Multi-Level Perspectives on Anti-Corruption: A Systematic Literature Review
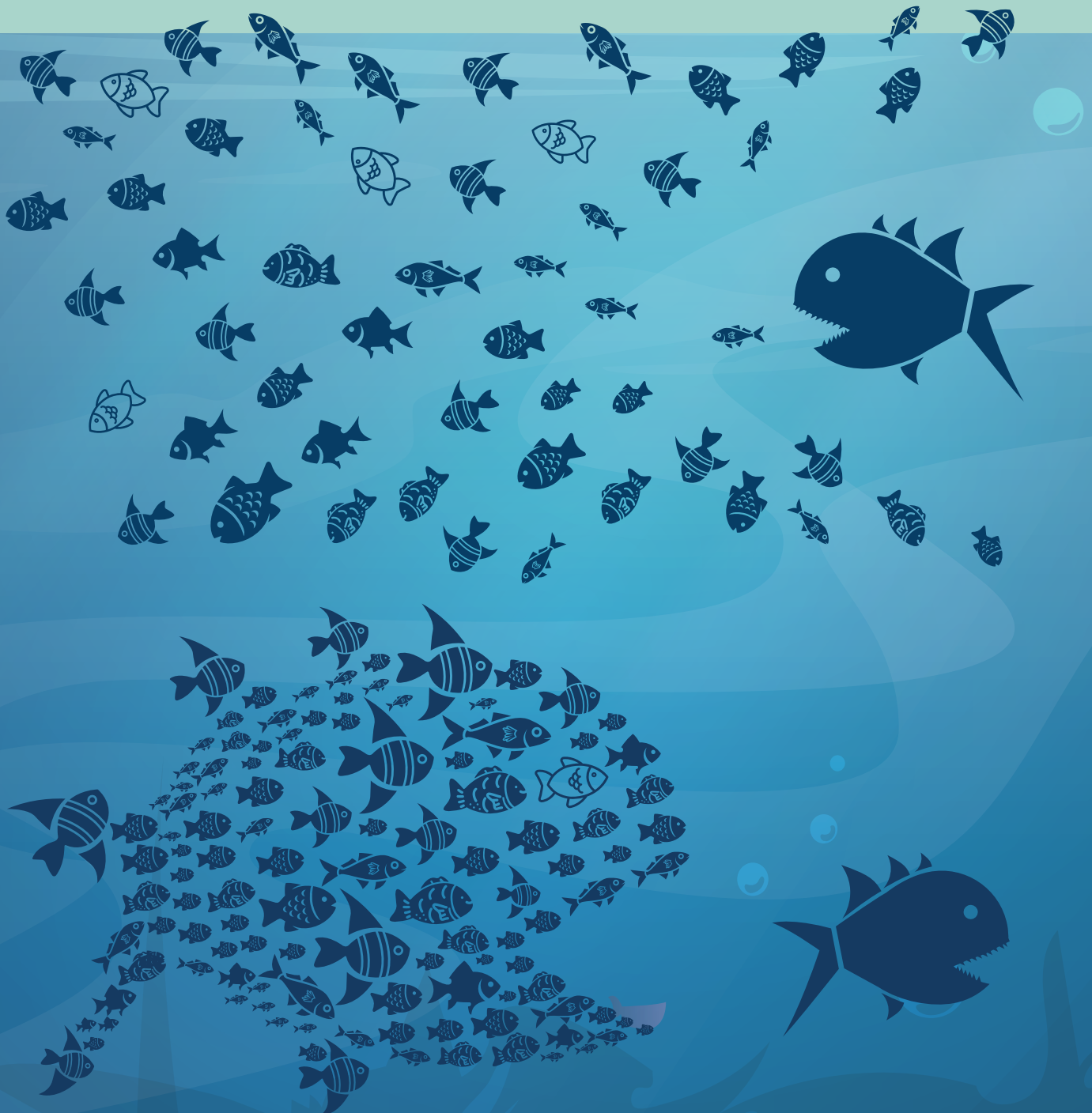
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Contents

Abstract

This systematic literature review investigates the extent to which recent anti-corruption literature goes beyond the established paradigms (i.e., principal-agent perspective, macro-level, structural, and legal centralistic approaches) to focus on society's informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations and non-monetary currencies (e.g. respect, prestige, social status and trust). By reconceptualising the various meanings and morality of informal, non-legal practices and transactions in the frame of the 'multi-level orders of corruption' perspective, the paper also assesses the extent to which the current canon focuses on the complex articulation and interdependencies between (1) global, transnational anti-corruption laws, initiatives, discourses, and institutions, (2) national/central level initiatives, policies, and laws, and (3) local, micro-level social norms and practices. Based on one-hundred and three systematically gathered peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2020, we found that most studies conducted within this period focus on anti-corruption at the national level and mostly employ analytical and quantitative methods. However, the local level received scant attention, and qualitative methods were employed in a few studies. Also, even though a significant number of studies focus on anti-corruption at multiple levels, these are mostly either the global-national level or national-local level. None of the articles gathered for this review studies anti-corruption in a complete multi-level approach that explores the global-national-local level. Lastly, we found that most of the studies across the levels are shaped by the principal-agent perspective and indicate a predominance of the perspective within anti-corruption policy and practice across the world. Consequently, irrespective of the entity of focus (i.e., country or institution), method (quantitative, qualitative, analytical or experimental) or level of analysis (i.e., global, national, or local or multi-level), most of the studies attribute the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption interventions to the inability of "principals" to be principled, and hence call for increased sanctioning, supervision, monitoring and political commitment towards combatting corruption. Thus, there is the need for more qualitative anti-corruption studies at the local level and alternative theoretical perspectives that go beyond the aforementioned established paradigms.

