

THE CULTURE OF SILENCE
**Identifying Factors that
Influence the Willingness to
Report Corruption Cases in
the Public Administration**

RESEARCH REPORT



Institute
for Democracy
and Mediation

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ABSTRACT

By means of this study, the effectiveness of reporting systems in reducing the culture of silence towards corruption in the public administration was proven through the experiment, emphasizing the importance of individuals' willingness to report. Relying on the Theory of Normalization of Corrupt Behaviors and the Theory of Social Structure and Anomie, this study analyzed the main factors that contribute to the design of educational strategies to encourage the reporting of corrupt cases among public administration employees. The identified factors include: (i) knowledge about ethics and integrity, (ii) attitudes towards unethical behavior, (iii) previous experiences of employees; and (iv) counseling and security. The results showed that employees with positive attitudes towards ethical behavior and those with a higher level of security are more willing to report, while previous knowledge and experience play a smaller role.

The study also identified factors that influence the non-reporting of corruption cases, such as (i) fear of revenge and (ii) damage of the working environment relations, offering perspectives for improving reporting systems and reducing the culture of silence. Meanwhile, the reporting system in the institution does not play a role if employees have limited knowledge, negative attitudes or fear. For this reason, interventions aimed at raising awareness and improving knowledge of rules and integrity can have a positive impact on willingness to report, although fear of revenge and damage to professional relationships remain the main obstacles.

Key words: *knowledge, ethics, corruption, reporting, reporting system*

1. PRESENTATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The negative effects of corruption can be better understood if we understand the causes of the development of corrupt behavior and the creation and development of instruments against it. Therefore, through this study it becomes possible to better understand the reasons that lead to corrupt behavior by examining the decision-making of individuals in a corrupt experimental environment. The Theory of Normalization¹ of Corrupt Behaviors² and the Theory of Social Structure and Anomie were used to design the experiment. The steps of the experiment were designed through deduction, which was also used to obtain the data on the main factors that influence the promotion of reporting through reporting systems among public administration employees, with the aim of combating the culture of silence against unethical and corrupt behavior. The experimental model was based on the assumption that *knowledge about ethics and integrity rules, attitudes towards unethical behavior, previous experiences as well as counseling as a form of increasing security* in public administration employees promote the willingness to report unethical behavior, including corruption, in public administration.

According to today's literature, individuals with a higher level of knowledge about integrity and ethics, with positive attitudes toward ethical behavior, with previous reporting experiences, and who are counseled before making the decision to report, are more willing to report³. In this context, *the experiment aimed to test the factors that promote the willingness to report among public administration employees*. The study fulfilled its purpose through two main phases:

Phase One - before the experimental intervention

1. Assessment of knowledge on integrity and ethics in relation to the rules and regulations in force;
2. Evaluation of public administration employees' attitudes towards unethical behavior;
3. Previous experiences of public administration employees with corrupt cases.

Second Phase - after the experimental intervention

1. Collection and analysis of data on the willingness of employees to report;
2. Testing the connection between the willingness to report and the level of knowledge;
3. Testing the relationship between willingness to report and attitudes towards ethical behavior;
4. Testing the relationship between willingness to report and previous experiences;
5. Testing the connection between the willingness to report and counseling;
6. Identification of factors influencing non-reporting behavior.

1 Bandura, A. 1977. Social Learning Theory. General Learning Press, https://www.asecib.ase.ro/mps/Bandura_SocialLearningTheory.pdf

2 Nguyen T. T. H., 2023. "Factors affecting corruption in the public sector: Evidence from Vietnam". Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, 9 (2).

3 Nguyen T. T. H., 2023. "Factors affecting corruption in the public sector: Evidence from Vietnam". Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, 9 (2).

Sixty-three (63) public administration employees were involved in the experiment and a partial field experiment model was used. The participants in the experiment were employees of various state institutions from the Parliament of Albania, the Information and Data Protection Commissioner, the High Council of Prosecution, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Culture, Department of Public Administration, General Directorate of Taxation, and Institute of Public Health

1.1 THE THEORY OF NORMALIZATION OF CORRUPT BEHAVIORS AND THE THEORY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ANOMIE

The number of actions that are categorized as “corrupt acts” is large. Corruption occurs when two people cooperate for personal gain, harming a third person. These actions are illegal, and the third party has the right to seek punishment, but often this is costly for him. However, in order to maintain the rules of cooperation in society, it is important that individuals punish offenders, even though it may cost them. This process helps maintain the norms of accountability and cooperation in society⁴. In this way, individuals who are willing to punish corruption help strengthen the reporting system and promote ethics in the work environment.

The literature suggests that when individuals are exposed to corruption or work in a corrupt environment, the normalization of corrupt behaviors may occur. This can increase tolerance and the tendency to justify or imitate corrupt behavior⁵. Also, some studies claim that corrupt individuals often do not consider themselves as such because they have normalized corrupt behavior.⁶

The factors that contribute to the normalization of corruption are:

1. **Institutionalization**, where corrupt practices become routine without reflecting on their correctness.
2. **Rationalization**, where individuals use socially created rationales to justify their corrupt actions.
3. **Socialization**, where young individuals are taught and accept corrupt practices.⁷

Through these three stages, **corruption is institutionalized and practiced collectively by employees, risking to last indefinitely**. However, people's attitudes towards corruption are shaped by socio-economic conditions, knowledge of the harms that corruption brings, their level of integrity and previous experiences.⁸ In order to encourage individuals to report corrupt acts, it is of great importance to create a culture where punishment of offenders is possible and accepted even when the punishment comes at a cost to the whistleblowers. This helps reduce the culture of silence and promotes an atmosphere in which individuals feel safe and motivated to report corrupt acts.⁹ In this context, interventions through educational forms seem to play an important role in increasing the willingness to report deviant cases within public institutions.

4 Fehr, E., S. Gächter. 2002, “Altruistic Punishment in Humans”, *Nature*, 415. Bowles, S., H. Gintis, 2002. “Homo Reciprocans”, *Nature*, 415.

5 Dey, H. K. 1989. “The Genesis and Spread of Economic Corruption: A Microtheoretic Interpretation,” *World Development*, 17(4)

6 Sykes, G. M., D. Matza. 1957. “Techniques of neutralization: A theory of delinquency”. *American Sociological Review*, 22.

7 Ashforth, B. E., Anand, V. 2003. “The normalization of corruption in organizations”. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25.

8 Varvarigos, D. (2023). “Cultural persistence in corruption, economic growth, and the environment”. *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 147.

