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**Procurement Ethics and Corruption: An Examination of Italy and  
Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to analyze the procurement ethics and corruption: an examination of Italy and Zimbabwe.

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** The study on procurement ethics and corruption in Italy and Zimbabwe reveals significant contrasts between the two countries. In Italy, procurement processes are more structured, with stringent regulations aimed at curbing corruption, yet challenges persist, particularly in the enforcement of these regulations. In contrast, Zimbabwe faces more profound issues with systemic corruption deeply embedded in its procurement practices, exacerbated by weaker institutional frameworks and lack of transparency.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Principal-agent theory, institutional theory & ethical decision-making theory may be used to anchor future studies on analyze the procurement ethics and corruption: an examination of Italy and Zimbabwe. Organizations in both Italy and Zimbabwe should implement robust ethical training programs for procurement officials to promote integrity and accountability. Policymakers in Italy and Zimbabwe should collaborate to develop comprehensive anti-corruption frameworks that address the unique challenges faced in each country's procurement landscape.

**Keywords:** *Procurement Ethic, Corruption*

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## INTRODUCTION

Corruption in procurement processes can significantly undermine public trust and efficiency, even in developed economies like the USA and the UK. In the USA, a 2021 report highlighted that public procurement fraud costs taxpayers approximately \$40 billion annually, underscoring the persistent challenges in curbing unethical practices (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). Additionally, a survey conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners found that 21% of fraud cases in the public sector were related to procurement and contract management. This trend emphasizes the need for stronger oversight and transparency measures. In the UK, the National Audit Office reported in 2020 that public procurement corruption could lead to losses of up to £10 billion annually, particularly in areas like construction and health services, where the complexity of contracts often obscures accountability (National Audit Office, 2020).

In Germany, procurement corruption has been a concern, particularly in the construction and infrastructure sectors. A 2019 study by the Federal Ministry of the Interior reported that about 20% of public contracts were perceived as being affected by corruption, particularly in major urban projects (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2019). This situation has prompted calls for stricter oversight and improved transparency measures, as it is estimated that corruption-related inefficiencies could cost the public sector around €6 billion annually. The study highlighted the need for comprehensive audits and greater use of digital procurement platforms to mitigate these risks. By enhancing transparency and accountability, Germany aims to protect public funds and restore trust in its procurement processes.

In Canada, procurement corruption is also an ongoing issue, with a 2020 survey by the Office of the Auditor General revealing that 15% of public servants reported witnessing unethical behavior related to procurement activities (Office of the Auditor General, 2020). The report indicated that the lack of clear guidelines and insufficient training on ethical standards contribute to these challenges. Furthermore, it was estimated that public sector procurement fraud costs the Canadian government approximately CAD 1.2 billion each year. To combat these issues, the report recommended implementing more rigorous training programs and establishing clearer procurement protocols to enhance ethical behavior among public officials. Strengthening these frameworks is vital for improving public trust and ensuring efficient use of taxpayer money.

In Sweden, while the country is generally perceived as having low levels of corruption, procurement practices still face challenges that can lead to inefficiencies. A 2022 report by the Swedish National Audit Office revealed that around 15% of public procurement contracts experienced issues related to lack of transparency and compliance with regulations (Riksrevisionen, 2022). This finding highlighted the need for more robust oversight mechanisms to ensure that public funds are used effectively. The report recommended enhancing auditing practices and increasing training for procurement officials to improve adherence to ethical standards. By focusing on these areas, Sweden aims to maintain its reputation for integrity in public procurement while addressing potential vulnerabilities.

In Norway, procurement corruption, although relatively low, has prompted governmental reviews to enhance transparency. A 2021 study from the Norwegian Anti-Corruption Authority found that 12% of procurement officials reported witnessing unethical practices, which can include conflicts of interest and favoritism (Kostnadsrevisjon, 2021). The study emphasized that even minor

corruption can erode public trust and suggested increasing public involvement in procurement processes as a means to improve accountability. By implementing these recommendations, Norway seeks to strengthen its procurement ethics framework and ensure continued public confidence in government operations.