Preface

The mandate of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting local democracy in low and middle-income countries. In order to fulfil this mandate, we promote and encourage decentralised cooperation through our municipal partnership programme, capacity building through our international training programmes, and exchange of knowledge through our Knowledge Centre. ICLD documents and publishes key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research, engages in scholarly networks, connecting relevant researcher with practitioners and organizes conferences and workshops. We also maintain a publications series.

This working paper, "Multi-Level Perspectives on Anti-Corruption: A Systematic Literature Review", by Måns Svensson, Thomas Labik Amanquandor, and Andreas Mattsson, is one of the results from the research project "The Role of Social Norms in Fighting Corruption in Local Governments", financed by ICLD. This project aims to further contribute to the understanding of dynamics that underlie corruption, and the significance of local informal social norms, in relation to, international anti-corruption conventions and national law, when building counteraction strategies on a local level.

In this working paper, the authors revised 103 scientific articles published in this field from 2015-2020. As corruption is a major obstacle for ending poverty and inequality, it is vital to understand how corruption take place and how to end it. This working paper highlights a research gap in which the local level is missing, with only three papers focusing on local governments. Moreover, the authors highlight the dominance of one theoretical perspective - the principal-agent perspective. This has led to recommendations related to sanctioning, supervision, and monitoring. However, local studies found that informal norms and practices at the local level that can have significant implications for anti-corruption initiatives. Local social norms can make illegal practices acceptable and we need to better understand the reasons behind acts of corruption more than pushing Global and national anti-corruption agendas. We hope this working paper can encourage further research on micro-perspectives on corruption and specifically studies focusing on local government's own initiatives to curb corruption.

Visby, Sweden, March 2022

Johan Lilja
Secretary General, ICLD

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Introduction

According to the World Bank (2021), corruption is a leading obstacle to ending poverty and inequality, especially among developing countries. As a social problem, it exceeds national boundaries and has attracted transnational policymaking, legislation, and extensive research, especially about its pervasiveness (Leys 1965, Heidenheimer et al. 1989, Rose- Ackerman 1999, Haller and Shore 2005, Sampson 2005, Nuijten and Anders 2007, Rothstein 2011). Most of these studies concur that corruption is endemic, especially in developing regions, because their anti-corruption policies and practices often are ineffective. In fact, combating corruption (anti-corruption) generally comprises three interdependent efforts, i.e., understanding the problem of corruption, establishing anti-corruption institutions, and designing strategies to curb it.

Corruption is generally understood as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, theoretically known as the "principal-agent" problem. This perspective assumes a dualistic relation where one actor (the agent) has more information and decision power in a specific situation and uses this advantage for their own gain, even when it goes against the interests of the other actor (the principal). In relation to corruption, the principal-agent approach can play out in different ways. First, political leaders are often tasked with the role of 'principal', monitoring the actions of bureaucrats, or 'agents', as a means of holding them to account. However, political leaders or principals may have imperfect information about the agent's or bureaucrats' actions due to logistical and oversight constraints. Corruption takes place when rational-minded bureaucrats use their discretion over resources to extract rents when such opportunities arise. In the second variation, the public is cast as the 'principal' while public officials (bureaucrats or politicians) are classed as the 'agents'. Here, the agents (public officials) are able to abuse their office and discretion over public services to secure rents from the public, while the public (the principals) are unable to perfectly monitor or hold the public officials to account. (Ugur and Dasgupta 2011; Schwertheim, 2017). In a recent report published by The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), it is pointed out that most corruption research and

anti-corruption interventions have used the principal-agent approach as a basis for understanding the corruption problem. IDEA argues, based on recent literature (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013; Rothstein, 2011; Marquette and Peiffer, 2015), that there are limitations in understanding corruption only as a 'principal-agent problem'. For example, such 'principals' may not exist in reality or may themselves participate in corrupt behaviour.

The question of how immigrants get involved in participatory processes is an under-researched topic in the literature on political participation of immigrants (Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013: 567) but also in the literature referring to citizen's participation. By focusing on the participation of immigrants in Barcelona through mechanisms of citizen participation, we aim to respond the following question: to what extent do institutions incorporate immigrant voices into the city's democratic innovations? How are immigrants formally embedded in the city's participation mechanisms? How can the policymaking process become more inclusive, especially in a city where almost one third of the population is of immigrant origin?

In addition, experiences from several anti-corruption interventions partly suggest that they fail because they are hugely influenced by rational choice approaches (Jackson, 2020). Accordingly, they hinge primarily on the assumption that officials act rationally and strategically to maximise their own self-interest. Subsequently, **many anti-corruption strategies tend to over-rely on formal norms, bureaucratic procedures, the enforcement of transparency and accountability and disregard the intricacies of informal local, micro-level social norms and practices** (Khan, Andreoni, and Roy, 2019). Heeks and Mathisen (2012) argue that disregard for informal micro-level social norms and practices results in a mismatch between the design expectations of anti-corruption strategies and the actual realities in the contexts of their implementations.

