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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Samuel B. Sam

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Implementation of Corruption Mitigation Strategies by Public Sector Leadership in Sierra Leone

by

Samuel B. Sam

MS Management, Troy State University, Troy, Alabama, 1998

BS Economics, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

November 2023

Abstract

Corruption is an elusive phenomenon, and it directly or indirectly impacts the daily lives of people globally. In Africa, leaders are partly blamed for persistent corruption due to poor leadership. Corruption persists in developing countries despite various strategies put in place to fight it. Sierra Leone has specifically struggled to implement mitigation strategies to reduce levels of corruption, and few studies have been conducted on lived experiences of public sector leaders pertaining to implementing corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to identify and report on those lived experiences. The two conceptual lenses of corruption, microlevel/human agency, and macrolevel/structural helped to elucidate implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in this study. The research question was designed to explore lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. Data was collected from a purposive sample of 10 participants via Zoom using semistructured interviews. To analyze data, Moustakas' modified van Kaam method was used. Outcomes of this study revealed challenges and accomplishments as underlying essences of participants' lived experiences. Two most endorsed challenges were allegiances, and influence peddling, and two most endorsed accomplishments were stakeholders support, and policies and programs. Results may enhance literature on corruption and reduce corruption in ministries, departments, and agencies in Sierra Leone. Results may trigger positive social changes, and foster progress and development in Sierra Leone.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Samuel Baimba Sam, and to my mother, Elizabeth Etta Sam. Thank you for the Agape love, and for dedicating tremendous time and resources to raising my sibling and I under enabling environment. Papa, you were a great, loving, and dedicated father who showed us love, and taught us to believe in ourselves. You reminded us that we were second to none, that we are special and unique in our own ways, and that no one is better than us. I thank you for giving us that confidence and self-esteem that have carried us through challenging times of our lives. Continue to rest in peace, we miss you dearly Papa.

Ngor Etta (my mother), your show of strength and courage has guided us, and it will continue to serve as our source of strength. You are a caring woman of substance, virtue, grit, and grace. You always reminded us that the key to success is the combination of prayer and hard work. I have always used that key, and it continues to unlock doors for me. Thank you Ngor Etta, my loving mother.

To my children, Christian Maada Sam, Seinya Sarah Sam, and Moi-Esbe Agape Sam, it is a special dedication to encourage you to pursue your dreams. I hope this dissertation serves as a light, and an inspiration to help you achieve your goals in life.

Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to every member of my family. May the good Lord continue to strengthen our family bond and give us the grace to love and support each other.

Acknowledgments

Thank you, our Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and the sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for giving me life and strength every day. I will continue to dwell in your presence and under your protection.

I would also like to acknowledge all my schoolteachers and mentors, from elementary to graduate school, who have contributed to my educational journey and have helped me to achieve this goal. A special acknowledgement to Dr. Elizabeth H. Thompson, my dissertation committee chairperson and mentor. You were tremendous, and I will never forget your dedication to helping me succeed. I hope to render the same service to others as you did for me. Thank you, Dr. Thompson.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

African leaders are partly blamed for the problem of persistent corruption because of poor leadership (Okunola et al., 2019). Corruption, however, is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. According to Ledeneva et al. (2017), for corruption mitigation measures to be effective, the phenomenon must be properly understood, modeled, designed, implemented, and monitored in context. There are many definitions of corruption, but it is commonly defined as abuse of public power for personal gain (Nye, 1967). No single conceptualization of corruption is exhaustive. However, Zimelis (2020) theorized corruption using two broad lenses: the microlevel, or human agency lens, and macrolevel, or structural lens. These two distinct lenses were used to explain the concept of corruption in this study.

The public sector provides goods and services for its citizens. Seifert (2018) posited that trustworthiness in state institutions may bring about substantial positive social changes for citizens. Therefore, employing effective corruption mitigation strategies is critical to reduce levels of corruption in any society.

In this chapter, I address the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary and transition.

Background of the Study

The leaders of the African continent endure constant criticism due to poor leadership and corruption (Okunola et al., 2019; Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019).

In Sierra Leone, the government's inability, or unwillingness to implement regulations to control corruption has driven public distrust and rendered most public institutions unable to manage national disasters, such as the Ebola epidemic in 2014 (Ganson & M'cleod, 2019). The survey conducted in Sierra Leone in July 2018 by Afrobarometer revealed that many people, especially the less educated and very poor, reported paying bribes to access basic healthcare services at public health facilities (Sanny, 2020).

The problem of implementing effective corruption mitigation strategies is not unique to Sierra Leone. Pring and Vrushi (2019) surveyed citizens about government leaders in African countries and showed over 50% of citizens in African countries believe their leaders are performing poorly at controlling corruption. Pring and Vrushi also found that while corruption varies extensively across countries and public institutions, challenges of corruption are complex and multifaceted. As a result, there is a need for fundamental and systemic changes to address how corruption is understood and addressed. Gorsira et al. (2018) sought to understand why public sector leaders and other businesspeople engage in corruption. Gorsira et al. found that people consider other factors for engaging in corruption other than economic reasons, such as personal moral conviction, perceptions of colleagues, and complying with rules on corruption.

According to Ledeneva et al. (2017), because corruption is context-sensitive, its understanding, policy design, and implementation should be addressed in context to produce policies that are reflective of the complexity of local environments. Adeleye et al. (2020) claimed there is a gap in literature between ethical theories propagated in schools and actual practice, especially in the African context. The important question is

how different cultures affect both Sub-Saharan African (SSA) ethics and Western or Asian ethics. Several studies (Barnard et al. 2017; Edozie 2017; Metz 2018) have made the argument that social, cultural, economic, and environmental differences between the African continent and the rest of the world should be taken into consideration when making judgements on matters relating to ethics in Africa.

Different conditions in various parts of the world make a compelling case for having alternative paradigms to explain complex social phenomena such as corruption. Barnard et al. (2017) argued the extreme conditions in Africa expose and undermine the implicit assumptions that underlie most of the existent organizational and human theories. It is therefore plausible to assume there are alternative paradigms to the Anglo-Saxon ideas involving corruption that remain to be identified, described, and reported in different parts of the world with different cultural orientations. Sambala et al., (2020) stated humanity, compassion, and social responsibility, all ideas that underlie the concept of *Ubuntu* (I am because we are), constitute the core structure of ethical decision-making for most public sector leaders in Africa. Sambala et al. further argued that, in SSA, the concept of *Ubuntu* could explain decisions made by leaders regarding ethical matters, and thus may serve as an alternative paradigm to Western conventional understanding of ethical issues.

Rethinking corruption with a focus on analysis based on fundamental issues in terms of forms, where it occurs, direction, and levels of corruption (Heywood, 2017), will help policymakers develop and implement effective corruption mitigation strategies. Public officials can improve implementation processes and address the policy-

implementation gap by focusing on relevant factors that cause policy failures (Hudson et al., 2019). However, as Friesl et al. (2021) suggested, the focus on various factors within a specific context and strategy-as-practice approach hold promise for implementing mitigation strategies.

Problem Statement

Corruption is one of the world's major problems, directly or indirectly impacting the daily lives of people (Dahal & Bista, 2018). The problem of corruption is highly prevalent and elusive. Tremendous efforts have been made by governments, development partners, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to promote anticorruption efforts (Gutterman, & Lohaus, 2018; Vian, 2020). The general problem is that corruption prevails in many countries despite steps undertaken by various institutions and governments, including legal and other institutional strategies (Hope 2017). There is a plethora of research on corruption and anticorruption implementation strategies. The literature, however, showed there are tremendous difficulties involved with developing and implementing any strategic plan. Most authors (e.g., Alharthy et al., 2017; Cândido & Santos, 2018) claimed that 30% to 70% of all development and implementation of strategic plans fail. The problem of implementing effective anticorruption strategies is complex, and it is a severe problem for most institutions, organizations, and governments. Heywood (2017) posited that analyzing corruption without paying attention to types, contexts, actors, and other factors that enable it misleads both policy prescription and implementation. Sufficient attention must be paid to the specific issue of corruption.

The specific problem in Sierra Leone is that public institutions continue to struggle to implement mitigation strategies to reduce levels of corruption (Fayiah, 2022). There are limited studies regarding lived experiences of leaders in the public sector in Sierra Leone pertaining to implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies. Most studies regarding corruption mitigation strategies have been done within the broad context of the civil service or public sector (Akosa et al., 2020; Andreoni, 2017; Kroukamp, & de Vries, 2020; Nicolaides, & Manyama, 2020; Olivier, & Schwella, 2018; Onwujekwe et al., 2020). Moreover, most corruption and anticorruption studies lack systematic appraisals of the issue of corruption in the context of the diverse institutional makeup of the public sector (Naidoo, 2017).

This study involved addressing the contextual gap by paying sufficient attention to types, actors, and factors that enable corruption within the public service in Sierra Leone. There is a need for more studies that establish, and relay lived experiences involving implementing corruption mitigation strategies in as many contexts as possible. Such studies may enhance existing literature by providing context-specific knowledge regarding corruption and revealing the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of mainstream corruption mitigation approaches. Different public sector contexts need context-specific implementation models because context may affect strategy and execution (Olivier & Schwella, 2018).

The role of corruption strategy implementation cannot be overemphasized, especially in Africa, where corruption is highly prevalent. Corruption is complex**,** and as a result, factors that shape or influence effective implementation of corruption mitigation

strategies are multileveled and multifaceted, and it is seemingly a problem that requires complex systems thinking (Hudson et al., 2019). Heywood (2017) noted that, notwithstanding the plethora of research over the past quarter of a century, there are dismal results of effective policy interventions.

Africa as a continent has lagged in terms of research regarding strategy implementation, with the U.S., UK, and Europe responsible for about 70% of studies on strategy implementation, and the remaining 30% coming from other regions, including Australia, India, Brazil, and Latin America (Alharthy et al., 2017). In Sierra Leone, public institutions continue to struggle to implement mitigation strategies to fight corruption (Fayiah, 2022; Svärd, 2017), and there are limited studies on public sector senior leadership experiences pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies. Existing studies in other parts of the world, despite providing useful information, may not adequately address unique challenges in Sierra Leone.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify, and report lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. To collect data, the qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach was used. Data analysis was done using Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis. The phenomenon of interest was lived experiences of senior officials in the public sector in Sierra Leone pertaining to implementation corruption mitigation strategies. Therefore, a purposeful sample of senior leaders in the public sector in Sierra Leone was used.

Research Question

The research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is discussed in this section. Johnson et al. (2020) postulated that the conceptual framework of a study is used to provide justification for the research question and methodology. Johnson et al. further claimed that the conceptual framework of a study is also used to provide perspectives that help to explain results and conclusions. In this study, the underlying concept was corruption. Jancsics (2019) posited anticorruption policies must be supported by clear anticorruption concepts. However, there is no single exhaustive conceptualization of corruption. Zimelis (2020) conceptualized corruption using two broad lenses: the microlevel, or human agency lens, and the macrolevel, or structural lens. These two lenses explain a wide range of corrupt activities. Zimelis elaborated that the microlevel involves individual decisions and explanations of differences in behaviors which underscore moralist and economic/rational choices (e.g., poverty, religion, greed). The macrolevel involves social behavior because of different institutions and circumstances (e.g., organizational culture) that influence corrupt actions, according to Zimelis.

Failure of anticorruption efforts is attributed mostly to using flawed lenses to understand corruption (Marquette & Peiffer, 2018). The two conceptual lenses of corruption, microlevel/human agency, and macrolevel/structural (Zimelis, 2020) help to

elucidate implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in this study. Bahoo et al. (2020) synthesized the literature on corruption and concluded that corruption is any unsanctioned activity, including falsification, bribery, and patronage that is undertaken by public or private officials for personal benefit. Despite the plethora of research on corruption, Pertiwi (2018) suggested the global anticorruption movement must endeavor to understand many practices labeled as corruption within a specific context.

Exploration of meanings within a specific context enables anticorruption implementers to evaluate and compare existing corruption mitigation strategies with actual corruption practices. Such exploration can be conducted using Husserl's transcendental phenomenology approach, which was employed in this study, and data were analyzed using Moustakas modified van Kaam method of analysis.

A conceptual framework which combined human agency and structural lenses of corruption as well as a transcendental phenomenological approach in conjunction with Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis, was used to address the phenomenon of interest. Results provide potential methods for improving implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in the public sector of Sierra Leone.

Nature of the Study

In this study, the qualitative research approach, and specifically Husserl's transcendental phenomenology approach in conjunction with Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis were used to address the research question. Moustakas' modified van Kaam method was used to address the research question. The usefulness of transcendental phenomenological approach to identify a phenomenon of interest, from

the perspective of the participant, is underscored (Moustakas, 1994). Unlike the Husserlian phenomenological approach, Heidegger's (1889–1976) phenomenological approach emphasizes reflexivity on the part of researcher, to revise, reinterpret, and reconstruct continuously, the original meanings during textual interpretation (Tuffour, 2017). The Heideggerian phenomenological approach was beyond the scope of this study, but it presented a good future-research opportunity to complement this study.

Husserl (1965) posited phenomenology involves investigating that which all other sciences have ignored. In this study, the phenomenon of interest, which is corruption, is complex. For this study, qualitative research methods were considered most appropriate in natural settings using interviews and reflexive journaling (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). That is contrary to quantitative research method, which stresses causation or correlation.

Data collection was done through Zoom interviews using recruited participants. With the qualitative phenomenological design, interviewing is the primary data collection approach (Patton, 2015). Umanailo et al. (2019) posited that words and actions of participants are the main types of data in qualitative studies, with documents and artifacts as additional sources. Interviews were scheduled via phone calls or email to discuss the following: appropriate time schedules, informed consent, eligibility, data collection procedures, and tools (computers and recording devices).

The appropriate sample size for participants in a phenomenological study range from 3 to 25, or until saturation is achieved. Moser and Korstjens (2017) posited data saturation is reached whenever the researcher thinks enough details regarding the phenomenon of interest have been acquired and new data are redundant. According to

O'Halloran et al. (2018), some data-collection tools include utilizing a purposive sample size, interviews, written documents, the use of everyday local language, and the elimination of elements that compromise essential meaning. The data captured by the various data-collection tools was used to attain the purpose of this study.

A purposeful sample was selected of senior leaders from a specific public institution in Sierra Leone with at least six months of experience pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies and were serving in that role during the period when I was conducting this study. Participant selection was done using the staff list on the specific public sector website in Sierra Leone, first by identifying and contacting the head of the specific public sector, and then using the snowball technique to access other potential participants. Atkinson and Flint (2001) referred to snowballing as a means of accessing a population of interest that may be inaccessible to researchers. The focus on a specific public institution was to facilitate context-sensitive policies (Ledeneva et al., 2017) aligned with the complexity of local environments and beyond any single conceptualization of corruption.

To attain the purpose of this this study, Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis was used, with manual organization and categorization of data. This method involves horizontalization/verbatim transcriptions, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, final identification of invariant constituents, individual textural description, textual description per individual, and textural-structural description combination.

Moustakas' modified van Kaam method facilitated identification and reporting of meaning of participants' lived experiences.

Definitions

Corruption: Misuse or abuse of power for private gain (Nye, 1967).

Implementation: Execution of predefined practice, program, policy, or guideline to accomplish a goal (Leeman et al., 2017).

Mitigating Strategy: Any strategy used to lessen the impact of something (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Public Sector: A set of government institutions including publicly owned and publicly controlled enterprises, as well as departments that provide goods and services (Guidance, 2011).

Assumptions

The objective of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to identify, and report lived experiences of senior public sector leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. I assumed that the best approach to address this study was to use the qualitative transcendental phenomenological design. Qualitative phenomenology is used for gaining in-depth insights regarding a phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I assumed Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis helped to reduce bias and enhance trustworthiness. Moreover, I assumed that purposeful sampling improved trustworthiness of this study.

According to O'Halloran et al. (2018) using interviews and everyday language for collecting data is important. I assumed participants provided information regarding lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. Transcendental phenomenology attempts to capture the whole story in a study (Jackson et al., 2018), and I assumed its use in this study might help to identify new concepts about corruption which may enhance literature on corruption.

Scope and Delimitations

Ten participants were interviewed until data saturation was achieved. Participants included only senior public officials with at least one year of experience implementing corruption mitigation strategies in specific public sectors in Sierra Leone. Selection was done within the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Sierra Leone, so data represented only senior public officials in that specific sector.

Heywood (2017) suggested corruption can be better addressed when it is analyzed from different angles in terms of the kind of corruption, direction, and level of corruption, and especially where it occurs. I focused on the ACC. In Sierra Leone using a purposive sample of only senior public sector officials. Corruption is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, I addressed senior public sector leaders with at least one year of lived experience and who were involved at the time of the study in the implementation of corruption mitigation strategies.

Limitations

One main challenge of research in general, but especially phenomenology, is to put aside prior knowledge of the phenomenon and maintain objectivity. Bracketing, which involves recognizing and setting aside one's personal biases, assumptions, and prior knowledge regarding a phenomenon of interest, is a practical weakness of the qualitative phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 2009). Merleau-Ponty (1962) argued objectivity can be enhanced, though it can never be fully achieved, by acknowledging biases and prior knowledge. I was born and raised in Sierra Leone, so my prior knowledge of the general opinions of citizens about their public leaders made it difficult for me to remain unbiased. There were also the possibility participants were not totally honest and open about their lived experiences.

The main source of data was interviews. This was another limitation. Participants may be limited in their abilities to clearly articulate their lived experiences. Webb and Welsh (2019) suggested the results of a study are a function of the population of the study, as well as the specific time of the data collection. Depending on the scope of the study, some influential concomitant factors associated with lived experiences may be missed, which may affect quality of data. Another limitation of this study was its scope, which was confined only to lived experiences of public sector senior leaders at a specific public sector in Sierra Leone.

Significance of the Study

Ghafoury et al. (2020) suggested that a phenomenological approach involves synthesizing and distilling various experiences and diverse situations by examining

subjective meanings, situatedness, and temporality of phenomena. The objective of this study was to enhance conceptualization and knowledge of corruption in the context of Sierra Leone. There is need to recognize and report unvarying aspects of a phenomenon as they seem, which improves the thought process about a taken-for-granted phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018).

Qutoshi (2018) posited outcomes of a transcendental phenomenological study can improve how people think about a phenomenon. This study provides unique and useful knowledge that may enhance and advance existing literature on corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. This may be useful to the government of Sierra Leone to design and implement effective policies and programs for another department in the public sector. Other governments in Africa operating under similar parameters and cultures may use the results of this study. This study may lead to positive social change via controlling corruption, increased trust, and cooperation between leaders and citizens.