9 Farooqi, S., et al, 2017. “How bad it is to be good: Impact of organizational ethical culture on whistleblowing (the ethical partners)”. *Arab Economic and Business Journal*, 12(2).

2. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The participants in the experiment were 63 public administration employees. They were randomly divided into two equal groups (experimental and control group) and placed in two different halls. The separation between the two groups enabled the creation of different experimental conditions for the two groups, which were confronted with experimental factors. The control group served to validate the comparison between the two groups and to highlight the difference. With 'participants' involved in the experiment; we refer to all public administration employees who participated in the experiment.

The experiment was conducted in three phases. Before starting each phase, both groups received the details and steps to follow. The transition from one stage to another was accompanied by a 10-minute break, without the right to leave the hall or communicate. No phone use or conversations that could affect concentration were allowed. In the first phase, both groups completed the same questionnaire to measure knowledge, basic attitudes on ethics and integrity, and their previous experiences with corrupt cases. In the second phase, the participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario of corruption in a written version, having the opportunity to read it silently without external influence. The content of the scenario was the same for both groups, with the only difference being that in the scenario of the experimental group a reporting mechanism was introduced while maintaining anonymity. In the third phase, after the presentation of the hypothetical corrupt case, both groups completed the same questionnaire. ***By comparing the responses of the experimental group with those of the control group, we were able to evaluate the effectiveness of the reporting system as well as the factors that influence the mitigation of the culture of silence against corruption in the public administration.***

2.1 PRE-EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

Participants in the experiment (both groups) answered three sets of identical questions before being presented with the experimental stimulus. The first set of questions was used to collect information on the level of knowledge and awareness regarding the rules and regulations in force that deal with corruption and integrity in public institutions. With the second set of questions, the participants' attitudes towards unethical behavior and reporting/complaint in the workplace were measured. With the third set of questions, data was collected on the participants' previous experiences or observations of corrupt events in the workplace (See Appendix 1).

2.2 EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

After completing the pre-experiment questionnaires, the participants were confronted with an experimental stimulant in the form of written scenarios, designed for the purposes of this experiment. In both the experimental and control groups, participants were presented with a scenario describing a situation in which a public servant discovers evidence of irregularities and corruption within his institution. The scenario illustrates the ethical and professional dilemma of public administration employees when faced with evidence of misuse of public funds for personal gain by their colleagues, identifying financial discrepancies and suspicious transactions that are evidence of corruption in the system, with consequences for institution and public interest. This scenario was the same for both groups, but only the experimental group was offered an additional option: *to report these irregularities through an anonymous reporting system, which is designed to facilitate and encourage the reporting of corruption without fear of revenge.* Thus, we were able to assess the impact of anonymous reporting systems as a mechanism for reducing the culture of silence and for promoting integrity in public administration. The stimulant was presented in the form of written (printed) text, and participants were encouraged to read it quietly. The texts used for each group can be found in Appendix 2 (Scenario A. Experimental group) and Appendix 3 (Scenario B. Control group).

2.3 POST-EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

Through the post-test evaluation, by means of the questionnaire (the same for both groups), data were collected (i) to analyze the attitudes of the participants towards the corrupt case and their willingness to report. Also, by analyzing the data collected from the post-experiment questionnaire, we aim to understand: (ii) the relationship between the willingness to report and the level of knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of individuals; (iii) the reasons that influenced their decision to report the case or not. This experimental manipulation, differentiating the experimental group from the control group, represents the essence of the research design. (For post-intervention questionnaire refer to Appendix 4.)

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The research was based on the basic assumption that: *Public administration employees who have deeper knowledge and more positive attitudes towards ethics and integrity in the workplace and have previous experiences with corruption are more inclined to report corrupt acts compared to those who have less knowledge and more negative attitudes.*

Therefore, the following sub-hypotheses were tested in this study:

Sub-Hypothesis 1: Public administration employees who are knowledgeable about the rules and regulations related to corruption and integrity in public institutions are more willing to report corrupt cases.

Sub-Hypothesis 2: Positive attitudes of employees towards ethical behavior positively influence their willingness to report corrupt acts in the workplace.

Sub-Hypothesis 3: Public administration employees who have had previous experiences or observations of corruption are more willing to report.

Sub-Hypothesis 4: Public administration employees with a high degree of security are more willing to report corrupt cases.

Dependent variable: **Willingness to report** (Question 1, Appendix 4)¹⁰

Independent variables:

1. **Level of knowledge and awareness** (Questions 4-5/Appendix 1)¹¹,
2. **Attitudes towards ethical behavior and reporting** (Questions 6-7, Appendix 1)¹²,
3. **Previous experiences and observations** (Questions 8 and 10, Appendix 1)¹³.
4. **Consultation as a form of security** (Question 4/Appendix 4)¹⁴

The collection and processing of this information in the first phase was important to understand as much as possible the initial context, which is then compared with the results of the second phase of the analysis, allowing the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the intervention (stimulant) in the promotion of reporting corruption and reducing the culture of silence.

10 Q. 1: 1. Would you report the corruption/irregularity you discovered in your institution? (Appendix 4)

11 Q. 4: How familiar are you with the rules and regulations in force regarding corruption and integrity in the public institution in your workplace? Q. 5: Have you attended any formal training or received information about the rules of ethics and integrity in your workplace?

12 Q. 6: In your opinion, how important is ethical behavior in the workplace? Q. 7: How comfortable do you feel about reporting unethical behavior or corruption that you may have seen in the workplace?

13 Q. 8: Have you ever noticed or personally experienced any form of corruption in the public institution in your workplace? Q. 10: Have you ever been aware of a colleague who has reported (denounced) unethical behavior or corruption in your institution?

14 Q. 4: Did you seek guidance or advice from others before making the decision?

In the second phase, two groups were identified: **Reporters** (participants who chose to report the corrupt case) and **Silent** (participants who decided not to report), to provide an initial basis of readiness for reporting among the participants. Only after this evaluation, the interaction between the level of knowledge, attitudes, previous experiences, and safety with the willingness to report was analyzed through ANOVA¹⁵. Finally, through descriptive analysis were identified the factors that motivated or hindered the reporting of corruption cases by public administration employees who participated in the experiment.

