

Enhancing Institutional Transparency to Curb Administrative Corruption: Islamic Perspectives and Policy Mechanisms

Abbas Amirhussaini ¹

1- Master's Student in International Law, Faculty of Law, Imam Sadiq University

a.amirhussaini1999@gmail.com

Abstract

Combating corruption and achieving administrative justice are fundamental concerns of contemporary political systems and societies, necessitating the development of epistemological foundations and executive structures aligned with Islamic values and other credible doctrines. Despite the multifaceted nature of corruption, identifying its key bottlenecks—such as the concentration of authority in managerial positions, extensive human intervention, lack of effective use of information technology, administrative stagnation due to gerontocracy, and limited elite circulation—can assist oversight institutions in preventing and effectively addressing this phenomenon. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, this study examines the necessary infrastructures and mechanisms to enhance administrative integrity. It proposes strategies including the establishment of a centralized transparency institution for organizations and administrations (SHAMSA), the creation of electronic administrative service offices to facilitate public reporting, the development of organizational integrity assessment indicators, the formation of administrative inspectors for overt and covert oversight, and the maximal utilization of information technology. These measures, grounded in the principles of transparency, meritocracy, youth empowerment, and universal oversight, not only contribute to reducing corruption bottlenecks but also foster public trust and citizen satisfaction, thereby paving the way for administrative justice, sustainable development, and enhanced legitimacy of governance systems.

Keywords: Institutional Transparency, Administrative Corruption, Anti-Corruption, Islamic Approach, Universal Oversight, Youth Empowerment, Administrative Stagnation

1. Introduction

Corruption, as a multifaceted phenomenon that undermines collective interests, is considered a fundamental threat to the efficiency of political and social systems from the perspective of governance and public law theories. This phenomenon, rooted in the violation of ethical principles and the abuse of public authority, not only hinders the achievement of sustainable development goals but also severely erodes public trust in governmental institutions. The term "corruption," derived from the Arabic root "Fasada"¹ (meaning deviation from proper function and violation of legitimate norms), is defined in English literature as "Corruption," referring to the transgression of ethical and legal principles. More precisely, corruption encompasses any act or phenomenon that diverts an organized system from its legitimate objectives and optimal functions[1]. In this regard, the World Bank and Transparency International define administrative corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain, influenced by factors such as personal interests, familial ties, or illicit influences[2].

In response to this challenge, transparency, as a cornerstone of good governance, plays a pivotal role in preventing and combating corruption. Transparency, within the framework of institutional theories, is defined as public access to information regarding governmental decision-making, power distribution mechanisms, and resource allocation. It requires the disclosure of the basis for decisions and public policies (except in cases of legally confidential matters or those related to national security). This process enhances accountability and legitimacy of governance systems by enabling public evaluation and oversight of institutional performance. Public assessments, shaped through active citizen participation in evaluating policies and decisions, not only influence the formulation of executive strategies but must also manifest objectively and tangibly in citizens' lived experiences, beyond governmental propaganda.

The consequences of corruption, particularly in administrative systems, encompass a wide range of harms, including tax evasion, undermining meritocracy, concentration of wealth among specific groups, social deprivation, erosion of public trust, obstacles to economic and social development, and violation of the rule of law. Moreover, corruption perpetuates cycles of injustice and inequality, jeopardizing the realization of social justice. In Iran's legal system, which is based on a pre-established legislative framework, a comprehensive set of laws and

[In Arabic]¹

regulations has been enacted to prevent and combat corruption. These include the Law on Enhancing Administrative System Integrity and Combating Corruption, the Law on Intensifying Penalties for Perpetrators of Bribery, Embezzlement, and Fraud, the Islamic Penal Code, the Law on Punishing Disruptors of the Country's Economic System, the Law on Punishing Collusion in Government Transactions, the Law Prohibiting Holding More Than One Government Position, the Law Prohibiting the Receipt of Commissions in Foreign Transactions, the Anti-Money Laundering Law, and the Citizens' Rights Charter[3]. Notably, the principle of transparency, as a fundamental tenet in Article 69 of the Citizens' Rights Charter, emphasizes the necessity of public access to information. However, the full realization of this legislative framework requires resolute commitment from executive institutions to effectively implement these laws at the societal level. The absence of such commitment could render the wisdom of the legislature in designing this legal framework ineffective.

