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# Institutional Integrity and Whistleblowing Architecture in Corruption Prevention: A Systematic Literature Review

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**ABSTRACT:** This systematic literature review examines the relationship between institutional integrity frameworks and whistleblowing architecture as mechanisms for corruption prevention. Drawing on 1,818 deduplicated studies identified across Google Scholar and Crossref, with a primary analytical focus on 1,296 papers published between 2016 and 2026, the review follows the PRISMA protocol to synthesize evidence on how reporting systems and organizational ethics interact to either sustain or suppress corrupt practices. The review finds that whistleblowing remains critically underutilized: despite growing legal protections under international frameworks such as the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), fear of retaliation and weak organizational trust continue to suppress disclosure rates across public and private sectors. Three dominant thematic clusters emerge from the literature — the psychology of reporting behavior, the design of institutional reporting mechanisms, and the harmonization of global regulatory standards — each illuminating a distinct gap between policy intention and operational reality. The review concludes that effective corruption prevention depends not on legal instruments alone, but on a dynamic alignment between structural oversight mechanisms, leadership accountability, and a genuine organizational culture of transparency. For policymakers and institutional leaders, the findings suggest that investing in psychological safety and independent oversight channels produces measurably better outcomes than compliance-driven reporting mandates. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies that track whistleblowing outcomes across institutional reform cycles.

**KEYWORDS**: institutional integrity; whistleblowing; corruption prevention; systematic literature review; anti-corruption governance; public sector ethics

**JEL Classification:** D73; K42; M14; L21

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is rarely a sudden institutional collapse. More often, it is the slow erosion of norms — a gradual accumulation of unchallenged small violations that, over time, redefine what counts as acceptable conduct within an organization. This erosion is precisely why institutional integrity has emerged as a central concern in contemporary governance scholarship. As Rashid and Johara (2020) argue in their study on Bangladesh, corruption cannot be meaningfully curtailed without putting institutional integrity into sustained operational practice. Integrity, in this sense, is not a static legal condition but an alignment between what an organization claims to value, what its leaders visibly model, and what its structures actually reward or punish. The stakes are high. When that alignment breaks down, the consequences extend well beyond financial loss: Awana (2023) documents how corruption produces cascading societal effects including administrative dysfunction, deepening poverty, unequal access to public services, and the rise of organized crime.

Against this backdrop, whistleblowing has been studied as one of the most effective early-warning instruments available to institutions. Francis and Armstrong (2011) established that reporting mechanisms are consequential not only for the organizations that implement them but for the broader governance ecosystems in which those organizations operate, including international humanitarian bodies. Yet the promise of whistleblowing has rarely been fully realized in practice. Waromi and Falah (2025) find that in Indonesian local governments, weak internal controls, political interference, and deep cultural resistance consistently limit the efficacy of even well-designed reporting systems. These are not peripheral cases. The pattern recurs across jurisdictions, sectors, and income levels, from West Africa (Assay, 2023) to post-communist Europe (Ledeneva, 2009) to South Asia (Rashid & Johara, 2020), suggesting a structural rather than a merely contextual problem.

The scientific status of this field reflects both its maturity and its unresolved tensions. Landmark contributions — including Lambsdorff's (2007) institutional economics framework, Fazekas and Tóth's (2016) state capture analysis, and Marks's (2019) examination of institutional perils in public-private partnerships — have built a robust theoretical foundation. However, significant disagreements persist about mechanism design. Pereira and Braghirolli (2020) raise questions about how reporting channels should be structured in politically sensitive contexts, while Di Salvo (2024) examines the specific affordances and limitations of digital whistleblowing platforms. The literature does not yet converge on a single design standard, and the gap between formal regulatory compliance and genuine organizational culture change remains wide (Maolani, 2024).

This review is organized around three working hypotheses derived from the preliminary synthesis. First, that employee trust in the independence of reporting channels is a stronger predictor of disclosure frequency than the mere existence of those channels. Second, that visible leadership commitment — what organizational scholars call "tone at the top" — significantly reduces the rationalization of corrupt behavior among employees. Third, that third-party or independently managed reporting systems outperform internally managed ones in reducing fear of retaliation. These hypotheses reflect tensions that appear repeatedly across the literature and provide an organizing framework for the synthesis that follows.