This is because certain informal, non-legal practices and transactions are perceived as instances of corruption from a legal standpoint (cf. Della Porta and

Vannucci, 1999b; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2001; TI, 2016), yet from a sociological perspective, also reflect people's desire to fulfil their family and kinship obligations (Urinboyev and Svensson, 2017), gain or preserve social status and reputation (Pardo, 1996), and get more moral and affective support from those around them (Lomnitz, 1995). Accordingly, informal, illegal transactions that would be labelled as corruption from a supranational and/or state law perspective may very well be considered to be a morally acceptable practice according to society's informal norms and moral codes. Subsequently, this study puts forward the claim that when analysing corruption and designing anti-corruption initiatives, these informal norms and practices (monetary and/or non-monetary) should be understood not simply as illegal or even non-legal, but rather as 'parallel legal orders' in their own right.

The notion of legal pluralism (cf. Griffiths, 2003; Merry, 1988; Moore, 1973; von Benda-Beckmann, 2002) emphasises the coexistence and clash of multiple sets of rules or 'legal orders' that mould people's social behaviour: the law of the nation-state, customary rules, religious decrees, moral codes, and practical norms of social life. This means that supranational law or state law is just one among many other legal orders in society. Classic studies in legal anthropology and a more recent legal pluralism scholarship have demonstrated the emergence of "semi-autonomous social fields" or "non-state forms of normative ordering" with their own forms of regulation and informal norms, many of which contradict the state law (Moore, 1973; Tamanha, 2000).

Hence, when these micro-level orders are perceived as corrupt and battled, there is a risk that the basic social fabrics of society will be weakened and distorted, possibly leading to social instability. Consequently, these micro-level 'legal orders' make efforts towards combating corruption complex and potentially counterproductive from a societal perspective. For this reason, **anti-corruption strategies should be built on a deep knowledge of these micro-level 'legal orders' that determine the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of everyday social behaviour.**

Understanding corruption from this perspective is essentially a question of recognizing that corruption as a social phenomenon is formed in the nexus between formal and informal norm structures on different levels of society. This approach is inspired by the theory of multi-level governance, developed originally by Gary Marks (1993) and later revisited by Marks in cooperation with Liesbet Hooghe (2003). Multi-level governance is a relatively recent conceptual framework and developed to understand the pluralistic and highly dispersed policymaking activity that takes place at various political levels, involving both individuals and institutions, from the supranational to national or local levels. This concept is used to describe the hierarchical separation between these levels and, more importantly, to highlight the linkages that connect the levels. In this sense, the concept of multi-level governance implies that no level of activity is superior to the other, and thereby they are mutually dependent through the intertwining of policy and other normative processes.

Subsequently, empirically grounded knowledge of these micro-level processes through the 'multi-level orders of corruption' perspective could provide useful insights for advancing the state-of-the-art on (anti-)corruption by offering new theoretical and methodological perspectives for developing an integrated multi-level framework that examines corruption within the nexus of law, social norms and everyday (micro-level) power relations.

Objective of the study

This project embraces the growing body of literature that argues for a shift from viewing corruption mainly as a principal-agent problem towards instead viewing it as a collective-action problem. Whereas the former focuses primarily on the macro-level structures and formal rules and norms, the latter highlights the necessity of understanding and including perspectives built on micro-level, everyday life observations (cf. Gupta 1995, Pardo 2004, Haller and Shore 2005, Nuijten and Anders 2007). Hence, as an additional lens to understand the emergence, persistence and ubiquitousness of corruption, this paper investigates the extent to

which recent anti-corruption literature (2015-2020) go beyond the established paradigms (macro-level, structural, interactional and legal centralistic approaches) to focus on society's informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations and non-monetary currencies (e.g. respect, prestige, social status, solidarity, trust and kinship). Additionally, by reconceptualising the various meanings and morality of informal, non-legal practices and transactions in the frame of the 'multi-level orders of corruption' perspective, this literature review aims to assess the extent to which the recent canon focuses on the complex articulation and interdependencies between (1) global, transnational anti-corruption laws, initiatives, discourses, and institutions, (2) national/central level initiatives, policies, and laws, and (3) local, micro-level social norms and practices.

Limitation of the study

This systematic review includes only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015-2020 and found in the Web of Science database. Therefore, there are several anti-corruption studies published within this period that might have been excluded from this review. Hence, our findings are limited to only these systematically gathered body of literature.

Systematic Literature Review Method

Our systematic literature review method draws on Transfield et al. (2003) as developed and adopted by Svensson et al. (2013) and Urinboyev et al. (2016). In their view, systematic literature reviews significantly differ from traditional narrative reviews as they can be easily replicated and are based on a more transparent selection and rigorous data collection process. Traditional ad hoc reviews often lack rigour, are prone to researchers' bias and do not sufficiently explain what the collection of reviewed studies is saying. Our literature review was conducted through the following stages:

1. Planning stage
2. Searching, gathering, and organising studies
3. Extraction and evaluation of gathered data
4. Presentation of descriptive and thematic findings
5. Identifying and discussing the state-of-the-art, i.e., current trends and gaps in the body of literature gathered for the study.

This section provides our readers with an overview of how the systematic literature review was conducted by presenting a brief description of the first, second, and third stages. The fourth and fifth stages are captured separately in the subsequent sections.