To effectively combat administrative corruption, it may be necessary to redesign institutional structures, reform executive policies, or develop new strategies. In some cases, establishing new institutions with distinct functions from existing structures, and in others, revising laws or strengthening executive mechanisms, appears essential. The fundamental question of this study is: what are the primary bottlenecks in the emergence and proliferation of corruption within the administrative system, and how should executive mechanisms and operational criteria be designed to maximize their impact in fostering integrity in administrative environments, which serve as a critical foundation for advancing national affairs? Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, this study examines the focal points of corruption, analyzes the challenges contributing to its spread, and evaluates strategies to combat it in each section. Accordingly, the present article is organized around three main themes: "Transparency," "Administrative Stagnation," and "The Discourse of Anti-Corruption."

2. Oversight of Transparency: An Institutional Framework for Enhancing Administrative Integrity

Transparency, as a cornerstone of good governance and a pivotal tool in preventing and combating administrative corruption, plays an unparalleled role in enhancing the efficiency and legitimacy of administrative systems. Defined within institutional theories as public access to information regarding governmental decision-making and resource allocation mechanisms, transparency requires systematic and structured oversight of public institutions' performance. However, achieving transparency in administrative systems, particularly within the framework of organizational hierarchy, necessitates delegating oversight to competent institutions with legal authority. In Iran's legal system, this responsibility primarily rests with senior government officials, as hierarchical overseers, who evaluate the performance of their subordinates through direct or indirect inspections, whether announced or unannounced.

Despite the significance of transparency oversight, the absence of a structured and legally grounded inspection system in many administrative systems, including Iran's, has created significant challenges in achieving this goal. Fragmented oversight efforts reliant on the initiatives of committed individual managers, while valuable, lack the continuity and comprehensiveness needed to ensure systematic administrative integrity. From the perspective of religious frameworks, oversight is emphasized as both an ethical and practical principle in Quranic texts. These texts delineate oversight in two distinct forms: first, oversight of human performance, as referenced in verses such as Surah Al-Alaq, verse 14, and Surah Yasin, verse 65; and second, covert evaluation and testing, as indicated in Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 2[1]. This duality provides a conceptual model for designing oversight mechanisms: overt oversight, conducted openly with prior notice, and covert oversight, carried out without prior knowledge to assess performance integrity. This framework can serve as a foundation for developing operational strategies in the realm of transparency oversight.

In the context of overt oversight, senior government officials, such as heads of organizations or their deputies, can conduct periodic or ad hoc inspections of subordinate entities. However, in cases where time or structural constraints prevent these officials from participating, it is proposed to define a new role termed "administrative inspectors." These inspectors, operating under the supervision of entities like the General Inspection Organization of Iran, can be selected from the country's talented workforce and, after undergoing specialized training, undertake both overt and covert inspections. This mechanism aligns with Article 8(a) of the Law on Enhancing Administrative System Integrity and Combating Corruption, which outlines the duties of the Vice Presidency for Strategic Planning and Supervision and the Vice Presidency for Management Development and Human Capital in formulating transparency policies, strengthening information systems, recording the performance of executive bodies, providing public information, and meeting the information needs of oversight institutions[2]. Far from conflicting with these provisions, this mechanism complements them.

Covert oversight, exclusively assigned to administrative inspectors, is designed to assess institutional integrity without prior notice. In this approach, inspectors may operate in the guise of clients, contract employees, or even permanent staff to investigate and document instances of corruption and violations. This form of oversight, which requires advanced training and occasionally the expertise of intelligence agencies, may include "integrity testing" by presenting corruption-inducing proposals to evaluate employee responses. To complicate the identification of inspectors' identities, specialized training in concealment techniques and oversight methods is

essential. Simultaneously, publicizing the possibility of such inspections among employees can serve as a deterrent mechanism, heightening awareness and adherence to transparency principles.

Given that managers and heads of organizations, due to their central roles and extensive authority, are more exposed to corruption risks than other employees, oversight of this group must be prioritized with greater intensity. This is significant not only because of managers' key roles in decision-making and finalizing client-related processes but also because, as direct overseers of employees, they are likely to be aware of their subordinates' violations. Therefore, selecting competent and ethical managers, coupled with continuous and meticulous oversight of their performance, is a critical strategy for preventing corruption. Such oversight can be implemented through mechanisms akin to those used for intelligence operatives, such as anonymous workplace presence, to prevent large-scale corruption.