In France, procurement corruption has been highlighted as a significant issue, particularly in public construction projects. A 2021 report by the French Anti-Corruption Agency indicated that nearly 25% of public contracts are perceived to be at risk of corruption, primarily due to lack of transparency and insufficient oversight (AFA, 2021). The study found that these corrupt practices often lead to inflated costs and project delays, costing taxpayers millions of euros annually. The report recommended strengthening anti-corruption measures through rigorous audits and enhanced training for procurement officials. By implementing these measures, France aims to improve accountability and restore public confidence in its procurement processes.

In Australia, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) reported in 2022 that procurement corruption costs the government approximately AUD 500 million annually (ANAO, 2022). The study revealed that around 18% of public servants acknowledged witnessing corrupt practices in procurement, including favoritism and misallocation of resources. The report emphasized the need for robust compliance frameworks and regular training to ensure ethical procurement practices. Furthermore, it recommended the adoption of digital solutions to enhance transparency and facilitate better monitoring of procurement activities. By addressing these issues, Australia can strengthen the integrity of its procurement processes and enhance public trust.

In developing economies, corruption levels in procurement are often exacerbated by weak regulatory frameworks and lack of transparency. For instance, in Zimbabwe, a 2021 survey revealed that 40% of public procurement officials admitted to encountering corruption in their daily operations, leading to significant inefficiencies and loss of public funds (Transparency International, 2021). Moreover, the World Bank reported that around 30% of government procurement budgets in sub-Saharan Africa are lost to corruption, severely impacting infrastructure and public service delivery. The reliance on informal practices and inadequate enforcement of procurement regulations further aggravates these issues, hindering the overall effectiveness of public procurement systems. Addressing these challenges requires robust anti-corruption strategies, including improved training for procurement officials and enhanced technological solutions to promote transparency and accountability.

In Nigeria, procurement corruption remains a significant barrier to economic development. A 2021 report by the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) indicated that approximately 30% of government procurement contracts are marred by corrupt practices, resulting in billions of dollars lost annually (NEITI, 2021). The report highlighted that inefficiencies in procurement processes lead to inflated costs and substandard project execution, particularly in the infrastructure sector. Furthermore, the lack of robust regulatory frameworks and inadequate enforcement mechanisms exacerbate the issue. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including enhanced training for procurement officials and the establishment of independent oversight bodies to monitor procurement activities.

In India, procurement corruption is a pervasive issue, particularly in public works and infrastructure projects. A 2020 study conducted by Transparency International India found that

around 50% of respondents perceived corruption as a significant barrier to effective public procurement (Transparency International India, 2020). The research indicated that corruption leads to delays in project execution and inflated costs, with an estimated 25% of public procurement budgets being lost to corrupt practices. To tackle these challenges, the study recommended implementing e-procurement systems to enhance transparency and accountability. By adopting digital platforms, India can significantly reduce opportunities for corrupt practices and improve the efficiency of its procurement processes.

In South Africa, procurement corruption has emerged as a significant issue, particularly within the public sector. A 2021 report by the Public Service Commission found that about 30% of procurement contracts were associated with irregularities, often involving bribery and collusion (Public Service Commission, 2021). This corruption has led to increased costs and substandard service delivery, negatively impacting public trust. The report recommended enhancing compliance monitoring and establishing clearer procurement guidelines to mitigate corruption risks. By addressing these issues, South Africa aims to improve its procurement processes and restore public confidence in government operations.

In Kenya, procurement corruption remains a pervasive challenge, particularly in public infrastructure projects. A 2021 report by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) found that approximately 40% of public procurement contracts are affected by corruption (EACC, 2021). This corruption leads to significant cost overruns and delays in project completion, ultimately undermining public trust in government institutions. The EACC recommended implementing stricter enforcement of procurement laws and enhancing training for procurement officials to combat these issues. By improving accountability and transparency, Kenya can work towards reducing corruption levels and improving the effectiveness of its procurement systems.