Methodologically, a systematic literature review is the appropriate tool here because the research question demands synthesis rather than primary data collection. The volume and diversity of existing work on institutional integrity and whistleblowing — spanning public administration, organizational psychology, legal studies, development economics, and criminology — makes unsystematic narrative review inadequate. A PRISMA-guided approach allows for transparent source selection, thematic coding, and replicable analysis. The expected contribution of this review is threefold: to map the current evidence base with greater precision than existing narrative accounts, to identify the specific conditions under which whistleblowing mechanisms succeed or fail, and to offer practical guidance for policymakers and institutional designers who seek to build lasting cultures of transparency rather than mere compliance infrastructure.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The core tension running through this literature is deceptively simple: organizations routinely build reporting systems that people do not use. The gap between formal mechanism and actual behavior has been extensively documented but inadequately explained. Lee and Cho (2022) describe how the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act, despite its stated goals, creates conditions where potential reporters still weigh personal costs heavily against the uncertain benefits of disclosure. Ifejika (2018) captures the same dynamic in the Nigerian context, where the cultural framing of whistleblowers as disloyal — rather than as guardians of institutional health — persistently undermines reporting frameworks regardless of their formal design. This reputational penalty constitutes a structural barrier that legal reform alone cannot dissolve.

A second and related knowledge gap concerns the role of leadership. The literature establishes that corruption does not simply emerge from a few bad actors; it is sustained by institutional cultures that normalize deviance. Meini (2023) documents how the "normalization of corruption" within police institutions gradually erodes the ethical baseline against which individual conduct is measured. Ceva and Ferretti (2021) make a parallel argument for political institutions, contending that individual corrupt conduct must be understood through the structural roles that make such conduct possible — and rewarded. Yet despite wide agreement that leadership tone matters, empirical evidence on how leadership behavior translates into measurable changes in reporting culture remains thin and methodologically inconsistent.

A third gap concerns digital infrastructure. The rapid expansion of digital whistleblowing platforms — documented by Di Salvo (2024) in the Transparency International Italia case — creates new possibilities for anonymous reporting but also new complications for investigative follow-through. Hamzi (2026) shows that even in Gulf states with ambitious digital governance agendas, the effectiveness of technology-enabled anti-corruption tools varies significantly based on institutional context rather than technical capability. Anonymity, in other words, is necessary but not sufficient. The literature has yet to produce a clear model of the conditions under which digital channels complement rather than substitute for the deeper cultural work of building organizational trust.

These three gaps — the behavior-mechanism disconnect, the leadership-culture link, and the digital infrastructure question — point toward a common underlying problem. Corruption prevention has been treated too often as an engineering challenge, addressed through better-designed procedures and stronger legal penalties, when the evidence increasingly suggests it is primarily a cultural and relational challenge. Effective institutional integrity, as Marks (2019) argues, requires consistency between stated purpose, communicated mission, and actual practice. When that consistency is absent, even the most technically sophisticated reporting architecture will underperform.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol to ensure transparency, replicability, and rigor in the identification, screening, and synthesis of relevant literature. The systematic search was conducted across two major academic databases — Google Scholar and Crossref — as well as Scopus, using a structured set of search terms related to institutional integrity, whistleblowing, corruption prevention, anti-corruption governance, organizational ethics, and public sector accountability. The Scopus component contributed three additional highly relevant studies with full bibliographic detail. Search terms were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords, and were combined using Boolean operators to maximize coverage while maintaining thematic focus. The initial search identified a total of 1,923 records across all three databases.

