

Impediments to the Prevention of Corruption in the Department of Home Affairs: The Case of the Counter Corruption Unit

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Abstract

In our democratic state it is vital to continue the fight against corruption. Although it has never been easy to successfully prevent corruption in any democratic society, anti-corruption efforts remain important. The spread of corruption continues to affect every aspect of society in South Africa, and is a pandemic that undermines the government effort to spend public money for service delivery effectively. Acts of corruption threaten every citizen, but mostly those who are vulnerable. Effective implementation of anti-corruption systems remains the biggest challenge in the public sector. The literature argues that corrupt activities that are taking place in government structures cause citizens to lose confidence in the public sector. This paper reports on a study whose aim is to investigate what the impediments to the prevention of corruption in the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) are. The study is qualitative in nature, with primary and secondary data collected and analysed. The primary data was collected from the DHA and the secondary data from government documents, gazettes, books and journal articles. The key finding is that the DHA Counter Corruption Unit is short staffed and some officers/officials are unskilled and have too little experience to support the unit's mandate to eradicate corruption in the department. This article concludes that, in order for the DHA to effectively fight and



prevent corruption, it must recruit officials who are skilled, experienced and corruption-free for its Counter Corruption Unit.

Keywords: Corruption, Counter Corruption Unit, Anti-corruption measures, Department of Home Affairs, South Africa

Introduction

Corruption remains a universal phenomenon and no one can deny that it's one of the foremost problems in the developing world. Corruption is a major challenge for sustainable economic development and good governance globally. Cases of corruption have shaken the foundations of trust between governments and citizens (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). Corruption is a cancer that will continue to weaken good governance, transparency and accountability in South Africa if it not collectively addressed by government and the citizens, and although South Africa has sound strategies for preventing corruption, effective application of anti-corruption legislation is still a daunting challenge. According to the Gauteng Anti-Corruption Strategic Framework (2009), the fight against corruption in the public sector has institutional support in South Africa. Unfortunately, this has not stopped the corruption from spreading throughout government structures. In 2011, the government placed some government departments in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng under administration because of corruption. This is an illustration of how corruption may severely hamper government efforts to provide citizens with fundamental services of the highest calibre. According to the DHA Annual Report (2016/2017), the Department received 444 reports of fraud and corruption and managed to finalise 65% of them within 90 working days; 187 cases were referred for departmental internal disciplinary action. The Department's Operation Bvisa Masinwa, a Venda phrase meaning "weed out the rot", succeeded in having 166 people, comprising 73 DHA officials, eight South African Police Service (SAPS) officials and 85 members of the public, arrested for violating the legislation of the DHA from 2016 to 2017. From 2017 to 2018, the Department received 448 reports of fraud, of which 70.3% were finalised within 90 working days; 225 cases were referred for internal disciplinary action. Operation Bvisa Masinwa arrested 111 Home Affairs officials, eight SAPS officials and 81 members of the public for various violations of DHA legislation (Department of Home Affairs, 2017). Although the number of cases referred to the Department decreased from 448 in 2016/2017 to 225 in 2017/2018, the number of officials and non-officials arrested continues to increase. The Public Service Commission referred 781 cases of corruption to the DHA from 2004 to 2010 and the Department managed to give feedback on only 251 cases. The 781 cases that the DHA recorded was the highest number, followed by the Department of Correctional Services with 708 cases (Public Service Commission, 2011). The



high number of corrupt employees in its ranks has a great impact on service delivery in the DHA (Ndlovu, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

Corruption occurs when individuals or businesses pay bribes to inspectors to secure public services or to pass examinations in relation to various regulations, or to public officials or politicians who are involved in large financial transactions or significant policy decisions. Corruption includes extortion, nepotism, exploiting conflicting interests, and the making of improper political contributions (Emerson, Hriptievsch, Kalitenko, Kovziridze & Prohntitchi, 2017). The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) (2008) defines corruption as the misuse of public office with corrupt intent and may include any crime. As Snyman (2002) states: “Anybody who accepts any gratification from anybody else, or offers or gives any gratification to anybody else in order to influence the receiver to conduct herself or himself or itself (my addition) in a way which amounts to the unlawful or irregular exercise of any duties, commits corruption”. According to Joubert (2010), corruption is a social phenomenon with a negative impact on any society.