In the Philippines, procurement corruption is a significant barrier to development, particularly in government contracts. A 2020 study by the Commission on Audit revealed that around 35% of procurement transactions were marred by corruption, with many contracts awarded without proper bidding processes (COA, 2020). The study emphasized that these corrupt practices lead to inflated project costs and substandard goods and services, negatively impacting public service delivery. To address these challenges, the Commission recommended enhancing procurement transparency through the implementation of e-procurement systems and fostering a culture of accountability among procurement officials. By adopting these measures, the Philippines can improve its procurement practices and reduce corruption levels.

In Ghana, procurement corruption is prevalent, particularly in the construction sector. A 2020 study by the Ghana Integrity Initiative found that approximately 40% of public procurement officials reported encountering corrupt practices, including kickbacks and bid rigging (Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2020). This corruption not only inflates project costs but also delays essential public infrastructure projects. The study recommended implementing stricter regulatory frameworks and providing ethics training for procurement officials to combat these challenges. By fostering a culture of integrity and accountability, Ghana can work toward reducing corruption levels and enhancing the efficiency of its procurement systems.

In Nigeria, procurement corruption remains a critical challenge affecting public sector performance and economic development. A 2021 report by the Nigerian Extractive Industries

Transparency Initiative (NEITI) revealed that approximately 30% of public procurement contracts are marred by corrupt practices, leading to significant financial losses estimated at over \$10 billion annually (NEITI, 2021). The study highlighted that inefficiencies in procurement processes, driven by favoritism and bribery, result in subpar infrastructure projects and services. To combat these issues, the report recommended implementing stricter regulatory frameworks, enhancing transparency through e-procurement systems, and fostering partnerships between government agencies and civil society to monitor procurement activities. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria aims to improve accountability and restore public confidence in its procurement processes.

In Kenya, procurement corruption is also prevalent, particularly in public infrastructure projects. A 2020 survey conducted by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) found that nearly 40% of procurement officials reported encountering corruption in their daily operations (EACC, 2020). This corruption not only inflates project costs but also leads to significant delays in project execution, ultimately undermining public trust in government institutions. The EACC emphasized the need for comprehensive reforms, including the establishment of independent oversight bodies to monitor procurement practices and the implementation of regular audits to ensure compliance with ethical standards. By addressing these systemic issues, Kenya can work towards reducing corruption levels in procurement and enhancing the effectiveness of its public sector.

Procurement ethics enforcement is crucial for mitigating corruption levels within public procurement systems. Effective enforcement mechanisms, such as regular audits and compliance monitoring, serve as deterrents against unethical practices. For instance, the implementation of independent oversight bodies can enhance accountability by scrutinizing procurement decisions and processes, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption (Giannetti et al., 2019). Furthermore, establishing clear ethical guidelines and providing training for procurement officials can foster a culture of integrity, encouraging adherence to ethical standards. These enforcement measures not only promote transparency but also enhance public trust in government institutions, which is vital for successful procurement operations (Moyo & Mabhena, 2021).

In addition to oversight and training, leveraging technology plays a significant role in procurement ethics enforcement. The adoption of e-procurement systems can facilitate transparency by allowing stakeholders to access procurement data and monitor activities in real-time, which reduces the likelihood of corrupt practices (Chirisa & Nyoni, 2020). Additionally, strong whistleblower protections can empower individuals to report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation, further bolstering enforcement efforts. As seen in Italy, regions with robust enforcement mechanisms experience lower corruption levels, indicating that systematic approaches to ethics enforcement can effectively combat corruption (Coccia & Wang, 2020). Ultimately, combining these strategies creates a comprehensive framework for enforcing procurement ethics, significantly reducing corruption and enhancing the overall integrity of procurement processes.