Ultimately, developing a comprehensive and multi-layered oversight system that integrates overt and covert mechanisms can serve as an effective tool for enhancing transparency and reducing administrative corruption. This system, grounded in the principles of good governance and leveraging religious and legal frameworks, not only ensures administrative integrity but also strengthens public trust and contributes to achieving sustainable development goals.

3. Oversight of Managers and Institutional Transparency: An Approach to Curbing Administrative Corruption Bottlenecks

One of the primary bottlenecks of corruption in administrative systems is the position of managers as final decision-makers in organizational processes. The concentration of authority in the hands of a single individual, as opposed to conciliar or consultative structures, creates opportunities for self-interested motives, as the absence of collective oversight and accountability mechanisms increases the potential for power abuse. In conciliar systems, social norms and collective ethical conscience, combined with the possibility of reporting violations, serve as barriers against corruption. This principle is rooted in ethical and religious frameworks, as exemplified by Imam Hassan Askari (AS), who stated: "Whoever does not feel shame before people will not fear God"[4]. This hadith underscores the role of social shame as a deterrent mechanism against ethical deviations. Accordingly, it is proposed that in designing administrative structures, the allocation of individual workspaces for managers and employees should be avoided to the extent possible. Instead, creating shared work environments with the presence of multiple employees or clients can reduce corruption risks by enhancing social oversight and leveraging collective ethical norms.

This oversight approach, grounded in strengthening social supervision, has historical and religious precedents. In the governance system of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS), oversight of agents' performance through covert and overt inspections was a key strategy. For instance, in a letter to Malik ibn Ka'b, one of his governors, Imam Ali instructed him to appoint a trusted individual to act on his behalf and, accompanied by a group of companions, inspect the performance of agents in the region between the Tigris and Adhib rivers and report back[5]. Similarly, in Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha to Malik al-Ashtar, the qualities of overseers are emphasized: "Inspect their actions and appoint spies from among the truthful and loyal to monitor them." The Imam further highlights the critical impact of this oversight, stating: "Your covert attention to their affairs encourages them to uphold trust and treat the subjects with leniency." This framework not only underscores the importance of covert oversight but also highlights the selection of competent and committed overseers as a prerequisite for the success of this mechanism. Globally, specialized inspection institutions with extensive authority are tasked with overseeing public institutions and addressing public complaints[6]. For these oversight efforts to be effective, regular overt and covert inspections at short intervals (e.g., monthly inspections) are necessary to prevent corruption from taking root and spreading. This approach, by establishing a dynamic oversight system, can help curb corruption bottlenecks at managerial levels.

To complement this strategy, institutional transparency, particularly in governmental systems, requires resolute political will and access to organizational data and information. In centralized systems like Iran's administrative framework, the government, as the overarching authority, has the capacity to collect and disseminate information. However, merely publishing data, especially in complex areas such as budget allocation or project implementation, may lead to ambiguity or the spread of rumors due to the public's lack of expertise. For instance, the general public may not be able to assess the appropriateness or efficiency of a budget allocated to a project, which could result in misunderstandings or diminished public trust. To address this challenge, it is proposed that a unit called the "Information Analysis Unit" be established within the structure of the General Inspection Organization of Iran. This unit, by analyzing published data and providing qualitative, accessible reports for the public, can enhance transparency and facilitate public oversight. These reports, offering simplified yet accurate analyses, enable citizens to make informed judgments about matters related to public interests. Ultimately, integrating institutional, social, and informational oversight, alongside designing administrative structures based on principles of transparency and accountability, can serve as a comprehensive strategy for preventing corruption and enhancing administrative integrity. This approach, drawing on religious, historical, and

comparative frameworks, not only mitigates corruption bottlenecks at managerial levels but also fosters public trust and supports the realization of good governance objectives.

4. Centralized Transparency: An Institutional Approach to Systematizing Public Access to Information

Transparency, as a cornerstone of good governance, requires systematic and integrated access to information from public institutions. Article 2 of the Draft Law on Transparency of the Three Branches, Executive Agencies, and Other Institutions envisages the transparency process through “systems related to each institution.” This article, alongside Article 1, which lists more than twenty institutions subject to this law, provides a legal framework for information disclosure. However, the multiplicity of institutions and information dissemination systems, coupled with a lack of integration in the data publication process, creates significant challenges to achieving transparency objectives. The fundamental question is whether the general public is aware of these institutions and their respective systems. More importantly, are the published data organized in a manner that is accessible and comprehensible to the public? The lack of coherence in transparency mechanisms not only undermines the effectiveness of these efforts but also jeopardizes the primary goal of transparency—public oversight and enhanced accountability—by failing to inform citizens effectively.