3.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS. KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND EXPERIENCES (PRE-EXPERIMENTAL INTERVENTION)

3.1.1 LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING

Questions related to the rules and regulations in force related to corruption and integrity in the public institution where the participants work produced results that highlight significant differences between participants in the experimental and control groups. The results show that there are significant differences between the two groups in terms of knowledge and awareness of rules and regulations related to corruption and integrity. The experimental group has a higher percentage of participants who are “very familiar” with these rules (54.8%) compared to the control group (48.4%). This initial level of knowledge suggests a small difference that does not affect their behavior in situations where it is required to denounce/report corruption. **Both groups appeared at the same level (38.7%) when they answered that they are “somewhat familiar”, indicating the same level of knowledge about the rules in force.**

On the other hand, a higher percentage of participants of the control group (12.9%) claimed that they “are unfamiliar” with the rules in force, compared to the experimental group (6.5%). This indicator may highlight a lack of initial knowledge or attention to integrity rules in the control group, which may be a key factor affecting the ability to understand barriers to reporting or denouncing corruption.

Regarding the question of whether they have participated in any official training or received information about the rules of ethics and integrity in the workplace, the data before the experimental intervention have evidenced two main moments: (i) The percentage of participants who *participated in the trainings is relatively low in both groups*. Specifically, (35.5%) participants from the experimental group and (38.7%) from the control group; (ii) *a significant difference between the two groups in the answer “no, I have not attended”*. In this case, 25.8% of the participants from the experimental group and 16% of the participants from the control group reported that they have not attended any training or do not have information about the rules of ethics and integrity.

The percentage of participants who have attended training is relatively similar in both groups, suggesting that the level of information about ethics and integrity rules is similar before the experiment. However, this information is of great importance to understand how well informed the participants are about the rules and policies related to reporting corruption and ethics at work. Meanwhile, the difference between the two groups in the response “no, I have not attended” may affect the results of the experiment, as the level of information and knowledge about rules and ethics may affect the willingness of individuals to report corruption.

15 ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Table 1. Knowledge and awareness

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
<i>How familiar are you with the rules and regulations in force regarding corruption and integrity in the public institution where you work?</i>			
	Very familiar	54.80%	48.40%
	Somewhat familiar	38.70%	38.70%
	Unfamiliarized	6.50%	12.90%
<i>Have you attended any formal training or received information about the rules of ethics and integrity in your workplace?</i>			
	Yes, immediately after recruitment	25.80%	16.10%
	Yes, in continuous training	35.50%	38.70%
	No, I have not attended any formal training	29.00%	45.20%

3.1.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

According to the data in Table 2, both groups have a similar perception of the importance of ethical behaviors in the workplace. Both groups reported a percentage of (54.8%) for the answer “Extremely important”, while for the answer “Very important”, the experimental group reported (45.2%) and the control group (41.9%). These percentages suggest that public administration employees have a high awareness of the importance of ethical behavior, reflecting a shared awareness of moral and ethical standards in the work environment.

On the other hand, regarding the question “How well do you feel about reporting an unethical behavior or corruption that you may have seen in the workplace?”, the highest percentage of answers was reached for the alternative “neither good nor bad”, 45.2% for the experimental group and 22.6% for the control group. These data suggest a tendency for underreporting, highlighting the need for more effective mechanisms that can initiate and support the reporting of unethical behavior.

Table 2. Attitudes towards ethical behavior

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
<i>In your opinion, how important is ethical behavior in the workplace?</i>			
	Extremely important	54.80%	54.80%
	Very important	45.20%	41.90%
	Somewhat important	0.00%	3.20%
	Little important	0.00%	0.00%

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
	Not important at all	0.00%	0.00%
<i>How comfortable do you feel about reporting unethical behavior or corruption that you may have seen in the workplace?</i>			
	Very good	12.90%	29.00%
	Somewhat good	19.40%	16.10%
	Neither good nor bad	45.20%	22.60%
	Somewhat bad	9.70%	16.10%
	Too bad	12.90%	16.10%

3.1.2 EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS

From the data in Table 3, it appears that most public administration employees have not had previous experiences with similar cases of corruption. The experimental group answered 'no' to the extent of 74.2%, while the control group to the extent of 83.3%.

Table 3. Experiences and observations

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
<i>Have you ever noticed or personally experienced any form of corruption in the public institution where you work?</i>			
	Yes	25.80%	16.70%
	No	74.20%	83.30%
<i>Have you ever been aware of a colleague who has reported (denounced) unethical behavior or corruption in your institution?</i>			
	Yes	13.30%	23.30%
	No	86.70%	76.70%

3.1.4 COUNSELING AS A FORM OF SECURITY

The data in Table 4 below show that 1 out of 2 public administration employees, part of the experimental group, consulted before deciding to report previous cases. While 37% of the control group affirmed that they consulted before making decisions.

Table 4. Counseling as a form of security

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
<i>Did you seek guidance or advice from others before making the decision?</i>			
	Yes	50%	37.9%
	No	50%	62.1%

3.2 KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES, AND CONFIDENCE IN RELATION TO WILLINGNESS TO REPORT: ANOVA (POST-EXPERIMENT)

In this subchapter¹⁶ it is shown the relationship of willingness to report with: (i) the level of knowledge on rules and regulations related to corruption, (ii) attitudes towards unethical behavior, and (iii) previous experiences. According to the data in Table 4, most of the participants declared their willingness to report, with 74.20% from the experimental group and 89.70% from the control group. So, after the presentation with the experimental stimulant (scenario), the participants have made the decision to report the case, enabling us to continue further analysis.

ANOVA analysis was used to test the relationship between *willingness to report* and the above factors. The results of this analysis show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the willingness to report and the mentioned factors, where the reliability of the model ($F = 37.6$, p value = 0.000)¹⁷ confirms that there is a significant difference in the willingness to report violations between the two studied groups. The model data prove that the experimental stimulant had an impact.

Table 5. Did you report the corruption or irregularity you discovered in your institution?

	Answer categories	Experimental group	Control group
<i>Would you report the corruption/irregularity you discovered in your institution?</i>			
	Yes	74.20%	89.70%
	No	25.80%	10.30%

3.2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT

The results of this analysis help us understand the differences in the behavior of individuals between the two groups due to the stimulant they were exposed to. The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and the willingness to report the corrupt case is not a strong relationship ($\eta^2 = .035$). However, ANOVA has shown that there is a significant and fair relationship between these two factors. The graphical presentation (figure 1) suggests that when confronted with the stimulant, the two groups change their behavior in different ways. ***The reporting rate for both groups is almost the same, but above average*** when they state that they are “very familiar” with rules and regulations (1.5 for the experimental group and 1.6 for the control group out of 2 which is the maximum value). Meanwhile, when both