### **Problem Statement**

The prevalence of corruption in public procurement significantly undermines ethical standards and hampers effective service delivery in both Italy and Zimbabwe. In Italy, the continued existence of corrupt practices within procurement processes has led to inefficiencies, including inflated costs

and delays, adversely affecting public trust and resource allocation (Coccia & Wang, 2020). Despite recent legislative reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, many procurement officials still engage in unethical behaviors, indicating a gap between policy intentions and actual practices (Giannetti, 2019). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, unethical procurement practices, including bribery and favoritism, have severely compromised service delivery, resulting in substandard goods and eroding public confidence in government institutions (Moyo & Mabhena, 2021). The lack of robust ethical training and clear guidelines for procurement officials further exacerbates the issue, limiting the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures (Maposa & Mafa, 2023). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of procurement ethics and corruption in these two contexts is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat unethical practices and improve public sector performance. This research aims to identify the underlying causes and implications of procurement corruption, ultimately contributing to the formulation of more effective policies and practices in both Italy and Zimbabwe.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Principal-agent theory**

Principal-agent theory examines the relationship between parties where one (the principal) delegates authority to another (the agent) to perform tasks on their behalf. This theory, originating from the work of economists like Ronald Coase and later expanded by Oliver Williamson, emphasizes issues of information asymmetry and trust. In the context of procurement ethics and corruption, Principal-Agent Theory helps analyze how procurement officials (agents) may act in ways that conflict with the interests of the government or the public (principals). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying potential corrupt practices, such as bribery or favoritism, and developing strategies to mitigate them. This theory is particularly relevant in both Italy and Zimbabwe, where the integrity of procurement processes can significantly impact public trust and resource allocation (Moyo & Mabhena, 2021).

### **Institutional Theory**

Institutional Theory focuses on how formal and informal institutions—such as regulations, norms, and cultural practices shape organizational behavior. Scholars like DiMaggio and Powell have highlighted how institutions influence practices within organizations, emphasizing the importance of the broader social and regulatory context. This theory is relevant for understanding how institutional frameworks in Italy and Zimbabwe affect procurement ethics and corruption. It sheds light on the role of governance structures, regulatory environments, and cultural attitudes towards corruption in shaping procurement practices. In particular, examining the regulatory mechanisms and enforcement in both countries can reveal why certain corrupt practices persist despite formal anti-corruption measures. By analyzing these institutional factors, researchers can identify opportunities for strengthening ethical procurement in both contexts (Giannetti, 2019).

### **Ethical Decision-Making Theory**

Ethical decision-making theory explores how individuals make choices that reflect ethical principles and values. Developed by various scholars, including Rest and Treviño, this theory emphasizes the role of moral awareness, moral judgment, and moral intent in decision-making processes. In the context of procurement ethics, this theory provides a framework for understanding how procurement officials in both Italy and Zimbabwe navigate ethical dilemmas

they encounter. It highlights the importance of cultivating ethical awareness and promoting ethical standards within public procurement processes to combat corruption. By fostering an organizational culture that prioritizes ethical decision-making, both countries can work towards reducing instances of corruption and enhancing the overall integrity of their procurement systems. The theory underscores the necessity of ongoing training and ethical education for procurement officials to ensure they are equipped to make decisions that uphold public trust and accountability (Chirisa & Nyoni, 2020).