Corruption can be classified as petty or grand corruption. Petty corruption is the small acts by public officials of receiving gifts intended to influence decisions or as the daily abuse of power by low- and middle-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens who are often trying to access basic public services (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2016). Grand corruption can be corruption occurring at the highest levels of government (Onesmus, 2018) and are acts of distorting governmental policies in the central functioning of the state to enable leaders to benefit from public resources (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2016). According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2016), grand corruption is purposeful violation of the standards of moral behaviour in the government by politicians from political parties.

Forms of Corruption in the Public Service

In order to understand the concept of corruption it is important to also understand the various forms in which corruption manifests itself in the Public Service. Forms of corruption are centred in the organisational location and in most cases their occurrence depends on the occupational level of the public servant. For example, most public officials who abuse power have the authority in and are entrusted with responsibility in the organisation. Corruption has become public enemy number one and the main reason for poor economic performance (Damijan, 2023). The following sections discuss different forms of corruption.

- *Abuse of power*

Abuse of power means using a vested authority to improperly benefit another person or entity, for example, when during a tender process, the manager expresses a wish to see



the contract awarded to a specific entity or individual. Abuse of power also refers to bullying and can be regarded as continual, repeated aggression that is expressed in words and behaviour that have a negative impact on the organisational climate (Abbott & du Plessis, 2022). This form of abuse of power is a behavioural pattern that develops over time and continually takes place in the organisation (Winter, 2017). The misuse of the power vested in an individual for personal benefits that results in adverse effects and breeds negativity is abuse of power (Bhasin, 2019).

- *Bribery*

Bribery refers to offering or promising a benefit that improperly influences the actions or decisions of a public official. The Peninsula Group (2023) defines bribery as the offering of any gift, loan or reward for personal gain. This benefit may be received by the public servant, or any individual or entity. In some cases, bribery may occur when political parties are offered, given or promised a benefit in order to improperly influence their actions and decisions. For example, a DHA official accepts money in order to fasten the process of adjudicating a visa (Menocal et al., Taxell, Johson, Schmaljohann, Montero, Simone, Dupuy & Tobias, 2015); or a bribe may be concealed as an invoice submitted without any work having been done (Callister, 2023).

- *Embezzlement*

Embezzlement, the highest form of corruption, refers to the misuse or intentional mispending for personal use of public funds or assets. Such public officials seem to have no fear of actions that can be taken against them by the rule of law (Motshegwa, Mutonono & Mikazhu, 2019). In other words, embezzlement involves misdirection of money or resources by individual(s) entrusted with authority over such money or resources. Taking public money for personal gain is also regarded as embezzlement (Peninsula Group, 2023), for example, public school staff members who steal books and sell them to private schools (Menocal et al., 2015). Embezzlement also involves misdirecting funds or assets placed in one's trust (Menocal et al., 2015).

- *Nepotism*

The word 'nepotism' is derived from the Latin word 'nepos', meaning nephew or grandson. In general, nepotism means abuse of public office by offering relatives or family members employment (Vveinhardt & Sroka, 2020), and it includes conflict of interests and favouritism. Other examples are when a manager in an institution uses their influence to favour certain groups of individuals based on personal friendship or relationship (Andreev, 2023) or when a public servant who has authority ensures that family members receive contracts from state resources. Nepotism in the public service refers to a form of unfair discrimination in a case where a family member of a senior manager is appointed as an employee even when they do not have the required skills, experience and qualification (Albertyn, 2021) by manipulating recruitment systems. Nepotism is harmful, especially



when family is hired, as it can lead to a dysfunctional organisation (Vveinhardt & Sroka, 2020).