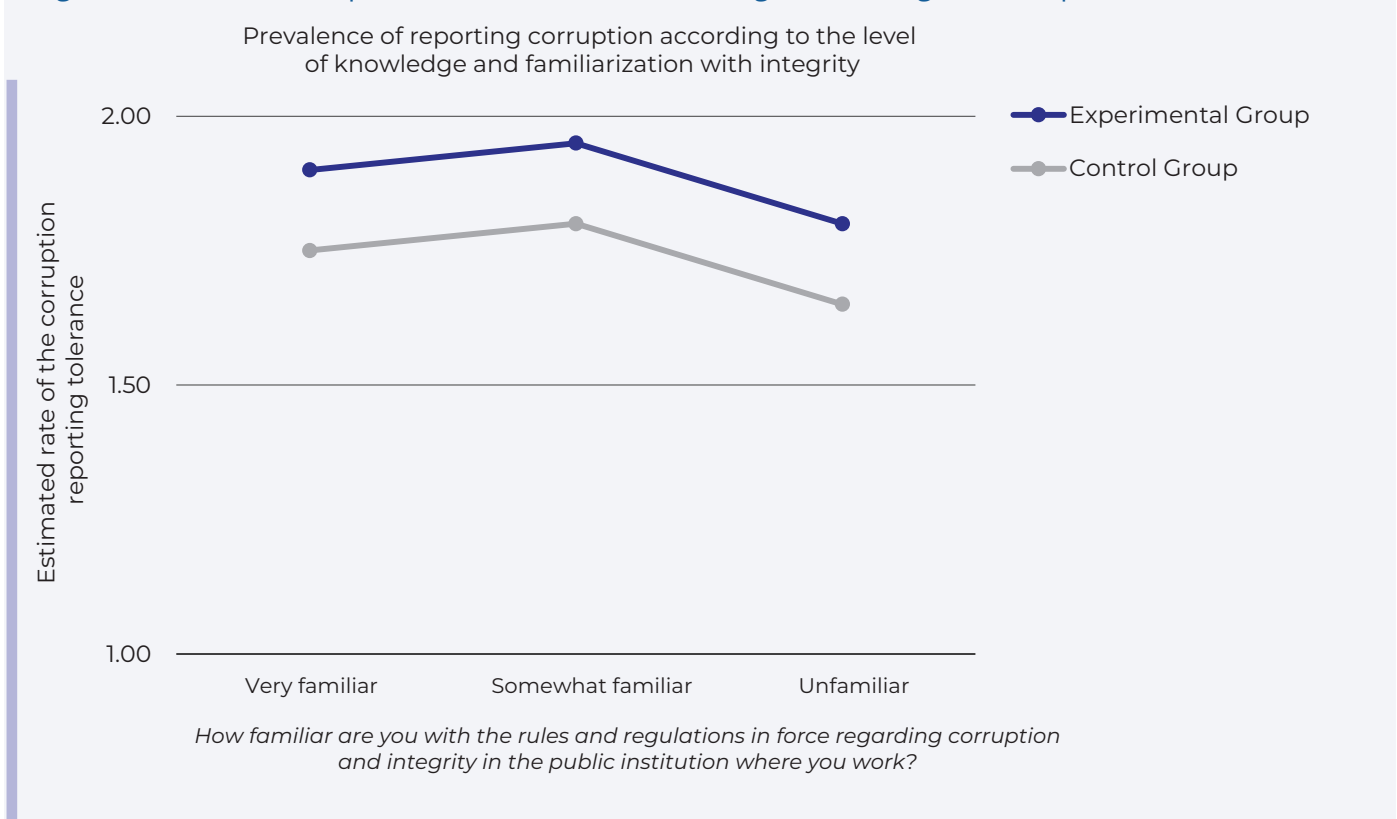
16 In this subchapter are processed the data collected from the questionnaire distributed to the participants in the experiment after the presentation of the experimental stimulus (see Appendix 4)

17 Refer to the table in Appendix 5

groups declare that they are “somewhat familiar”, the degree of willingness to report begins to increase significantly (1.75 for the experimental group and 1.5 for the control group). When both groups claimed to be “unfamiliar” with the rules, the willingness to report the corrupt case presented in the scenario began to decline (1.6 for the experimental group and 1.3 for the control group, as shown in Graph 1). If we refer to the data in Table 1, the control group showed a lower level of knowledge (12.90%) compared to the experimental group (6.5%), a result which proves once again the relationship between the level of knowledge and readiness to report.

In any case, participants who stated that they are familiar with the rules and regulations in force (‘very familiar’ and ‘somewhat familiar’) are more willing to report compared to those who are ‘unfamiliar’. The factor “degree of knowledge” plays a key role in the willingness to report, supporting the sub-hypothesis that public administration employees who have knowledge of the rules related to corruption and integrity are more willing to report corrupt cases. **Also, the data suggest that the rate of willingness to report in the experimental group, who had the possibility of reporting through the anonymous system, remains in any circumstance higher than the rate of willingness to report in the control group.**

Figure 1. The relationship between the level of knowledge and willingness to report