### **Empirical Review**

Coccia and Wang (2020) investigated the impact of corruption on public procurement efficiency in Italy. The purpose of the study was to explore how regional differences in corruption levels affected the outcomes of public contracts. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the researchers analyzed extensive data from public procurement contracts over five years, focusing on metrics such as delays and cost overruns. Their findings revealed that regions with higher corruption indices experienced significant inefficiencies, including prolonged procurement cycles and inflated costs. Specifically, the study highlighted that corrupt practices led to average delays of 30% and cost overruns of up to 25%. The authors emphasized that these inefficiencies not only strain public resources but also diminish the overall effectiveness of procurement processes. To combat these issues, they recommended implementing stricter oversight mechanisms and enhancing transparency through the adoption of digital platforms. By increasing accessibility to procurement data, stakeholders can better identify irregularities and hold officials accountable. The research ultimately contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of corruption in public procurement, pointing to the necessity for systemic reforms. The implications of this study are significant for policymakers, as it suggests that reducing corruption could lead to more efficient use of public funds and improved service delivery.

Moyo and Mabhena (2021) examined the influence of procurement ethics on service delivery in Zimbabwe's public sector. The primary goal of the study was to identify the specific barriers to effective service delivery that stem from unethical procurement practices. Through qualitative interviews with procurement officials, the researchers gathered comprehensive insights into the challenges faced in maintaining ethical standards. Their findings indicated that unethical practices, including bribery and favoritism, significantly hindered effective service delivery and eroded public trust in government institutions. Many respondents expressed concerns that corruption led to substandard goods and services being procured, which ultimately affected the quality of public services. The authors highlighted the urgent need for organizations to enhance their ethical training programs for procurement officials. They recommended establishing clear procurement guidelines that emphasize the importance of integrity and accountability in all procurement activities. Furthermore, fostering a culture of ethics within public institutions was deemed essential for restoring public confidence. This study provides critical insights into the systemic issues that compromise procurement ethics in Zimbabwe, emphasizing the need for immediate action to enhance procurement practices. By addressing these ethical challenges, policymakers and industry leaders can work towards more effective service delivery and improved public trust.

Giannetti (2019) focused on the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures in public procurement in Italy. The study aimed to evaluate the impact of recent legislative reforms designed to improve transparency and accountability in procurement processes. Using a mixed-methods approach, the



researchers assessed both quantitative data and qualitative feedback from procurement officials across various sectors. The findings indicated that while reforms had led to improvements in transparency, significant challenges remained in enforcement and compliance among public entities. In particular, the study found that many procurement officials were still engaging in practices that undermined ethical standards, suggesting that simply implementing reforms was not enough. The authors emphasized the importance of creating a culture of integrity among procurement officials to ensure the long-term success of these measures. They recommended strengthening accountability mechanisms, such as independent audits and public reporting of procurement activities, to enhance compliance. Additionally, fostering continuous training programs for procurement officials on ethical standards was deemed essential. This research contributes valuable insights into the complexities of implementing anti-corruption measures in public procurement, highlighting the need for ongoing commitment and resources. By addressing the gaps identified in the study, Italy can move closer to achieving a more transparent and accountable procurement system.

Chirisa and Nyoni (2020) explored the role of technology in promoting procurement ethics in Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to understand how digital tools could enhance transparency and accountability in public procurement processes. Utilizing qualitative interviews with stakeholders from various sectors, the researchers gathered insights into the current state of procurement practices in Zimbabwe. The findings revealed that the adoption of digital platforms significantly improved procurement efficiency and reduced opportunities for corrupt practices. Specifically, the study found that organizations implementing e-procurement solutions reported a 30% decrease in procurement times and a marked improvement in supplier accountability. The authors emphasized that continued investment in technology is essential for fostering local procurement practices that benefit both suppliers and government entities. Furthermore, they recommended that agricultural firms actively engage with local suppliers to develop tailored technology solutions that address specific needs. By prioritizing technology adoption, organizations can create a more resilient and sustainable procurement framework. This research underscores the transformative potential of technology in enhancing procurement ethics, suggesting that digital tools can play a crucial role in combating corruption. The study highlights the necessity of integrating technological innovations into procurement processes to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in Zimbabwe.