Significance for Practice

Kubbe and Engelbert (2018) suggested that country-specific cultural contexts and characteristics influence behaviors of groups of people. Outcomes of this study may also provide useful guidance for public sector leaders in Sierra Leone and other parts of the world pertaining to the implementation of corruption mitigation strategies. Additionally, this may help to advance practice by encouraging leaders in other sectors to reassess context-specific factors that may aid or hinder implementation of corruption mitigation strategies.

Significance for Theory

Kolaiti (2017) claimed theory results from transforming vague and ambiguous pretheoretical claims into clearer, unambiguous, and testable ones. This study, which involves rich descriptions of lived experiences, may prove useful for developing new ethical decision-making theories and/or enhancing existing literature. The transcendental phenomenological approach is pretheoretical (Giorgi, 2009). With the transcendental phenomenology, participant experiences are underscored, which may produce insights that are invariant and generalizable. The attempt to capture the whole story in transcendental phenomenology (Jackson et al., 2018), may produce new constructs that can serve as building blocks. This study may serve to construct new theories or concepts that may apply to different settings.

It is also important to acquire knowledge and ideas on corruption that reflect unique worldviews with underlying shared elements. The outcomes of this study may enhance existing literature on corruption. According to Kazanjian (2019), future research on corruption must reflect accounts of participants living in various settings, with rich descriptions of their own unique cultural experiences.

Significance for Social Change

Knowledge about lived experiences pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies may lead to improvements in terms of corruption control. Ko et al. (2018) stated that followers may perceive their ethical leaders as authentic and courageous, which can produce positive follower outcomes. These positive outcomes may be due to increased collaboration, reduced tension and conflicts, and increased

cooperation among citizens, all of which may create conducive environments in the country and lead to positive social changes. Seifert (2018) suggested that trustworthiness in state institutions impacts trust in the general population at home and abroad, which may also trigger local and direct foreign investments and, subsequently, produce many positive social changes.

Summary and Transition

The prevalence of corruption in the public sector presents serious challenges for many institutions, governments, and countries around the world, despite tremendous efforts to address it (Hope, 2017). There is need for more focused and context-specific approaches to address the phenomenon of corruption (Pertiwi, 2018). The gap in knowledge regarding implementing corruption mitigation strategies is apparent because there are a limited number of studies conducted around the world pertaining to these strategies. In Chapter 2, literature is reviewed regarding the phenomenon of corruption and the context of Sierra Leone in particular.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Corruption persists in developing countries despite various strategies put in place to fight it, including legal and institutional measures (Hope, 2017). Sierra Leone continues to struggle to implement mitigation strategies to reduce corruption. There are also very limited studies on lived experiences of public sector senior leadership pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to identify and report those lived experiences.

Corruption is context sensitive, and it varies extensively across countries and public institutions. Using both microlevel lens (why and how people take part in corrupt activities) and macrolevel lens (how social norms influence the actions of individuals), it is possible to explicate context-specific outcomes that are useful for policy formulation and implementation. Rethinking corruption in terms of its types, where it occurs, its direction, and levels can help policymakers develop and implement effective corruption mitigation strategies. This chapter includes literature search strategies, conceptual framework, information about the phenomenon of and factors which lead to corruption, approaches to corruption, history of Sierra Leone, history of corruption in Sierra Leone, and present state of corruption in Sierra Leone, review of literature, overview of selected studies in the literature, and overview of studies on corruption in Sierra Leone.

Literature Search Strategy

In this study, I used the following databases: ABI/INFORM Collection, Academic Source Complete, Business Complete, SAGE Journals, Emerald Management,

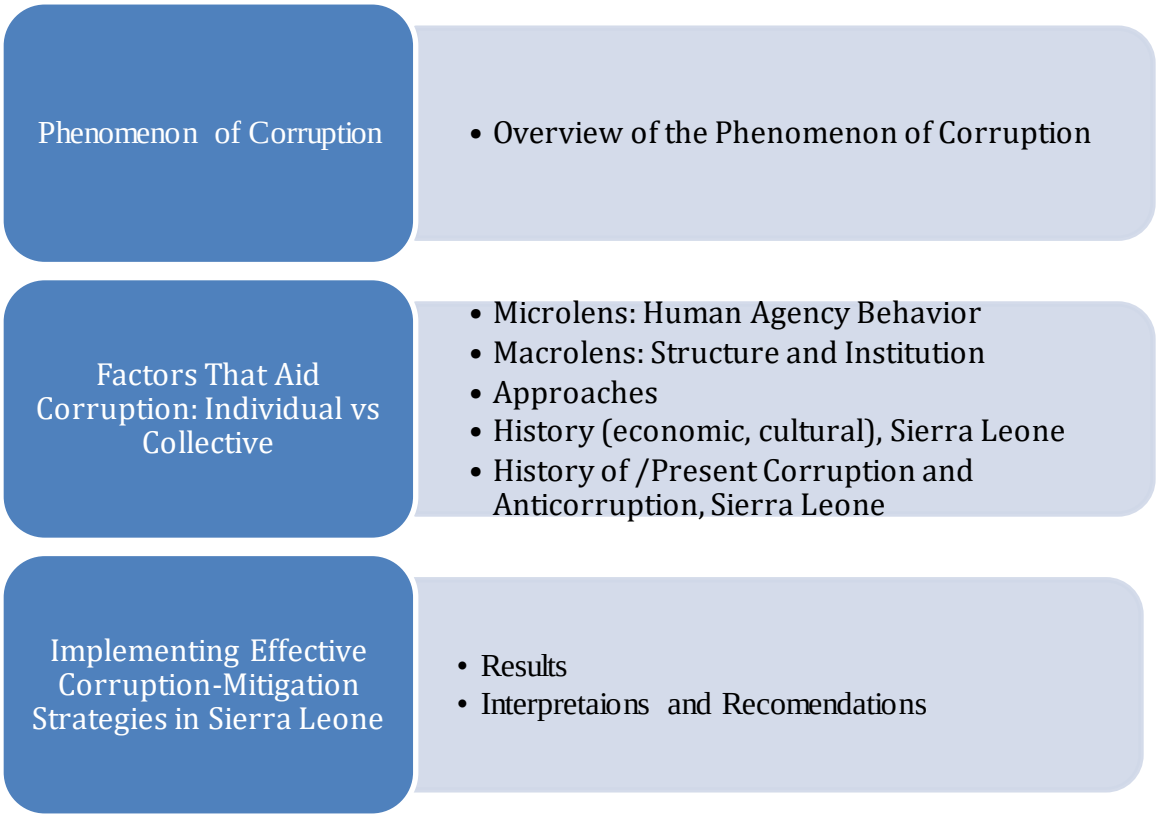
EBSCOHost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. To complement literature, researchers must search beyond specific databases which contain a representative set of literature to larger or global databases (Harding et al., 2021). Google Scholar was another source used for a broader literature search to obtain a more comprehensive search string. As Davis (2019) suggested, Key search terms helped to break down the topic of interest into concepts. These key search terms were used individually as well as in concert with other key search terms that were relevant to this study. I used the following search terms: *lived experiences, corruption, mitigation, implementing, public sector, strategies, leadership,* and *Sierra Leone.*

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework. The first two upper sections (phenomenon of corruption and factors that aid corruption) are discussed in this section. Implementing effective corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone is addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Diagram



Phenomenon of Corruption

Corruption is a serious problem in many countries. Sherma (2017) posited that corruption is a universal phenomenon that is as old as human civilization. Enste and Heldman (2017) suggested that the classical view of corruption, which involves only less-developed countries, is weak because no country is immune to corruption. Enste and Heldman claimed that more than two-thirds of countries worldwide, including half of G20 countries, significantly suffer due to various negative effects of corruption, even

though those effects tend to be worse in less-developed countries. Corruption negatively impacts bureaucratic efficiency, local and business environments, political atmosphere and civil liberties, economic welfare, foreign investment, income gaps, international business, political stability, parallel economy, and human capital flight (Dimant & Tosato, 2018; Enste & Heldman, 2017). The negative consequences associated with corruption are so compelling that Pertiwi (2018) described it as the enemy of humanity, a harmful and distorting element of society.

The phenomenon of corruption is multidimensional and entails a complex combination of human behaviors exhibited by various actors (Villeneuve et al., 2017). Corruption has been pervasive throughout history (Dixit, 2018). Baez-Camargo and Passas (2017) stated despite substantial investments in anticorruption by multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and private companies across numerous countries, progress has been limited and even insignificant in some cases. Efforts to curb corruption with implementation of laws and measures have not been effective in many parts of the world. The problem remains pervasive because of bad policies and institutional governance with underlying ineffectiveness or a lack of policy implementation (Zulu, 2018). Considering the persistence of corruption throughout the world, despite serious attempts by many countries, organizations, and institutions to address it, I addressed why anticorruption reforms are ineffective. Ledeneva et al. (2017) offered plausible explanatory factors for these outcomes: poor understanding of the concept of corruption, bad measurement and improper monitoring, and ineffective policies and poor

implementation. In this section of the literature review, emphasis is put on the first issue outlined, which is the issue of corruption, and how it is conceptualized.

Many authors (Enste & Heldman, 2017; Wickberg & Mugellini, 2020) argued that corruption is defined in diverse ways. However, there is a commonly used definition of corruption in literature. Nye (1967) referred to corruption as misuse or abuse of public power for private gain. Heywood (2017) argued the definition of corruption proffered Nye, and used also by Transparency International (TI), and the World Bank, is less than ideal. Heywood posited that this definition of corruption captures the essence of the term but does not address the question of what exactly constitutes abuse or who decides. Heywood also postulated that a central issue surrounding the commonly used definition is that it is too simple and does not capture complexity of the phenomenon of corruption in various contexts.

The phenomenon of corruption is centered on people, their institutions, and their environment. Suleiman and Othman (2017) suggested that a cursory look at the literature on corruption reveals a multitude of definitions and meanings of corruption. This is because humans have divergent perspectives and orientations regarding moral, economic, historical, political, bureaucratic, legal, social, and anthropological issues. For example, according to Hugo et al. (2022), the anthropological definition of corruption encompasses complicated and subtle sets of corruption behaviors that extend beyond greed and abuse of position or power. There may be other elements at play, such as hidden alliances that could redefine social norms and social relations, and as Feldman (2018) suggested, the field of anthropology has opened the debate about the meaning of corruption, especially

regarding its boundaries and effects. The literature is replete with divergent meanings and nuances associated with the phenomenon of corruption (Ang, 2020; Bauhr & Charron, 2020; Graycar & Jancsics 2017). Ghaniy and Hastiadi (2017), however, argued that despite the multidimensionality of corruption, the definition of corruption as an abuse of public power for personal gain (Nye, 1976) has gained ground in the literature on corruption.

Rose (2018) suggested that the quest to get a definition of corruption that is conceptually robust, is a herculean task in which conceptual clarity becomes messy due to the ever-growing dimensions and perspectives that evolve. Mackey et al. (2018) also argued that it is critical to have great clarity, such as regarding the specific type of corruption, because there are nuanced but crucial differences between the various forms, including kleptocracy, bribery, and influence-peddling. Although there are classifications of corruption such as the bottom-up and top-down, and administrative and political corruption (Mugellini et al, 2021), Heywood (2018) argued that corruption is not dichotomous. Rather, one could get a better understanding of corruption using the concept of a spectrum, containing a range of positions, and not as a specific value. Understanding corruption as a spectrum is best captured by the bifurcation of corruption studies in the literature into micro/individual human agency and macro/structural (Minto, 2019; Zimelis, 2020). The phenomenon of corruption, regardless of its types, forms, classifications, directions, and levels, is centered on human behaviors. Heywood (2018) proposed dealing with the cancer of corruption by focusing on what drives individuals to take part in corrupt behavior. The center of all corruption phenomena is human behavior.

Heywood postulated that focusing on when and why people take part in corrupt activities (microlevel lens), and the influence of social norms and institutions on their behaviors on corruption (macrolevel lens), will produce better outcomes regarding both research and policy formulation.

Zimelis (2020) elaborated on individual human agency in terms of individual decision-making and explaining differences in behavior based on moralist and economic/rational choices. Minto (2019) underscored the micro perspective with a focus on the key incentives and crucial variables that determine individual behavior, such as individual incentives, rent seeking, and evaluating power and privilege. Regarding the macro or structural agency perspective, Zimelis (2020) suggested that social behavior results are propelled by different institutions and circumstances (organizational culture, political climate, peer pressure, and so on) that drive corrupt actions. Minto (2019) supported the macro perspective by emphasizing the dynamic interplay between corruption and its economic, social, and institutional aspects.

Based on the commonly used definition of corruption, which is the abuse or misuse of power or authority of public office for private benefit or gain (Nye, 1967), the underlying tenet of corruption is abuse, a human behavior exhibited either from the personal perspective (micro) or from the structural perspective (macro). Understanding the mechanisms and channels of corruption, regardless of its dimensions and characteristics, reveals the flawed lenses used to understand the phenomenon. Tackling corruption begins with an understanding of what people contend with when to decide use corruption as a solution (Marquette & Pfeiffer, 2018). Many factors aid corruption.

According to Gorsira et al. (2018), whether individuals are corruption-prone depends on their moral conviction, their perceptions of others on the issue of corruption, and the difficulties experienced in complying with the rules regarding corruption. These individuals (microlevel) and structural factors (macrolevel) are discussed in the following sections: Factors That Aid Corruption, and Approaches of Anticorruption.

Factors That Aid Corruption

The concept of corruption remains contentious due to its multifaceted and multidimensional nature, and the debate extends to many areas of corruption, including the levels of analysis. Some authors have broadly categorized the analyses of corruption into three levels: micro/individual, meso/organizational, and macro/societal (Binions, 2019; De Graaf, 2007; Dimant & Schulte, 2016; Gorsira et al 2018; Mingo, & Faggiano, 2020: Pertiwi, 2018). De Graaf (2007), however, noted that an organization is a microcosm of society, and the culture of an organization reflects society at large. In this study, the distinct bifurcation of corruption is discussed from two main perspectives: micro (individual factors) and macro (the conglomeration of external factors outside of the individual, including cultural, social, economic, and political (Minto, 2019; Zimelis, 2020).

According to Gorsira et al. (2018), corruption results from the decisions of individuals (micro), but those individuals do not operate in a vacuum. The literature has a host of structural (macro) factors, including economic, social, political, and cultural factors that drive corruption, and isolating the specifics of these factors is a

contextual matter (Zulu, 2018). The two factors, micro and macro, that aid corruption are discussed in detail.

Micro

Academics and practitioners have struggled with the issue of explaining factors of corruption. According to Gorsira et al. (2018), it is the individual or agent who engages in corruption. Therefore, the need to focus on explaining corruption at the unit, individual, or microlevel is underscored. The individual behavior and decision-making process can be explained at the microlevel by using two principal lenses: the rational choice/public choice, and the moralist/bad apple (De Graaf, 2007).

Rational Choice or Public Choice

This choice of lens emphasizes the behavior of the individual based on a conscious and deliberate, mindful, strategic, and self-interested means, which involves a decision-making process that maximizes individual utility (Becker, 1976; De Graaf, 2007; Juraev, 2018). De Graaf (2007) postulated that the rational or public choice lens contrasts with most of the other perspectives in the literature on corruption behaviors, in which individual behavior is driven by causes beyond the individual's or agent's control. In contrast to examining general determining factors, the rational-choice perspective focuses on the specific situation of an agent (e.g., a corrupt official) who calculates the merits and demerits of their actions.

Dupuy and Neset (2018) stated that the rational-choice lens also considers mental capacity, time, and motivation as prime factors that should be considered when individuals make decisions about engaging in corruption. Dupuy and Neset cautioned that

the conventional presuppositions regarding willingness to engage in corruption may not be entirely credible. This claim is based on Kahneman (2011) work, which demonstrated an individual's decision-making and behavior are subject to a variety of cognitive biases. Such bias may include the rationalization of different standards or reasons including caring for a family member (Prasad et al., 2019). Whatever the motivation for corrupt behavior, rationalization occurs, and rationalization is predominantly based on weighing benefits versus costs.

Dupuy and Neset (2018) stressed that cost/benefit analysis is central to the rational choice/public choice perspective. The researchers found evidence that people have the tendency to be corrupt when they discern less harm from corrupt behavior and when there is personal gain. The rational-choice perspective focuses on the deliberate personal calculation of the individual. De Graaf (2007) asked the interesting question of whether becoming corrupt is making bad calculations or whether some people consider corruption a good deal. The answer lies partly in the following moralist or bad apple perspective of corruption behavior.

Moralist or Bad Apple

This behavioral perspective (Gorsira et al, 2018; Minto, 2019; Mishra, 2018; Prasad et al., 2019; Zimelis, 2020) is another lens utilized to account of the phenomenon of corruption. Zimelis (2020) used the bad-apples metaphor to describe people with a high predisposition toward criminal activity; thus, they can engage in corrupt behavior with relative ease. However, Bayley (2022) cautioned there are alternative aspects to the

bad apple perspective, such as not having self-restraint or shallow mental and moral development, which may lead to good individuals making bad ethical choices.

The moralist argument has always been contentious in the literature on corruption. De Graaf (2007) argued that people must first understand the difference between good and bad to know who or what is bad. and who or what is good. Underlying De Graaf's idea is one of the fundamental challenges of the phenomenon of corruption, the normative-approach challenge (Ledeneva, 2018). Ledeneva (2018) argued the moralist stance on corruption, which is deviation from the norm, is especially problematic in societies in which corruption is systemic, and the vernacular knowledge of morality is best produced by the local contextualization of perceptions and practical norms.

As the debate on the moralist's perspective lingers in the literature on corruption behavior, some (Vannucci, 2017; Villarreal-Diaz, 2018) have argued that Corruption extends beyond the individual (moral character or rational/public choice) to a matrix of external forces embedded in institutions and in the general environment and circumstances of the individual (Vannucci, 2017; Villarreal-Diaz, 2018). These external forces are discussed below under the macrolevel analysis of corruption behavior.

Macro

Villarreal-Diaz (2018) argued corruption occasionally is a moral issue, and one must understand also the macro or institutional atmosphere and influences that compel people to act corruptly or virtuously. Macro-oriented research, unlike the microlevel analyses of corruption, which focuses solely on the individual, is oriented toward identifying the macro variables (economic factors, democracy, institutions) affecting

corruption risks. The issue of corruption is complicated, and getting a comprehensive account of the causes of corruption is difficult. De Graaf (2007) noted that most of the causal factors of corruption are theorized and mixed with empirical evidence. Several elements, including various econometric perspectives or large-scale datasets, explain the contradictions and inconsistencies in empirical results (Dimant, & Tosato, 2018) or the lack of consensus of specific structural factors (Zimelis, 2020). Zimelis also noted that despite the variation of elements and conflicting empirical findings, the knowledge of these relationships (between corruption and institutions) has been particularly useful at the national level, despite not being well researched at the sectoral and local levels of corruption.