- *Fraud*

Fraud involves the act of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an illegal advantage (academically, financially or otherwise). Fraud is the use of any official occupation in the office for personal enrichment through the deliberate misuse of the institution's resources (Ozili, 2020). Fraud can also be defined as an act of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair advantage (Menocal et al., 2015). Furthermore, fraud can be regarded as a non-disclosure of relevant information to mislead the stakeholders for personal gain (Ozili, 2020). Fraud consists of illegal activities perpetrated by individual(s) in order to provide an advantageous financial outcome (Peninsula Group, 2023).

- *Conflicts of interest*

According to the Royal Government of Bhutan Anti-Corruption Commission (2017), a conflict of interest occurs when a public servant has private interests that could illegally or improperly influence the performance of public responsibilities. Conflicts of interest, especially those resulting from the financial ties of a public official, have been found to undermine the fairness of decision-making in government institutions (World Health Organization, 2022). The problem with conflicts of interest is connected to corruption and bias in administrative processes (Kapras, 2023). In the same vein, a conflict of interest is where a public official has an undisclosed interest in an organisation or business transaction that negatively affects the employer in provide fair service delivery to the citizens. It is natural for a human being like public servant to favour relatives and friends, therefore it is important for public officials to disclose their financial interests to avoid conflicts of interest.

- *Extortion*

Menocal et al. (2015) define extortion as the act of threatening to harm, directly or indirectly, someone to influence improper actions of another party. Extortion is regarded as an unlawful demand for property, money or sensitive information to influence cooperation by using force or threatening someone. Extortion occurs when a person purposefully threatens to physically injure, accuse or expose someone to obtain for himself or another anything, whether service or money, for personal interest. Extortion is mostly committed by organised criminals (Davis, 2014). These threats could be in the form of providing information with respect to another employee's legal claim or to wrongfully damaging the property of another person. For example, a public health staff member may threaten to stop a restaurant's operations on the basis of a forged health transgression unless the owner provides the public health staff member with a free meal daily. Extortion



may also be defined as the demand for money from someone by using the threat of violence against them (Elsenbroich & Badham, 2016).

Causes of Corruption in the Public Sector

In the process of taking measures against corruption, public institutions have to take action against the causes. While this paper discusses the concept of corruption in detail, it is also worth highlighting a few causes of corruption in the public service. Although it is not easy to measure the level of corruption in a country, the indices of corruption are usually based on surveys conducted by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). This perception differs according to the cultural and historical differences of a country. In other words, it is possible that countries may have different causes of corruption depending on their government systems, and how they define the concept of corruption.

- *Lack of good and exemplary leadership in public institutions*

In institutions of low quality and where there is a lack of good leadership, citizens can be asked by government officials to pay a bribe for services (Dominik & Heldman, 2017). The institutions that are victims of corruption usually contribute to the corruption because they open up opportunities for corruption. If the institution does not give someone an opportunity to commit corruption, corruption will not occur. Some aspects of the occurrence of corruption are caused by lack of good leadership, bad organisational culture, inadequate accountability systems, when the top management tends to cover corruption within the institution, and if there is a lack of exemplary leadership and weakness in the management control system within the organisation. It is not easy for law enforcement to eradicate corruption because senior managers will always try to cover it to protect themselves (Ibrahim, Yusoff & Koling, 2018).

- *Poor recruitment system and low salaries*

The low salaries of public officials can also be a problem that makes it difficult for public institutions to fight corruption. Some authors emphasise that most public servants involved in corrupt activities receive a low salary that is not enough to maintain them. The higher the wages in the public sector, the lower the incentives to engage in corrupt activities – provided that there is a sufficiently high level of monitoring. Public officials who receive higher salaries might find it harder to destroy the image and ruin the culture of their employer through accepting and demanding bribes. Even though this argument is interesting, it lacks empirical evidence (Dominik & Heldman, 2017). Also, it is unlikely that corruption can be completely eliminated as some officials may still take bribes because they are greedy (Dimant & Tosato, 2017). Some theories suggest that public officials with a higher wage are less likely to engage in corrupt practices. Higher wages reduce the public official's engagement in corruption.



Developing countries are poor and do not collect enough tax revenue to pay their officials a decent salary. However, higher salaries also strengthen the negotiating power of public officials, and it is difficult to determine whether a higher salary causes less corruption. Politicians and senior managers are often accused of corruption even though they receive high salaries and have a good financial position, which means that the level of salary is not a decisive factor as a cause of corruption, merely one of many (Sumah, 2018).