Stage 1 – Planning the literature review

This stage represents the first steps taken by the research team during the conduct of the literature review. The research team discussed and decided to employ the review methodology developed by Svensson et al. (2013) and Urinboyev et al. (2016). These methods were found to be suitable to and appropriate for the research context, subject and field of investigation. Afterwards, the team deliberated on the relevant vocabulary/key search term and database for data collection. Consequently, we decided on studies found in the "web of science" database with the keyword "anticorruption OR anti-corruption" in their respective titles. Next, we decided to conduct the data search with the parameters mentioned above but consider only peer-reviewed anti-corruption journal articles written in English from 2015 to 2020. In addition, only articles categorised under the following disciplines: political science, economics, criminology, law and inter-disciplinary studies (social sciences) in the web of science database will be considered. These disciplines were chosen because they have the largest collection of anti-corruption studies and present a narrow disciplinary scope for the literature review.

Stage 2 – Searching, gathering, and organising the studies

During this stage, we conducted the actual literature search in the web of science database following the key search word and the inclusion criteria established in the previous stage. This resulted in a total of 141 peer-reviewed journal articles. The team repeated the process on different dates to ensure the result was the same, i.e., indicating the replicability of the process. Afterwards, the results were exported to the Zotero reference management programme for subsequent evaluation to decide which articles would be included or excluded from the systematic review.

Stage 3 – Extraction and evaluation of gathered data

This stage mainly entailed a further assessment of the 141 articles to ascertain which ones were relevant to the research topic and the literature review. This was done by skimming either or both the abstract and full text of the 141 studies exported in the Zotero programme. During this process, our focus was specifically on the extent to which the articles were concerned with a multi-level approach to anti-corruption. Hence, this stage also involved the classification of selected articles into global, national, local, and multi-level. This process resulted in the selection of 103 out of the 141 articles for the literature review.

Descriptive Analysis

This section via a descriptive analysis, presents the characteristics of the articles included in this review. Table 2 below shows the essential characteristics of the 103 papers, classified according to the following criteria:

- Name of the author.
- The year of publication in the period 2015–2020.
- The entity of study, according to the primary geographic or institutional focus of the paper.
- The level at which the study is conducted: (1) global (2) national (3) local (4) multi-level
- The research method employed in the respective articles:

Columns i–ii in Table 2 (see Appendix A) shows the essential characteristics of the 103 papers, included according to the inclusion criteria. In total, our review included 103 journal articles published between 2015-2020. Column iii captures the classification of publications according to their scope: (i) Global (G), (ii) National (N) (iii) Local (L) (iv) Multi-level (GN, NL or GNL). On this classification, we found most of the publications on the national level, which constituted sixty-six (64%) out of the total one-hundred and three articles. The global level followed with eleven articles (11%). Anti-corruption literature on the local level between 2015-2020 was significantly low, with only three articles representing 3%. The multi-level articles accounted for twenty-three (22%) of the one-hundred and three articles. This finding suggests a lack of literature on anti-corruption at the local level and an overconcentration of literature at the national level. In addition, there seems to be a significant level of attention given to a multi-level analysis of anti-corruption. However, the majority of multi-level articles concerned the global-national (fifteen out of the twenty-three) and the remaining were on the national-local levels (eight). This suggests that complete multi-level studies emphasising all three levels (global-national-local) are generally rare in the literature.

Columns iv shows the classification of papers according to the research methods employed in them, i.e., those based on qualitative methods (Ql), quantitative methods(Q), analytical(A) and experimental(E) techniques. We found analytical methods to be the most preferred by the studies included in this review. A total of forty-seven articles (45.6%) used this method. Quantitative methods, however, were used in thirty-one articles (30.1%), qualitative methods in twenty-three (22.3%) and experimental methods in two (2%) of the studies. Overall, we found the use of primary empirical data to be relatively low. Only 43% of the articles included in the review used primary empirical data in their research. Columns viii shows the focal entities of the studies included in this review. These were generally countries and institutions. We found that between 2015-2020 most anti-corruption research included in our review were single-country case studies. These studies amounted to eighty-eight articles and constituted 85% of the entire body of literature gathered.

China alone received thirty-two articles (36%) of all articles that focused on countries. In Asia, aside from China, there was an article on Azerbaijan, another on Bangladesh, two on Kazakhstan, one on Turkmenistan, three on India, one on Japan, one on Indonesia, two on South Korea and Vietnam, respectively. In Africa, Nigeria was the most researched, with four articles. The remaining were two on South Africa and a paper each on Rwanda, Kenya, Kenya/Tunisia, Uganda, Ghana, and Ethiopia. Only eleven out of the 103 articles focused on African countries. We found only four articles on North America. Two in Canada and two on the USA. Similarly, we found only three articles on South America. Two of these were exclusively on Brazil, and the remaining on both Brazil and Argentina.

In Europe, we found eighteen 18 articles. The breakdown is as follows: one article on Bosnia-Herzegovina/Macedonia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Italy, Poland, and Serbia. Two each on Georgia, Russia, Spain, Romania, Britain and three on Romania. Finally, there were only four articles on Oceania, three on Australia and one on Papua New Guinea. International non-governmental and non-state institutions also featured as the central focal entity of twelve out of the hundred and three articles, representing 12%. These include IACR, IOC, OECD, TIU, GRECO, WTO and UN. The European Union was the entity of focus in two articles. The remaining were three general analytical papers and ten articles with no specific entity under focus.