There is no unanimous agreement among scholars on the explanatory variables of corruption, but there is a consensus in the literature that institutional circumstances (economic, political, social, cultural, legal, organizational, governmental) influence individual or agent behavior (Dimant & Tosato, 2018; Jetter & Parmeter, 2018; Zimelis, 2020). Corruption's behavioral outcomes are functions of different institutions and circumstances. As a result, researchers should seek to understand the relationships between institutional circumstances or structures (economic, political, cultures, legal, and so on) and corruption, and vice versa (Suleiman and Othman, 2017).

A review of literature on corruption behaviors disclosed that different perspectives can be used to explain corrupt behavior at the macrolevel. Some authors (De Graaf 2007; Fernando & Bandara, 2020; Jancsics, 2019; Juraev, 2018) have highlighted

and discussed the following critical lenses that are useful for the macrolevel analysis of corruption behavior:

Organizational Culture

This perspective centers on the norms, core beliefs and practices of society behaviors of people or agent that create a group culture that may promote corrupt behavior (Jancsics, 2019). The contextual features that promote the agent's corrupt behavior are the focus of the cultural lens, not the corrupt agent or official.

Clashing Moral Values

This lens emphasizes the conflict between legal or civil-service norms and widely accepted social norms, especially when there is an overlap between the agent's private and public roles. The agent faces a challenge managing both the moral personal duties to the agent's friends, family, or group and the official obligations (Juraev, 2018).

Ethos of Public Administration

This perspective emphasizes the fundamental changes in culture and social structures within public management and society that influence corruption (Fernando & Bandara, 2020). The agent's effectiveness during public sector reforms is the focus of this lens. A lack of moral standards, which undermine the normal conventionalities of governance, such as honesty, legal or moral duties, answerability, etc., may lead to corrupt behavior, such as influence-peddling.

Correlational Perspective

This lens emphasizes the consideration and utility of variables at all levels: individual, organization, and society. There are often causal claims made with no clear

causal path between specific macrolevel elements, including earnings such as income, gross domestic product, political participation, or the dimension of state-own institutions as well as general corruption (De Graaf, 2007).

Collective Action

This perspective is a more recent addition to the extensive scholarly materials that enable mental visualization of corruption (Bauhr, 2017; Rothstein and Varraich, 2017). The main idea of the collective-action lens points to the systemic nature of corruption and, therefore, expected. There is very little to no incentive for legal enforcement of anticorruption measures, and therefore everyone engages in corruption because they think others have similar inclination for corruption.

The causal factors associated with both the microlevel and macrolevel analyses of corruption present a framework to explain corrupt behaviors. De Graaf (2007) cautioned against making causal claims in the social sciences, because causal factors are only concepts and theories that provide interesting insights into the background of corruption. These discussed concepts (ethos of public administration, rational, moralist, cultural, collective actions, clashing moral values, and correlation) are related to anticorruption approaches.

Anticorruption Approaches

Corruption is the result of a complex array of interactions and choices made by individuals and groups of people, which are driven by societal, environmental, and cultural forces; the combination creates expectations, habits, beliefs, and actions that direct corruption's evolution and manifestation over time (Vannucci, 2017). There are

three main causal explanations for corruption in the literature on corruption: incentives, opportunities, and norms (Gorsira et al. 2018). Mugellini et al. (2021) distinguished interventions against corruption in agreement with according with two principal versions of corruption: cultural paradigm, and economic paradigm. These two paradigms are further categorized under two main approaches: corruption as an agency approach (Rose-Ackerman 1978), and corruption as a collective approach (You, 2018).

The principal-agent approach, according to You (2018), considers the agent or individual to be using an informational advantage over the principal out of self-interest. The agency approach, which is based on checks and suppressive actions, is related to the economic paradigm (Rose-Ackerman, 1978). Under the agency approach, the standard solutions are monitoring the agent, rewarding honesty, or issuing punishment, with strategies such as increasing cost and reducing benefit for the individual (De Graaf, 2007). Other solutions under the agency approach include reducing discretionary power through deregulation and privatization to monitor and sanction corrupt officials (Klitgaard, 1988).

Persson et al. (2019) explained that several researchers have contended that the implementation gap regarding the control of corruption is found in the conventional solutions that are associated with the principal-agent approach. Persson et al. further suggested that the implicit assumption underlying the principal-agency approach, which considers corruption an individual-deviance problem, is flawed, especially when corruption is systemic and should be deemed collective. Therefore, the collective-action

concept of corruption has enhanced the literature on corruption, by bringing into focus the tremendous problems that are associated with institutional reforms (You, 2018).

The collective-action approach is also explained under the cultural paradigm, in which understanding corruption is clarified by focusing on environmental characteristics, structure, and culture. According to Camargo et al. (2017), structural changes in society and institutions may positively impact and change attitudes and therefore, can also eliminate the defense for corruption. These attitudinal changes may be facilitated by training and education campaigns, the legitimate expansion of code of conduct that are ethical, the spread of information, etc., to influence culture.

Drawing on work from various disciplines, Gans-Morse et al. (2018) comprehensively reviewed interdisciplinary anticorruption policies using the following categories: monitoring, penalties, restructuring, rewards, campaigns, agreements, antigraft agencies, recruitments. The researchers noted the lack of rigorous empirical evaluation of most prescribed anticorruption policies does not undermine the grounds for optimism on anticorruption policies and programs.

History of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone, now an independent country, which is bounded by Guinea and Liberia in the northeast and southwest, respectively, was a British West African colony from 1787 to 1961 (Enria, 2018). In the 1460's a Portuguese explorer called Pedro Da Cintra gave its original name, Sierra Lyoa, meaning Lion Mountain. The name was later changed by English sailors and, later, British colonization to Sierra Leone, according to Kaifala (2017). The capital city, Freetown, is in the western area of the country. The

capital city, Freetown, is in the western area of Sierra Leone. It is one of the least populated countries in Africa, with a current population of about 7.3 million people, of whom 75% are under 35 years of age (World Bank, 2017). Sierra Leone has about 18 ethnic groups; the two largest and most influential are the Temnes and the Mendes. One of the smallest tribes, the Creole, the direct descendants of the freed African Americans and West Indies slaves, comprises about 2% of the country's population (Kaifala, 2017). Geremichael et al. (2019) posited that Sierra Leone is a religiously tolerant country, with a Christian (21%) coexisting peacefully with Muslims (78%).

The modern history of Sierra Leone dates to the 1780s, at the period of abolition of the slave trade at the end of the 18th century, when freed slaves from England and the Americas were offered resettlement sites at the Sierra Leone peninsula (Atanasov, 2019; Jang, 2012). In 1808, the locus of Freetown became a British Crown colony. and the state of Sierra Leone began as two separate states under colonial rule. Ganson and M'cleod (2017) said that Sierra Leone' history is an amalgamation of the protectorate and the British Crown colony, and the two establishments operated alongside each other but never fully became one state before independence. Ganson and M'cleod further posited there were clear differences between the two entities: the citizens of the Crown colony (main part of the British Empire, which was established for the settlement of freed slaves), and the protectorate (an area inhabited by the ethnic groups). For over a century, the differences were evident regarding security, law, and many other state services, as the protectorate was left to the social dynamics of the Indigenous groups of people. The failure to become one state under British rule created an atmosphere of distrust between

the Indigenous people in the protectorate and the residents of the Crown colony, according to Ganson and M'cleod.

Dietz et al. (2021) outlined few of the main episodes of the political calendar of Sierra Leone, 60 years after independence, as follows:

1) Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth in April 1961, and Sir Milton Margai, who was elected as government leader in 1951, became its first prime minister in 1961 up to his passing in 1964. His brother, Sir Albert Margai, succeeded him.
2) Sir Albert ruled for three years, and those early years of independence were good, like in many other African countries, because of the devotion of resource income to investments in development, including infrastructure and education.
3) The change of government through a democratic election in 1967 became the turning point in the history of Sierra Leone. A military coup, led by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Juxon-Smith, toppled Siaka Stevens' government, which was restored in 1968. Siaka Stevens, who was the executive president until 1985, instituted a one-party system of governance in 1978. Corruption became rampant, political instability grew, and the country's economy deteriorated during the dictatorial reign of Siaka Stevens.

4) Joseph Saidu Momoh, Stevens' successor, followed in his footsteps of bad governance and corruption, which unfortunately trigger the civil war in the country in 1991.
5) The civil war was another major turning point in Sierra Leone's history, which eventually caused a series of military coups and regimes under Valentine Strasser and Julius Maada Bio. There was a short democratic period in 1996–1997 under civilian president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, but the country once again experienced another military overthrow of government, spearheaded by Major Johnny Paul Koroma. President Ahmed Tejan Kabba was later restored to power and served the rest of the presidency until 2007. In 2007, Earnest Bai Koroma was elected president of Sierra Leone.
6) In 2014, there was an Ebola epidemic that infected 14,000 people and killed at least 4,000 by the end of 2016.
7) There was another change of government in 2018, and the winner was the current president of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio.

The list discussed does not exhaustively represent all the political and social events that occurred in Sierra Leone after independence, only some of the most crucial. Kormoh (2020) provided more detailed analyses of events regarding political development by postulating there was greater political tolerance during the initial years after independence in 1961 in Sierra Leone. Kormoh further suggested that political rivalries based on tribal or ethnic alliances degenerated into political chaos. Kormoh

claimed the leader of the All People's Congress (APC) party, Siaka Stevens, campaigned on being the harmonious candidate, as he appeared to be the son of the two political divides (northwest and southeast), and he won. Kormoh also noted that Siaka Stevens' reign established patrimonial networks and ethnoregional politics, which created an atmosphere of mistrust and ethnic divide between the leaders and citizens of Sierra Leone and contributed to the civil war (Ochiai, 2017).

Although there was no one definite reason for the civil conflict in Sierra Leone, Ganson and M'cleod (2017) argued various governments in postindependent Sierra Leone were increasingly predatory and mismanaged state resources to benefit a few political-party loyalists. The researchers also suggested the mismanagement of state resources resulted in scandals of corruption that produced five different commissions of inquiry: the Tucker Commission (1988), and the Beccles-Davies, Marcus-Jones, and Nylander commissions (1993), the Foster Commission (1968), on embezzlement between 1970 and 1990. Also, at the time (1970 to 1990), the practices of regionalization and abuse of political power were rampant. The dangerous practice of divide and conquer by the political elites in Sierra Leone during that period when economically and socially vulnerable youth were used by politician for to cause social unrest in the country (Cole, 2021). This practice produced groups of youths with blind allegiances to political parties, which resulted in a military junta that thrusted the country into a civil war that last about a decade, from 1991 to 2002.

The election of a new President, Ahmed Tejan Kabba, in 2002, signaled great promise for Sierra Leone. Ochiai (2017) contended that the Government of President

Kabba focused on overhauling the system of local government to serve as public service providers. The restoration of democratically elected local government echoed Sierra Leone's ability to remain a multicentered system of governance that supports clusters and allegiances around paramount and lesser chiefs (Albrecht, 2017). Albrecht further posited that chiefs have become an integral part of political-party formation in Freetown and function as the primary custodians of their chiefdoms.

Sierra Leone maintained its colonial-era structure of local government since independence in 1961, despite many political transformations (Ochiai, 2017). Ochiai stated that this continuation was reflected in the enactment of the Tribal Authorities Act of 1964. Taye (2021) suggested that Sierra Leone's political history of instability and a prolonged period of one-party authoritarian rule resulted in little or no accountability for public officials.

Economic History of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's economic history has been unimpressive. The country's economy, after it became an independent country in 1961, relied on foreign trade, and the major sectors of the economy, including the extraction and manufacturing industries, were controlled by foreign investors (Kaplan et al., 1976). Subsistence agriculture was the mainstay of the general population, but as the government focused its resources on the mining sector and allowed widespread illicit mining, there was a drastic decline in agriculture during the 1980s and 1990s, which led to a contracted and conflict-ripe economy (Thompson & Potter, 1997).

The economic development of Sierra Leone post-independence has reflected its political development, with modest levels of growth (Bangura, 2012) when there was a strong multiparty system government until 1967. This period was followed by a long repressive and authoritarian one-party rule, which resulted in a series of military coups and eventually triggered violent civil unrest in the 1990s that devastated the country and the economy (Herrera, 2017). Herrera further claimed that the one-party rule that started in 1967, was marked by corruption and the mismanagement of the economy. The one-party rule resulted in the dwindling economic gains that were realized during the multiparty period of governance at the beginning of the country's independence in 1961, according to Herrera.

The restoration of the democratic multiparty system in 1996 reversed the economic decline and decay of the country's public institutions and produced some moderate growth (Bangura, 2012). That period produced a glimmer of hope for the economy of Sierra Leone, but the most recent census revealed economic stagnation, the marginalization of youths, and maladministration of the country's assets (Enria, 2018). In addition, the Annual Economic Bulletin for Sierra Leone in 2021 reported a 14.4% deficit in GPD (Sierra Leone Government, 2020), and the economic outlook over the medium-term remains uncertain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy of Sierra Leone has never taken off sustainably since independence.

Poverty remains prevalent, which in large part may be attributed to the country's political and economic instability because of ethnoregional politics, which has perpetuated a culture of regionalism, mismanagement, and corruption. Gebremichael et

al. (2019) stated that Sierra Leone continues to be among the impoverished countries in the world, with about 87.7% underemployment, and about 74.8% of the country's population existing below the poverty line, because of the ingrained culture of corruption. The culture of corruption has, unfortunately, become a distinct national culture in Sierra Leone. The phenomenon of poverty is reflected in many aspects of life in Sierra Leone, including life expectancy at birth, which is 52.2 years, rated at the bottom of the world (UNDP, 2018). Sierra Leone's economy is yet to utilize its human resources to its greatest potential to benefit its people. Mbeteh and Pellegrini (2022) described Sierra Leone as a factor-driven economy in which the natural resources, including the extractive industries of petroleum and the mining sector, hold the largest amount of its wealth. Unfortunately, the natural resources sector is under the direct influence and control of government officials, who are mostly influenced by corruption culture.

Culture of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's culture was as diverse historically as it is today, with allegiances to various cultural authorities, including traditional chieftaincies, alliances of elites, regional groups, secret societies, and various other local groups (M'cleod & Ganson, 2018). Van Pinxteren (2020) suggested the colonial powers that formed the countries in Africa, disregarded many of the linguistic or cultural characteristics of Africans. Van Pinxteren further postulated that underlying the massive influences of the colonial and postcolonial upheavals in Africa is the emergence of national cultures, which is reflected in the patterns evident across Africa.

Sierra Leone has strong ethnic and cultural diversity that emanated from the indigenes and the freed slaves who introduced their own language and foreign culture influenced by British values (Abraham, 1978). The British allowed traditional leaders to maintain and control their customs under the supervision of the Crown colony, which helped local people to maintain strong Indigenous cultural practices (Maclure & Denov, 2009; Mattila, 2016). The interplay of the many cultural influences enables the average Sierra Leonean to identify with more than one cultural identity and practice. Using Abraham's (1978) broad interpretation of culture as the sum of the nation's life, modified but not altered beyond recognition, Sierra Leone's national culture is highly diverse, with an intricate blend of traditional customary practices and values and general tolerances and respect for others.

Although the concept of culture has been addressed by many authors, Hofstede is among the most quoted social scientists in Europe, with the likes of Karl Popper and Immanuel Kant but rank under Sigmund Freud and Karl (Sent and Kroese, 2022). Hofstede (2020) conducted the only known only known empirical cross-country research on the culture of Sierra Leone. Culture is complex. Culture represents a collective mindset and behavior that distinguishes a group or category of people from others (Mansaray & Jnr, 2020). The plurality and diversity of culture are not unique to any one country. Cultural pluralism, as expressed in the diversity of traditional social practices in Sierra Leone, has enhanced and/or disrupted the discourse of culture, especially for the youth of Sierra Leone. Abraham (1978) posited that educated youths have struggled with cultural emancipation and identity, and the average youth is caught between the

dominance of Euro-American cultural values and various domestic cultural influences. The culture of Sierra Leone has many layers due to the blend of domestic and foreign cultures, which continues to impact the norms of society.

Hofstede (1980) described culture using an onion model, with the core culture positioned in the middle, representing the core state of cultural affairs. In Sierra Leone, there are various representations of customary practices expressed in symbols, rituals, and paladins, which represent the diversified cultural orientations. At the core of Sierra Leonean culture and what may be considered the national culture is political point-scoring (Kormoh, 2020), in which tribal narratives are used to divide the country for political gains. Kormoh suggested the manipulation and indoctrination of people by politicians along tribal lines for political gains have created a highly distrustful atmosphere in Sierra Leone, an atmosphere of systemic exclusion, factionalism, ethnic politics, corruption, neglect and misuse of youth, abuse of power, politicization of the judiciary, and impunity in the public domain.

The politicians have entrenched the patron-client culture in Sierra Leone, which has penetrated the public sector. Even with the presence of multiparty systems of government in most African countries, including Sierra Leone, there is low political tolerance for divergence of opinion and an elevated level of ethnoregional political rivalry. As a result, there is a culture of mismanaging state assets, and various form of corrupt practices such as clientelism within the government system, weakening public institutions, compromising the rule of law, and politicizing civil societies (Bangura & Kovacs, 2018; Gebremichael et al., 2019).

According to Hofstede (2020) Sierra Leoneans are more normative than pragmatic, as they adhere to norms and conform to traditions. Hofstede placed the general culture of Sierra Leone in the category of group thinkers and a collectivist society in which members closely commit themselves to groups and abide by the prevailing status quo. For example, voting patterns have been strongly driven by an ethnoregional logic that, during times of highly competitive electoral contests, divides the country into two halves: the northwest and the southeast (Bangura & Kovacs, 2018; Gebremichael et al., 2019). The examples above point to the general behavior of Sierra Leoneans. Although Hofstede (2020) highlights some homogenous national cultural behaviors, there remains a strong prevalence of heterogeneity in cultural behaviors in Sierra Leone. Various cultural nuances exist, such as women serving as family heads but men dominating decision-making processes, an inclination supported the country's patriarchal orientation (Mansaray & Jnr, 2020).

History of Corruption and Anticorruption in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is one of the impoverish countries in the world, and it has consistently hovered around the base of the Human Development Index (HDI) because of corruption (Pring & Vrushi, 2019). The HDI data have been available since 1990, with United Nation's Development Project (UNDP) updates annually. Sierra Leone's HDI was at a level of 0.287 in 1990 (Dietz et al., 2021). Dietz et al. noted that Sierra Leone's HDI value between 1990 and 2019 increased from 0.287 to 0.452, which was still under the average of 0.547 for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The substandard performance of Sierra Leone regarding HDI is unfortunate; the country has abundant

natural and mineral wealth, which, if effectively managed without corruption, could raise the country's HDI.