From the perspective of institutional theories, any action lacking structural coherence and order is prone to failure, even if implemented on a large scale. To address this challenge and systematize the transparency process, it is proposed to establish an institution named the “Centralized Transparency Institution for Organizations and Administrations” under the supervision of the General Inspection Organization of Iran. This institution, by fostering coordination and integration in the performance of covered entities, can contribute to the sustainability and enhancement of transparency in the administrative system. Placing this institution under the oversight of the General Inspection Organization not only facilitates monitoring of its performance but also enables synergy with other oversight mechanisms, such as the proposed “Information Analysis Unit” (discussed in previous sections). The duties of this institution can be outlined as follows:

1. **Data Analysis and Expertise:** Specialized evaluation of information provided by organizations and administrations to ensure its accuracy and sufficiency.
2. **Simplification of Information for the Public:** Transforming raw and complex data into qualitative, comprehensible reports for citizens, enabling informed judgment about institutional performance.
3. **Development of Standardized Indicators:** Establishing uniform criteria and frameworks for categorizing and publishing information to ensure coherence in the transparency process.
4. **Data Aggregation and Organization:** Collecting information directly (by republishing data on the centralized transparency institution’s system) or indirectly (by linking institutional systems through electronic connections).
5. **Monitoring and Follow-Up on Performance:** Continuous oversight of executive agencies’ compliance with their commitments and follow-up on promises made by authorities to enhance accountability.
6. **Collaboration with Oversight Institutions:** Coordination with entities such as the Ministry of Intelligence to identify and address vulnerabilities to corruption.
7. **Access to Information Databases:** Leveraging legal access to data from governmental organizations and administrations for simplification, categorization, and publication.

Furthermore, establishing this institution can channel public demands for transparency to a single, clear authority, which is significantly simpler and more effective for citizens. To enhance public access and participation, it is proposed that this institution establish a network of “Electronic Administrative Service Offices” in various cities, similar to electronic judicial service offices. These offices, which could operate independently or as part of judicial service offices, would be responsible for receiving public reports on administrative corruption and referring them to competent authorities. Such a structure not only encourages citizen participation in combating corruption but also enhances public awareness of civic rights and duties while increasing the effectiveness of public oversight by reducing the fragmentation caused by multiple systems.

To facilitate reporting, a unified electronic system for registering administrative violations could be designed, which, unlike judicial complaints, would not require verification of the reporter’s identity. This feature, by simplifying the reporting process, encourages public participation. Historically, the establishment of the “Bayt al-Qisas” during the governance of Imam Ali (AS) as the first formal mechanism for receiving public complaints against government agents and ordinary citizens serves as a pioneering example of direct public engagement with governance. This institution, which handled both administrative and judicial complaints, provides a model for designing modern oversight mechanisms. Although Article 173 of the Constitution designates the Administrative Court of Justice as the authority for addressing grievances against government officials, the establishment of electronic administrative service offices does not conflict with this court. First, these offices align with the court’s objectives of safeguarding citizens’ rights. Second, unlike the court, which focuses on handling formal complaints, the proposed offices concentrate solely on receiving corruption reports without requiring identity verification. This distinction highlights the complementary role of these offices in the country’s oversight system.

Despite repeated emphases by the Supreme Leader on the necessity of forming an anti-corruption task force and his guidelines in this regard, the current systems of this task force still lack the necessary efficiency. This inefficiency has limited citizens' effective participation in reporting and combating administrative corruption. The establishment of the Centralized Transparency Institution and Electronic Administrative Service Offices, as part of a comprehensive oversight system, can address this gap and, by enhancing transparency and accountability, contribute to achieving the objectives of good governance and preventing corruption.

5. Information Technology and Enhancing Institutional Transparency: An Approach to Reducing Corruption in Administrative Systems

Information technology, particularly in the digital era and with the expansion of global internet networks, has become an unparalleled tool for strengthening transparency and preventing corruption in governance systems. Public access to the web, which enables the continuous and widespread dissemination and oversight of information, provides a unique platform for realizing the principles of institutional transparency. The publication of information related to governmental decisions, laws, executive actions, budget allocations, expenditures, and revenues—provided they are not classified as confidential under Article 8, Clause 11 of the Law on Handling Administrative Violations—not only fosters public participation but also facilitates fact-based decision-making and enhances citizens' trust in the performance of public institutions[7].