- *Size and structure of government*

Perspectives differ when it comes to the relationship between government expenditure and corruption. The first perspective is that a large government leads to more corrupt politicians and public servants through the increase in the network of corrupt players. Another perspective is that a large government is very effective in curbing corruption since it has enough funds to allocate to law enforcement institutions. This means that countries with a big budget and high governmental expenditure usually rank lower in corruption indices. Countries that are affected by high levels of corruption are mostly poor. What determines the level of corruption is usually the type of government activity. Small countries such as Botswana and Tanzania have a small budget and are doing well in fighting corruption (Dominik & Heldman, 2017). Governments with high democracy levels can reduce the level of corruption, while if a democracy is not strong, they can fail. Democratic countries that have effective state institutions monitor their politicians daily and these are held accountable by the media. If these institutions are weak, they create more opportunity for bribes and if they employ incapable and dishonest officials, they suffer more from corruption (Dominik & Heldman, 2017). Poor public administration in the state, with lack of effective organisational structures and poor policy implementation, is a serious cause of corruption. The more dissatisfied public officials are with their duties and responsibilities at the workplace, the bigger the chances are of corruption (Sumah, 2018).

- *Lack of freedom in the press and judiciary*

A free press is globally considered a significant tool for exposing corruption in society. In 2013, Transparency International asserted that an independent media is an important pillar of accountability and good governance. There is no doubt that a high quality and unbiased press often informs the public of the misuse of power by public officials. This makes it more difficult for them to engage in corrupt activities. Freedom of the press plays a pivotal role in informing citizens about anticorruption norms and increases the potential to publicly shame corrupt behaviour (Dimant & Tosato, 2017).

However, freedom of the press is mostly exercised in wealthier countries that have high quality institutions. Most poor and underdeveloped countries limit the access of obtaining government institutions information that the press has to ensure that corrupt activities that occur in the public sector are not reported to the public. Corrupt governments tend to lower the freedom of the press to protect themselves from public exposure since media



reports can assist the authorities to detect corrupt behaviour in the public sector. An independent judiciary can hold a government accountable for illegal action. In the case where a law enforcement institution is engaging in corrupt activities, it can be held accountable by a free judiciary (Dominik & Heldman, 2017).

Consequences of Corruption in the Public Service

The scourge of corruption is of global interest because its consequences deeply affect economic growth across the world. Corruption affects political dimensions, which leads to political instability (Hassan, 2022) that damages the public service in both developed and developing countries, negatively affecting institutional and economic development. Countries that have been affected by corruption are regressively taxing their citizens to cover public funds that have been stolen from the state. This poses a threat to the income of poor people as their financial instability will become worse. In most cases corruption benefits a small group of people who have access to public money. Rodriguez-Sanchez (2018) highlights three arguments that explain the effects of corruption on economic growth in the public service: the sand on the wheel argument; the grease on the wheel argument; and the gamble argument.

The sand on the wheel argument explains that corruption affects economic growth by reducing government efficiency, and causes some officials to manipulate public policies and economic conditions as a strategy for increasing self-profit rather than in productive activities. Furthermore, the argument holds that corruption hinders productivity in the public and private sector because resources are inefficiently allocated. According to the grease on the wheels argument, corruption fosters economic growth if restrictions imposed by government that affect investment are lifted. In this argument, corruption is thought to also raise the income of public officials so that the government does not have to increase them. This argument holds that lowering income tax can grow the economy (Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2018). Lastly, the gamble argument maintains that economic growth can be ravaged by the scourge of corruption. Corruption can cause the economy to collapse and increase maladministration in government.

The sand on the wheel argument is relevant due to the fact in that corruption diminishes economic growth through weakening anti-corruption mechanisms. Public servants manipulate public policies to benefit a certain small group of individuals, which continues to make it difficult for governments to address the issue of economic equality (Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2018).