Corruption has been endemic in Sierra Leone throughout its recorded history. This section covers the period from colonial rule in Sierra Leone to the beginning of the civil war in 1991. Conteh-Morgan (2018) argued that Sierra Leone has been plagued by both internal and external corruption practices, which have encouraged widespread socioeconomic misery and aggravated political grievances, which imploded into a full-scale civilian unrest in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002. Ochiai (2017) also suggested that civil war during the colonial era was the result of corruption practices. Ochiai argued that throughout British rule, more privileges, and opportunities were made available to the inhabitants of the Crown colony than to the inhabitants of the protectorate, which was not under the rule of the colonial masters. These special privileges exercised by the British constituted a patrimonial form of corruption, lopsided in favor of the residents of the Crown colony.

Corruption has persisted in Sierra Leone before and after independence. The literature is replete with claims of colonialism as a scapegoat for the problem of corruption among African leaders. This is a popular sentiment shared by some authors (Abraham, 1978; Kpundeh, 1999; McCloed &Ganson, 2018; Thompson &Porter, 1997), who have claimed the genesis of corruption in Sierra Leone is rooted in its colonial past. Ochiai (2017) explained that the modern state of Sierra Leone can be pinned down to 1787, when the resettlement of freed slaves became the colony, controlled by the British Crown, and the remaining regions of the country became a protectorate in 1896.

During the later part of the 19th century, there was a new African colonial nation, which consisted of components: a system of direct colonial rule with a governor as head (Crown colony), and a system of indirect rule, which was supervised by few colonial administrators (protectorate). Sierra Leone maintained both structures of centralized despotism and decentralized despotism, terms used to denote direct rule and indirect rule, respectively (Mamdani, 1996), which resulted in the abuse of power by the colonial heads and opportunities for corruption (Sankoh, 1999), for both the traditional leaders and elites and the colonial masters.

Levine (1975) argued that colonialism may have introduced a set of values and institutions that were strange to Africa, and not corruption. Levine also suggested that the colonial impositions were dissimilar with many local ideas of governance, which created chaos because there was little time allowed for redefinition, incorporation, and traditional adjustment. The outcome was abuse, contempt of the law, and corruption, because the chiefs and other elites searched for ways around the cash-mercantile system of the colonial economy while maintaining their traditional status (Sankoh, 1999). Sankoh highlighted several other consequences of British colonial policies for corruption in Sierra Leone as well as other countries of West Africa, such as the following:

- The increase in stratification in Sierra Leone created a larger gap between the new bureaucratic classes and the ordinary peasants. As such, the ordinary peasant resorted to bribery and other forms of influence-peddling to acquire state assets.

- The expansion of marketing boards, such as the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB), multiplied opportunities for corruption through their activities and other regulatory bodies.
- The new consciousness and perspective created by the banning of established practices and customary norms resulted in both dilemmas and opportunities for corruption.
- The problem with coordination, applying, and enforcing British colonial policies from the top to the bottom.
- The accusation of many forms of corruption, including election fraud, nepotism, control of marketing boards, and the use of public funds to support political parties, exacerbated the problem of patron-client connections.

There was a plethora of corrupt practices during the colonial era in Sierra Leone in the literature. In the late 1920s in Sierra Leone, the few British district commissioners had to make deals with local strongmen (chiefs included) acting as tax collectors (Kilson,1966). The British also practiced the forceful or manipulative installation of chiefs, which, according to Sankoh (1999), could explain the culture of military coups d'état of popularly elected African leaders of governments in the first few decades of post-independence Africa. Under the British governance structure of indirect rule over the protectorate, the British were engaged also in diamond exploitation in the early 1930sthe early 1930s, first, through a British mining company called the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), according to Le Billon & Levin (2009). Abraham (1978) claimed

corruption was so pervasive among the ruling elites during the colonial period that chiefs and traditional rulers were deposed by the British authorities for fraud and nepotism.

Colonialism officially ended in Sierra Leone in 1961, but the failure to merge the two experiences of the state of Sierra Leone, especially after independence, produced parallel states: the formal state, and operate within it, the informal state (McCleod & Ganson, 2018). McCleod elaborated that the state of Sierra Leone functioned as a continuation of colonial structures (formal state) and as a continuation of traditional structures (informal state), which did not merge as one state post-independence. Davis (2002) noted that, during the early years of Sierra Leone's independence in 1961, the country had a good educational system as well as lots of valuable and abundant natural, agricultural, and marine resources, and a stable democracy. Davis claimed that development gains started to decline in the 1970s, worsened in the 1980s, and declined further in the 1990s because of pervasive corruption. From the 1970s until the early 1990s, corrupt practices were institutionalized, as smuggling, embezzlement of state resources, and many other forms of corruption became highly prevalent in Sierra Leone (Conteh-Morgan, 2018; Kpundeh,1995). Self-enrichment by political leaders and the society's elite was pervasive.

Sierra Leone's post-independence prime minister, Sir Milton Margai, who ruled from 1961 to 1964, was accused of patrimonial corruption when he used his power of appointment to gain a measure of leverage over his own state officials (Reno, 1997). His brother and successor, Sir Albert Margai, was also accused of direct involvement in corruption by acquiring assets disproportionate to his income (Sankoh, 1999).

Kleptocracy and political repression plagued Sierra Leone in the first-two decades post-independence. According to Davis (2002), President Siaka Stevens' ethos and survival strategy during his time in power, from 1968 to 1985, induced state collapse, which led to the civil war. President Siaka Stevens personalized Sierra Leone's diamond sector by distributing preferred (untaxed) concessions in diamond mining and plundered valuable state resources that accounted for 70% of state revenues in the early 1970s (Reno, 1997). His successor, President Joseph S. Momoh, owned numerous investments, vehicles, and huge amount of local currency in his bank account, as well as huge sums of foreign currencies in foreign bank accounts that far exceeded his official (Kpundeh, 1999). The unexplained wealth allegedly came from corrupt practices by his administration such as patronage and favoritism and appointing only his close allies to government jobs to serve as special agents to conduct both local and foreign business deals for him (Kpundeh, 1999).

Corruption was not only limited to the heads of state of Sierra Leone. Thompson and Potter (1997) suggested that senior government officials and illustrious businesspeople frequently squandered substantial amounts of public funds. Some embezzlement cases ignited many well-known corruption scandals in the 1970s to the 1990s, such as vouchergate, squandergate, and milliongate (Bakarr Bah, 2011; M'cleod & Ganson, 2022; Kpundeh, 1993). These three names were applied to highly publicized corruption scandals in Sierra Leone involving high-profile politicians and civil servants. Public sector corruption was the norm and an accepted way of life, especially in post-independence Sierra Leone until the early 1990s, when the civil war began. Although

various explanations have been proffered as the reasons for the civil conflict, Nkwede and Usonka (2019) claimed the most plausible explanation was personal greed, economic and political exclusions.

Addressing the problem of corruption in Sierra Leone, Sankoh (1999) argued that more investigations of corruption were conducted in the colonial period than in the post-colonial period to the beginning of the civil war in 1991. Sankoh outlined the pre-independence corruption investigation as follows: Report of the Commission of Inquiry in the Conduct of Certain Chiefs-1957; Report of the Commission of Inquiry in the Issue of Alluvial Diamond Mining Licenses in the Ghambaiadu Area, Kono District-1957; Report of the Administration of the Provinces-1955; Report of the Functions and Finances of District Councils in Sierra Leone-1953; Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine the Working of the Tribal Administration (Colony) Ordinance, Cap. 244-1955; and Further Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conduct of Certain Chiefs-1957; among others.

For Post-Independence, Report of the Dove-Edwin Commission of Inquiry into the Conduct of the 1967 General Elections in Sierra Leone, held to inquire into the conduct of the last 'general elections' held. The commission outcome showed many election malpractices by the Prime Minister, Sir Albert Margai, several election officers, and members of the SLPP. This report was followed by the Foster Commission, which was initiated by Siaka Stevens, and the Tucker Commission, which was put in place by Joseph Momoh (Bakarr Bah, 2011; Kpundeh, 1995). The Tucker Commission was the

last major investigation of corruption practices in Sierra Leone prior to the start of the civil conflict in 1991.

There is limited literature about any other concerted national or sectoral anticorruption strategies, apart from commissions of inquiry and dismissals or fines of public officials found guilty of corruption. Kpundeh (1999) posited these types of reform strategies revealed an extensive misunderstanding of the act of corruption: they were devoid of proper coordination, had low political commitment, with disengaged leadership, and extremely low public interest. These mitigation strategies were more investigative and punitive than preventive. This study does not focus on the acts of corruption in Sierra Leone 1991 to 2002. This was the period of the civil war, thousands of civilians were murdered, property was destroyed, and many state institutions were dysfunctional. The following section covers the present state of corruption from 2002 to the present.

Present Corruption Phenomenon in Sierra Leone

The extended disintegration of the formal state during the reign of the APC party, due to rampant, uncontrolled corruption has been the dominant explanation for the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone (Bangura, & Kovacs, 2018; Conteh-Morgan, 2018; Gebremichael et al., 2019). In the absence of proper formal state institutions, informal state institutions surge, which are usually characterized by corruption. Conteh-Morgan (2018) claimed the diamond industry in Sierra Leone, which is a major source of national revenue, was transformed into an integral part of the informal economy, and the smuggling of diamonds has become the norm. Sierra Leone's main export products are its

mineral resources (Dietz et al, 2021). The literature on the gem industry in Sierra Loene abounds, and a huge portion of it relates to corruption in the industry. Gberie (2002) claimed that the British Department for International Development (DFID) conducted a policy study in 2002 underscored how the 'deleterious' effects of corruption will wipe out the any profit from Sierra Leons diamond reserves. Corrupt practices continue to plague Sierra Leone and are very much institutionalized.

McCloed and Ganson (2018) claimed that institutions in Sierra Leone have deteriorated as they were prior to the civil conflict, as evidenced in the manifestation of many forms of corruption and extensive impunity for at various levels. For example, the weak, corrupt state of institutions could not effectively manage the tasks of coordinating crucial emergency services for the Ebola outbreak in 2014. As a result, the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) reported, in 2014, the massive misappropriation of public funds meant for the treatment and control of the Ebola outbreak in the country (McCleod & Ganson, 2018). In August 2017, Sierra Leone experienced severe flooding and a massive landslide in Freetown, which affected 6,000 people and killed more than 1,100 (Sandford et al., 2020). The failed state institutions, due to ingrained corruption and mismanagement of state resources, were once again blamed for lacking the capacity to assist the victims of the natural tragedy (Gebremichael et al., 2019). The weakness of the state institutions in Sierra Leone persists because of several corrupt practices and the incitement of political and ethnoregional conflicts.

Despite the effort by President Ahmad Tejan Kabba's administration, in May 2002, to redress the weak institutional situation after the end of the civil conflict, Isbell

(2017) suggested that 70% people of Sierra Leone perceived that corrupt practices have increased over the years. Gebremichael et al. (2019) claimed there is an extremely high possibility that neither of the two main political parties in Sierra Leone would reduce the level of corruption because of the deeply entrenched corrupt practices of ethnoregional opposition. These practices emphasize clientelism and patronage in Sierra Leone.

Clientelism refers to different corrupt political practices in which unequal vertical relationships such as a patron-client relationship exist, and in which the patron offers material benefits to the client for his or her support (Gallego & Wantchekon, 2017). Patronage is a subset of clientelism in which the patron seeks support in exchange for the allocation of public resources, such as jobs or contracts (Colonnelli et al, 2017). According to Asangna (2017), one of the many effects of clientelism and patronage is state weakness, and clientelism has weakened many state institutions in Sierra Leone.

From independence in 1961 to present in Sierra Leone, paramount chiefs and local elites have been victims of political exploitation by the two major political parties. The two major political parties entrench electoral loyalties by mobilizing youth through their patronage networks to incite and perpetrate violence during political campaigns. Gebremichael et al. (2019) highlighted the association between Chief Samuel Samsumana and former President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, and how they used the corrupt practice of clientelism to mobilize youths in Kono, a major city in Sierra Leone, to intimidate opponents in the 2007 presidential elections. Gebremichael et al. noted another incident of clientelism on 26 January 2018, when the incumbent political party mobilized marginalized youths to fight against the opposition party members during

the general election in Sierra Leone. Many of these kinds of corrupt practices exist in the country. Furthermore, corruption in Sierra Leone extend beyond to public officials, it is widespread. The corrupt culture of clientelism and patronage, among other forms, has encouraged businesspeople to loot state funds as well. Ganson and M'cleod (2017) gave an example of a prominent Afro-Lebanese associate of President Siaka Stevens, Jamil Mohamed, who was indicted for plundering vital state assets in all regions of the country.

Corruption is pervasive in Sierra Leone, and public sector officials face serious challenges to mitigate it. The formation of the ACC in 2000 was a step toward addressing the issues of corruption in the public sector and the public as well (Gberie, 2002). Despite the efforts of the present ACC commissioner, Francis Ben Kelfala, in 2018, to address the problem of corruption in the country, the problem persists, and there is minimal success. For example, Francis Ben Kelfala presented to the current president of Sierra Leone, in 2019, the sum of 16 billion Leones, which is equivalent to $ 1,500.000, as money recovered from public officials who engaged in corrupt practices (Bull, n.d.). The general conclusions of the most recent commission of inquiry in 2020, by the current government administration in Sierra Leone, highlighted grave incidents unexplained wealth and unjust enrichments of public officials acquired from monies misappropriated or stolen from November 2007 to April 2018.

Sierra Leone is now under the new leadership of President Julius Maada Bio, who has promised a new direction in the control of corruption. The strategies to fight corruption are outlined in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) report, 2019-2023 (Leone, 2020). The report acknowledges that in the past 20 twenty years, Sierra

Leone has experienced an upsurge of corruption practices, especially in recent years. The report emphasizes greater accountability in public service and the restoration of state institutions. The NACS in Sierra Leone has been reactionary in the past, focusing mostly on legal means and primarily using commissions of inquiry. However, the surge of persistent activism of civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs reinforces democratic and legal institutions, helping to mitigate the levels of corruption (Gebremichael et al., 2019).

Corruption is a multifaceted problem, and no one strategy is sufficient to address it (Castro e Silva, 2019). The NACS, 2019–2023 has adopted a multipronged approach, with a focus on the following strategic pillars: to enforce, to prevent, to engage publicly, to sustain partners, and provide public ethical and religious reorientation (Leone, 2020). Despite some degree of optimism expressed in the NACS plan, the plan indicates there should be some caution regarding what is achievable, and it suggests using a piecemeal approach to achieve effectiveness. Sierra Leone's ranking on the TI corruption index was remarkable in 2021, improving 15 places on the previous year's ranking of 130 out of 180 countries (Fayiah, 2020; Transparency International, 2021). A lower score on the corruption index is better. The same report, however, revealed that 45% of Sierra Leone citizens believed corruption had increased, and 52% admitted to paying bribes for public services. The problem of corruption in Sierra Leone continues unabated.

Review of Literature

The familiar idea in the literature on corruption is that, despite great advances in corruption studies, there is still much to learn about corruption and anticorruption policies

(Ledeneva et al, 2017). Several arguments have been proffered to explain corruption. Heywood (2017) argued that underlying most corruption studies are social theories developed in the mid- and late 20th century that no longer match present realities. Heywood's argument buttresses the notion of studying and fighting corruption in real time and in a particular context to understand its present state (Durokifa, & Ijeoma, 2018; Gutmann et al 2020; Kirya, 2019).

Different authors have applied different lenses or approaches to explicate the phenomenon of corruption, but there are two principal approaches in the literature: the rational or principal-agent approach (Marquette and Pfeiffer 2015; 2013; Rose-Ackerman, 1978) and the structural or collective-action approach. These two approaches have their limitations, however, and have failed to provide adequate solutions to the persistent and pervasive phenomenon of corruption (Bauhr, 2017; Marquette, & Peiffer, 2018; Pertiwi, 2018). As a result, new schools of thought continue to emerge, feeding into the ongoing discussion of the anticorruption debate (Ledeneva et al., 2017). The limitations of both these approaches have prompted many scholars to proffer other innovative ideas to solve the wicked problem. In contrast to much of the existent comparative research, which uses composite specialized assessments and emphasizes the degree of corruption based on aggregates such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), there is a clarion call for more studies on corruption phenomena that highlight qualitative differences. Some of these approaches are as follows:

- The focus is on specific types of corruption (Jancsics, 2019).

- The focus is on an integrated approach, such as studying all elements of corruption, including specific elements that lead to more effective anticorruption strategies, to identify the comprehensive causes and remedies of corruption (Zimelis, 2020).
- A cross-disciplinary approach (Pertiwi, 2018) that emphasizes individuals' bilateral interpretation and knowledge of corruption of corruption from various disciplinary perspectives.
- An indirect approach (Rothstein, 2018) that relies more on strategies that positively affect the implicit agreements or social contracts and less on strategies that focus directly on the actors themselves.

The new generation of anticorruption approaches is tremendous and nuanced, with each approach attempting to capture the various elements of the phenomenon of corruption. However, most authors have stressed the importance of definition and context (Ankamah & Manzoor e Khoda, 2018; Baez-Camargo & Passas 2017; Dixit, 2018; Heywood, 2017; Marquette & Peiffer, 2018; Mungiu-Pippidi, & Dadašov, 2017; Vian, 2020). The existing literature on corruption emphasizes not only context but also specificity within the context (Di Mascio, & Piattoni, 2020; McDonnell, 2020). Di Mascio and Piattoni suggested that corruption simply refers to a negative departure from the normative, but the precise departure is a function of the contextual elements such as local institution, norms, and culture. Corruption is complex and multidimensional, and there is no singular formula or prescription for it (Dixit, 2018). Dixit suggested that anticorruption policies and strategies should address the various aspects of corruption.

This literature review discusses a small but representative selection of various research approaches in the nascent literature on corruption. In this section of the literature review, attention is paid to corruption studies to highlight qualitative differences and draw insights from the approaches and is organized as follows: first, there is an overview of the studies, and second, more detailed discussions of the studies are presented under various categories.

Overview of Selected Studies

There is a reestablished effort in the literature on corruption to concentrate on specific aspects of corruption. Manifold studies have focused on aspects, and some of these studies have been selected for this literature review. Magyar and Madlovics (2019) examined how the CPI, as a measure of corruption, has focused only on the general picture of the level of corruption and ignored particularly important aspects and different patterns of corruption, such as top-down patterns. Onwujekwe et al. (2018), in a similar effort to emphasize the importance of aspects of corruption, focused on identifying specific types of corruption in sectors and on specifying the patterns of corruption.