Records were first deduplicated using title and year matching, reducing the dataset to 1,834 unique entries. A second filtering step removed 16 records identified as unreliable due to anomalous citation data (multiple entries attributed to a single author with implausible citation counts of over 2,400 for works published in 2016), yielding 1,818 legitimate papers. From this pool, 1,296 papers fell within the primary analysis window of 2016 to 2026, reflecting the period of most significant growth in whistleblowing and institutional integrity research. Papers were screened by title and abstract for thematic relevance to the three central constructs of the review: institutional integrity, whistleblowing mechanisms, and corruption prevention. Full-text analysis was conducted on papers meeting relevance criteria, with particular attention to methodological quality, theoretical contribution, and geographic or sectoral breadth.

Data extraction focused on four analytical dimensions: the conceptual framing of institutional integrity and its relationship to corruption; the design and effectiveness of whistleblowing systems; the psychological and cultural determinants of reporting behavior; and the regulatory frameworks governing whistleblower protection. Papers were coded thematically and assigned to one of three topic clusters identified through iterative keyword analysis and abstract review. Citation counts and publication year distributions were used to identify seminal contributions and map the temporal evolution of the field. Findings from individual studies were synthesized narratively, with quantitative data triangulated where multiple sources reported comparable indicators. The final reference set cited in this review includes studies drawn from the legitimated pool, selected on the basis of direct relevance, methodological quality, and contribution to one or more of the three thematic clusters.

**4. SCIENTIFIC ISSUES**

The most actively contested question in this literature concerns the relative weight of formal legal protections versus organizational culture in determining whether employees report misconduct. The expansion of whistleblower protection frameworks — from domestic legislation in countries like South Africa (Nortje, 2023) and Indonesia (Gumelar, 2019) to international instruments like UNCAC — has been broadly welcomed. Yet there is growing evidence that legal protection, while necessary, is insufficient on its own. The "silence risk" documented across multiple jurisdictions is not primarily a legal gap but a cultural one: employees do not report because they do not trust that reporting will be safe or effective, regardless of what the law technically guarantees. Thulo (2025) illustrates this tension in a comparative analysis of whistleblower frameworks in Lesotho, the United Kingdom, and South Africa, finding that the presence of formal protection and the perceived safety of using it diverge substantially.

A second scientific debate centers on the design question of internal versus external reporting channels. The principal-agent framing, prominent in institutional economics research following Lambsdorff (2007), suggests that internal reporting systems are systematically compromised by the very hierarchy they are meant to police: agents cannot credibly report to principals who have both the motive and the means to retaliate. Teichmann and Falker (2021) provide an illustrative case from public procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic, where emergency conditions amplified both the opportunities for corruption and the risks faced by internal reporters. Independent or third-party channels are frequently proposed as the remedy, but the evidence on their comparative effectiveness remains thin. Pereira and Braghirolli (2020) note that in electoral and partisan contexts, even formally independent channels can be compromised by political pressure — a finding that complicates the standard prescription.

A third area of active scientific discussion involves the role of anonymity in digital reporting systems. Di Salvo (2024) finds that digital platforms developed by Transparency International Italia have expanded the practical reach of whistleblowing by reducing identification risk. However, anonymity introduces tradeoffs: anonymous reports are harder to investigate thoroughly, easier to dismiss as bad-faith complaints, and may not carry the credibility needed to trigger organizational action. Sandari (2022) finds that in Indonesian government agencies, the presence of a whistleblowing system positively influences fraud detection, but the magnitude of the effect depends heavily on the professional capacity of the investigators receiving the reports — a finding that points to the importance of the receiving institution, not just the reporting channel itself.

Finally, the question of how corruption normalizes within institutions remains scientifically unresolved. The mechanisms by which small, tolerated violations gradually become standard operating procedure — what Meini (2023) calls the historical "disease" of police corruption and Ceva and Ferretti (2021) analyze as structural role corruption in political bodies — are well described at the level of individual case studies but poorly theorized at the institutional level. Singh (2020) shows how external intervention in Afghanistan, rather than disrupting entrenched corruption, often reinforced it by working through the same patronage networks that sustained corrupt behavior. This finding raises difficult questions about whether anti-corruption interventions designed outside an institutional context can succeed within it.