Despite the remarkable potential of information technology in advancing transparency, global data still indicate significant gaps in this area. According to the 2021 Transparency International report, Iran ranked 150th among 180 countries with a score of 25, placing it on par with countries such as Guatemala and Tajikistan. The report also notes a 30-rank decline in Iran's transparency index from 2011 to 2021[8]. A comparative analysis of leading countries in this index, such as Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, and Norway, versus countries with lower rankings, such as Sudan, Somalia, Venezuela, and Afghanistan, reveals a significant correlation between the use of information technology and transparency levels. Leading countries, by systematically integrating digital technologies into governance processes—including the publication of detailed government and electoral activities—have achieved high transparency standards[9]. In contrast, countries with limited use of these tools in their domestic policies face higher corruption risks and lower transparency rankings.

One of the key features of information technology in administrative systems is the reduction of reliance on human intervention in bureaucratic processes. This not only increases the speed and efficiency of processes but also significantly reduces the likelihood of errors and corruption by minimizing human involvement. Digital systems, due to their higher reliability and accuracy compared to human-dependent processes, enable the precise and lawful execution of administrative tasks. Within the framework of administrative modernization theories, this feature is recognized as a critical factor in enhancing the integrity of executive systems, as information technology promotes transparency in processes and reduces opportunities for abuse, thereby fostering public trust and achieving the objectives of good governance.

However, realizing the full potential of information technology in enhancing transparency requires the design and implementation of coherent policies and integrated digital infrastructures. The absence of such infrastructures, coupled with insufficient public awareness of how to access published information, can limit the effectiveness of this tool. To address this challenge, it is proposed that oversight institutions, such as the General Inspection Organization of Iran, develop centralized and user-friendly systems to facilitate public access to information. These systems, by providing simplified and comprehensible data, can enhance informed citizen participation and prevent transparency from becoming a superficial exercise. Ultimately, the integration of information technology into oversight and executive frameworks, as a comprehensive strategy, not only helps reduce administrative corruption but also paves the way for sustainable development and the strengthening of the legitimacy of governance systems.

6. Administrative Stagnation and Youth Empowerment: An Institutional Approach to Preventing Corruption in Management Systems

Corruption, as a multifaceted phenomenon, often emerges in environments where material and personal interests overshadow incentives for reporting and accountability. In such contexts, relying solely on legal incentives for whistleblowing is ineffective, as the benefits derived from violations typically outweigh the rewards offered to informants. Moreover, the covert nature of corruption, which primarily occurs in limited interactions between involved parties, makes its detection challenging. Therefore, preventing corruption requires controlling the entry points of administrative systems, particularly through criteria for personnel selection and human resource management. One of the most critical criteria is attention to age and the age composition of the workforce in administrative environments.

From psychological and sociological perspectives, advancing age and entry into later stages of life are often associated with a decline in physical and cognitive capacities, which may lead to a desire to maintain or expand power and wealth. This inclination, sometimes manifested in efforts to secure social status or create a material legacy, may in some cases be pursued through illicit and corrupt means. In contrast, younger personnel, characterized by traits such as a desire for change, idealism, and boldness, are less prone to self-interested motives. This group, driven by creativity and enthusiasm for exploring innovative ideas, demonstrates a greater tendency to achieve organizational goals through lawful and innovative methods. However, experience, as a valuable asset in addressing challenges, should not be overlooked. A balanced combination of creative and operational young talent with the knowledge and experience of older individuals can serve as an effective strategy for preventing corruption and enhancing administrative integrity. In this regard, leveraging older individuals in advisory roles, such as knowledge management and experience transfer, not only provides a more suitable position for this group but also strengthens the efficiency of the management system.