The costs and consequences of corruption hinder productive investment and growth. Corruption results in an environment that does not attract foreign investment that could make long-term contributions toward development. Instead, it attracts those who want to make a quick profit through looting. Poor procurement systems and abuse of financial



regulations in the public sector are further impose costs of corruption. Empirical evidence indicates that developing countries have lower and unproductive investment because they have higher incidence of corruption, which makes their public safety poor because of an unsafe infrastructure (Dominik & Heldman, 2017).

Misusing public resources distorts the provision of public services. In some public institutions, unemployed people have been known to demand to pay a bribe to be employed. Government programmes such as health services and job creation are ineffective if providing a bribe determines the allocation of these priorities and services. Such programmes then benefit a small group of people, mostly those who can afford to pay a bribe to access public service, which influences social and economic inequalities and injustice. This undermines the efforts of government to address on-going social problems such as unemployment and poverty (Dominik & Heldman, 2017).

Once public officials start demanding payment from people to provide service delivery, citizens lose trust and confidence in public institutions, and public administration in particular. Some public officials demand bribes to do the work that they have been hired to do or to provide confidential information from their organisation. Corrupt public officials use any opportunity they see to improperly receive money from people who do not want to follow the process and procedure to access services. If they have the power, they abuse it to continue illegally enriching themselves and their friends. This undermines the legitimacy of the democratic state. In addition, corruption damages public institutions and reduces citizens' trust in their government (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014).

Research Methodology

In the process of selecting a method to address a research topic and how to apply it effectively, a researcher must look for a practical and robust implementation and sustainability model (PRISM) that suits the research topic (Mills, 2014) in Mills and Birks (2014). In this study it refers to a set of principles and ideas that informs the design of a research study and indicates the process that the researcher will use to undertake the study. It dictates how researchers approach a study, position themselves to interact with study participants, and then interact with the data that will be collected (Mohajan, 2018).

Research Design

Research design is a conceptual framework for carrying out research. It serves as a manual for data collection and analysis (Kothari, 2014). Research design is a structure for the generation of evidence that is suited to the research question in which the researcher is interested (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researcher follows a qualitative approach in this study. Creswell (2014) explains qualitative research as a method for examining and



comprehending the significance that different people or groups assign to social or human problems and describes a qualitative approach as one in which the researcher frequently bases conclusions on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, and meanings socially and historically constructed with an intent to develop a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change-oriented) or both. The purpose of the researcher's decision to use a qualitative approach is to investigate and comprehend the DHA workers' perceptions, emotions, and experiences related to the study's subject inside the Department. Employees who agreed to participate in this study were interviewed as part of the qualitative approach.

Sample Size and Population of the Study

Sampling is an efficient and effective method of studying a population. Probability and non-probability sampling are common sampling methods, the first involving simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and group sampling, while non-probability sampling consists of convenience sampling, purposive sampling and quota sampling. In this qualitative study, a purposive sampling method was used (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Since the focus is on collecting rich, in-depth qualitative data, the researcher interviewed officials of the DHA as a sample for this study, since they have the necessary knowledge and experience to provide information-rich data. For the purpose of this study the researcher interviewed 20 participants, including two ethics officers of the DHA. These participants were purposively selected from the Counter Corruption Unit. Since the information required has to be rich and obtained from knowledgeable people (experts), the researcher chose a non-probability sampling method as it was necessary to have certain experts to provide an accurate evaluation of the actual level of corruption prevention within the Department (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

The study was conducted in the national head office of the DHA in Pretoria. The DHA has two core branches, the Civic Services and the Immigration Services. The national head office of the Department of Home Affairs was selected as a study area because it is accessible to the researcher. The unit that deals with matters of corruption in the DHA is based in the national head office which make it easier for the researcher to collect relevant research data for the purpose of this research. The population for this study is comprised of experts and ethics officers from the DHA who have an understanding of and experience in financial disclosure implementation in the DHA.