Thematic Analysis

Anti-corruption mainly comprises three interdependent efforts, i.e., understanding the problem of corruption, establishing anti-corruption institutions, and designing strategies to curb corruption. In this thematic analysis, we investigate the extent to which recent anti-corruption efforts and literature (2015-2020) go beyond the established paradigms (i.e., principal-agent perspective, macro-level, structural, interactional, and legal centralistic approaches) to focus on society's local level informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations and non-monetary currencies (e.g., respect, prestige, social status, solidarity, trust and kinship). This is done with the purpose of underlining the importance of local approaches based on the collective action perspective. The literature review also assesses the extent to which the recent canon focuses on the complex articulation and interdependencies between (1) global, transnational anti-corruption laws, initiatives, discourses, and institutions, (2) national/central level initiatives, policies, and laws, and (3) local, micro-level social norms and practices.

Anti-corruption literature on the global level

First, the articles that focused on this level concur that the perception of corruption as a global menace is problematic. They trace this orthodoxy to the early internationalisation of the anti-corruption agenda (Gephart 2016; Katzarova 2018; Bull and Heywood 2019; Ivory 2018). By mapping how the orthodoxy in corruption's definition is linked to the United States Foreign Corrupt Practices Act 1977, they show the impact of global level legal and political activities in shaping corruptions' definition and its influence on international anti-corruption norms conventions and statutes.

Most studies on this level also explore challenges confronting international anti-corruption institutions (Gephart 2016; Katzarova 2018; Bull and Heywood 2019; Harkin 2017; Schwickerath 2018; Kruessmann 2019; Panov 2018; de Oliveira Silveira 2019; Ocheje 2017; Ivory 2018; Wolf 2018). According to Harkin (2017), Schwickerath (2018) and Kruessmann (2019), international anti-corruption institutions face significant difficulties in effectively transforming their anti-corruption strategies into enforceable legal regulations at the

national level. In fact, the majority of the studies on this level assert that this happens due to the politicisation of national anti-corruption institutions and strategies. Subsequently, Panov (2018), de Oliveira Silveira (2019) and Wolf (2018) maintain that it is necessary to strengthen transnational anti-corruption mechanisms in ways that can punish corrupt leaders. For Wolf (2018), this can be achieved through the creation of an International Anti-Corruption Court.

Anti-corruption literature on the national level

Most articles included in this review (64%) were on this level exclusively. These articles focused mainly on ways of improving national anti-corruption regimes (Gemperle 2018; Schnell 2018; Deng 2018; L. Li et al. 2017; Boly and Gillander 2018; Aburamoto 2019; Taylor 2018; Kurakin and Sukharenko 2018; Ross 2018; Robinson 2015; Heinrich and Brown 2017; Hobbs and Williams 2017; Min 2019; S. B. Kim 2016; Peiffer and Alvarez 2016; Ocheje 2017; Dadasov 2017; Esoimeme 2018). According to Gemperle (2018), establishing anti-corruption institutions and policies is crucial for many governments because it demonstrates their commitment to transparency and accountability. However, certain governments only do this to signal their integrity without properly implementing their anti-corruption policies and regulations (Schnell 2018). According to Deng (2018) and L. Li et al. (2017), political leaders are often apathetic with implementation due to conflict of interest. For example, even when policymakers are not corrupt, they often significantly distort anti-corruption initiatives by opting for lower detection strategies when these strategies apply to their actions compared to situations where it does not (Boly and Gillander 2018). Therefore, in the wake of unempowered outsiders and demotivated agencies, many countries rely strongly on top-political will and leadership to ensure the effective implementation of anti-corruption regulations (Deng 2018). Nonetheless, Schnell (2018) argues that political competition that benefits from anti-corruption agenda setting can effectively force governments to implement anti-corruption policies and regulations. However, this might not always be the case. Some governments also use non-state or para-state anti-corruption institutions to deflect political opponents' blame and pressure

without directly interfering (Aburamoto 2019).

Several studies within this level's canon recommend multi-sectoral, multi-agency, legal cooperation, and interdependencies between and within countries to improve the implementation of anti-corruption programs and policies (Taylor 2018; Kurakin and Sukharenko 2018; Ross 2018; Robinson 2015; Heinrich and Brown 2017). Conversely, Hobbs and Williams (2017), Boly and Gillander (2018), Fedotov and Voloshyna (2019) and Deng (2018) argue against the decentralisation of anti-corruption institutions. In their view, increased supervision could lead to fear of making mistakes on the part of officials (Deng 2018), and multiple agencies could breed under-reporting of corrupt acts (Hobbs and Williams 2017).

Furthermore, Min (2019) and S. B. Kim (2016) suggest that legal sanctions must endeavour to incentivise corporations and individuals to self-report misconduct. Nevertheless, such civic action can only be induced when the public perceives the government to effectively implement its anti-corruption policies (Peiffer and Alvarez 2016). Also, even though the use of legal sanctions in fighting corruption has shown significant results in most Western societies, Ocheje (2017), Dadasov (2017) and Esoimeme (2018) separately question its dispensability in Africa. Ocheje's study, for example, suggests that normative peculiarities such as the blurry distinction between the public and private sphere in many African countries throw a peculiar challenge for the anti-corruption legal sanctions. Accordingly, they argue that improving anti-corruption institutions and strategies require ardent consideration of contextual and endogenous factors (Ocheje 2017; Dadasov 2017; Esoimeme 2018).