The many distinct aspects of corruption mean there are also various dimensions to studying corruption. Albanese and Artello (2019) specified the precise practical behaviors that constitute corruption, whereas Mugellini et al. (2021) focused on a specific aspect of corruption (administrative), and on reforms in the public sector as they relate to the levels of corruption. These kinds of studies that focus on specific aspects of corruption abound in the current literature, but identifying specifics is also a function of the prevailing conditions and contexts in which they occur. Dávid-Barrett et al. (2020)

conducted quantitative study to assess the situations in which regulations advocated by donor agencies are effective in regulating the levels of corruption regarding donor funds to governments of country which are secured through procurement tenders.

Specificity in corruption can be cross-regional as well. Onwujekwe et al. (2018) outlined commonly used mitigation strategies together with the common forms of corruption in West African countries. However, as important as cross-country and cross-sectoral studies are for understanding corruption, Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999) stressed the relevance of comprehending different shades of corrupt activities in each country to help devise effective anticorruption strategies. These selected studies, which focus on specific aspects of corruption, reveal the current trend in the literature on corruption, and they may help anticorruption efforts targeting distinct types of deviant behavior and the prevailing conditions that enable them by focusing on the "specific aspects" of corruption.

Di Mascio and Piattoni (2020), however, claimed that no single policy or approach and no preventive instrument are holistic. It is, therefore, vital to integrate approaches and concepts of corruption, including specific elements of anticorruption, to obtain more comprehensive causes and remedies of corruption (Zimelis, 2020). Many studies on corruption have combined concepts and approaches. For example, Abbink and Wu (2017) argued for combining deterrence strategies with other policies and programs that restrict the actors' open interactions with one another. Strategies such as staff rotation, to obtain more effective outcomes regarding controlling corruption. D'onza et al. (2019), on the other hand, combined two distinct approach, statistical tests, and

regression together in combination with content analysis content analysis to reveal anticorruption measures implemented by 120 entities of the Italian local government. Hope (2017) posited that developing and implementing well-monitored policies and strategies should be a participatory process for all relevant stakeholders.

The effectiveness of combining different interventions and concepts is mentioned by various studies (Adams et al., 2019; Shekshnia & Ledeneva, 2017; Zulu, 2018) that demonstrated how different interventions and concepts complement each other for effective policy design and implementation. In addition to integrating concepts and ideas, corruption studies have also focused on using multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to promote the apprehension of the issue of corruption. From a study that revealed the impact of collaboration and shared experiences (Williams, 2021) to one that highlighted the gradual shift of corruption research from qualitative analysis to quantitative analysis (Tang, 2018), interdisciplinary studies have informed strategic thinking about corruption. In Nigeria, for example, Onwujekwe et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study that highlighted how health workers and policymakers worked together to establish and prioritize practical solutions to corruption in Nigerian health feasible responses to corruption in Nigerian public health research. These types of interdisciplinary studies reveal how diverse perspectives can work to address corruption-mitigation efforts.

The studies discussed briefly above highlight direct approaches to studying corruption. Other studies have used indirect approaches (Rose-Ackerman, 2018; Rothstein, 2018). Khan et al. (2019) utilized an indirect approach to identify sectoral

anticorruption strategies. Lu et al. (2019) revealed how government policies not aimed directly at addressing corruption unintentionally produced favorable conditions for corruption risk mitigation. All the studies highlighted above represent different innovative approaches among a plethora of literature on corruption, and they are discussed in greater detail under the various subheadings below.

Focus on Specific Types of Corruption. Magyar and Madlovics (2019) addressed the issues of defining corruption in a qualitative case study by analyzing the CPI survey questions and advancing reasons for the unapparent nature of the index. Using an analytical framework to show the distinct level of corruption, the study drew on the narratives from the post-communist region. The results revealed evidence of top-down corruption in Hungary, showing the urgency of having better indices of corruption. Magyar and Madlovics argued that most of the CPI surveys present a broad view of the level of corruption but overlook other vital facts and representation of corruption, like the top-down patterns in the post-communist countries, as manifested in involuntary patron-client relations.

Magyar and Madlovics concluded the CPI carries the presumptions of bottom-up type of corruption, such as free-market and state capture, which are not entirely applicable to a country affected by other forms of corruption, such as the top-down types of corruption in Hungary. Magyar and Madlovics, however, noted the CPI provides a decent database that has been widely used to illustrate the level of corruption and is applicable to cross-country comparisons. The authors underscored the problem of

inconsistency in definition and the importance of recognizing specific patterns prevalent in the country to provide specific recommendations for reducing corruption.

Albanese and Artello (2019) conducted a quantitative study aimed at specifying the precise practical behaviors that constitute corruption. They examined over 300 convictions on public corruption for a three-year period, by looking at the statistical conformity to produce a classification and categories of corruption dispositions.

The outcome of the study revealed eight distinct types of corrupt conduct despite the multiplicity of charges in public corruption. The development of a clear typology helped to identify the specific behaviors that underlie prosecutions for serious corruption offenses. The process also helped to support prevention efforts aimed at reducing incidences of corruption behavior over time by focusing only on the most serious cases worthy of criminal prosecution. The importance of the study was that it revealed types of corrupt behaviors most common among the many cases, enabling better targeting of serious behaviors within the purview of the available resources.

Another study that underscored a specific aspect of corruption (administrative) was conducted by Mugellini et al. (2021) who investigated the repercussion of public sector reforms on the level of corruption. The main goal of this study was to establish the factors that control the levels of corruption in the public sector. The results of published and unpublished materials on evaluations of various corruption mitigation strategies in different countries were meta-analyzed. The focal point of the study was administrative corruption, especially those perpetuated by civil servants during the implementation of public policies. This review, the Campbell Systematic Review, was a quantitative review

which examined the impact of public sector intervention, based on restrain and suppressive strategies, on administrative corruption in the public sector.

The review, which combined various documents from 29 high-level reviews of randomized controlled trials, from 16 countries for the period 2007–2018. The result showed that in the short term, control and deterrence were superior strategies to other forms of control, including cultural and other institutional reforms. However, the result also revealed that the interplay of several types of interventions was better than a single intervention. Equally important, this review underscored the two most important forms of intervention to control administrative corruption were: deterrence and control, and organizational and cultural reforms. These results revealed the importance of going beyond only economic models to explain corruption.

Researchers and programmers on anticorruption have also realized the importance of using both scale and sectoral focus to get a clearer perspective of anticorruption. According to Mungiu-Pippidi (2018), a good strategy to control corruption entails focusing on critical sectoral differentiation, by paying attention to the pathologies of specific corruption risk in a sector. Kirya (2019) described a study by a team of anticorruption advisers (U4) who researched and compared noted on monitoring and implementing corruption mitigation strategies in education. Their (U4) mixed-methods study utilized various techniques such as: online training, dialogue workshops, publication, and innovation to reveal various forms of cheating and other academic violations. The results identified corrupt practices specific to the educational sector, such as nepotism, bribery, absenteeism, sexual harassment, etc.

The results of the study showed the contextual elements surrounding a country's system of education affects the level of corruption The conclusion of the study was that the use of sector-specific anticorruption strategy enables implementer to target specific areas of interest on the control of corruption. They recommended the following:

- Design and assess corruption-mitigation strategies with context in mind.
- Context is equally important to assist anticorruption agents identify and use partners as well as control deviants of the reform process.
- The use of dialogue and consensus-building by stakeholders to reach an agreement on priorities based on the urgency and political feasibility of different anticorruption strategies.
- The utilization of good anticorruption strategies in education, such as (a) transparency-promoting tools, stakeholders budgeting, and (b) accountability-promoting tools, such as performance-based contracting, code of conduct for teachers, income-scale reform, and education-based procurement reforms.
- Incorporating anticorruption reforms, to adjust measures to the dynamic contextual realities, such as monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
- Incorporating moral values in school curricula for the long term.
- Developing assessments using gender sensitive and human rights-based strategies

Equally important as clarifying the conceptual difficulty of defining corruption, identifying specific types of corruptions in sectors, and specifying a particular sector is understanding the patterns of corruption across sectors and contexts within a region. Onwujekwe et al. (2018) outlined familiar kinds of corruption and mitigation strategies

that are used in West African countries. Their qualitative study identified evidence gaps across Anglophone West African countries by exploring the patterns of corruption in health sectors and the incentives underlying corrupt practices. The goal was to produce a quality study on corruption, and specifically to produce valuable and pragmatic knowledge that will be helpful to anticorruption agents to plan, design and implement context-specific anticorruption strategies. The study was a systematic review of literature that covered the health sectors of some West-African countries.

Onwujekwe et al. (2018) found evidence of the following: various kinds and dispositions of corruption, motivation, and demotivation for corrupt behavior in the healthcare industry, impacts of corruption on health service users, policies and programs, and legal aspects that provide good framework for mitigating corruption. Additional issues addressed in the study were the groups, organizations, and networks involved in regulatory practices. The conclusion of the study was that the quality of these approaches is questionable, despite their continues use in the region to curb corruption. Onwujekwe et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of getting good analyses of a range of corrupt practices and the contextual element underlying them. Furthermore, the authors believed a review of the studies was necessary to monitor and/or evaluate the impacts of different anticorruption strategies.

Cross-country and cross-sectoral studies are important for understanding corruption. However, understanding the nuances in each country is equally important for devising appropriate anticorruption tactics. As Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999) noted, country-specific case studies reflect the magnitude and specific facets of the issue of

corruption in each country. The researchers contributed to the existent literature on corruption with good qualitative case studies in Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.

In Tanzania, anticorruption workshops and experiences revealed pervasive and systematic corruption, which called for a country-wide campaign against corruption. The effective campaign against corruption, which was credited to sustained political leadership, was distorted by the previous anticorruption campaign, in 1993, against economic saboteurs. The failure of the anticorruption efforts in 1993 undermined the effective use of law enforcement as a strategy to control corruption. The conclusion of the study was that fighting corruption in Tanzania in the early 1980s focused only on the symptoms of corruption.

In Uganda, the anticorruption campaign initially resulted in a positive surge toward real accountability and transparency in the 1980s. Uganda conducted massive reforms in the public sector to stamp out corruption, with a series of investigative journalism workshops, public-awareness campaigns, institutional judiciary training, parliamentary retreats. However, the restrictions that were imposed against party political campaigns during the elections incited responses form the Lord's Resistance Army, which threatened a resurgence of violence and the state stability in northern Uganda.

The case study on Sierra Leone revealed a completely failed state where efforts to curb corruption were ineffective due to endemic corrupt practices by politicians as well as public sector workers. The recommendations of the study were that government officials should try to discern the underlying element and nature of corruption in context before embarking on designing and implementing national anticorruption strategy. Other

recommendations were the integration of all formal institutions and policies, measures, and a massive public campaign through regular, extensive press conferences to educate the masses. The general conclusion was that broad, descriptive strategies must be tailored accordingly to fit the contextual factors.

The focus on an integrated approach, such as studying all elements of corruption, including specific elements of anticorruption, especially those that lead to greater effectiveness, is to produce a holistic framework that includes the causes and remedies of corruption (Zimelis, 2020). Anticorruption efforts may take specific forms, depending on the situation. However, Heywood (2018) proposed combating corruption in the 21st century by making fundamental changes, including paying more attention to precise issues. Scholars should isolate and investigate specific factors that have the potential to impact corrupt practices significantly.

Piattoni and Giglioli (2020) cautioned about the temptation of using adopting definitions that are too broad and may alter the framework of the phenomenon of corruption**.** It is, therefore, essential that researchers isolate specific factors that account for the observed levels of corruption (Ledeneva et al., 2017). There are manifold factors that may enhance or reduce levels of corruption, and isolating and revealing their various effects may add knowledge to the existent literature on mitigating levels of corruption.

Dávid-Barrett et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study to assess the situations in which regulations given by donor countries help to control the levels of corruption by national government through procurement tenders. The problem addressed in this study was the lack of good evidence on the steps toward controlling the levels of corruption on

development aid. Data was obtained from more than 100 countries over a two-year period, 1998-2008, on procurement contracts on donor-funded programs. The results of the study showed that a strategy focused on donor oversight gave more access to tenders and reduced corruption risks, and that is especially true for countries with underdeveloped state institutions.

This selection of studies illustrates the relevance of focusing on the specific aspects of corruption. Both sector-specific and systemic aspects of corruption are important because they help practitioners understand and contextualize the interplay between individual behaviors and power relations, social norms, networks, and inequalities (Williams, 2021). Williams (2021) suggested that multidimensional remedies based on systemic understanding have distinct advantages over those that only identify and deal with isolated problems. Therefore, it is vital to integrate approaches and concepts of corruption to get a broader perspective on the causes and remedies of corruption (Zimelis, 2020).

The Integrated Approach. D'onza et al. (2019) conducted a study that utilized both statistical regression and content analysis to examine the revelations of anticorruption measures of 120 Italian local governments. The combination of concepts, issues, and approaches is gaining momentum in corruption literature. For example, Abbink and Wu (2017) advocated combining deterrence with staff rotation for potentially more effective corruption control. Hope (2017) posited that the participation of all relevant stakeholders helps to develop and implement well-monitored policies and

strategies. Such studies have emphasized the effectiveness of combining different interventions and concepts over single interventions.

Shekshnia and Ledeneva (2017), in a qualitative study, revealed how assembling bottom-up accounts of noncompliant practices in a context-bound way helps explain the friction between the formal compliance with anticorruption legislation adopted at the national level and firms' noncompliant practices. The researchers argued that managing corruption in systemically corrupt environments requires both control and prevention, and therefore should engage the two critical channels of corruption practices. These channels of corruption practices include organizational hierarchies and personal networks, and they enable understanding of the problem of corruption. The findings revealed that informal incentives and signals are as important as formal ones, and they are effective in mitigating corruption risks. The main conclusion of the study was that it is important to combine formal tools (hotline, codes of conduct) with informal influence (role modeling, peer pressure). Furthermore, no one strategy is superior to the others in delivering effective control of corruption; the choice depends on how well the leaders manage, combine, and utilize resources and contingencies.

In another study on integrating approaches, Zulu (2018) examined factors and consequences of corruption on development projects in South Africa. The objective of the study was to obtain information about the ills of corruption in South Africa, using both theoretical and practical insights. Global and regional perspectives provided the framework and context for the analysis. Zulu suggested that most of the methods that were used to control corruption were in address corruption in the subregion, were

ineffective. Zulu further claimed the ineffectiveness of the formal mechanisms partly stems from ignoring a host of crucial factors such as the informal institutions, the communities gender issues, which are vital element of intervention in corruption. Zulu also used several indicators, such as the CPI, to assess the effect of corruption in South. Zulu revealed that linking specific interventions with certain policies creates the condition for uprooting corruption in Southern Africa. Thus, Zulu suggested a multipronged approach to corruption mitigation is necessary for sustained and effective outcomes in the subregion.

Adams et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study to examine the interplay of corruption-mitigation strategies with the strength of state institutions and quality of governance in reducing the resource-curse in African countries that are endowed with minerals. The goal of this study was to assist with stopping the resource-curse in mineral-rich countries in Africa. Mukoyama (2020), suggested that there are negative impacts of natural resources, and their collective impacts are called the resource curse. Stratified simple random sampling was used to provide equal selection opportunities for every member of each stratum. Descriptive statistics were utilized. A Likert scale was utilized to assess the survey question on the role of Ghana's institutional factors in reducing the level of corruption, especially in area of abundant natural resources.

The results of the study showed no change in resource-curse in Ghana despite the country maintaining good petroleum revenue management policies as well as keeping its membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The conclusion of the study was that other factors such as country-level institutional factors exist apart

from membership and revenue collection, which may help to reduce the resource-curse. The findings of the study added a layer of understanding regarding complex macrolevel factors and the need to combine various concepts and elements for a more effective approach to anticorruption.

The Cross-Disciplinary Approach. As underscored exhaustively in the literature, the concept of corruption lacks consensus because of its multifaceted, dynamic, and evolving nature, especially with diverse types of actors, behaviors, and activities. Villeneuve et al., (2020) postulated that the complexity of corruption requires a multidisciplinary approach; unidimensional and general definitions are insufficient. Numerous studies have employed interdisciplinary approaches to improve the comprehension of the complex issue of corruption.

Williams (2021) highlighted the work of Interdisciplinary Corruption Research Networks (ICRN), which focused on harnessing and developing various perspectives to broaden the trajectory of corruption discourse. The ICRN works revealed how practitioners collaborated and shared experiences of sector, geography, and research methods to inform strategic thinking. The different ideas from various disciplines were synthesized into constructive knowledge for effective scientific research on corruption.

In China, Tang et al. (2018) did a qualitative study using a top Chinese journal articles that were cross-disciplinary, which offered non-Western perspectives on corruption and anticorruption. Tang et al. described the negative consequences of corruption on public administration in China. The findings revealed that because of the lack of empirical research on corruption in China, there is a gradual shift in Chinese

research toward more quantitative research. Additional conclusion of the study was that there were some factors of corruption that were specific to the Chinese context such as: personal greed, ineffective civil society, and traditional norms. The result of the study also revealed a shift toward institutionalized anticorruption, in the 1990s in China. The anti-corruption movement in China, in the 1950s to the 1980s, was called campaign against corruption. However, since the 2000s, the anti-corruption campaign in China has shifted toward using the news media platforms. The authors concluded there was a need for empirical evaluations of anticorruption effects.

Onwujekwe et al. (2020) used a mixed-methods approach to show ways of building consensus among policymakers and health workers in Nigeria, on the identification and prioritization of practical responses to the phenomenon of corruption. A narrative literature review approach was employed to identify the various forms of corruption that were reported in Nigeria's health sector. To review and prioritize the results, the nominal group techniques (NGT) was used. The findings were presented to 25 policymakers to express their opinions on the practicalities of implementing anticorruption measures. The main conclusion was that a structured approach can achieve consensus from diverse perspectives, which is crucial for mobilizing action to address corruption.

The Indirect Approach. There have been studies conducted using indirect approaches (Rose-Ackerman, 2018; Rothstein, 2018) to address corruption. Khan et al. (2019) postulated that conventional anticorruption strategies have been ineffective in situations in which formal rules were not enforced properly and in which the powerful

violated the rules. The authors proposed an indirect approach to identifying sectoral anticorruption strategies that target groups to comply with the implementation of corruption strategies because of the direct benefit to their own interests. The indirect approach identified anticorruption strategies from the bottom up, including the following:

- Aligning incentives with the group will remove any incentive to violate the rules.
- Design for differences, especially in heterogeneous societies, in which development is uneven, to provide equal opportunities for everyone.
- Build coalitions to assist with the enforcement of rules.
- Resolving rights using effective and legitimate conflict-resolution processes leads to acceptable compromises for all major stakeholders.