3.2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT

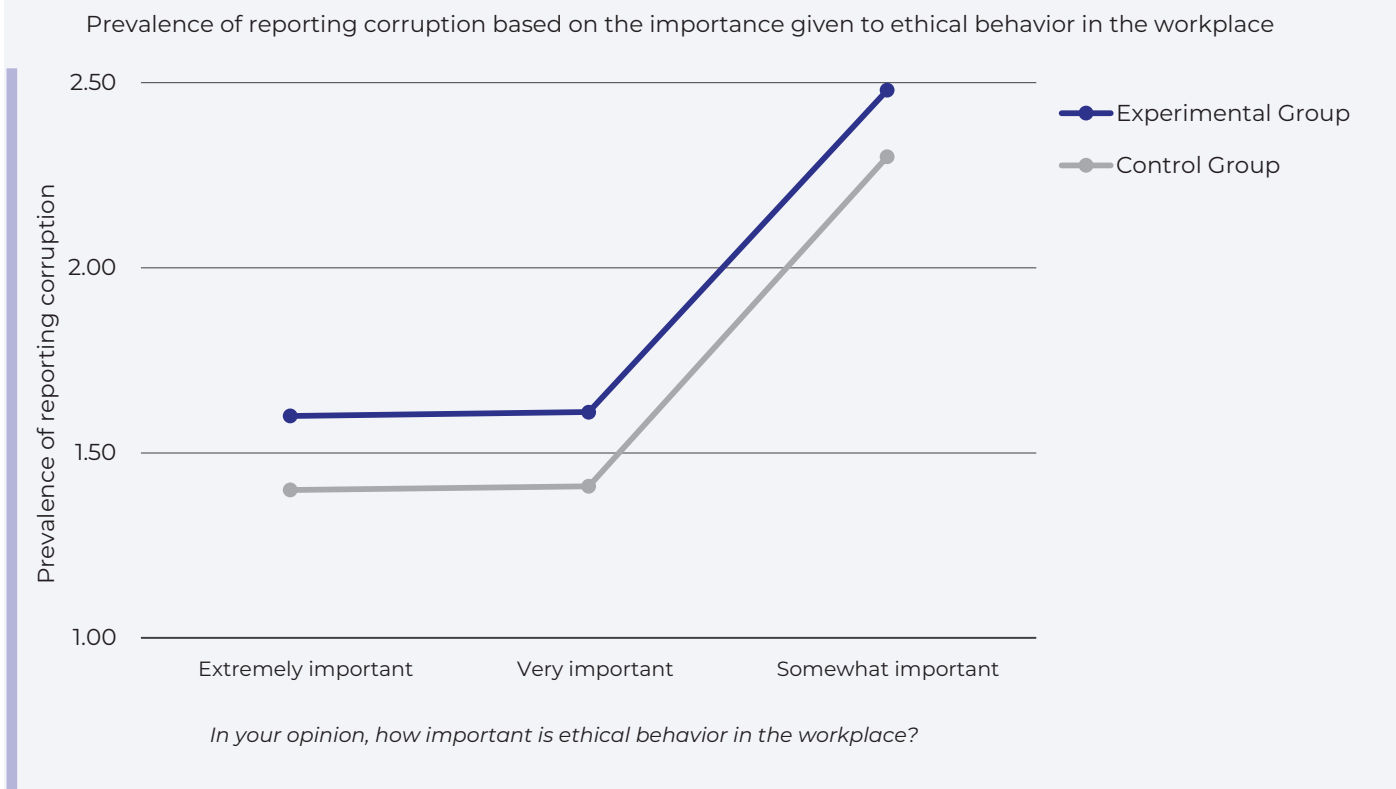
According to the results of the analysis (Chart 2), there is a difference between the experimental and control groups regarding the attitudes of the participants towards ethical behavior and the willingness to report corrupt cases in the workplace. The results of the ANOVA analysis show that the relationship between the factors “participants' attitudes towards ethical behavior and reporting” is a relationship

with high statistical reliability (ETA .143**) ¹⁸. This value suggests that the beliefs and attitudes of public administration employees towards ethical behavior in the workplace increases by 14% the willingness to report corrupt cases.

According to the results of the first phase of the analysis (see Table 2), both groups, the experimental group and the control group, declare that ethical behavior in the workplace is "extremely important" and "very important" but this belief coincides with a lower willingness to report (0.5 for the experimental group and 1.6 for the control group, Figure 2) compared to when both groups perceive ethical behavior as "somewhat important", where the willingness to report increases significantly (2.3 for the experimental group and 2.5 for the control group). However, in each case the ANOVA analysis proves that there is a strong and positive relationship between the attitudes of the participants and the willingness to report corrupt cases. This result affirms sub-hypothesis 2, which assumed that positive attitudes towards ethical behavior positively influence the willingness to report corrupt acts. The analysis confirms that belief in integrity and ethical behavior is more important than knowledge and familiarity with them as practical concepts.

According to the graph data, the difference between the groups shows that the stimulated intervention in the experiment has made its impact, however, the rate of willingness to report in the experiment group, who had the possibility of reporting through the anonymous system is lower than the rate of willingness to report in the control group.

Figure 2. The relationship between ethical behaviors and willingness to report



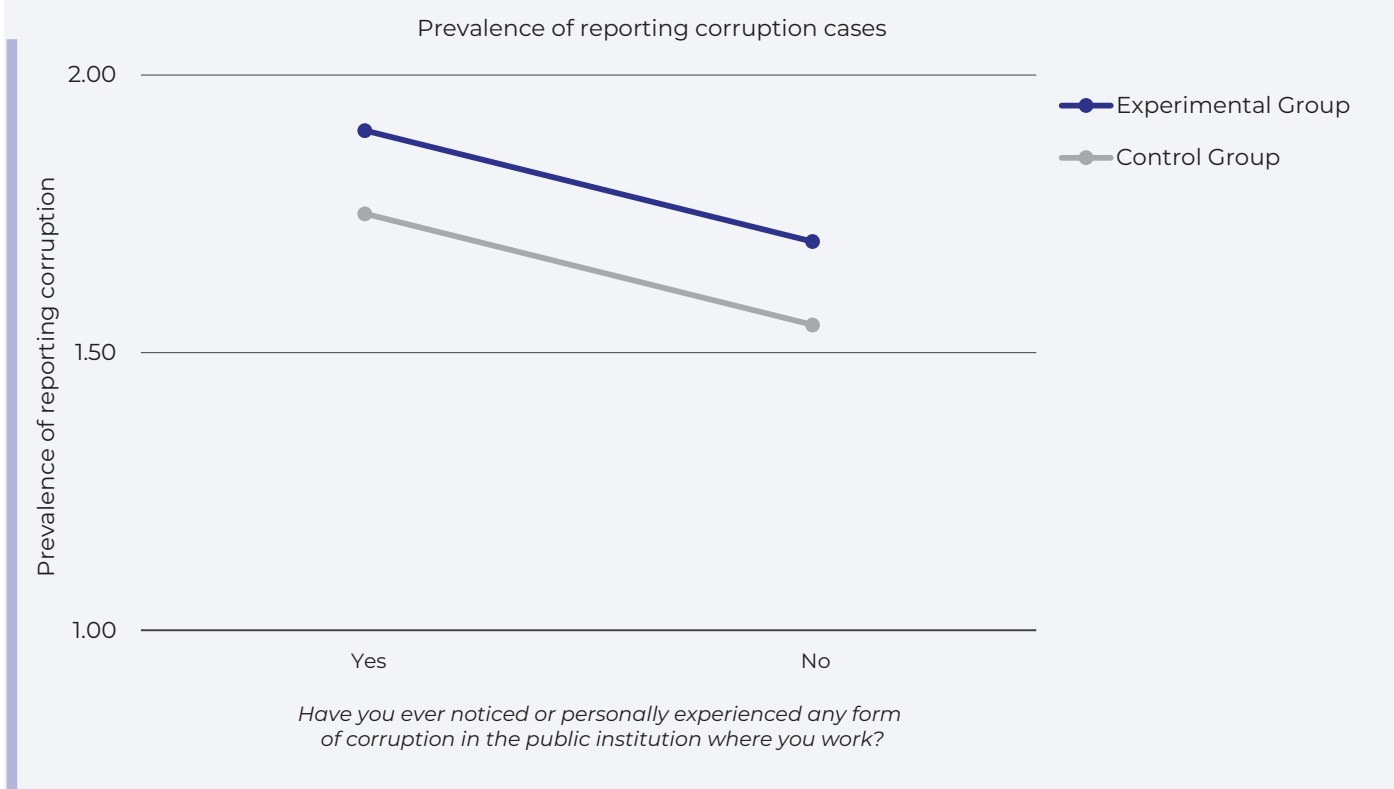
18 Refer to table – Appendix 5.