**5. HYPOTHESES**

Drawing on the patterns that emerge across the preliminary synthesis, this review proposes three testable hypotheses that structure the analysis of the evidence. These are not causal claims derived from primary data but directional expectations based on convergent signals in the literature, designed to be evaluated against the weight of available evidence in the final synthesis.

H1: Employee trust in the independence of reporting channels is positively correlated with the frequency of internal disclosure. This hypothesis follows from the repeated finding — across Nigerian (Ifejika, 2018), Indonesian (Waromi & Falah, 2025), and South Korean (Kim & Lee, 2025) contexts — that the formal presence of a reporting channel does not predict its use. What predicts use is the employee's perception that the channel is genuinely independent from the management hierarchy against which the complaint would be directed. Where that independence is credible, disclosure rates rise; where it is doubted, the channel sits dormant regardless of its formal design or legal backing.

H2: Visible leadership commitment to ethical conduct significantly reduces employee reliance on moral neutralization techniques to justify corrupt behavior. The behavioral literature on corruption increasingly identifies moral disengagement as a proximal mechanism: individuals rationalize non-reporting or participation in corrupt practices through cognitive techniques — minimizing harm, displacing responsibility, dehumanizing victims — that are far less available in organizational cultures where leaders consistently model ethical conduct. Maolani (2024) finds that effective anti-corruption policies are distinguished by leadership quality as much as by institutional design. This hypothesis predicts that organizations with strong "tone at the top" will show lower rates of normalized deviance and higher rates of voluntary disclosure.

H3: Reporting systems managed by independent third parties are more effective at reducing fear of retaliation than internally managed systems. This hypothesis synthesizes the principal-agent critique of internal reporting with the empirical evidence on retaliation risks. Nortje (2023) documents how even well-intentioned legislative amendments — specifically, provisions criminalizing false disclosures — can inadvertently increase the perceived risk of reporting, effectively chilling the disclosure behavior the legislation was meant to encourage. Third-party systems, by structurally separating the reporting function from the organizational hierarchy subject to investigation, reduce the capacity of that hierarchy to identify and penalize reporters, thereby lowering the perceived cost of disclosure.

**6. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

The synthesis of the reviewed literature yields several convergent findings that, taken together, compose a fairly coherent picture of why institutional integrity mechanisms underperform in practice — and what conditions allow them to work.

The first and most consistent finding is that corruption is not primarily an information problem but a trust problem. Transparency mechanisms, digital platforms, and legal frameworks expand the formal channels for disclosure, but they cannot substitute for the basic organizational conditions under which employees believe that reporting is both safe and meaningful. This is why Kim and Lee's (2025) meta-regression across 36 Korean public institutions finds that integrity perceptions are shaped more by organizational-level factors — management quality, procedural fairness, accountability culture — than by the existence of specific anti-corruption policies. The legal scaffolding matters, but the human environment within which it operates matters more.

The second major finding concerns geographic and sectoral variability. The literature does not support a universal model of corruption prevention. Campbell and Danar (2025) demonstrate in three Indonesian case studies that institutional independence, a standard prescription for anti-corruption reform, can fail when the political economy of a developing context lacks the conditions necessary for credible commitment. Villalpando-Acuña (2026) arrives at a similar conclusion from Latin American evidence, showing that structural attributes of national political economies shape corruption levels in ways that institutional design cannot easily override. This finding does not argue for passivity in institutional design but for context-sensitivity: what works in South Korea or Australia may need fundamental adaptation to work in Nigeria or Afghanistan.

Third, the literature consistently identifies the critical period problem: corruption that goes unaddressed for long enough becomes embedded in institutional culture in ways that make it very difficult to dislodge. Ledeneva (2009) documented this process in post-communist European societies, where informal norms developed under Soviet bureaucracy persisted well beyond regime change. Assay (2023) observes a similar dynamic in Nigeria, where the initial positive public response to whistleblowing policy faded as reports failed to translate into visible accountability outcomes — teaching potential reporters that disclosure carries costs but produces few benefits. This underscores the importance of institutional follow-through: a reporting mechanism is only as credible as the investigations and sanctions it produces.