Lu et al. (2019) applied the concept of corporate social responsibility (CRS) to demonstrate the viability of the energy sector as well as its effects on corruption risk mitigation. Lu et al. demonstrated the connection between viability of enterprises and CSR at private enterprise and national levels. Lu et al. also posited that corruption is a major challenge obstacle to the development of CSR, and that some of the elements of CRS, such as advancing social and commercial developments, lowing environmental effects, and promoting good governance, are critical to reducing the levels of corruption in the energy sector. Lu et al. believed government policies that demand CRS are needed to generate a conducive environment that will also help to reduce the risks of corruption.

These studies, which have been discussed, represent different innovative approaches among a plethora of studies in literature on the corruption phenomenon. Mugellini et al. (2021) posited that many countries have implemented anticorruption

reforms, but there is still limited empirical research done to assess the effects of the anticorruption reforms. The UNDP (2015) painted an even grimmer picture by suggesting that most reforms in government yield unsatisfactory outcomes because they never move past the implementation stage. Implementing corruption reforms can be top down (leadership), bottom up (citizens), or a combination of both (Ankamah & Manzoor e Khoda, 2018; Dixit, 2018). Dixit noted that whether the approach is from the top or the bottom, the goal is changing social norms and culture, which may not succeed 100%, but doing nothing amounts to 0% success.

The methods discussed in this study have revealed varied results. The resounding themes among the studies discussed are context, emphasis on lack of enforcement, and poor implementation. What has not been highlighted much in these studies are the deeper underlying structures in the different contexts that may explain the successes and failures of corruption-mitigation implementation efforts. Fritzen and Dobel (2018) called for greater focus on the generous mix of reforms in various settings and, more important, for more in-depth research into how interventions function differently across diverse contexts. Hellmann (2017) suggested that future research on corruption in the developing world must focus on anticorruption measures that are effective. Hellman further posited that effective anticorruption measures could be produced if researchers try to fully understand how the corruption market operates, and sparing use the indicators of expert-based assessments. Hellman also said that understanding corruption from the perspective of informal rules and behaviors within a particular context, advances knowledge of the

issue; there is a need to focus on explaining the distinct arrangements of corruption in various contexts.

The purpose of this study was to identify, and report lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leones. The literature review focused on the multiple studies and reform combinations that have unfolded within the context of Sierra Leone and in other parts of the world. Context has been overemphasized in the existing literature on corruption, especially regarding implementing corruption-mitigating strategies. A search of the literature on corruption in Sierra Leone found a limited number of studies. These studies are first discussed individually and then compared with the dominant approaches (rational or principal-agent, and collective or structural) in the literature on corruption. The review of studies on anticorruption in Sierra Leone revealed various research methodologies have been employed, and most have been at the national level.

Overview of Corruption Studies in Sierra Leone

The literature review on corruption in Sierra Leone revealed a lack of adequate studies on the pervasive and endemic phenomenon that has plagued and devastated the country. Few studies have monitored the implementation of corruption strategies. Most studies on corruption conducted in Sierra Leone have been all-encompassing and targeted at the national level (Kpundeh,1999; NACS, 2019-2023; Riddell, 1996; Thompson & Porter, 1997). Only a few studies (Golub, 2014; Rodgers, 2006; Sawaneh, 2018) have addressed specific aspects of corruption. Additionally, survey methods with questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions have been mostly used. Very few

on corruption in Sierra Leone have employed transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies.

Equally important, the selected studies on corruption in Sierra Leone revealed a focus on the principal anticorruption approaches (principal-agent or rational choice, and structural). Some studies have promoted the use of incentive and deterrence (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al, 2020; Rodger, 2006) to mitigate corruption. Other studies have promoted the use of education, training, capacity-building (Bangura, 2007; Sawaneh, 2018), and legal reforms (Kpundeh, 1996; Thompson and Porter, 1997). Riddell (1996) discussed the phenomenon of corruption (political and administrative) in Sierra Leone but did not focus much on anticorruption approaches. One study (Golub, 2014) discussed the use of alternative informal channels to complement formal channels in mitigating corruption.

The most comprehensive review of the phenomenon of corruption in Sierra Leone is the NACS plan, 2019–2023. One of the main conclusions of this plan (Leone, 2020) was the lack of programmatic design for implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in previous versions of the NACS plans. An additional recommendation in the NACS plan, 2019–2023 was a focus on executing the strategic plan at all levels of public offices to fight corruption. More important, the plan called for pragmatism and for implementation to be subjected continually to the strictest achievability test.

The 4th NACS for the period 2019–2023 is the latest of the three NACS (Leone, 2020). The objective of the project and study was to produce a national anticorruption strategic plan to guide the mitigation and controlling of corruption in Sierra Leone. The

methodology used to produce the NACS plan was a multipronged, consultative, and interactive approach.

The data were obtained from critical informant interviews, personal interviews, and hall meetings at district levels. The Technical Expert Team (TET) consisted of experts from the Sierra Leone civil service, civil service organizations (CSOs), media, various partner organizations, and other stakeholder institutions. The project team engaged in large-scale consultations with people from various social classes in Sierra Leone. Additionally, several meetings, focus groups activities and workshops sessions were held in Freetown, in the provinces, and districts of Sierra Leone. The following points were the consensus among Sierra Leoneans:

- Corruption was socially accepted as the norm and was systemic.
- Political corruption, procurement fraud (including public sector corporations), and bank loan write-offs were among the highest forms of corruption.
- All arms of government suffered acutely from corruption.
- A host of factors contribute to corruption in Sierra Leone, including economic, social/cultural, developmental, political, legal, and judicial.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

- A lack of capacity and political inclination among the political elites to confront the issue of corruption.
- No programmatic design for implementation in previous versions of the NACS plan.

- A failure to take ownership of and commit to the responsibility for executing the strategic plan.
- Insufficient public involvement at all levels in the fight against corruption.
- Some degree of cautious optimism, but it was critical the strategy and its implementation be highly pragmatic, with a focus on what could be achieved.

The authors of the NACS plan made the following recommendations:

- Encourage all departments and agencies to develop their own anticorruption policies regarding their employees, suppliers, and other third parties.
- Introduce public dialogue and raise awareness through viable public education programs.
- Develop rules and policies to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Implement the right to information policy to give citizens easy access to government documents.
- Institutionalize a public integrity pledge and execute punishment for any failure to adhere to it.
- Institutionalize codes of conduct to set ethical standards.
- Educate the population on conflict-of-interest laws, regulations, or rules of business to prevent private interests' interference with civic obligations.
- Develop integrity pacts among related stakeholders and engage in open and verifiable ventures.
- Legally protect whistleblowers to encourage more involvement.

Kpundeh (1995) employed a quantitative approach, using face-to-face interviews with 300 people selected randomly from the four main regions of Sierra Leone. Kpundeh explored the attitudes and concerns of elites and non-elites toward corruption levels. The study generated descriptive statistics from the survey data, revealing that Sierra Leoneans believed political corruption is endemic and one of the most pressing problems the country faces apart from the civil war. Additionally, the outcome of survey revealed the respondents concurred that bribery was harmful, and that it was rampant among the police, the judiciary, and the business community.

Thompson and Potter (1997) did a qualitative case study that explored the predisposing factors for the phenomenon of corruption in Sierra Leone. Thompson and Porter used secondary data, mainly from previous studies (historical, sociological, political, and legal studies), and the results of previous Judicial Commissions of Inquiry into governmental corruption. Additionally, the principal author incorporated his prosecutorial and magisterial experiences in Sierra Leone. Thompson and Porter reached the following conclusions:

- Many factors explained the phenomenon of governmental corruption in Africa.
- Public employees solicit bribes or favors on a quid pro quo basis.
- Political leadership was openly supportive of corruption in government and has mismanaged the country's resources.
- There was a need to redesign the justice process and reform laws on customs, imports, income tax, and investment, etc., to facilitate the effective response of the ordinary courts to administrative corruption.

Sawaneh (2018) did qualitative study which investigated the social and technical problems that effects cyber security and cybercrime, which are national security threats in Sierra Leone. Also, the underlying sociological and technological reasons for cybercrime were explored in the study. The results of Sawaneh's study enhanced the implementation of solid cybersecurity, which contributed to reduction of the rate of cybercrime in Sierra Leone.

Sawaneh's research was based on literature reviews and an extensive survey in Freetown. The study sample population included nonprobability sampling from the cybersecurity unit in the security sector, and at the Anticorruption Commission (ACC) in Sierra Leone. The results also revealed weaknesses in state laws pertaining to cybersecurity in Sierra Leone. The results further revealed a substantial number of employees in the security sector in Sierra Leone did not have extensive knowledge of cybersecurity.

The conclusions of the study were as follows:

- There were substandard forensic laboratories to investigate serious crimes, and the state relied on the use of traditional, low-technology methods of investigation.
- The survey questionnaires were semi-structured and were borrowed from a dissertation thesis that did not allow for the development of tacit knowledge.
- There was a renewed sense of public awareness of the consequences of cybersecurity and cybercrimes.
- There was also renewed effort by key stakeholder institutions to advocate the enactment of effective cybersecurity laws in Sierra Leone.

- The recommendations from previous cybercrime research in Sierra Leone were not enacted by Parliament.
- There were not enough Indigenous cybersecurity experts in the country.

The recommendations included capacity-building through local training and connection with the Professional Certification Body International Partnership (PCBIP). It also was recommended to institute a special training unit on cybersecurity in the Armed Forces and the Police Forces of Sierra Leone.

Okeke-Ogbuafor et al. (2020) did an extensive fieldwork was conducted in two coastal fishing towns in Sierra Leone (Tombo and Goderich). The research investigated the practicality of a ban on industry fishing, with the goal of improving fish stock in the locality, which will provide food security and reduce poverty in those coastal communities. Okeke-Ogbuafor et al. used the mixed-method approach and utilized qualitative and quantitative data, semi-structured interviews, an open-ended survey questionnaire, a literature review, and relevant documents. A purposeful sample of 26 people from Tombo and 25 people from Goderich was recruited through social networking. The participants included four representatives from the field of academia in Siera Leone, 36 fishermen from two coastal communities, three executive staff from the Sierra Leone Amalgamated Fisher's Union (SLAFU), and three staff members from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR).

Results revealed the following:

- All the respondents thought industrial fishers (legal and illegal) were responsible for the drastic reduction in fish stock.

- They believed the total ban or at least a significant reduction of large-scale industrial fishing, both legal and illegal, will increase the fish stock in their local waters, which will improve food security as well as reduce poverty in their communities.

The conclusions were that the respondents made claims that could be challenged due to the bitter rivalry among the various opposing groups. Additionally, it was unclear whether the prohibition of industrial fishing would remove the problems because of the difficulty of establishing a cause-and-effect relationship.

Golub (2014) described the experiences of NGOs in Bangladesh and Sierra Leone and how the informal justice systems mitigated the degrees of corruption in developing nations. Golub shared the experiences of NGOs in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh on reducing the levels of corruption and improving the lives of people by working with, adapting to, or adjusting the informal Justice System (IJS). The results revealed that using informal means (local chiefs), who in some respects have official status, to preside over disputes served as an alternative to the formal justice system in Sierra Leone, where there were not enough attorneys outside of Freetown. Minor disputes were dealt with promptly, which prevented them from spiraling into broader conflicts with more far-reaching political implications, especially in Sierra Leone, which has institutions that are incapable of easily controlling volatile situations.

Golub concluded that alternative informal channels can be as effective as formal channels, and that informal channels can complement formal channels in mitigating corruption. Furthermore, collective action against the perpetrators of corruption may

deter such behavior. Using remedial action instead of punitive action may also produce effective results.

Rodger (2006) conducted a mixed-methods study in Sierra Leone to assess the relationship between the rebel war, which lasted for about 10 years, and the commercialization of the country's diamond mines. The focus of the study was on how international legislation, such as requiring an international diamond certificate, helped to reduce the illegal trading of the country's diamonds, which were otherwise called conflict diamond or blood diamond. Previous research materials were used in the study to support the claim that the implementation of legislative policies such as requiring a certificate of original scheme, help to reduce the level of illegal trade in the country's diamonds. A major finding of the study was that the international illegal trading of conflict diamonds was reduced by international certification scheme, but extensive efforts to control corruption are essential for peace and recovery in Sierra Leone.

Riddell (1996) did a qualitative, theory-informed review of William Reno's work in Sierra Leone, which explored how extreme patron-client relations in Sierra Leone resulted in the collapse of the nation-state. The investigation entailed a lot of literature on African political economy, including news reports, interviews, archival data (both national and district), theses, and many other sources. The results revealed that state rules and foreign partners connived in mutually beneficial ways, through corrupt practices, to ravage the state resources in the Kono district, a diamond-rich area of Sierra Leone. The results also exposed the interrelationship between politics and economics in the diamond-

rich area and the massive corrupt practices by national leaders and the privileged elites, as well as how external forces overwhelmed the weak state of Sierra Leone.

Bangura (2007) conducted a study in Sierra Leone, and it looked at how simple things such as linguistic metaphors, which are often ignored by the public, can infiltrate the core values of the society. Bangura suggested that simple things like metaphors should not be ignored in the fight against corruption because of their capability of altering the national mentality of people in a country. The fight against corruption must focus on developing the youth by re-instilling traditional ethical practices. The investigation attempted to highlight alternative methods of understanding and fighting corruption in Sierra Leone, where the legislative means has not been highly effective in fighting corruption in Sierra Leone. Bangura noted the self-glorifying language of survival of the fittest, was notoriously unflattering, with undertones of greed and selfishness that promoted a jungle mentality devoid of trust, mutual respect, and concern for others. Bangura further suggested corruption is a moral and mental issue, and therefore, there is need to guard the mind against destructive metaphors.

Many countries worldwide, including Sierra Leone, have initiated, and implemented several anticorruption reforms. However, very little research exists on the effectiveness of anticorruption measures (Mugellini, et al, 2021; Vian, 2020). Furthermore, insignificant progress has been made despite tremendous investment in anticorruption reforms (Camargo & Passas, 2017). It is therefore imperative to have conduct assessments and implementations of anticorruption strategies to determine their effectiveness in various settings (Killias et al, 2016). One promising research approach

used by many authors (Dandison, 2021; Lachney, 2018; Reda, 2021; Sungbeh, 2017) in the nascent literature on corruption-mitigation strategies is phenomenology.

Phenomenology enables researchers to explore a phenomenon by obtaining rich, thick descriptions of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This approach can uncover the reasons the implementation of some conventional anticorruption strategies fails in some contexts, which may help to create context-appropriate corruption-mitigation policies and strategies for effective implementation.

Summary and Conclusions

There is still much to learn about corruption and anticorruption policies and implementation despite great advances in corruption studies (Ledeneva et al, 2017) Corruption must be addressed in real time and particular contexts to understand its present state (Durokifa & Ijeoma, 2018; Gutmann et al., 2020; Kirya, 2019).

Implementing effective anticorruption strategies is difficult for most institutions, organizations, and governments. Heywood (2017) suggested that studies on corruption must pay sufficient attention to what exactly is being addressed. I addressed types and actors that enable corruption within a specific context in Sierra Leone. More studies on the corruption phenomenon are necessary in the different contexts that reflect the reality of specific instances of actual corrupt practices. Such studies may enhance literature by demonstrating the effectiveness or lack thereof of mainstream corruption mitigation approaches. Context determines both strategy and strategy execution (Olivier & Schwella, 2018).

Phenomenology involves exploring a phenomenon by providing rich and thick descriptions of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). As a result, phenomenology may uncover the success and failure of conventional anticorruption strategies and can provide context-appropriate corruption-mitigation policies and strategies for effective implementation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this study, the goal was to identify, and report lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. This chapter includes research methods. First, the design of the research and its rationale are discussed, as well as why other research approaches are unsuitable for this study. Afterwards, my role as well as collection, presentation, analysis, and interpretations of data are presented.

In the methodology section, my role is explained, followed by logic for participant selection, instrumentation, expert review, recruitment procedures and participation, and data collection procedures. I also address trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. The summary section concludes this chapter and includes a synthesis of major points of the chapter as well as a preview of Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question of this study was: What are the lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementing corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone? To answer the research question of this study, I ensured alignment of the procedures of inquiry or research design and the nature of the problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The nature of the problem in this study, as informed by the research question, is reflected in multiple human realities. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) stated that qualitative study enhances the understanding of multiple realities, in line with the constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2014) explained that constructivism involves

developing subjective meanings from understandings of individual experiences about a specific phenomenon in a specific social and historical context. Researchers who seek to explore phenomena in their natural settings through people's experiences should employ qualitative methods (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). In this study, the qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach was used.

Qualitative research has its roots in the social sciences, according to Creswell (2017), and it includes phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative case study, and ethnography (Creswell, 2017). Rahi (2017) posited that exploratory research involves seeking new insights and asking questions when concepts are not clear enough to develop an operational definition. There are many definitions of corruption which lead to substantive disagreements that emphasize the unclear nature of corruption (Rose, 2018). In this study, the phenomenon of corruption in Sierra Leone might be manifested and understood differently than in other contexts, which may constitute a conceptual or definitional problem. The qualitative approach is useful when:

- The goal is to explore people's experiences.
- The researcher primarily collects data and does analysis.
- There is a need for inductive analysis of data.
- There are multiple sources of data, and there is a need for rich descriptions of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Various approaches are discussed in this section to underscore the most suitable approach for this study. Qutoshi (2018) posited that phenomenology is used for gaining a deep understanding of people's everyday experiences of a phenomenon. Understanding

participants' lived experiences about a particular phenomenon requires accessing them directly (Van Manen, 2014). In phenomenology, the goal is to capture detailed descriptions, meanings, and essences in terms of participants' awareness of a phenomenon as identified and reported by participants (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009; Khan, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). If the goal of the study is to identify, describe, or report and not to explain, it is best to use phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological approach is subdivided into transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger 1962; Van Manen, 2014). Transcendental phenomenology involves identification and meaning of phenomena from perspectives of participants. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological approach, a more personal and reflexive approach, involves focusing on subjective interpretations or reinterpretations and reconstructing original meaning (Tuffour, 2017). This was not the focus of the study. The qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach, therefore, was most suitable because the purpose of this study was identification of a phenomenon from perspectives of participants.