Challenges arising from the management of administrative systems by older individuals, particularly those over 70, are linked to diminished cognitive capacities. Research indicates that after this age, the ability to absorb and process large volumes of new information and solve problems unconventionally significantly declines[10]. This phenomenon, referred to in academic literature as “gerontocracy,” is characterized by traits such as conservatism, limited flexibility, resistance to elite circulation, reduced motivation among younger staff, and a threatening perception of the presence of young talent. These traits ultimately lead to administrative stagnation, which creates a fertile ground for corruption. Stagnation, whether in natural systems, individual beliefs, or management structures, fosters decline and undermines existing merits. Monopolistic tendencies, concentration of financial resources among specific groups, and lack of organizational dynamism are all manifestations of this stagnation, exacerbating corruption in administrative systems. To address this challenge, organizational dynamism, elite circulation, and knowledge transfer are proposed as key strategies for preventing corruption. Revitalizing management systems through targeted rotation of employees and managers in sensitive or corruption-prone positions can prevent the formation of corrupt networks. This approach, emphasized in Article 4 of the Law on Enhancing Administrative System Integrity and Combating Corruption as a duty of the Ministry of Intelligence to identify corruption-prone positions, also fosters creativity and innovative ideas through diverse work experiences. Such dynamism not only strengthens administrative integrity but also enhances organizational efficiency by increasing employee motivation and participation.

Within the framework of historical and religious experiences, the governance approach of Imam Ali (AS) provides a prominent model. By avoiding the appointment of relatives and close associates to positions of power and addressing violations by those close to him more decisively to eliminate perceptions of immunity due to proximity, Imam Ali demonstrated the role of informal relationships and familiarity in creating opportunities for corruption. A similar phenomenon can be observed in groups such as prisoners, who, after building trust and familiarity, collaborate to commit violations. To prevent such risks in administrative systems, the systematic rotation of employees and managers in corruption-prone positions is essential as a preventive mechanism. This strategy disrupts potential corrupt networks, reducing the likelihood of informal relationships and organized violations.

Ultimately, youth empowerment, as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat administrative stagnation, not only promotes dynamism in management systems but also enhances administrative integrity and efficiency by combining the creativity of younger personnel with the experience of older individuals. This approach, grounded in the principles of good governance and religious and historical frameworks, can mitigate corruption bottlenecks and contribute to achieving sustainable development goals.

7. The Discourse of Anti-Corruption: An Approach to Strengthening Public Oversight and Enhancing Administrative Integrity

Oversight, as a cornerstone of corruption prevention, gains greater effectiveness in achieving justice-oriented and anti-corruption objectives as its scope and intensity increase. However, quantitative and qualitative limitations in governmental oversight capacities, such as a shortage of specialized personnel or structural complexities, raise fundamental questions: To what extent can governmental oversight of administrative institutions be expanded? And how can oversight institutions be strengthened to ensure their sustained efficiency? Addressing these questions hinges on leveraging the potential of public oversight and citizen participation in oversight processes. In this context, promoting universal oversight, which positions every citizen as an active monitor of administrative violations, can serve as a complementary strategy to address the limitations of governmental oversight. This approach, by transforming citizens into informed and responsible actors, not only broadens the scope of oversight over public institutions but also fosters public demand for combating corruption.

Universal oversight, beyond strengthening oversight processes, leads to the creation of a widespread social demand that compels governmental institutions to enhance accountability and effectively implement anti-corruption policies. This demand, rooted in a sense of civic duty and reciprocal expectations from the state, acts

as a driving force to improve the performance of public institutions in alignment with justice-oriented and administrative integrity goals. A key strategy for realizing universal oversight and nurturing social monitors is the development of an anti-corruption discourse. Discourse-building, defined in political science as the production and reproduction of meanings and values in a specific domain through dialogue, writing, and social interactions, can sensitize public consciousness to corruption and the need to combat it, thereby awakening the collective conscience[11]. This process, by promoting ethical and religious values in academic circles, media, books, and research articles, creates a foundation for restoring the social stigma of corruption. Evidence of this impact can be seen in the well-known saying, “People follow the religion of their rulers,” which highlights the role of governmental policies and actions in shaping social behavior and values[12].

In cases where material interests entice individuals to engage in corruption and disregard ethical and religious values, the erosion of the social stigma of corruption emerges as a significant cultural harm. In such contexts, discourse-building, by reconstructing the collective conscience and reinforcing ethical values, can serve as a deterrent mechanism. This process, by raising societal awareness of the consequences of corruption, not only strengthens resistance to corrupt inducements but also prevents the spread of this organizational harm by encouraging the reporting of violations[13]. Consequently, the anti-corruption discourse, as a soft tool, contributes to enhancing administrative integrity and achieving the objectives of good governance.