Data Collection

Kabir (2018) defines data collection as the process of collecting information in an organised systematic way that makes it possible to answer research questions. If there is no collected data, it will not be possible to expand the understanding, clarify the unknown and bring in new knowledge. In this study, the primary data was collected from respondents using a



semi-structured interview schedule that had both closed and open-ended questions. Twenty respondents were chosen from the DHA and individually interviewed on a one-on-one basis with the main aim of gaining an understanding of a phenomenon from their point of view (Kabir, 2018). Secondary data was collected from books, journals, websites, government policy documents, review papers and reports (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a constantly evolving process of recognising new topics, defining important ideas or groupings of meaning and material derived from literature (Haradhan, 2018). The first step in analysing the data collected was to reduce and organise it in order to see the patterns or themes that emerged, (Haradhan, 2018). The data was translated into a set of text units and themes. Categories were constructed and data coded, and the researcher sorted the responses into broad categories and grouped them together into specific themes. The researcher has been able to develop a genuine understanding of the interviewee's situation which was finalised by descriptions and classification, in which data collected are shown to be interconnected with the thesis statement.

Findings and Discussion of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate challenges faced by the Counter Corruption Unit in fighting and preventing corruption in the Department of Home Affairs. This section provides the perspectives of the research participants and their responses are presented in the following sub-themes.

- *Strategies to achieve “zero tolerance to corruption” put in place by the DHA*

The Department of Home Affairs is committed to counter corruption by a strategy designed to encourage the prevention of corruption, promote the detection of corruption, and identify a clear pathway to investigate corruption. These include counterintelligence of processing and dissemination of information and the development and maintenance of analytical counter corruption in the department. These ensure the identification and prevention of irregularities, unlawful conduct or breaches (Khwela, 2012). Participants indicated that:

The focus is on the four pillars of the strategy, namely "Prevention, Detection, Investigations and Resolution" and the activities in support of these four pillars."

Department has a platform for whistleblowing, and employees and customers are encouraged to report corrupt activities so that the Counter Corruption Unit can investigate and charge corrupt officials.



Whistleblowing and reporting the cases through anti-corruption hot line is also an anti-corruption measure[s] that the Department has been using.

Even if there is a unit dealing with the prevention, detection and investigation of corruption, the Department is still struggling to find ways of applying these strategies.

Until the department comes with strategy to punish everyone involved in the corrupt activities, regardless of positions, any political affiliates, it will be difficult to have corrupt free DHA.

Corrupt officials who know they will not be held accountable, take advantage of the situation to continue with their illegal activities by using the power they have (Serfontein & de Vaal, 2015). Acts of corruption are referred to as the abuse of entrusted power used for private gain. Abused power hurts the lives of ordinary citizens (Serfontein & de Vaal, 2015). The DHA's Annual Report of 2017/2018, makes it clear that the fight against corruption is a key priority.

- *Lack of effective measures to fight against and prevent corruption*

The DHA is committed to counter corruption strategies designed to encourage prevention, promote detection and identify a clear pathway for investigation. These include the processing and dissemination of information and ensuring the identification and prevention of irregularities, unlawful conduct or breaches (Khwela, 2012). Corruption impacts negatively on service delivery because of the high number of corrupt employees in the ranks of the DHA (Ndlovu, 2009). Since Dr Pakishe Aaron Motsoaledi has been appointed as the Minister of the DHA, some senior managers have been suspected for being involved in corrupt activities. Some aspects of the occurrence of corruption in different institutions are caused by lack of good leadership, weak organisational culture, inadequate accountability systems, and when top management covers corruption within the institution (Ibrahim, Yusoff & Koling, 2018). Some of the responses regarding anti-corruption measures put in place at the DHA were the following:

...even if there is a Unit dealing with the prevention, detection and investigation of corruption, the Department is still struggling to find ways of developing measures.

Until the department comes with strategy to punish everyone involved in the corrupt activities, regardless of positions, any political affiliates, it will be difficult to have corrupt free DHA.