The other two dominant research approaches in literature, which are mixed methods and quantitative methods, were not appropriate for the purpose of this study. Roger et al. (2018) stated in quantitative and mixed methods research, independent realities are sought by researchers using objective means. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that quantitative method deals with cause-and-effect, predicting, or assessing the distribution of population attributes. I had no intent to use statistical analysis

(Creswell, 2014; Park & Park, 2016), and the nature of this study was exploratory, thus the quantitative approach was not suitable. The purpose of this study was to identify, and report lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies. There was no need for a mixed methods approach, which involves using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018).

Other qualitative methods were inappropriate for this study because they did not align with its purpose. With the narrative approach, a narrative is constructed using documents and interviews involving the lives of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The narrative approach has an interpretive underpinning (Nigar, 2020), which was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, the narrative approach was not suitable for this study. The grounded theory approach is suitable for discovering unknown information about a phenomenon (Chun Tie et al., 2019), and when researchers try to capture the realities of a phenomenon without personal prejudices (Glaser, 2014). However, underlying grounded theory is the construction of an explanatory theory (Creswell, 2013), and that was not the goal of this study.

With ethnographic designs, emphasis is placed on exploring values, beliefs, and ideas of a group of people in relation to phenomena (Mannay & Morgan, 2015). Ethnography involves holistic and detailed descriptions of specific, recurring, and interrelated variables in society (Hammersley, 2018). The ethnographic research design was inappropriate for this study because I identified and described lived experiences rather than observing a phenomenon. With the case study approach, researchers can also look at the reality of a phenomenon in a specific context (Ridder, 2017). The case study

approach involves using a variety of procedures to collect rich data over a prolonged period (Creswell, 2009). This was beyond the scope of this study.

Role of the Researcher

To conduct research is to inquire into or investigate a phenomenon for a specific purpose using a specific research question or set of research questions, as well as collecting, presenting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Dhritikesh, 2018). Researchers must share information with participants about the purpose of the study, usefulness of data, risks to participants, and the researcher's responsibility during data collection procedures, as detailed in the informed consent form (Denzin, 2017). Data collection procedures, presentation, analysis, and interpretation are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach enables investigators to assess the participants' experiences using in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2009) or semi-structured interviews (Moustakas, 1994) to identify and describe patterns that help explain the phenomenon of interest. In this study, my responsibility as the investigator was to develop a clear, focused study question supported by a strong conceptual framework, enabling the selection of appropriate research methods to minimize researcher bias and improve trustworthiness (Johnson et al., 2020). I formulated interview questions, recruited participants, sent letters of informed consent to them, and facilitated the return of the signed copies. I conducted interviews and transcribed interview scripts as well as sent the transcribed interview scripts to participants to verify correctness of data.

The responsibility of the researcher, especially in a qualitative study, is to maximize accuracy and credibility, as well as to minimize bias. Accuracy and credibility in the research process can be achieved through reflexivity and deliberate planning (Dhritikesh, 2018), as well as through honest communication between the participants of the study, the investigator (Patton, 2015). I established honest interaction with the participants as an observer and facilitator of data collection (Roger et al., 2018). Researchers must also pay attention to ethical issues (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I provided information to the participants about the risks of their participation, and about their right to their right to stop participating at any time, as well as the measures in place to ensure their privacy and minimize or eliminate those risks. An example of a confidentiality measure is using aliases for participants to protect their privacy (Abakpa et al., 2017). Husserlian epoché, or bracketing, requires accessing the experiences of participants from an unbiased perspective, devoid of all preconceptions about the phenomenon of interest (Sylvester Idemudia, 2021). I endeavored to set aside personal thoughts and/or judgments through the process of epoché or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994) to avoid prejudice and acknowledge any biases by journaling and keeping field notes. Moustakas suggested that researchers must engage in phenomenological reduction to develop rich textual data, which is then synthesized to derive meaning and the existence of phenomena from the participants' perspectives.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Moustakas (1994) wrote that selecting participants for a phenomenological study has no definite criteria; the focus was on people who were ready to take part in the study, and who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. Merriam and Tisdell (2016), advocated the use of purposeful sample for homogeneity, and to secure a group of participants best suited to provide answers to the study question (s). Purposeful sampling also allows the researcher to gain comprehensive information for participants with the underlying characteristics for the study (Patton, 2015).

Although Sixsmith and Sixsmith (1987) suggested that using larger samples in phenomenological studies enables investigators to identify shared similarities and meanings between participants easily, the literature does not offer any clear-cut recommendation for the right sample size. There are various sample sizes suggested by different scholars in the literature, ranging from 3 to 25 or when data saturation is attained. Data saturation is attained whenever the researcher deems new data redundant or when enough details are obtained about the phenomenon of interest (Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Van Manen, 2014). In this study, the selection of the participants was based on two main criteria; those who have served in senior leadership positions, as well as those who are responsible for implementing policies and programs on mitigating corruption in a specific public sector departments in Sierra Leone. The focus on a specific public sector was to ensure each participant possessed the necessary experience and to provide quality descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The selection was

taken from a specific public sector staff list on the public website in Sierra Leone, first by identifying and contacting the director or manager of that public sector and then resorting to snowballing techniques to access other potential participants. Atkinson and Flint (2001) referred to snowballing as a clever and straightforward way of accessing a population of interest that may be initially inaccessible to the investigator.

Instrumentation

Creswell (2009) posited that instrumentation, in qualitative study may entail videos files, documentation, audio file, and the investigator. O'Halloran et al. (2018) suggested the researcher must use certain instruments including interviews, common local languages, and elimination, to ensure that essential meaning structures are maintained. The captured data, following a semi-structured interview process (see Appendix A), were used to attain the purpose of this study.

Creswell (2003) outlined that the literature on interview protocols entails the preparation stage, constructing effective research questions, and implementing the interviews. Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) claimed interview preparation is particularly important. In this study, semi-structured interview questions, with flexibility for follow-up questions were used. Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt argued open-ended questions are useful for soliciting detailed information from participants as well as for enabling the researcher to probe deeper to ensure they obtain adequate responses.

Appendix B shows the interview questions for this study, and the investigator used the concept of bracketing, as described by Moustakas (1994) van Kamm method of analysis. Bracketing requires the investigator to transcend and self-reflect, to

acknowledge biases and prior knowledge, and to comprehend the experience only from the perspective of the participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which enhances the objectivity of the study (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Expert Review

An expert review serves several purposes. The primary purpose is to ensure the instrument of the research (interview script) is comprehensive enough by submitting it to field experts to review and to resolve any practical issues before implementation (Avella, 2016; Creswell, 2013). Avella added that the use of experts helps to improve the credibility and transferability of an instrument. As with any instrument, tests assist the researcher in finding design flaws, limitations, and weaknesses, and field tests are especially useful to an inexperienced researcher. In this study, the expert review followed the traditional means of using academic phenomenological and qualitative expert opinion (Howie & Bagnall, 2016) to assess the quality of the interview questions (Patton, 2015). I sent the research questions via email to two experts – one in research design and another in corruption-mitigation strategy, who was also head of a large and especially important public sector department in Sierra Leone. I utilized the experts' feedback to distill and finalize the interview questions, shown in Appendix B.

In this study, the interview questions were partly informed by Moustakas' (1994) two central phenomenological questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

A gamut of effective strategies exists in qualitative research to recruit participants. Moustakas (1994) suggested using demographic information of the participant such as gender, experience, and age to recruit the desired candidates. In this study, the most important criterion was the experience of the participant. Despite the availability of other traditional recruitment strategies, purposeful sampling was used in this study. Potential participants who were able to implement corruption-mitigation strategies in a specific public sector in Sierra Leone were contacted via phone or email to ask for their consent to participate. More participants were reached through the snowballing sampling technique because I was unable to identify all potential participants who had valuable insights into the phenomenon of interest. The potential participants were asked to confirm their experiences pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. Guest et al. (2006) suggested the recruitment of at least 6 to 12 participants to allow for natural attrition and to ensure the minimum number of participants recommended by most scholars in the literature regarding sample size in phenomenology is attained. I began by recruiting five participants I identified as appropriate. Heckathorn and Cameron (2017) described snowball sampling as starting with identifying initial participants as a base, which then serves as a network linkage to other participants to reach the target population or until data saturation is attained.

Participation

As mentioned previously, the number of participants in phenomenological studies is a function of saturation (Moser & Korstjens , 2017). In this study, all participants were informed that their participant was purely voluntary. They were also informed about their privacy, and their right to withdraw their participant from the study at any time. All processes and procedures pertaining to this study were clearly outlined in the informed consent, and participants were also informed that they must sign the consent form to be able to participate.

The main elements of the consent form were introduction, motive of the forms, nature, or essence of the study, the procedures or processes, the dangers, and rewards for taking part in the study, and the contact information. I sent the informed consent through personal email, and the participants replied, I consent, which served as their consent to participate. I also called the participants via phone to address any questions about the consent form or any other issues. I conducted the interview at the place and time that the participants chose.

The participants lived in a country with many economic challenges and lacked access to certain necessities, such as consistent electricity. The participants were offered the choice of participating via electronically mediated sources, such as Skype, Zoom, or a telephone interview. Also, I requested the participants' permission to audio record the interviews. It was necessary to audio record the interview for ease of transcription, and it enabled the easy coding and identification of themes and patterns (Moustakas, 1994). Zoom videoconferencing was the preferred option for the interviews because it captured

nonverbal elements of a conversation, such as facial expressions, and was cost-effective, user-friendly, and more secure than telephone (Archibald et al., 2019).

Other relevant discussions on the place and time for the interview, and concerns about any matter that may potentially affect their participation, were held during the initial phone calls. Korstjens and Moser (2018) outlined that participation in qualitative studies occurs when the participant and investigator engage in a conversation in which the researcher asks wide-ranging questions that may produce unexpected results. The participants provided one-on-one responses though various communication means.

Data Collection

The phenomenological interview is the preferred method to access participants' lived world and to explore and collect data on the lived experience (Van Manen, 2014). In this study, the purpose statement was also a useful element that helped to design the interview protocol. Paton (2015) advocated for good planning on the data-collection process. Patton said that proper data collection clarifies the main research question, and it provides leverage for the investigator to dig deep and capture the structures and essences of the participant's lived experiences. The following interview protocols (see Appendix A), as suggested by Creswell (2009) for use in qualitative interviews, were adopted: heading, directions, interview questions, follow-up questions, and any other issues, comments, or concerns.

The data-collection process began by conducting an interview with five participants for a duration of 30 to 60 minutes per interview. The interviewing process continued after the initial five participants until data saturation was attained. No

electronic software transcription service was used because of the many nuances, intonations, and expressions that are not captured sufficiently by many software programs that are Western-language oriented. The participants were from Sierra Leone, and although the official language is English, it is still a second language, and many people's spoken English is influenced by their first local language. Transcription was conducted manually by the researcher, who understands the language and some of the unique expressions of the English language of the participants. I provided the transcribed data to the participants, to examine the accuracy of data. The participants were allowed up to seven days to confirm accuracy, or the transcribed data were adopted as accurate. Each transcript from the interview was typed in Microsoft Word format and saved electronically and in hard copy for added security against loss of data. Data analyses began seven days after the translated materials were sent to the participants for review for accuracy. No one questioned the accuracy of the data.

Van Manem (2014) underscored the importance of collecting participants' lived experiences to explore and reflect on the meanings assigned to experiences of the same phenomenon by different people. Thompson et al. (2017) posited that, in phenomenology, the interview is the main data-collection method, providing the means for participants to describe how the phenomenon is experienced. Interviews are also an opportunity for the investigator to extract the underlying meaning structures of the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). In most instances, the investigator develops relationships with the participants during the interview process. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological interviews as an informal, interactive process. This

informal interaction creates an avenue for bias to occur, and the researcher must reflect on any influence that may affect the comprehension of the results. However, putting aside prior knowledge and one's natural attitude is one of the main challenges of maintaining objectivity with the phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 2009).

A limitation of the interview approach is the inability of the participants to articulate their lived experience clearly, which is a function of the population, as well as the specific time of data gathering (Webb & Welsh, 2019). Webb and Welsh emphasized that the standard of data is also a function of a multitude of issues, such as concomitant factors associated with lived experiences, which could be ignored, and the limit of the scope. Acknowledging the limitations of the interview process was important but taking fieldnotes of every possible concomitant factor that comes to mind or arises during the interview process was also important for the conclusions of the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis in qualitative phenomenological studies must follow a specific, structured method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Collecting data using open-ended interview questions about lived experiences as described by the participants precedes the data analysis process. The researcher must change the interview data, first into textural description, and then, into structural description to highlight the core experiences of participants (van Manen, 2014). Organizing data into themes can be aided by computer software technology, such as NVivo statistical and data analysis software, to support a more accurate transcription of the data from interview recordings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, as Zamawe (2015) argued, some researchers prefer to use visual and

interactive methods, which makes NVivo less useful. In this study, the data were organized manually and immediately following transcription, because the organization and analysis of data must begin when interview data are transcribed (Moustakas, 1994). As the instrument of the research process, I desired to isolate and emphasize the fine distinctions of language expressions that might be missed by the software and that I could capture because of my knowledge of the local language expression.

There are several approaches used to analyze data in qualitative phenomenology. The following steps outlined in the Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis, were used:

The first task is to read thoroughly the entire transcribed interview notes several times while identifying and noting keywords and ideas that pertain to the phenomenon. The discernment of the key elements of the experience in alignment with study's main research question, as described by the participant, is referred to as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas noted that, in horizontalization, all statements must be given equal attention to capture all relevant descriptions of the participants' experiences.

However, it was salient that investigator followed the bracketing process by paying attention to his personal biases and focusing solely on the accounts of what the participants experienced. Preparing and organizing the transcripts, as well as taking fieldnotes, are equally important first steps in data analysis (Akinyode & Khan, 2018), especially with the epoché process. Husserl (1931) described the concept of epoché as placing an emphasis on eliminating prejudice to understand fully the phenomenon as it is.

In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher attempts to transcend all prejudices and view the phenomenon from a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

The horizontalization process enables the researcher to identify and separate words and phrases with similar meanings (Merriam et al., 2016), which prepares the way for the researcher to review, eliminate, and reduce the transcribed data into a meaningful dataset. I considered all statements by the participants to be of equal value at the stage of data analysis. I eliminated statements I considered unimportant to the purpose of the study or statements that were overlapping and redundant. I created and retained only a list or groups of expressions that were important to the objective of the study, and I ignored the rest.

For meaningful data, the researcher must remove or eliminate words that overlap or render no value for explicating the phenomenon of interest, and therefore, cannot be labeled as important (Moustakas, 1994). The words or phrases the researcher retains must support the purpose of the study and must be transformed into labels and themes to obtain meaningful data (Saldana, 2016). In this study, after coding the components deemed relevant, the next key step was to separate and highlight the invariant elements that formed the core of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest and then remove the nonessential ones.

The process of elimination and removal preceded the clustering and thematizing, which divided the data into units, sections, or clusters expressed as descriptions of the text to make complete sense of the narratives. I clustered the horizons or lists into meaningful statements at this stage of the data analysis.

The invariant constituents that remained after eliminating nonessential ones were clustered based on themes relevant to the participant' shared awareness of the situation (Moustakas, 1994). Clustering and thematizing constitute the end-stage elements of the identification part of data analysis in transcendental phenomenology, which leads to the next stage: integrating similar, recurrent, invariant themes and constituents. At this point of the data analysis, I thematized and clustered all relevant statements and labeled them core themes of the participants' experiences.

The invariant constituents and textual description were achieved by creating individual textual descriptions for each participant. According to Moustakas (1994), textual description should reflect exactly what the participant shared with the researcher regarding the total experience of the phenomenon. The purpose of creating individual textual descriptions is to arrive at the common meaning shared by the participants based on their lived experiences of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This step is a validation of the meaning derived from the central themes created for what each participant shared about their experiences in the interview (Grumstrup & Demchak, 2019). At this stage of data analysis, I placed meaning units in a narrative format for easy comprehension of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon of interest. Summarizing the invariant themes in the textual description was followed by the structural description of each participant.

The participants' description of their experiences of the situation including all variations of it, to obtain the various meanings, is called structured description (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas suggested that combinations of both textual and structural

accounts of the participant's experience of a situation constitute the true meanings and essences of those experiences. At this point in the data analysis process, I generated an additional structural description at the end of each textual description to facilitate understanding how each participant experienced the phenomenon.

The combination of both textual description and structural description is called composite description (Moustakas, 1994), and it constitutes the central meaning and essence of the total experiences of phenomena of interest to the participants. It is at this final stage of data analysis that I highlighted and described the essence of the participant's experiences of the situation in the context of Sierra Leone.

The steps in Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method provide a structured means of obtaining rich, descriptive data for the phenomenon of interest. These data were obtained via careful transcription, identification, coding, thematization, categorization, and syntheses of themes to identify the universal meaning of experience ascribed by the participants. In this study, no statistical or data analysis software was used, despite the suggestion by Creswell and Poth (2018) that it contributes to the accuracy of transcriptions of recorded interviews. Manual transcription and development of themes were used in this study because I was well positioned to transcribe more accurately than the software could, due to my expertise in understanding the accents and local English-language expression.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

Every qualitative research study should be trustworthy to justify its findings being worthy or useful (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Trustworthiness is the most essential element of qualitative research because it presents the overall rigor and strength of the research process. As Patton (2015) suggested, trustworthiness ensures confidence in research processes via strict adherence to proper procedures. In an excellent quality study, trustworthiness must also include four other critical elements: dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Schwandt et al., 2007). To achieve trustworthiness, the researcher must employ various strategies to achieve these other critical elements to address the various perspectives of the investigator, the readers, as well as the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, I paid attention to reflexivity to address personal biases and attitudes (Moustakas, 1994). I also solicited feedback regarding transcript verification to check the accuracy of the information provided by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Another crucial step for ensuring trustworthiness is to strive for data saturation. Additionally, I enhanced trustworthiness by focusing on originality of insight and a good interpretation of the meaning structures as described by the participants, based on scholarly phenomenological research (Van Manen, 2014). The critical parts of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) are discussed.

Credibility

A qualitative research study must use appropriate strategies to enhance its truthfulness and to enable any reader or other researcher to understand the procedures and processes used to enable replication (Miles et al., 2014). The participants and the investigator must both be credible, because it is a critical underpinning factor that supports the trustworthiness of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To establish credibility and advance wholeness in any study, Noble and Smith (2015) recommended adoption of strategies such as transcript verification and validation by the participants and the researcher. Taking these steps supports accuracy of the materials collected. Additionally, the use of experts to review the research instruments adds value and credibility to the research process. Participants should receive copies of their transcripts to validate the correctness of the details provided. Equally important, the investigator must obtain adequate information to the point of saturation, meaning no additional information is needed (Fusch & Ness, 2015). There are also other steps such as maintaining a reflective journal, and keeping an audit of the data-collection procedures that supports the credibility of a study.