From the perspective of modern discourse theories, particularly Michel Foucault’s views, discourse serves as a nexus of power and knowledge, playing a pivotal role in shaping social and political relationships. Foucault considers discourse not only a tool for producing truth and scientific legitimacy but also a means of exercising power indirectly and softly[14]. Within this framework, the anti-corruption discourse, as a dual-purpose tool, enables mutual influence between the public and the state. The state, through anti-corruption policies and the promotion of anti-corruption values, can guide social behavior, while citizens, through public demand and oversight, steer state power toward implementing transparent and accountable policies. This interaction creates a positive cycle that sustains universal oversight and reduces corruption.

Alongside discourse-building, sustained cultural initiatives can also contribute to preventing corruption in administrative environments. Organizing programs such as cultural competitions centered on anti-corruption themes, utilizing religious verses and narrations, academic books and articles, and related judicial cases, can raise public awareness and institutionalize anti-corruption values in society. These initiatives, by fostering a sense of social responsibility, encourage citizens to actively participate in oversight processes. Ultimately, combining discourse-building with cultural programs, as part of a comprehensive strategy, not only helps mitigate corruption bottlenecks in administrative systems but also, by strengthening collective conscience and public demand, paves the way for achieving sustainable development goals and enhancing the legitimacy of governance systems.

Summary and Conclusion: Formulating Comprehensive Strategies for Preventing and Combating Administrative Corruption

Corruption, as a persistent social and organizational harm, has long permeated both administrative and non-administrative systems across various societies, posing fundamental challenges for governments and nations. Every political and legal system, in accordance with its structures and values, has devised strategies to curb this phenomenon. In Iran’s legal system, a comprehensive legislative framework, including laws such as the Law on Enhancing Administrative System Integrity and Combating Corruption, the Anti-Money Laundering Law, and the Citizens’ Rights Charter, has achieved relatively successful outcomes in preventing and addressing administrative corruption. However, shortcomings in areas such as administrative procedural regulations or the lack of transparency in certain covert oversight policies continue to hinder the full realization of anti-corruption objectives. Disclosing these policies, alongside the legalization of oversight mechanisms, can contribute to eliminating this harm from the administrative system by reducing incentives for corruption and strengthening legal deterrence. This requires lawmakers to pay closer attention to the wisdom behind legislation and to design transparent and systematic oversight structures. Based on the discussions presented in this study, the relationship between corruption, corruption-prone points, and preventive factors can be articulated in a simplified conceptual model as follows:

$$\text{Corruption} = (\text{Transparency} + \text{Meritocracy} + \text{Youth Empowerment} + \text{Social Conscience and Shame}) - (\text{Power Monopoly} + \text{Secrecy})$$

This model emphasizes the role of preventive factors such as transparency, meritocracy, and social shame in reducing corruption, while identifying power monopolies and secrecy as primary drivers of this phenomenon. Although completely eliminating the root causes of corruption, such as monopolistic tendencies, may be challenging due to their complex nature—as noted in religious culture as an inherent characteristic of power[15]—Imam Ali (AS) states in this regard: “Whoever attains rulership adopts monopolistic tendencies”[16]. Nevertheless, adopting executive strategies grounded in theoretical foundations can minimize these factors.

To achieve this goal, strengthening institutional transparency through the establishment of centralized oversight institutions, leveraging information technology for systematic information dissemination, and promoting universal oversight through discourse-building are essential. Additionally, youth empowerment and elite circulation, as solutions to address administrative stagnation, can reduce corruption risks by fostering dynamism in management systems. These strategies, by combining the creativity of younger personnel with the experience of older individuals, enhance administrative integrity and efficiency. Furthermore, sustained cultural programs, such as events centered on anti-corruption values, can awaken the collective conscience and strengthen public participation in combating corruption.

Ultimately, combating corruption, as a multifaceted endeavor, requires the integration of governmental oversight, public participation, and anti-corruption policymaking. This study proposes a comprehensive framework for preventing and addressing corruption through strategies such as establishing a centralized transparency institution, strengthening universal oversight, and utilizing information technology. Implementing these strategies not only helps mitigate corruption bottlenecks in administrative systems but also fosters public trust and supports the realization of good governance objectives, paving the way for sustainable development and enhancing the legitimacy of governance systems. Achieving these goals requires resolute commitment from governmental institutions, lawmakers, and citizens to the systematic and coordinated implementation of these strategies.