3.2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT

The ANOVA results show that the willingness to report corrupt cases is influenced by previous experiences, such as witnessing or experiencing cases of corruption in the institution where the participants work. However, this impact does not have high statistical reliability (ETA. 041, see appendix 5). The reason why the link between previous experiences and the prevalence to report corrupt behavior loses statistical reliability is related to the low rate of declarations for such cases. Participants often state that they are not informed or have not experienced similar situations (see Table 3). These data suggest that there is a tendency to minimize or deny corrupt experiences, which confirms a culture of silence in public institutions.

However, ANOVA analysis has shown that there is a direct relationship between these two variables. When participants in the experimental group and the control group report that they have previously experienced corruption, they show a high degree of willingness to report (1.8 for the experimental group and 1.98 for the control group, where 2 is the maximum value). This indicates that previous experiences can positively influence the willingness to report such behaviors. Participants who have had contact with corrupt situations are more inclined to provide information on these cases, and regard reporting as a way to prevent the recurrence of similar events in the future. These results support sub-hypothesis 3 which states that employees who have had previous experiences or observations of corruption are more willing to report. And in this case, the experimental group, which was introduced to the anonymous reporting mechanism, did not show a higher willingness to report compared to the control group (Chart 3). This shows that the existence of the reporting system in public institutions is not necessarily a guarantee for the increase in the number of reports.

Figure 3: Prevalence to report corrupt behavior according to individuals' previous personal experiences.



3.2.3 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAFETY AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT

Participants were asked whether they had consulted anyone before making the decision to report cases related to their personal experience. ANOVA analysis shows that counseling with support structures plays an important role in the willingness to report unethical behavior. The results show that individuals who had the opportunity to be consulted are more likely to report cases of corruption (ETA 0.20**; see Appendix 5). This trend suggests that the more safe and protected individuals feel, the more likely they are to report. When the individual feels safe, the likelihood that they will report increases by 20%.

According to the data, the family has an important role in this context. Fully 32% of the participants in both groups declared that they consulted with family, 20% of them claimed that they consulted with colleagues, 20% with friends and 16% with their superior. This result suggests that counseling with different individuals has a significant impact on the decision to report corruption cases. This study did not aim to understand or analyze these choices. However, the study is an important piece of data that paves the way for further studies regarding the level of trust of public administration employees towards the internal structures of the institution where they work.

Table 6. Advisory structures

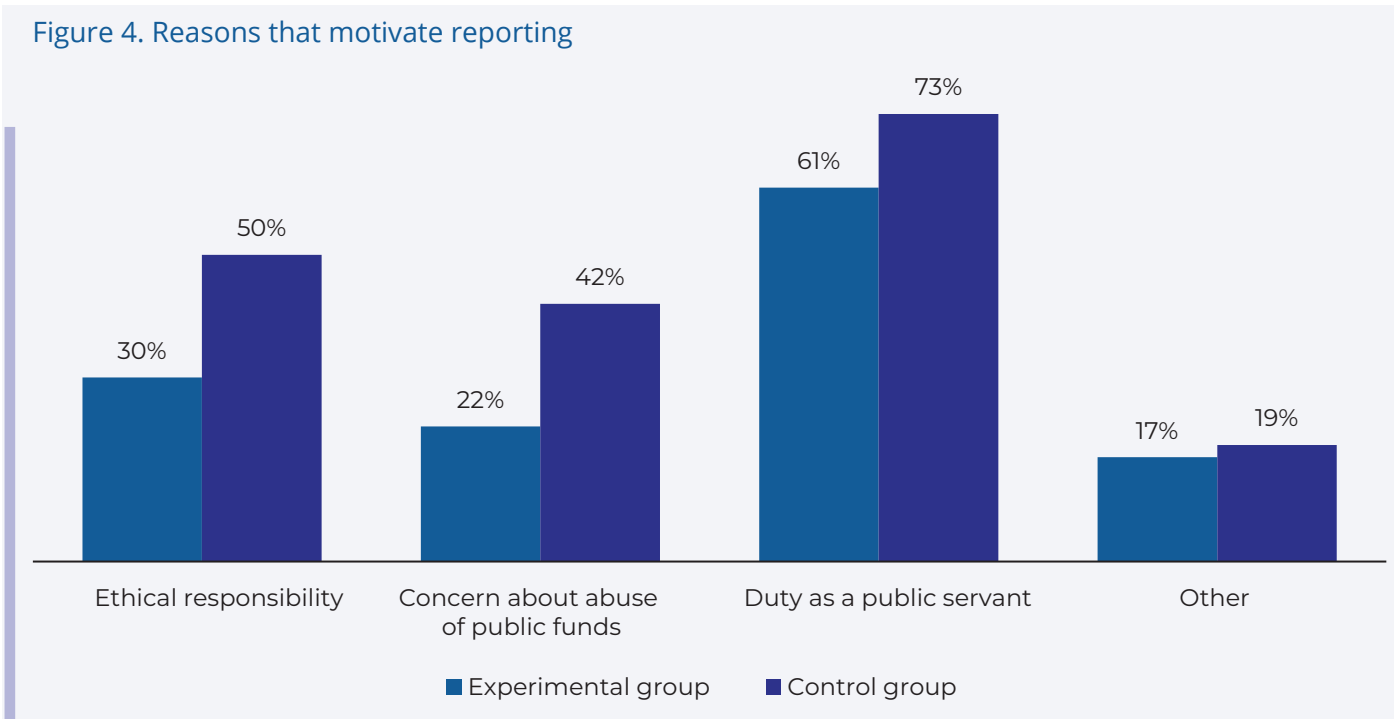
Category	Frequency
Supervisor	16%
Family	32%
Colleague	20%
Counselor	8%
Friend	20%
Whistleblowers	4%

3.2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE (NON)REPORTING OF THE CORRUPTION CASE

According to graph 4, and although with a small margin, it seems that public administration employees in both groups see the duty as a public servant as an important element that motivates the willingness to report. Fully 61% of participants of the experimental group and 73% of the control group listed it as the main reason for reporting the corrupt case presented in the experimental stimulus. The second most important factor is ethical responsibility, which was chosen by 30% of the experimental group and 50% of the control group, showing its influence on the decision to handle corrupt cases. And in the above ANOVA analysis, the ethical behaviors resulted as one of the factors with the highest impact on the willingness to report, a fact which is reconfirmed in this phase of the analysis.