Anti-corruption literature on the local level

The articles gathered on China's anti-corruption regime alone amounted to twenty-three (35%) out of the sixty-six articles on the national level. These studies were mainly in economics and focused primarily on the nature of the country's anti-corruption regime and its impact on the performance of firms. Subsequently, these articles (Gang-Zhi Fan, Huszár, and Weina

Zhang 2016; Xu and Yano 2017; Ying and Liu 2018; D. S. Kim, Li, and Tarzia 2018; He, Wang, and Yang 2019; Qian 2019; Yu et al. 2019; Guo 2019; Shu and Cai 2017; Qu, Sylwester, and Wang 2018; Chuanli 2015; Sharkey and Fraser 2017; Zhu and Zhang 2017; Liang and Langbein 2019; Dang and Yang 2016; Manion 2016; Nie and Wang 2016; Zhou, Wang and Chen 2020; Xie and Zhang 2020; Hao, Liu, Zhang and Zhao 2020; Kong, Tao and Wang 2020; Tao 2020; Kang and Zhu 2020) were sub-grouped and thematically analysed separately.

According to Manion (2016), the main characteristic of China's current anti-corruption regime is its capacity to significantly reduce bureaucratic opportunities for corruption and structural obstacles to anti-corruption enforcement. The current regime has achieved this by making top political officials its primary target (D. S. Kim, Li, and Tarzia 2018). However, Zhu and Zhang (2017) argue that the regime is a product of informal politics and intra-elite power competition, captured by the informal power configuration of government incumbents and their predecessors. Therefore, it targets top officials in a relatively selective, arbitrary, and factionally biased way.

Nonetheless, studies on the regime's impact on firm performance indicate that without political connections, firms that are either young, non-state-owned or operating in non-regulated industries benefitted most from the regime (Ying and Liu 2018; Xu and Yano 2017; Ying and Liu 2018; Guo 2019; Dang and Yang 2016). According to Dang and Yang (2016), this was due to the anti-corruption regime's ability to increase the cost of seeking political connection whiles incentivising the quest for innovation and research. This makes research and development a more attractive and efficient way for firms to grow instead of a political bond and connections. Guo (2019), Qian (2019), and Xu and Yano (2017) observed this impact to be substantial among firms within provinces with effective implementation of the regime's policies.

Even though these studies suggest that China's current anti-corruption regime has had a positive impact on the growth of firms, research conducted by Qu, Sylwester, and Wang (2018) Ying and Liu (2018), Xu and

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Multi-level Anti-corruption literature

Among the articles gathered for this systematic literature review, a total of twenty-three were concerned with anti-corruption at more than one societal level. These articles focused either on the global-national (15) or the national-local (8). None of the studies gathered for this review was a complete multi-level (i.e., global-national-local).

Global-National literature

The main concern of these studies on the global-national level (Lang 2018; Xenakis and Ivanov 2017; Barutciski and Bandali 2015; Tourinho 2018; Pleines and Woestheinrich 2016; Nasuti 2016; Gilbert and Sharman 2016; Johnston 2018; Christensen 2017; Flavier, Chikireva, and Ivanova 2017; Verdenicci and Hough 2015; Davis, Jorge, and Machado 2015; Walton 2016; Sakib, 2020; Al-Ajmi, and Alnami 2020), is the internalisation of international anti-corruption norms, statutes, and conventions (i.e., the orthodoxy) by various countries through either inspiration and legitimation, coercion, or support for policies and programs implementation.

Firstly, most of these articles are analytical studies. Only four of the multi-level studies were based on primary empirical data. These studies concur that global anti-corruption norms hinge on the characterisation of corruption found in the 1977 US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. They maintain that the emergence of transnational advocacy movements (like Transparency International) and the adoption of international treaties and conventions such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) led to the harmonisation of various national legal definitions and criminal law along the lines of the US FCPA conceptualisation of corruption ('abuse of public power for private gain'). Lang (2018) and Tourinho (2018) separately suggest that this orthodoxy is promoted through various structural and administrative reforms encouraged by international aid and loan conditions set by Western-dominated international institutions.

However, these studies suggest that country-specific factors influence the implementation of these international conventions and reforms. These include the nature of political elites, bureaucrats and system of governance or political regime. For example, in a comparative study of Ukraine and Georgia, Nasuti (2016) found that members of the Georgian government were young, primarily educated in the West and thus constituted a group of officials who were willing to enforce and embrace change. However, the opposite was largely true in the case of Ukraine. Accordingly, Nasuti maintains that these differences explain why the former was better at implementing international anti-corruption reforms than the latter.

Similarly, in China's case Lang (2018) found that even though the country's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) led to significant legal and administrative anti-corruption reforms, the leadership norms and the authoritarian one-party system produces certain peculiarities in China's anti-corruption regime. According to Lang, even though the formal definition of corruption in the laws of China concurs with international conventions, it differs significantly. He argues that the legitimacy of the Party and system stability are at the core of the country's anti-corruption initiatives rather than the

protection of human rights or economic efficiency. Consequently, these differences in the anti-corruption objectives yield significantly different operational definitions, strategies, and measures.

National-Local literature

While the studies on the global-national level are mainly analytical and focus on the internalisation of the orthodoxy of corruption, these on the national-local level (F. Li and Deng 2016a; Cochrane 2018; Lee 2018; Mattoni 2017; Ocheje 2018; Milan 2017; Zeng 2017) are mainly empirical and focus on the implementation challenges facing national anti-corruption policies and programs at the local level. Two main challenges were identified within this body of literature. These were the impact of social/cultural norms and local political officials on anti-corruption initiatives (Lee 2018; Ocheje 2018; F. Li and Deng 2016a; Zeng 2017).