Proposed Solutions and Policy Recommendations: A Comprehensive Framework for Preventing and Combating Administrative Corruption

Based on the theoretical and operational discussions presented in this study, which analyzed corruption bottlenecks and preventive factors, a set of policy measures can serve as a comprehensive strategy to enhance administrative integrity and achieve the objectives of good governance. These measures, grounded in the principles of transparency, meritocracy, universal oversight, and the utilization of information technology, are outlined below with an emphasis on their operational and policy dimensions:

1. **Strengthening Oversight of Transparency:** Designing and implementing a multi-layered oversight system, including overt inspections by heads of organizations, their deputies, or, in their absence, administrative inspectors, alongside covert inspections conducted in the guise of clients or employees. This mechanism, aimed at assessing performance integrity and identifying violations, can enhance oversight effectiveness through specialized training and collaboration with intelligence agencies. Covert oversight, in particular, plays a key role in preventing corruption by fostering deterrence through “integrity testing.”
2. **Establishment of the Centralized Transparency Institution for Organizations and Administrations (SHAMSA)²:** Creating an institution under the supervision of the General Inspection Organization of Iran to standardize and integrate transparency processes across organizations and administrations. With duties such as specialized data analysis, simplifying information for public comprehension, developing standardized information disclosure indicators, and aggregating data directly or indirectly, this institution enhances public access and sustains transparency. Its placement under the General Inspection Organization ensures effective oversight of its performance.
3. **Creation of Electronic Administrative Service Offices:** Establishing electronic administrative service offices, either independently or as part of electronic judicial service offices, under SHAMSA’s supervision, to receive and refer public reports on administrative corruption. These offices, by facilitating reporting without requiring identity verification, encourage public participation and channel citizen demands to a single authority, reducing fragmentation caused by multiple systems.
4. **Youth Empowerment and Combining Experience with Creativity in Management:** Incorporating age as a factor in selecting managers, emphasizing the integration of young, creative talent with the experience of older managers. This approach mitigates risks associated with gerontocracy and conservatism, fostering dynamism in management systems. Older individuals can contribute to organizational efficiency in advisory roles, such as knowledge management and experience transfer.
5. **Promoting Elite Circulation and Organizational Dynamism:** Developing policies for elite circulation in administrative systems in collaboration with the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization and the National Elites Foundation. It is proposed to establish a structure called the “Administrative Elites Organization” (SAANA)³ within the National Elites Foundation to formulate criteria and policies for selecting elites, fostering creativity, and enhancing administrative integrity through diverse work experiences. This strategy prevents corruption bottlenecks by reducing monopolistic tendencies and managerial stagnation.

[In Persian]²
[In Persian]³

6. **Strengthening the Social Discourse of Anti-Corruption:** Promoting universal oversight and public demand through discourse-building in the fight against corruption. This process, utilizing media, anti-corruption policies, and sustained cultural programs—such as competitions centered on anti-corruption themes grounded in religious verses, narrations, and academic resources—awakens the collective conscience and enhances citizen participation in overseeing public institutions. Collaboration with academic and cultural institutions, such as universities and educational centers, ensures the sustainability of this discourse.
7. **Leveraging Information Technology:** Systematically integrating information technology into bureaucratic processes to expedite, facilitate, and reduce errors and corruption in administrative tasks. This strategy, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology and the Ministry of Intelligence, can improve public access to information and strengthen transparency through the development of centralized, user-friendly systems. Minimizing human intervention in executive processes reduces the likelihood of abuse and violations.

Implementing these measures requires coordinated commitment from governmental institutions, lawmakers, and citizens. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Drafting Executive Regulations:** For SHAMSA and electronic administrative service offices, emphasizing transparent processes and operational independence.
- **Strengthening Digital Infrastructure:** Investing in information technology infrastructure to support transparency and reporting systems.
- **Education and Culturalization:** Designing training programs for administrative inspectors and citizens to enhance awareness and empower universal oversight.
- **Inter-Institutional Collaboration:** Establishing a joint committee among the General Inspection Organization, the National Elites Foundation, and the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology to coordinate the implementation of proposed measures.
- These strategies, rooted in the theoretical frameworks of good governance and historical and religious experiences, not only mitigate corruption bottlenecks but also foster public trust, accountability, and citizen participation, paving the way for sustainable development and enhancing the legitimacy of governance systems.

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