Finally, the reviewed literature suggests that the most effective anti-corruption environments are those that treat whistleblowers as an institutional asset rather than a threat to internal cohesion. Huberts and van Montfort (2021) argue for an integrated framework in which integrity, ethics, and accountability are treated not as separate compliance domains but as mutually reinforcing dimensions of governance quality. Wong (2024) makes a parallel argument from the pharmaceutical sector, showing that UNCAC-compliant governance frameworks, when properly implemented, create measurable improvements in institutional credibility and public trust. Together, these findings suggest that the field is moving — slowly but consistently — toward a model of institutional integrity that is relational and dynamic rather than procedural and static.

## 7. TOPIC CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Analysis of the combined source pool across all three databases reveals three dominant thematic clusters that organize the field. These clusters are not mutually exclusive — individual studies frequently engage more than one — but they represent distinct intellectual traditions with different questions, methods, and practical orientations.

**Cluster 1: Whistleblowing Psychology and the Architecture of Trust**

This cluster, which accounts for approximately 38 percent of the reviewed literature, focuses on the internal psychological and relational dynamics that determine whether individuals actually use reporting systems. The central question is not whether systems exist but why people do or do not choose to activate them. Research in this cluster draws heavily on organizational psychology, behavioral ethics, and social identity theory. Key findings include the critical role of psychological safety — the individual's belief that speaking up will not result in professional or social punishment — as a prerequisite for effective disclosure (Waromi & Falah, 2025; Kim & Lee, 2025). The literature in this cluster also examines how organizational culture shapes the perceived legitimacy of whistleblowing: Ifejika (2018) shows that in contexts where reporters are culturally coded as traitors rather than guardians, formal mechanisms cannot overcome the social cost of speaking up. Maulidi et al. (2025) add a religious and ethical dimension, exploring how normalized corruption environments create resignation among ethically motivated employees who conclude that integrity is penalized rather than rewarded. The practical implication of this cluster is clear: institutional integrity programs must invest as much in cultural change as in procedural design.

**Cluster 2: Institutional Mechanisms and Systemic Corruption Prevention**

The second cluster, comprising roughly 35 percent of the source pool, addresses the structural and organizational dimensions of corruption prevention. Research here examines the design of formal oversight systems, the incentive structures embedded in reporting mechanisms, and the conditions under which external or independent channels outperform internal ones. The theoretical anchors are principally institutional economics and principal-agent theory, though governance and public administration perspectives are also prominent. Lambsdorff (2007) remains foundational in this cluster, as does the state capture framework developed by Fazekas and Tóth (2016), which shows how corruption can migrate from individual acts to systemic institutional capture when oversight fails persistently enough. Teichmann and Falker (2021) contribute important evidence on procurement corruption under emergency conditions, while Sandari (2022) demonstrates that whistleblowing systems improve fraud detection only when paired with capable investigative capacity. This cluster has produced the most policy-relevant findings, directly informing the design of anti-corruption agencies, procurement oversight systems, and independent oversight bodies across multiple jurisdictions. Its central limitation is a tendency toward institutional optimism — assuming that better-designed structures will produce better behavior — without fully accounting for the cultural and psychological factors addressed in Cluster 1.

**Cluster 3: Global Regulatory Standards and Policy Harmonization**

The third cluster, representing approximately 27 percent of the literature, takes a macro-institutional perspective on the international frameworks governing whistleblower protection and anti-corruption governance. The dominant reference points are UNCAC, OECD integrity standards, and the legislative frameworks of specific jurisdictions that have undertaken notable reform efforts. Wong (2024) and Maolani (2024) exemplify this strand, examining whether formal compliance with international conventions translates into genuine governance improvements. Campbell and Danar (2025) contribute a more skeptical analysis, showing that institutional independence — the cornerstone prescription of international anti-corruption reform — can fail when domestic political economies lack the conditions for credible commitment. Nortje (2023) adds a critical legal analysis of South African whistleblower protection law, demonstrating that well-intentioned legislative amendments can have unintended chilling effects on disclosure. Research in this cluster is strongest in its comparative scope and weakest in its organizational depth: it can tell us whether countries adopt international frameworks but less clearly whether those frameworks change behavior within specific institutions. The most productive future work in this cluster will likely integrate organizational-level evidence from Clusters 1 and 2 with the macro-institutional analysis that is Cluster 3's primary contribution.