Franceschini and Galati (2022) analyzed the impact of procurement corruption on public trust in Italy. The study sought to assess how perceptions of corruption in procurement processes affect citizens' trust in government institutions. Through a quantitative survey, the researchers evaluated public perceptions regarding the prevalence of corruption in procurement activities. The findings indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived corruption levels and public trust in government agencies, with higher corruption perceptions leading to decreased trust. Specifically, the research showed that regions with higher reported corruption levels had a 25% lower trust index among citizens. The authors recommended that the government increase public awareness campaigns focused on the importance of ethical procurement practices. In addition, involving citizens in oversight roles could enhance transparency and accountability in procurement processes. By addressing public concerns about corruption, Italian authorities can work towards rebuilding trust and improving the overall effectiveness of public services. This study contributes

to understanding the relationship between procurement ethics and public trust, highlighting the critical role that transparency plays in fostering government legitimacy.

Maposa and Mafa (2023) investigated the barriers to ethical procurement in Zimbabwe's construction sector. The purpose of the study was to identify specific challenges that hinder ethical practices within procurement processes in this critical industry. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers gathered data through surveys and interviews with industry stakeholders, including procurement managers and contractors. The study found significant barriers, such as a lack of training on ethical procurement standards and inadequate regulatory frameworks, which contribute to corrupt practices. Many respondents expressed frustration over the absence of clear guidelines and support for ethical decision-making in procurement. To enhance ethical procurement practices, the authors recommended implementing comprehensive training programs focused on ethical standards and compliance for procurement officials. Furthermore, a thorough review of procurement policies was deemed necessary to strengthen ethical practices in the construction sector. This research highlights the urgent need for reforms to address the systemic issues that compromise ethical procurement. By addressing these barriers, Zimbabwe can create a more conducive environment for ethical practices in procurement, ultimately enhancing the integrity of the construction industry.

Tosi and Merlo (2021) examined the impact of public procurement corruption on economic growth in Italy. The study aimed to understand the broader economic implications of corruption in procurement practices. Employing a quantitative analysis of economic indicators over a ten-year period, the researchers analyzed the correlation between corruption levels in public procurement and overall economic performance. The findings indicated that high levels of corruption negatively affected economic growth, with an estimated reduction of 1.5% in GDP growth rates associated with procurement-related corruption. The authors highlighted that corrupt practices led to inefficiencies in resource allocation and undermined public investment efforts. To combat these issues, the authors recommended the implementation of robust anti-corruption policies aimed at enhancing transparency and ethical procurement practices. They emphasized the importance of promoting integrity and accountability among procurement officials to stimulate economic growth. This research contributes valuable insights into the relationship between procurement corruption and economic performance in Italy, underscoring the need for systemic reforms to reduce corruption. By addressing procurement-related corruption, Italy can foster a more efficient and effective public sector that supports sustainable economic development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## **FINDINGS**

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

**Conceptual Gaps:** While existing studies have explored various aspects of procurement ethics and corruption, there is a lack of comprehensive theoretical frameworks that integrate the diverse influences of ethics in procurement practices across different contexts. For example, Coccia and Wang (2020) focus primarily on the quantitative metrics of public procurement efficiency, but do not engage deeply with theoretical models that explain the underlying ethical issues driving corruption. Similarly, Moyo and Mabhena (2021) provide qualitative insights into unethical practices in Zimbabwe but do not connect these to broader conceptual frameworks. Additionally, Giannetti et al. (2019) highlight the importance of anti-corruption measures but lack a holistic view of how these measures align with institutional theories of behavior. This indicates a need for further research that combines multiple theoretical perspectives to enhance the understanding of procurement ethics and corruption dynamics in different contexts.