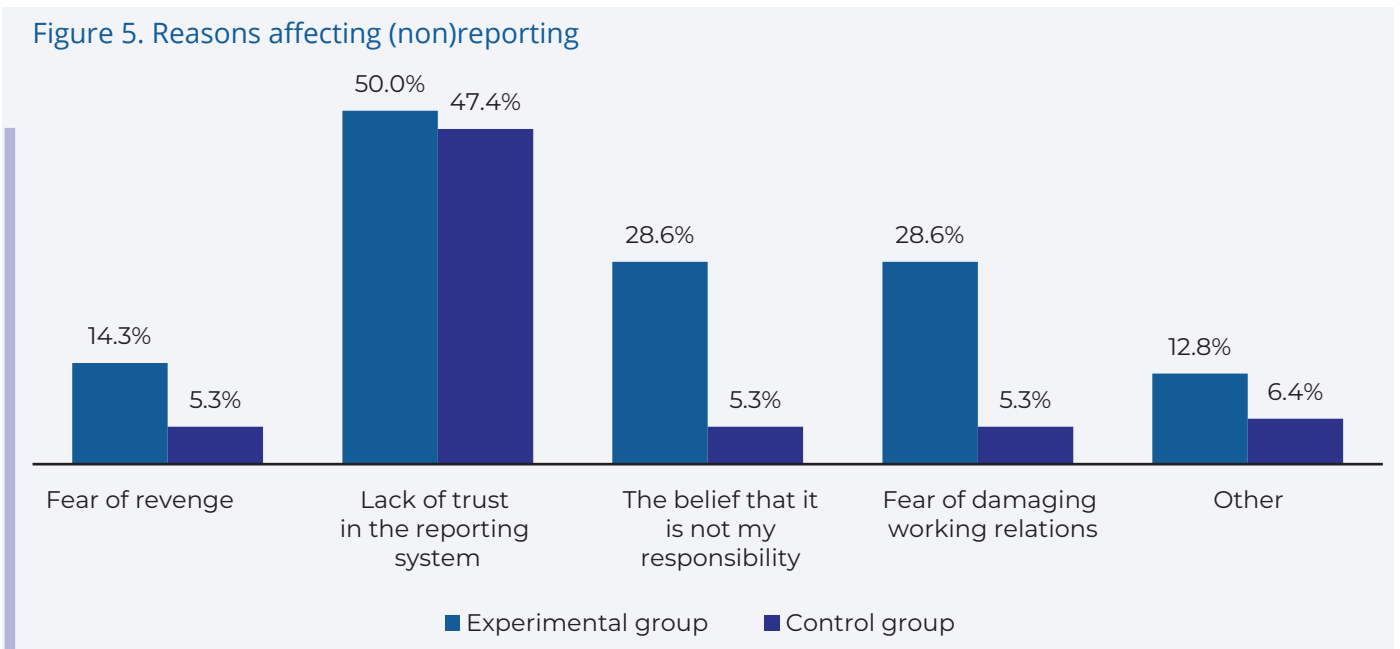
The purpose of this analysis is not to evaluate the effectiveness of the reporting system introduced in the experimental stimulation for the experiment group, but to identify the factors that encourage public administration employees to report corrupt cases.

Figure 4. Reasons that motivate reporting



According to graph 5, the main reasons for not reporting corrupt cases in the public administration are mainly related to the lack of trust in the reporting system, which was identified by almost 50% of the participants in both groups. Other influencing factors include the perception that reporting is 'not personal responsibility' and 'fear of damaging working relationships', which were selected by 28.6% of the experimental group participants and 5.3% of the control group. Fear of revenge is another important factor, reported by 14.3% of the experimental group and 5.3% of the control group.

Figure 5. Reasons affecting (non)reporting



These data suggest that personal perceptions about responsibility and risk have influenced the motivation and behavior of employees in reporting corruption. It is worth noting that the experimental

group had a mechanism available to report cases of corruption anonymously, which should theoretically increase trust in the reporting process and reduce the fear of revenge or damage of the working relationships. However, the results showed the opposite. From the above ANOVA analysis, it was confirmed that the reporting system does not play an important role in increasing the willingness to report, a finding which is supported by the data of this subchapter, which showed the lack of trust in this system. Therefore, the anonymous reporting system does not appear to be a strong incentive for reporting.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this study, several key factors were identified that influence the willingness to report corruption cases in the public administration. Awareness and knowledge of integrity rules are important, but the link between knowledge and reporting is not very strong, suggesting that information is necessary but not sufficient to fully influence reporting behavior.

Ethical behaviors in the workplace influence willingness to report corruption, indicating that ethical valuing has a greater impact than technical knowledge. Personal experiences with corruption help shape willingness to report. Participants who have had previous experiences with corruption cases show a higher willingness to report, as those experiences serve as catalysts for action. However, the impact of these experiences is not statistically very strong, perhaps due to the tendency to minimize or deny contacts with corruption, confirming the culture of silence in public administration. Consultation before reporting is a key factor in increasing willingness to report. Family is the most trusted support structure for counseling, while superiors are the least preferred.

The results of the analysis emphasize that the main reasons for reporting corrupt cases among public administration employees are commitment to duty as public servants and ethical responsibility. These motives have been identified as the main reasons for reporting by participants in both study groups, reconfirming the great influence of attitudes towards ethical behavior on the willingness to report corruption.

On the other hand, lack of trust in reporting systems remains a major barrier to non-reporting cases. Perceptions that reporting is 'not a personal responsibility' and fear of damaging work relations or revenge are important factors that inhibit reporting of corrupt behavior. Although the experimental group had the option of anonymous reporting, this mechanism failed to increase trust in the process and decrease fear of revenge, showing limited effectiveness.