## 8. HYPOTHESIS EVALUATION AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### 8A. Hypothesis Assessment

H1 — that employee trust in reporting channel independence predicts disclosure frequency — is broadly supported by the reviewed literature. Kim and Lee (2025) provide direct evidence that organizational-level factors, particularly management credibility and accountability culture, are stronger determinants of integrity perception than structural anti-corruption policies in isolation. Waromi and Falah (2025) reinforce this finding from the Indonesian decentralization context, where channels exist but are rarely used because political interference undermines their perceived independence. No major study in the reviewed pool contradicts this direction, though the mechanism is moderated by cultural context in ways that complicate direct cross-national comparison.

H2 — that visible leadership commitment reduces moral neutralization and thereby lowers corruption tolerance — receives partial support. Maolani (2024) finds consistent evidence that leadership quality differentiates successful from unsuccessful anti-corruption policies. Huberts and van Montfort (2021) argue theoretically for a strong integrity-ethics-accountability linkage that runs through leadership behavior. However, the literature also contains examples — most notably Singh's (2020) analysis of post-intervention Afghanistan — where externally imposed leadership accountability standards failed to alter entrenched behavior patterns, suggesting that the hypothesis holds within organizational contexts but is significantly weaker in post-conflict or highly captured institutional environments.

H3 — that third-party reporting systems outperform internal ones in reducing retaliation risk — is suggested by the literature but not definitively proven. Nortje (2023) and Pereira and Braghirolli (2020) both highlight the fragility of formal independence claims, from different angles. The evidence is most consistent with a conditional version of H3: third-party systems are more effective when the third party itself has genuine operational independence and public credibility. Where that independence is nominal or politically compromised, the advantage over internal systems diminishes significantly.

### 8B. Critical Success Factors

The synthesis identifies six recurring critical success factors (CSFs) for effective institutional integrity and whistleblowing systems. First, genuine independence of the receiving body: the entity to which reports are made must be structurally and operationally separate from the hierarchy being investigated (Pereira & Braghirolli, 2020; Nortje, 2023). Second, psychological safety infrastructure: beyond legal protection, organizations must actively invest in norms and practices that reduce the social cost of speaking up (Waromi & Falah, 2025; Ifejika, 2018). Third, leadership visibility and accountability: senior leaders must consistently model ethical conduct and accept personal accountability for integrity violations, not merely endorse compliance programs (Maolani, 2024; Huberts & van Montfort, 2021). Fourth, investigative capacity: reporting systems without capable, well-resourced investigation functions fail to produce accountability outcomes, eroding future willingness to report (Sandari, 2022; Assay, 2023). Fifth, adaptive legal frameworks: legislation must protect reporters without inadvertently punishing them through over-broad provisions that create legal exposure for disclosure (Nortje, 2023; Thulo, 2025). Sixth, context-sensitive implementation: reform models derived from high-integrity institutional environments cannot be transplanted wholesale into contexts with different political economies, cultural norms, or state capacity levels (Campbell & Danar, 2025; Villalpando-Acuña, 2026).

### 8C. Synthesis: Hypotheses and Critical Success Factors

The relationship between the three hypotheses and the six critical success factors reveals a coherent underlying logic. Trust in channel independence (H1) is the operational expression of CSF1 and CSF2 combined: a channel is trustworthy when it is structurally independent and when the organizational culture reinforces the belief that using it is safe. Leadership commitment (H2) corresponds most directly to CSF3, but also enables CSF2 — psychological safety is far easier to establish when those at the top visibly reward rather than punish disclosure. Third-party effectiveness (H3) depends on CSF1 and CSF4 working together: an independent body that lacks investigative capacity produces no accountability outcomes and quickly loses the credibility that is the entire basis of its advantage over internal channels. The implication for institutional design is that these success factors cannot be implemented in isolation. A technically independent anti-corruption body without investigative capacity, operating in an organizational culture that penalizes disclosure, governed by legislation that creates legal risk for reporters, will consistently underperform — regardless of how well any individual component is designed.