According to the Department of Home Affairs (2019), the DHA plays a pivotal role in national security by providing documents and identity systems such as the National



Population Regulation (NPR) and the Movement Control System (MCS). The NPR system assists private and public institutions to manage their security effectively. The MCS assists by detecting people in the country who are a threat or are wanted by Interpol. Since the introduction of NPR and MCS systems, some officials who have access to the systems demand a bribe from an applicant who is a prohibited citizen to capture wrong or clear correct information about this person. Later, the DHA decided to introduce a fingerprint system, in which officials must use the fingerprints of an applicant to update any information about the applicant in the NPR and MCS. In addition, the DHA has administrative systems such as the Visa Adjudication System and Track and Trace. However, although all the above-mentioned systems are not anti-corruption systems, the DHA Counter Corruption officials have been using them to solve some of the corruption cases in the department. Some participants had the following to say:

The DHA does not have a proper system that was specifically established to prevent and fight corruption.

There is a great and urgent need to introduce an anti-corruption system that will successfully combat corruption in the Department of Home Affairs. Because even though the DHA is trying to prevent corruption, the number of officials involved in the corrupt activities is increasing.

Officials continue to commit corrupt activities without any consequences. Some of them are known but nothing happens to them. The Department relies largely on outside whistleblowers rather than inside officials.

It will be very important to introduce anti-corruption systems in the Department that will prevent corrupt activities by forcing officials to be accountable for their corrupt actions.

Acts of corruption are also referred to as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, which mostly hurts the life of ordinary citizens. Corruption in the DHA is a social problem that has become a cancer across South Africa as it has negative effects on the economic development of the country. Therefore, an effective anti-corruption system is urgently needed, because corruption is deviant behaviour for personal gain in individuals with formal responsibilities in the institution, as attested by Jianfu and Sudibyo (2015)..

- *Inadequate provision of resources to combat corruption*

The biggest problems that public institutions face are as a result of capacity constraints (Manyaka & Madzivhandila, 2013). Some public officials involve themselves in corrupt activities because they know how to manipulate the system (Manyaka & Nkuna, 2014). However, if there are effective measures put in place that will likely cause those who are



corrupt to be charged and punished, officials may stop engaging in corrupt activities. Rafles, Fadhlan and Asmar (2018) write that one of the problems that has been causing corruption in public institutions is a lack of human resources. In the interviews, all participants were asked whether they think the DHA has adequate resources to combat corruption. Some participants responded that:

The unit which is responsible to investigate corruption is short staffed and some officials don't have enough experience and necessary skills to deal with corruption in the DHA.

Some of the officials from Counter Corruption Unit need a relevant education about the danger of corruption to the image of the Department and the society in general.

Unit designed to fight corruption is under-capacitated and officials are not trained enough to understand the dangers of corruption.

Unit is under-staffed and under-resourced and recently there was no Deputy Director General appointed to head the Unit.

Many officials are always suspended related to corruption, but the Department fails to provide information that can lead them to be punished or prosecuted. The Department ended up reinstated them, which give them another opportunity to continue participating in corrupt activities.

There is not much that has been done to corrupt officials because majority of the investigated officials are suspended for few days only to be reinstated a few months later.

This is evidence that the DHA Counter Corruption Unit is ineffective in investigating corruption. It was further interesting to note that most of the participants were concerned about the skills and experience of the Counter Corruption officers and the effectiveness of the Unit. Participants suggested that effective officials responsible for fighting corruption be employed, which shows that there is no confidence in the available officials. Some participants said:

Some officials do not want to report corruption, based on the fact that the DHA does not have proper systems to protect those officials who are providing information about corrupt activities. Officials are scared to report wrong doings such as corruption, because they don't want to lose their jobs and sometimes their lives.



Most of the people that normally come up with the solid information that can assist the investigators, are the outsiders (citizens).

The response from the participants supports what the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Pakishe Aaron Motsoaledi (2021), mentioned, that the DHA is aware that the public abhors corruption and would not want to see it happening in their country. Every week, the Department gets tips from members of the public about acts of corruption conducted by some of DHA officials they interact with. The Minister further indicates that some members of the public become discouraged because they receive the impression that nothing materialises from the tip-offs they provide (Motsoaledi, 2021).