According to F. Li and Deng (2016a) and Zeng (2017), the centralisation of China's anti-corruption regime into a single agency model results in a substantial decrease in the influence of local party leaders on the implementation of anti-corruption programs and policies. However, this represents an attempt by the party's centre to maintain control of the regime rather than relinquishing control or promoting the rule of law. In addition, Lee (2018) contends that because the Chinese anti-corruption regime employs a Top-down legal approach, it faces difficulties tackling non-economic forms of corruption and potential corruption-breeding rooted in Chinese culture such as gift-giving or "guanxi". Consequently, he proposes a bottom-up, culture-based approach to combatting corruption that creates an environment where new norms will be propagated to discourage corruption induced through guanxi. This finding corroborates Ocheje (2018) observations on Nigeria's fight against corruption. Ocheje found that social norms and institutions in Nigerian society create an enabling environment for corruption, which in essence, pose a severe challenge to the efficacy of law in combating it. Hence, the success of any anti-corruption initiative in the country should rely critically on the broad instigation of change in these norms.

Conclusion

Our analysis of one-hundred and three peer-reviewed journal articles gathered for this systematic literature review indicates that most studies conducted within this period focus on anti-corruption at the national level, and mostly employ analytical and quantitative methods. However, the local level received scant attention, and qualitative methods were employed in very few studies. Also, even though a significant number of studies focus on anti-corruption at multiple levels, these are mostly either the global-national level or national-local level. None of the articles gathered for this review studied anti-corruption in a complete multi-level approach that explores the global-national-local level. Our thematic analysis also suggests that most anti-corruption studies conducted in this period, have generally focused on an analytical, or empirical appraisal of anti-corruption policies and practices. However, this finding might have been due to our keyword search string "anti-corruption" used in gathering these articles. The term itself connotes interventions against corruption.

Nonetheless, our analysis suggests that studies on anti-corruption at the global level engaged primarily with the impact of global level legal and political activities in shaping corruptions' definition and its influence on international anti-corruption norms, conventions, and statutes. Studies on the national and local levels however, mainly appraised national anti-corruption strategies and their implementation challenges. Despite the variances in their subject matter, we found that majority of the studies across the levels are shaped by the principal-agent perspective. Subsequently, these studies are generally state-centric and devote primarily to the analysis of macro-level factors such as the behaviour of actors in particular public-office settings, the system of formal rules and institutions, how ruling elites are composed, the competition that exists among them, how accountable they are, and disregarded micro-level informal social norms and their roles in combating corruption. Consequently, irrespective of the entity of focus (i.e., country or institution), method or level of analysis (global, national, or local or multi-level) common conclusions and recommendation were offered in their appraisals of anti-corruption strategies. Most of the studies attributed the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption

policies and strategies across various societal levels and institutions, to basically the inability of "principals" to be principled. For example, majority of the studies at the global level pointed to "politicization at the national level" as the primary challenge, and majority of studies at the national level pointed to the lack of political will and weak monitoring mechanisms as the primary obstacle to effective anti-corruption. Our findings corroborate earlier observations of Ugur and Dasgupta (2011), on the predominance of the principal-agent theoretical perspective within anti-corruption scholarships, theory, and practice. Even though local level studies were scant, findings from the few studies suggests that micro-level informalities have significant implications on the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives.

Furthermore, among the multi-level articles included in this review, most of the global-national studies were concerned with the internalisation of international anti-corruption norms, statutes, and conventions by various countries through either inspiration and legitimation, coercion, or support for policies and programs implementation. Also, the national-local level studies primarily focused on the implementation challenges facing national anti-corruption policies and strategies at the local level. Thus, the interconnections and interdependence of anti-corruption activities between these levels were explored. Nevertheless, this was done in a top-down approach. Subsequently, how national-level activities shape the global discourse on corruption, and especially how local micro-level activities and norms shape national and global anti-corruption discourse and strategies were not adequately explored. Nonetheless, the analysis found in the canon highlights the need for empirical anti-corruption studies on the interdependencies between (1) global, transnational anti-corruption laws, initiatives, discourses, and institutions, (2) national/central level initiatives, policies, and laws, and (3) local, micro-level social norms and practices. Additionally, they indicate the crucialness of local level actors and informal norms to anti-corruption policymaking and implementation.

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Appendix A

Table 2. Papers included for the systematic literature review on anti-corruption, 2015-2020