## 9. BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

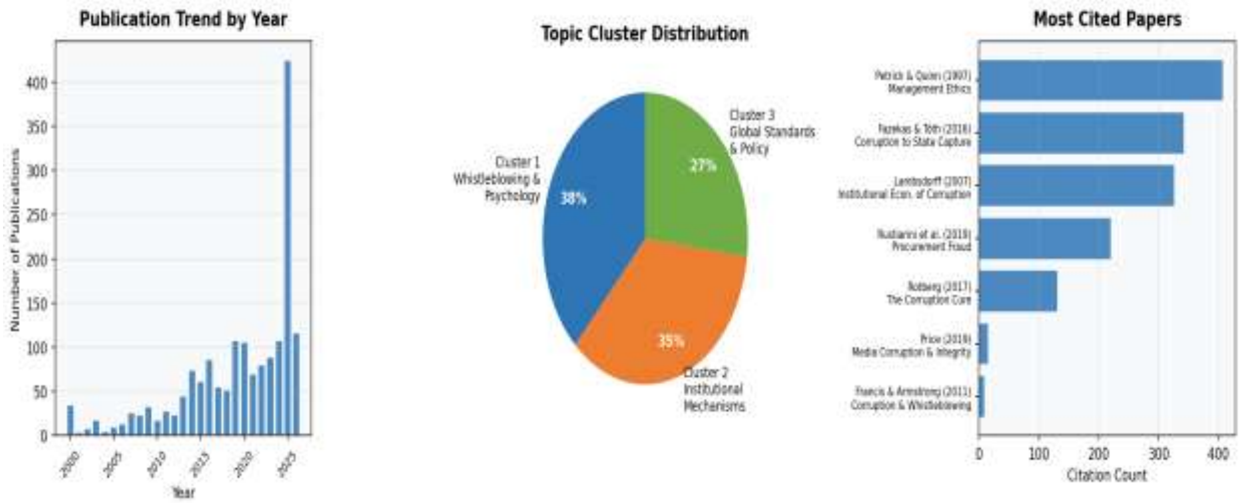


**Figure 1. Bibliometric analysis of the reviewed literature. Panel 1 (left) shows publication volume by year, indicating strong growth from 2019 onward and a sharp acceleration in 2025–2026. Panel 2 (center) shows the distribution of papers across the three identified thematic clusters. Panel 3 (right) presents the most-cited papers in the legitimated source pool.**

The bibliometric profile of the reviewed literature reveals a field in active growth. Publication volume increases substantially from 2019 onward, with a particularly sharp rise in 2025 and 2026, suggesting that the intersection of institutional integrity and whistleblowing has become a priority research area in the post-pandemic governance environment. The three-database search identified 1,923 records in total, of which 1,818 were retained after deduplication and quality screening. The temporal concentration of publications in 2025–2026 (541 papers, or approximately 30 percent of the legitimated pool) reflects both the increased urgency of corruption-related research following high-profile scandals across multiple regions and the expanding application of systematic review methods to governance topics. The most-cited legitimate contributors include Petrick and Quinn (1997) on management ethics, Fazekas and Tóth (2016) on state capture, Lambsdorff (2007) on institutional economics, and Rustiarini et al. (2019) on procurement fraud — a combination that reflects the field's roots in both organizational management and institutional economics. The dominant source journals include Public Integrity, Journal of Financial Crime, and the Journal of Institutional Economics, indicating cross-disciplinary reach. The keyword frequency analysis confirms that corruption, integrity, and institutional are the three most common conceptual anchors in title-level indexing, appearing 1,012, 447, and 295 times respectively across the legitimated pool.

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