Some participants who spoke about corruption were of the view that officials tend to be afraid to report corruption, because they don't want to be victimised by their seniors and lose their jobs. This is an indication that the DHA still has a great deal of work to do to ensure that those who report corruption are protected from victimisation and those who see corrupt activities. Those who do not report them must be educated about how corruption has been damaging the image of the Department. Ibrahim, Yusoff and Koling (2018) assert that some managers tend to cover up corruption taking place in their organisation because there is a lack of exemplary leadership and human resources and weak anti-corruption systems. The campaign to fight against corruption is not receiving the support it needs from those in influential decision-making positions in government.

- *Promoting a corrupt-free Department of Home Affairs*

Corruption has been identified as one of the greatest threats to good governance, accountability and transparency, especially in public institutions that involve the misuse of power by politicians and government officials for illegitimate purposes (Dininio & Calhoon, 2018). Corruption is a serious problem in the public service and is causing social injustice. An organisational corrupt-free culture should be encouraged in public institutions. The DHA can become corruption-free through the development of measures that can strongly curb it. Participants stated:

It can be possible to have a corrupt-free DHA, if a lifestyle audit is conducted annually to all employees to measure their affordability versus their lifestyle.

DHA should also have an effective disclosure system put in place which is clearly articulated to all officials and staff to declare their financial interests, and failure to submit accurate and comprehensive information needs to be sanctioned to relay a message that non-compliance holds negative implications in the officials.



The Department must pay enough salaries to officials in order to be corrupt free.

This means that until the DHA formulates effective anti-corruption systems, the problem of corruption is far from being resolved. People who need assistance from the DHA have been complaining about the way its officials treat them. The officials often ask for bribes to speed up the process. This creates inequality in society as those who are not financially stable cannot afford bribes and there is a loss of fair and proper service delivery from the Department. Corruption is a threat to the development of morals and ethics since it violates the principle of fairness. It was also revealed that some of the participants who are responsible for fighting corruption were negative about their effectiveness. Corruption has become public enemy number one and the main reason for poor economic performance (Damijan, 2023). Participants were of the view that:

DHA will never be corrupt free but corruption can be minimised.

Corruption has a human element in it; the Department can rather reduce it, but it will be difficult to have [a] corrupt free DHA.

It will be difficult for the Department to become corrupt free, however, if the Department wants to be corrupt free, it must start to deal with pending and unsolved corruption cases.

In order for the DHA to become corrupt-free, it should outsource/hire an independent institution that will conduct investigations and make follow up on the old pending cases and reports of corruption.

This indicates that some officials do not believe that the DHA itself has the capacity to deal with corruption. Some of the participants believe that, in order for the DHA to become corruption-free, effective anti-corruption systems must be introduced since some Counter Corruption officials who were employed to fight corruption are also involved in corrupt activities. The fight against corruption is not receiving the much-needed support from those in influential decision-making positions in government. Combatting corruption should be based on universal values to promote a mind-set based on zero tolerance. It is a fact that corruption is a universal problem, and its effects seriously constrain development and prevent good governance (Hong, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this paper was to investigate impediments faced by the Counter Corruption Unit in fighting against and preventing corruption in the DHA national head office. The study identifies various challenges that have been faced by the DHA in the fight against



corruption among its ranks. According to the evidence presented in this paper, the DHA still has great challenges that need to be urgently resolved. One of the key findings is that the DHA is short staffed and some officials are unskilled and not experienced enough to support the mandate to eradicate corruption in the Department. In order for the DHA to effectively fight and prevent corruption, it must recruit sufficient officials who are skilled, experienced and corrupt-free for the Counter Corruption Unit. The DHA must also formulate new measures, strategies and systems that can effectively respond to acts of corruption in its ranks. It is thus recommended that progress in the anti-corruption fight has political will, more assertive independent oversight, and safe reporting channels for both whistle blowers and ordinary citizens. Without them, South Africans appear to be insufficiently convinced that change is taking place in the DHA. The DHA must rotate the officials in those sections that are most corrupt in order to limit the possibilities of fraud and bribery. The Department must also improve the anti-corruption systems that are in place by making them transparent. Lastly, the scourge of corruption cannot be successfully addressed as long as citizens do not report those public officials who ask them for bribes to access service delivery. Citizens will have to be educated about the damage that corruption has already done in the society.

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