Based on the findings of the study, below are presented some recommendations aimed at improving the culture of silence and encouraging the reporting of corrupt cases in the public administration:

1. Organize and implement regular training programs on ethics and integrity rules for all employees.
2. Encourage ethical behavior by promoting and rewarding good examples. Analysis data showed that ethical attitudes have a greater impact than technical knowledge, so support and examples are important.
3. Create easy-to-use reporting systems. These systems must be reliable and create a sense of security for reporting employees.
4. Increase transparency about the reporting process and the measures taken after reports.
5. Provide opportunities for consultation and support for employees facing ethical dilemmas.
6. Draft clear and enforceable policies for the protection of whistleblowers, including guarantees against revenge and damage to working relations.
7. Design specialized training modules that deal specifically with issues of corruption and its impact on the work environment. These modules help improve knowledge and provide guidance on identifying and reporting corruption cases.
8. Improve communication and cooperation between the public administration and the civil sector to strengthen accountability and supervision of public activity.

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APPENDIX I. PRE-EXPERIMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Other (please specify)
- 4 I'd rather not say it

2. HOW OLD ARE YOU?

3. HOW MANY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION WHERE YOU CURRENTLY WORK?

4. HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS IN FORCE REGARDING CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION WHERE YOU WORK?

- 1 Very familiar
- 2 Somewhat familiar
- 3 Unfamiliar

5. HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY FORMAL TRAINING OR RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT THE RULES OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE? CHOOSE ALL THE ANSWERS THAT APPLY.

- 1 Yes, immediately after recruitment
- 2 Yes, in continuous training
- 3 No, I have not participated in official training

6. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT IS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE WORKPLACE?

- 1 Extremely important
- 2 Very important
- 3 Somewhat important
- 4 Slightly important
- 5 Not at all important

7. HOW COMFORTABLE DO YOU FEEL ABOUT REPORTING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OR CORRUPTION THAT YOU MAY HAVE WITNESSED IN THE WORKPLACE?

- 1 Very good
- 2 Somewhat well
- 3 Neither good nor bad
- 4 Somewhat bad
- 5 Very bad

8. HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED OR PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED ANY FORM OF CORRUPTION IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION WHERE YOU WORK?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

9. IF SO, PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE SITUATION.

10. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN AWARE OF A COLLEAGUE WHO HAS REPORTED (DENOUNCED) UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OR CORRUPTION IN YOUR INSTITUTION?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

11. IF YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE THE OUTCOME OR CONSEQUENCES OF THE REPORTING/ DENUNCIATION, IF YOU ARE AWARE OF THEM.

12. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH US ABOUT CORRUPTION, ETHICS OR REPORTING IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

APPENDIX II. SCENARIO A FOR THE EXPERIMENT GROUP. THE POSSIBILITY OF REPORTING

You are a dedicated and conscientious public servant working in the public administration. One day, you discover compelling evidence of irregularities or corruption that may be taking place in your institution. Your office colleague is implicated in it. These irregularities suggest that there is a possible misuse of public funds for personal gain. You have noticed that there are large discrepancies in financial data, unapproved and unplanned transactions, and strange spending trends, which cast a shadow of doubt on the institution's activities. You are offered the opportunity to report the case through an anonymous reporting system. This system makes it possible for you to report concerns you have about these irregularities, without revealing your identity. The system is strategically designed to encourage and facilitate the reporting of corrupt practices.

APPENDIX III. SCENARIO B FOR THE CONTROL GROUP. MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

You are a dedicated and conscientious public servant working in the public administration. One day, you discover compelling evidence of irregularities or corruption that may be taking place in your institution. Your office colleague is implicated in it. These irregularities suggest that there is a possible misuse of public funds for personal gain. You have noticed that there are large discrepancies in financial data, unapproved and unplanned transactions, and strange spending trends, which cast a shadow of doubt on the institution's activities.

APPENDIX IV. POST-EXPERIMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BOTH GROUPS

1. WOULD YOU REPORT THE CORRUPTION/IRREGULARITY YOU DISCOVERED IN YOUR INSTITUTION?

1 Yes 2 No

2. IF SO, WHAT WAS YOUR MAIN MOTIVE FOR REPORTING THE CORRUPTION/ IRREGULARITY?

- 1 Ethical responsibility
- 2 Concern about abuse of public funds
- 3 Duty as a public servant
- 4 Other (please specify):

3. IF YOU CHOSE NOT TO REPORT THE CORRUPTION/ IRREGULARITY, WHAT WERE THE MAIN REASONS FOR REMAINING SILENT?

- 1 Fear of revenge
- 2 Lack of trust in the reporting system
- 3 I believe that it is not my responsibility
- 4 Fear of damaging working relations
- 5 Other (please specify)

4. DID YOU SEEK GUIDANCE OR ADVICE FROM OTHERS BEFORE MAKING THE DECISION?

1 Yes 2 No

5. IF YOU SOUGHT GUIDANCE OR DIRECTION, WHO DID YOU CONSULT WITH (E.G., A SUPERVISOR, A FRIEND, A FAMILY MEMBER) AND WHAT IMPACT DID THEIR ADVICE HAVE ON YOUR DECISION?

6. WERE YOU AWARE OF THE WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICIES OR MECHANISMS AT YOUR INSTITUTION BEFORE MAKING THE DECISION?

1 Yess 2 No

7. IF YOU WERE AWARE OF WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICIES, DID THIS FACT INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO REPORT OR REMAIN SILENT?

1 Report 2 Remain silent

8. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT YOUR DECISION WAS THE RIGHT ONE, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

1 Very confident

2 Somewhat confident


3 Somewhat confident

4 Not confident at all

APPENDIX V – ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TABLES

WOULD YOU REPORT THE CORRUPTION/IRREGULARITY YOU DISCOVERED IN YOUR INSTITUTION?

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F – Statistical	P-value	Partial Eta Squared
Model	84.095	20	4.205	37.686	.000	.956***
Experimental group versus control group	.269	1	.269	2.412	.1029	.064*
Degree of familiarization with integrity and ethics	.143	2	.071	.640	.534	.035
Degree of importance of integrity/ ethics	.652	2	.326	2.920	.067	.143**
How comfortable you feel about reporting unethical behavior?	.346	4	.086	.775	.549	.081
Have you ever noticed or experienced any form of corruption?	.167	1	.167	1.499	.229	.041
Have you ever been aware of any colleagues who reported (denounced) unethical behavior?	.010	1	.010	.086	.770	.002
Did you seek guidance or advice from others before making the decision?	.998	1	.998	8.949	.005	.204**
Were you aware of whistleblower protection policies or mechanisms?	.012	1	.012	.103	.750	.003
How confident are you that your decision was the right one, given the circumstances?	1.121	3	.374	3.349	.030	.223**
Common variables						
Gender	.047	1	.047	.424	.519	.012
Age	.037	1	.037	.328	.571	.009
Work experience	.047	1	.047	.417	.523	.012
R Squared = .956 (R Adjusted R Squared = .930)						



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