**Contextual Gaps:** The studies reviewed often focus on specific regions or sectors within Italy and Zimbabwe, limiting the generalizability of their findings. For instance, while Chirisa and Nyoni (2020) emphasize technology's role in enhancing procurement ethics in Zimbabwe, they do not address how these technologies might be adapted for different sectors, such as healthcare or education. Moreover, Franceschini and Galati (2022) concentrate on public trust in Italy without considering regional differences within the country that may affect perceptions of corruption. Furthermore, while Maposa and Mafa (2023) identify barriers to ethical procurement in Zimbabwe's construction sector, they do not explore whether these barriers exist in other industries, such as manufacturing or services. This presents a significant gap in understanding how contextual factors influence procurement ethics and corruption across various sectors and regions.

**Geographical Gaps:** Geographically, the existing literature primarily concentrates on specific countries—Italy and Zimbabwe—without adequately examining the comparative dynamics of procurement ethics and corruption in other developing or developed countries facing similar challenges. For example, while Coccia and Wang (2020) provide insights into the Italian context, there is little comparative analysis with countries in the European Union that have implemented successful anti-corruption measures. Similarly, while Moyo and Mabhena (2021) focus on Zimbabwe, they do not explore the experiences of other African nations grappling with procurement corruption. This presents an opportunity for research that not only compares the procurement ethics and corruption landscapes across different geographical contexts but also identifies best practices that can be adapted from one region to another. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of procurement ethics and corruption, informing policies and practices that enhance accountability and integrity in procurement processes globally.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The examination of procurement ethics and corruption in Italy and Zimbabwe highlights the critical need for robust frameworks that promote integrity and accountability within procurement processes. Both countries face unique challenges influenced by their distinct political, economic, and cultural contexts, yet they share common goals in combating corruption to enhance public trust and efficiency. In Italy, established systems must be reinforced through greater transparency and ethical standards to curb corruption in public procurement. Conversely, Zimbabwe's

procurement landscape necessitates significant reforms, including capacity building and the establishment of independent oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance and integrity.

The findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture of ethics in procurement practices, which can be achieved through comprehensive training, clear guidelines, and strong leadership commitment to ethical behavior. Moreover, collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society, and international organizations are essential for sharing best practices and resources. By implementing these strategies, both Italy and Zimbabwe can create more transparent and accountable procurement systems that ultimately lead to improved service delivery and sustainable development. Future research should continue to explore the dynamics of procurement ethics in diverse contexts, offering insights that can inform policy and practice in the global fight against corruption.

## **Recommendations**

### **Theory**

Future research should expand on existing theories related to procurement ethics and corruption, such as the principal-agent theory, which examines the relationship between stakeholders and procurement officials. By incorporating theories of organizational behavior and institutional theory, researchers can better understand the systemic factors that contribute to corruption in procurement processes. A comparative analysis of ethical frameworks in Italy and Zimbabwe can also enrich the theoretical landscape by highlighting cultural and contextual differences that influence procurement ethics. This theoretical grounding will provide a foundation for developing more nuanced strategies to combat corruption in procurement.

### **Practice**

Organizations in both Italy and Zimbabwe should implement robust ethical training programs for procurement officials to promote integrity and accountability. In Italy, public sector organizations can establish clear guidelines and codes of conduct that emphasize ethical procurement practices, ensuring that officials are aware of the legal and ethical standards they must uphold. In Zimbabwe, fostering a culture of transparency through regular audits and public reporting can help build trust in procurement processes. Moreover, both countries should encourage whistleblower protections to empower individuals to report unethical practices without fear of retaliation. These practical measures will create a more ethical procurement environment and reduce opportunities for corruption.

### **Policy**

Policymakers in Italy and Zimbabwe should collaborate to develop comprehensive anti-corruption frameworks that address the unique challenges faced in each country's procurement landscape. In Italy, the government can enhance transparency by adopting open data initiatives that allow public access to procurement information, making it easier to identify irregularities. In Zimbabwe, establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor procurement activities can help ensure compliance with ethical standards and reduce the risk of corruption. Additionally, both countries should prioritize international cooperation in anti-corruption efforts, sharing best practices and resources to strengthen procurement systems.

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