (T1)

This shows that the creation of public value by the Ombudsman is not only limited to supervision, but also in providing recommendations that are oriented towards the interests of the community. Prevention of maladministration is the Ombudsman's main strategy in preventing corruption. Informant U1 emphasized that through preventing maladministration and resolving reports, the Ombudsman also contributes to anti-corruption efforts:

"Through preventing maladministration and resolving reports, I think that's what the Ombudsman can contribute. Although the scope is small, this is part of our ongoing efforts to encourage anti-corruption behavior." (U1)

However, the challenge in understanding the impact of maladministration on corruption was also acknowledged by U2:

"Preventing maladministration and corruption is actually a series, but we often only focus on resolving reports and do not explore its impact on eradicating corruption." (U2)

Thus, a more comprehensive strategy is needed so that efforts to prevent maladministration can contribute more to eradicating corruption systematically. The Ombudsman's commitment to preventing corruption is not a temporary task, but must be carried out continuously. This was emphasized by various informants:

"Preventing corruption is not a one-time task. This must be a continuous effort."

(U3)

"Corruption prevention is a continuous work and requires long-term commitment." (U4)

"Corruption prevention requires continuous effort, it is not a one-time job." (U5)

"Corruption prevention is a continuous process, which requires constant focus and dedication." (T1)

This statement confirms that the public value created by the Ombudsman in preventing corruption is long-term and requires continuous commitment and dedication.

As an institution that monitors public services, the Indonesian Ombudsman plays an important role in preventing corruption, especially in the realm of monitoring service standards and preventing maladministration. Based on the Strategic Triangle perspective by Moore (2013), the public value created by the Ombudsman is manifested in its commitment to ensuring transparent services, providing recommendations that have an impact on the community, and carrying out efforts to prevent corruption in a sustainable manner. Despite its limitations in its authority to take action, the Ombudsman continues to contribute to building cleaner and more accountable governance through strategies that focus on quality public services.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that although the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia does not have the authority to take action like other anti-corruption institutions, this institution still plays a strategic role in preventing corruption through supervision of maladministration and public services. Corruption and maladministration are proven to be interrelated, where maladministration is the main entry point for corrupt practices. Through Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle perspective, it can be understood that,

From a legitimacy perspective, the existence of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia has a strong legal basis and is supported by a national regulatory framework. However, the effectiveness of non-binding recommendations is still a major obstacle in strengthening its position legally and politically.

From an operational capacity aspect, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia experiences limitations in human resources and budget. However, data shows an increase in efficiency in handling public reports, although the scope of supervision is still limited, especially in remote areas.

In terms of public value, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia shows a high commitment to integrity, accountability, and professionalism. Supervision of public services carried out by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia has a strategic value in forming bureaucratic behavior that is free from

corrupt practices. Public value is also reflected in the increasing participation and trust of the public in the Ombudsman. Although the direct contribution of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia to the increase in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is still considered minimal, preventing small-scale corruption through improving public services and preventing maladministration is a real form of this institution's commitment to promoting clean governance. Long-term commitment, institutional improvement, and expansion of the Ombudsman's authority, especially in the provision of administrative sanctions, are urgent matters to be fought for so that the ORI can play a more optimal role in eradicating systemic corruption.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research should critically explore the transformation potential of the Indonesian Ombudsman in becoming a fully empowered anti-corruption institution by employing a comparative institutional analysis framework. Drawing on Moore's Strategic Triangle, scholars can further investigate how legitimacy, operational capacity, and public value can be enhanced through policy reform, inter-agency collaboration with the KPK, and legislative amendments that grant binding authority to Ombudsman recommendations. Additionally, longitudinal and cross-regional studies can uncover how different provinces operationalize the Ombudsman's mandate, and whether variations in public awareness, service responsiveness, and resource allocation significantly affect its preventive impact on corruption. Such multi-dimensional inquiry not only contributes to theoretical advancement in public value governance but also informs institutional design strategies in emerging democracies facing similar maladministration challenges.

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