Article	Year	Level	Method	Entity
(Vadlamannati 2015)	2015	L	Q	India
(H. Li, Xiao, and Gong 2015)	2015	N	Q	China
(Babos 2015)	2015	N	Q	Estonia/Slovakia/Slovenia/ Romania
(Kuris 2015)	2015	N	A	Multi
(Verdenicci and Hough 2015)	2015	G/N	A	IACR/Brazil
(Goel, Budak, and Rajh 2015)	2015	N	Q	Croatia
(Davis, Jorge, and Machado 2015)	2015	G/N	Ql	IACR/Argentine/Brazil
(Barutciski and Bandali 2015)	2015	G/N	A	OECD/Canada
(Robinson 2015)	2015	N	A	Kenya/Tunisia
(Chuanli 2015)	2015	N	A	China
(Nasuti 2016)	2016	G/N	A	Georgia/Ukraine
(Pleines and Woestheinrich 2016)	2016	G/N	Q	Azerbaijan/Kazakhstan/ Turkmenistan
(F. Li and Deng 2016a)	2016	N/L	Ql	China
(Walton 2016)	2016	G/N	Ql	Papua New Guinea
(F. Li and Deng 2016b)	2016	L	Ql	China
(Gephart 2016)	2016	G	A	IACR
(Bin and Yinghong 2016)	2016	N	A	India
(Gang-Zhi Fan, Huszár, and Weina Zhang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(Gilbert and Sharman 2016)	2016	G/N	A	OECD/UK/Australia
(Peiffer and Alvarez 2016)	2016	N	Q	Multi
(Spector 2016)	2016	N	Q	Multi/Vietnam
(Dang and Yang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(Manion 2016)	2016	N	A	China
(Nie and Wang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(S. B. Kim 2016)	2016	N	A	South Korea
(Muhumuza 2016)	2016	N	A	Uganda
(Tromme 2016)	2016	N	A	Vietnam
(Xenakis and Ivanov 2017)	2017	G/N	A	South-East Europe/ Britain
(Christensen 2017)	2017	G/N	Ql	Multi
(Mattoni 2017)	2017	N/L	Ql	Italy/Spain
(Mungiu-Pippidi and Dadasov 2017)	2017	N	Q	Multi
(Rogelja and Shannon 2017)	2017	N	Ql	Serbia
(L. Li et al. 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Harkin 2017)	2017	G	A	TIU (tennis)
(Hoole and Appleby 2017)	2017	N	A	Australia

Article	Year	Level	Method	Entity
(Hobbs and Williams 2017)	2017	N	A	Australia
(Xu and Yano 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Flavier, Chikireva, and Ivanova 2017)	2017	G/N	A	GRECO/Europe/Russia/ USA
(Sheryazdanova and Butterfield 2017)	2017	N	Ql	Kazakhstan
(Shu and Cai 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Zeng 2017)	2017	N/L	Q	China
(Ocheje 2017)	2017	G	A	Africa/EU
(Ocheje 2018)	2017	N/L	A	Nigeria
(Heinrich and Brown 2017)	2017	N	Q	Multi
(Milan 2017)	2017	N/L	Ql	Bosnia-Herzegovina/Macedonia
(Sharkey and Fraser 2017)	2017	N	A	China
(Zhu and Zhang 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Krajewska and Makowski 2017)	2017	N	A	Poland
(Caruso 2017)	2017	N	A	Spain
(Gemperle 2018)	2018	N	A	Multi
(Deng 2018)	2018	N	Ql	China
(Esoimeme 2018)	2018	N	A	Nigeria
(Lang 2018)	2018	G/N	A	IACR/China
(Boly and Gillander 2018)	2018	N	E	General
(Schwickerath 2018)	2018	G	Ql	UN
(Cochrane 2018)	2018	N/L	Ql	Australia
(Mamychev et al. 2018)	2018	N	A	China
(Kurakin and Sukharenko 2018)	2018	N	A	Brazil/South Africa/China/India
(Hassan 2018)	2018	N	A	Ethiopia
(Ross 2018)	2018	N	A	China/USA
(Taylor 2018)	2018	N	A	Georgia/Rwanda/Japan
(Wibowo 2018)	2018	N	A	Indonesia
(Panov 2018)	2018	G	A	EU
(Ying and Liu 2018)	2018	N	Q	China
(D. S. Kim, Li, and Tarzia 2018)	2018	N	Q	China
(Katzarova 2018)	2018	G	A	IACR
(Qu, Sylwester, and Wang 2018)	2018	N	Q	China
(Lee 2018)	2018	N/L	A	China
(Johnston 2018)	2018	G/N	A	Multi
(Rotberg 2018)	2018	N	A	Multi
(Ivory 2018)	2018	G	A	General

Article	Year	Level	Method	Entity
(Suberu 2018)	2018	N	A	Nigeria
(Schnell 2018)	2018	N	Ql	Romania
(Tourinho 2018)	2018	G/N	A	IACR/Brazil
(Mazak and Diviak 2018)	2018	N	Ql	Czech Republic
(Wolf 2018)	2018	G	A	IACR
(Mungiu-Pippidi 2018)	2018	N	A	Romania
(Fedotov and Voloshyna 2019)	2019	N	Q	Ukraine
(Aburamoto 2019)	2019	N	A	Russia
(Kruessmann 2019)	2019	G	A	IOC
(Banerjee and Vaidya 2019)	2019	N	E	General
(He, Wang, and Yang 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Qian 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Yu et al. 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Guo 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(de Oliveira Silveira 2019)	2019	G	A	WTO
(Ho et al. 2019)	2019	N	Q	Multi
(Liang and Langbein 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Min 2019)	2019	N	Q	South Korea
(Bull and Heywood 2019)	2019	G	A	IACR
(Sundstrom 2019)	2019	L	Ql	South Africa
(Sakib, 2020)	2020	G/N	Ql	Bangladesh
(Bautista-Beauchesne, 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Canada
(Zhou, Wang, and Chen 2020)	2020	N	Q	China
(Xie and Zhang 2020)	2020	N	Ql	China
(Onyango 2020)	2020	N/L	Ql	Kenya
Hao, Liu, Zhang and Zhao (2020)	2020	N	A	China
(Kong, Tao and Wang 2020)	2020	N	Q	China
(Al-Ajmi, and Alnami 2020)	2020	G/N	Ql	Kuwait
(Abotsi 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Ghana
(Okafor, Opara, and Adebisi 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Nigeria
(Tao 2020)	2020	N	Ql	China
(Kang and Zhu 2020)	2020	N	Q	China

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