Transferability

Another essential element of trustworthiness in a quality study is transferability, which allows the outcome of an investigation to be applied to other individuals or settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles et al., 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The investigator must provide a comprehensive account of the study, including its nature and all its processes, procedures, findings, and limitations. This detailed description provides

sufficient information about the study to enable other researchers to use the same processes in different contexts (Creswell, 2009). In this study, I have outlined all relevant procedures and clearly described the contexts.

Dependability

Dependability is another important criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is attained by maintaining consistency in procedures throughout the study, so they may produce the same research findings if the study is replicated with the same people and methods over time (Moon et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). To achieve dependability, an audit trail must be established to ensure proper adherence to the step-by-step process of keeping records, taped interviews, notes taken from interviews, and transcripts to obtain error-free and consistent data for the study (Creswell, 2007; Rudestam & Newton; 2007). The audit trail was established at the beginning of this study.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the corroboration of the outcomes of the study by other researchers (El Hussein et al., 2015). In this study, I attempted to exclude personal biases and influences that may affect the truthfulness of the outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas1994). In qualitative transcendental phenomenology, the focus is on the participants. There is a need to acknowledge and contemplate any potential influence through reflexivity (Creswell, 2013). Keeping an audit of the procedures and maintaining a reflective journal enabled others to confirm the processes and protocols followed in this study.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure confidentiality and safety of the participants in this study, ethical procedures were employed in Walden University's protocols on informed consent. accordance with the protocol of informed consent developed by Walden University. No data were collected until the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University granted permission to conduct the study. All steps taken in this study complied with ethical standards (Denzin, 2017). These steps included providing informed consent forms to participants. Also, I asked the participants for permission to use an audio recorder, to accurately capture their responses to the interview questions. The participants were offered the option of telephone interviews or Zoom conference interviews for data collection because of the poor economic conditions in Sierra Leone.

Saarijärvi and Bratt (2021) outlined the unreliability and technical difficulties of internet connections, including good cameras and working microphones, in some parts of the world. As a result, participants with relevant information may opt out because of the unavailability of the necessary equipment. The unavailability of equipment was not an issue in this study; all the participants had access to phones and computers.

Saarijärvi and Bratt stated that both telephone and video conferences have potential confidentiality risks, such as having another person in attendance, who may be inconspicuous but may impact the outcomes. However, Zoom has password protection for confidentiality and the capacity for recording and storage. Zoom also has a waiting room that allows the host to let people in and keep people out.

Abukari et al. (2022) proposed using highly advanced two-layer encryption with two different encryption schemes to get dependable audio and video data production that is accessible only to the Zoom user and a third-party agent. This advanced technology and solution architecture are new, and Zoom claims to have also acquired Keybase, another technological development to strengthen its security and move toward end-to-end encryption and secure file-sharing (Secara, 2020). All data were stored on electronic devices with security passwords, and all physical documents pertaining to this study were stored securely under lock and key.

The data for this study will be kept for five years, after which, the physical document will be shredded or burnt, and all the electronic versions will be erased by using the latest electronic data-erasing software. No data were stored on Zoom. I kept the study data on the computer with a password to protect it, so no online versions of the saved interviews were made.

Summary

I identified and described lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. It was important to choose the qualitative transcendental phenomenology for this study. Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes using a fresh perspective when studying a phenomenon with an emphasis on epoché and accounting for personal beliefs and assumptions (Creswell 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, I used Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis to ensure necessary procedures were followed to make the study trustworthy, credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable. To

ensure privacy and safety of participants, I adhered to proper ethical standards. Chapter 4 includes details regarding results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

To achieve desired results in strategic management, it is necessary to employ concepts, processes, tools, techniques, and practices that are adapted strategically to specific contexts (Bryson & George, 2020). In this chapter, I discuss the expert review, research setting, data collection, and data analysis. Evidence of trustworthiness is also discussed, followed by results of the study and a summary.

Outcomes of the study revealed more participants endorsed prevention than prosecution, and participants described more themes regarding challenges than accomplishments. Understanding the underlying context-specific elements of corruption is important (Glynn, 2022), so the following processes, procedures, techniques, and concepts, which were adapted strategically to the specific context of this study, are discussed in this chapter.

Expert Review

The central question of this study was: What are the lived experiences of senior public sector leaders pertaining to implementing corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone? Nine semi-structured interview questions with room for follow-up questions, originally designed by me and refined by two expert reviewers, were used. Two central phenomenological questions advanced by Moustakas informed the interview questions. I sent the interview questions to two experts: one on research designs and another on corruption mitigation strategies, who is also head of department in a public sector in Sierra Leone. The two experts provided feedback, which I used to refine the interview questions (see Appendix B). Avella (2016) posited the aim of the expert review is to

ensure the instrument is comprehensive, credible, transferable, and ready to address any practical issues before implementation. The refined interview questions supported elements of the conceptual framework of this study, which were phenomenon of corruption, approaches, and lived experiences in the context of Sierra Leone.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in Sierra Leone, and voluntary participants were public sector senior leaders at the ACC in Sierra Leone who participated in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. In Sierra Leone, the main responsibility of the ACC is to prevent and prosecute corruption. The ACC has employees working in all four regions of the country and was the most suitable organization for this study because it works directly with public institutions to generate and enforce anticorruption programs and policies that help to mitigate corruption in Sierra Leone.

Demographics

I collected demographic data from 10 participants in this study. Collecting demographic data is useful for ensuring there is adequate representation of various groups within a sample (Andrus & Villeneuve, 2022). In this case, the target population sample was homogeneous (same group of people doing the same thing in the same organization), and only four demographic questions (age, sex, role, and number of years in the current role) were asked. The reason for collecting limited demographic information was to ensure anonymity of participants. Participants' mean age was 42, and all participants had at least two years of work experience in their current roles. The average years of work experience was four, and participants were public sector senior leaders, who satisfied

recruitment criteria for this study. Four participants were managers, and the rest were other public sector senior leaders. Six participants were males, and four participants were females. Seven participants held master's degrees, and three participants held bachelor's degrees (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participants	Age	Sex	Education	Role	Years
P1	38	Female	Masters	Manager	3
P2	52	Male	Masters	Education Officer	4
P3	41	Female	Masters	Manager	3
P4	36	Male	Bachelor	District Monitor	3
P5	52	Female	Masters	Manager	10
P6	38	Male	Masters	Compliance Officer	2
P7	41	Male	Masters	Education Officer	3
P8	55	Male	Masters	Manager	6
P9	35	Male	Bachelor	Investigation Officer	4
P10	31	Female	Bachelor	Prevention Officer	2

Data Collection

In this study, I started to collect data after receiving the approval from the IRB at Walden University. I obtained contact information for the Commissioner of the ACC in

Sierra Leone from the website for the Sierra Leone government, and I contacted him via email and phone calls to ask permission to do the study. I received his permission, and he also provided an updated list of employees who met recruitment criteria for this study. I sent approximately 15 emails to potential participants. I received three responses initially. I established relationships with those who responded. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological interviews as an informal, interactive process. I found that some ACC workers did not access their emails daily because of logistical issues involving electricity and internet unavailability. I made phone calls to follow up on invitational emails and secured an additional two volunteers. I sent out letters of consent to those participants who responded to invitational emails. I scheduled Zoom interviews with participants from whom I received email replies with the words, I consent.

I used semi-structured interview questions which were based on a prepared interview guide (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017) to collect data for this study. Creswell (2009) suggested using scripted interview protocols (see Appendix B) for qualitative research. I started data collection process by interviewing each of the first five participants for a duration of 30 to 60 minutes. As Thompson et al. (2017) posited, interview is the main data collection method for phenomenological studies and provides the means for participants to describe how the phenomenon is experienced. The interviewing process continued after the initial five participants. I found an additional five volunteers through snowballing sampling via the original participants I established relationships with. I continued with interviewing participants, and I achieved data

saturation after interviewing eight participants. However, I still did the two interviews I had scheduled prior to data saturation.

I conducted all interviews via Zoom, with password protection and a waiting room for the participants, who were only allowed into the Zoom meeting by me. Participants agreed to Zoom's audio recording. However, two of 10 participants (20% of sample) preferred audio recording only, with no video, because they felt more comfortable that way. I conducted the first Zoom interview on 7 February 2023, and the final Zoom interview on 2 March 2023. One of the major limitations of the phenomenological perspective is maintaining objectivity (Giorgi, 2009). I maintained epoché throughout each interview to contain any bias or preconceptions on the issue of corruption in Sierra Leone. The epoché process permitted the investigator to get information on corruption only from the point of view of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). I reflected on the answers and took field notes on any influence that may influence the understanding of the outcomes of the study. Webb and Welsh (2019) posited that scope of the study and a multitude of factors, such as concomitant factors associated with lived experiences, which could be missed by the interviewer, may affect the quality of the data. Field notes were taken to acknowledge every possible concomitant factor crossed my mind and were deemed relevant to the conclusions of the study.

Each transcript from the interviews was typed in Microsoft Word format verbatim and saved electronically and in hard copy for added security against loss of data. I sent the interview transcript to every participant at the conclusion of the individual interviews and allowed seven days as the grace period to receive their feedback. Only two of 10

participants (20% percent of sample) responded to transcript validation, and they indicated that everything was good. The remaining eight participants did not respond. I adopted the interview transcripts as valid after the grace period of seven days, for the remaining eight participants who did not respond. I began data analysis after the seven-day grace period which was given to each participant to review their data for accuracy.

Data Analysis

In this study, I analyzed the data following a specific, structured method of analysis. After adopting the transcribed data as valid, I used the steps outlined in Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis. However, the first step I adopted was the epoché process or bracketing in which I acknowledged as well as set aside any prior knowledge. This step was important because I was born and raised in Sierra Leone, and it was necessary to bracket my prior knowledge of corruption in the country throughout the entire research process. After adopting the epoché process, I read each interview script repeatedly to identify important words, phrases, and statements. Identification and isolation of significant statements is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). I considered all statements or data given by participants as having equal value. I eliminated statements I considered unimportant to the purpose of the study or overlapping and redundant. I created and retained a list or groups of expressions I considered relevant and ignored the rest. Second, I retained words or phrases that supported the purpose of the study and coded them as E, for essential. For example, phrases such as "refuse to divulge information" in P5's transcript were coded as E.

I separated and highlighted the invariant essential elements that formed the core of the meaning structure of the participants' comprehension of the situation, and then removed nonessential ones. I thematized and clustered all essential statements and labeled them as core theme of the participants' understanding of the situation of interest. For example, the statement "I saw a kind of collusion; collusion in doing their job" by P6 was placed under the core theme of system lapses, and the statement "the human resource is not entirely up to task" by P4 was placed under the core theme of resource constraints.

Thereafter, I identified invariant elements and generated textural descriptions, which were achieved by creating individual textual description for each participant to reflect exactly what that participant shared with the researcher regarding lived experiences of the phenomenon. I put meaning units in narrative format for easy comprehension of participants' experiences. I transformed interview data into textual and structural descriptions to attain core meaning of accounts of situations participants described. For example, I combined P1's statement "We were almost pelted" with P6's "I am not secure in doing my job" to narrate and emphasize the participants' negative experiences of violence against them when implementing the anticorruption strategies. Combination of invariant themes to form textual descriptions was followed by structural descriptions of participants' accounts of their lived experiences.

Regarding structural description, I focused on how participants experienced the phenomenon, including all variations of it, by creating structural description at the end of each textual description to confirm or reaffirm the core theme and how each participant experienced the phenomenon. I examined all textual descriptions and placed them under

core themes and created a label that represented all variations of meaning units. For example, all textual descriptions of experiences with underlying references to demonstrating unwavering loyalties to a group or ideology were labeled structurally as allegiances. The last stage of data analysis process was composite description. At this stage, I combined textual descriptions and structural descriptions to determine essence(s) and central meaning of participants' total accounts of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For example, all structural and textual descriptions related to core themes such as personal commitments, stakeholder support, and programs and policies were labeled as accomplishments or positives.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In this study, I addressed the issue of trustworthiness by ensuring that the study was credible, transferable, dependable, and conformable. Guba and Lincoln (1981) postulated that trustworthiness in a study justifies the value of its data. I utilized various strategies to address the various perspectives of participants, researchers, and readers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, I paid attention to reflexivity to address personal biases and attitudes (Moustakas, 1994). I adopted the epoché approach throughout the entire research process of the study to reveal only participants' account of the phenomenon of interest.

Another critical step taken toward trustworthiness in this study was ensuring data saturation was attained. I attained data saturation after conducting interviews with eight participants. However, I interviewed the other two participants I had scheduled prior to reaching data saturation. I used verbatim transcription method and presented only what

participants said to enhance trustworthiness by focusing on originality of their insights. Furthermore, to interpret the meaning structures as described by participants, based on scholarly phenomenological research (Van Manen, 2014), I employed the horizontalization process. This process was achieved by repeatedly reading the transcribed transcripts of participants and extracting essential elements pertaining to the goal of this study.

Thereafter, I solicited feedback on transcript verification to crosscheck for correctness of the data provided by participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Only two of 10 participants (20% of sample) provided feedback and endorsed the accuracy of the transcripts that I sent to them. The remaining participants were informed they had seven days to crosscheck for correctness of the translated interview scripts, or they would be adopted as accurate. Transcripts were adopted as accurate after seven days, which was the grace period, of not receiving any further response from the remaining eight participants. Trustworthiness was also enhanced by ensuring this study was credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable.

Credibility

To address issue of credibility in this study, I facilitated an expert review of interview scripts, which added value and credibility to the research instruments. Equally important, I ensured that I obtained adequate information to attain data saturation, to the point at which additional information did not add value to the purpose of the study. Furthermore, to enhance credibility of this study, I kept an audit of the data-collection process, and I maintained a reflective journal throughout the study. Also, I sent interview

transcripts and summary of results to all participants of this to study for verification and feedback.

Participants were given timelines to provide feedback; otherwise, they were assumed to be accurate. I called, sent text messages, and sent emails to participants to notify them of the documents I sent for verification. I received feedback from two of 10 participants (20% of sample) via email regarding transcript verification, and both indicated that the transcripts were accurate. I also received feedback from three of 10 participants (30% of sample) regarding summary of results. Two of the three participants said that they had nothing to add.

The third participant on the summary of results, however, asked that I emphasize the issue of witch guns as a fear of public officials when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. The issue of witch guns is a common belief among people in Sierra Leone that some people possess spiritual powers to kill others. The goal of presenting a detailed discussion of the data-collection steps that were taken, is to enable any reader or other researcher to understand the procedures and processes used to enable the replication of the study (Miles et al., 2014). The series of steps discussed in this section were used to enhance trustworthiness of the study' outcomes.

Transferability

Trustworthiness was also enhanced by focusing on elements of transferability. Transferability is achieved when the outcome of a study is applicable to different contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles et al., 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In this study, I provided a comprehensive account of processes and procedures to enable

different researchers to apply the study to other settings. This thick description of all processes and procedures may enhance transparency for other researchers who might be interested in applying the study to different contexts.

Dependability

I achieved dependability by maintaining consistency in procedures throughout the study. I followed the interview protocols strictly and applied the same processes to all participants. An audit trail was established at the beginning of this study to ensure proper adherence to the step-by-step process of keeping records, taped interviews, notes taken, and transcripts. Consistency of procedures and processes helps to produce error-free and consistent data (Creswell, 2007; Rudestam & Newton; 2007). In this study, I adhered to the step-by-step procedures for all participants, which may allow other investigators to generate the same outcomes when this study is reproduced with the same people and methods over time.

Confirmability

I focused on the participants, and I tried to exclude personal biases and influences through the process of epoché and by maintaining an audit trail and a reflective journal. It is always important to acknowledge and contemplate any potential influence through reflexivity (Creswell, 2013). All processes I adopted (epoché, audit trail, and reflective journal) in this study, can enhance corroboration of the outcomes by other researchers.

Study Results

The interview questions were designed to generate answers that helped to attain the purpose of this study. The purpose was to identify and describe lived experiences of

public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. Participants' responses supported major elements of the conceptual framework, which required knowledge of lived experiences in Sierra Leone. These lived experiences were captured from responses to questions about what corruption meant to participants and what approaches were used (policies and programs). Total lived experiences of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies were captured from interview questions on the contexts that affected the experiences, situations that helped or hindered implementation, both from within and from without their organization, and any additional comments that supported the conceptual framework.

Results are presented as individual textual descriptions in three sections of thematic outcomes: meaning of corruption, approaches, and lived experiences. Individual textual description for each participant reflects exactly what the participant shared with the researcher regarding total experience of how they experienced the phenomenon, including all variations of it, to obtain the various meanings (Moustakas, 1994). I created individual textual descriptions based on central themes created from the interview scripts. Creswell and Poth (2018) underscored the need for common meaning shared by participants pertaining to their accounts of the situation of interest. Implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies was incorporated as the last element in the conceptual framework.

There was one main research question, What are the lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone? Nine interview questions were used to address the main question of this

study. The first three interview questions addressed role of participants in the organization, meaning of corruption to participants, and programs and policies that were used in the organization. The remaining questions explored lived experiences of senior public sector leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes Regarding the Meaning of Corruption

Categories	Words/Phrases	Participants
Misuse/abuse of public office	Abuse, misuse, office, position, entrusted influencing, dishonesty, power, distortion.	10
Private gain	Private gain, someone else' gain, self-gain personal benefit, aggrandizement, own gain.	10
Law	Act, statute, protocols, against standard, entrusted resource.	4

Table 2 lists themes regarding corruption in categories. These categories include words or phrases participants used to express what corruption meant to them. All 10 participants (100% of sample) used words with the invariant meaning of "abuse or misuse" of public office for "private gain." P1 said the phrase "the abuse of power or the abuse of position for your own private gains." Five other participants (P3, P7, P8, P9, and P10) offered very similar descriptions of corruption as P1, all of which emphasized the deprivation of others of public resources for personal gains. Only four of 10 (40% of sample) participants used the word "law" to describe their understanding of corruption. P5 said, "Well, to me, corruption is anything that is contrary to the law, anything that

goes against what the law says, against the rights standards." P5's perspective of corruption as violating the law for personal gain was shared by P2, P4, and P5. P4 described corruption as follows:

> Trying to move away from what has been prescribed by the act or what has been prescribed by the legal statute, I may say corruption is something that actually means greed or influencing, trying to amass the resources that is meant for many, for just a few of those individuals.

Three themes were identified – abuse or misuse (Theme 1), private gain (Theme 2), and law (Theme 3) that encapsulated the invariant description of participants' understanding of the definition of corruption. Corruption was described and understood as engaging in activities that involved the abuse or misuse of public resources or breaking the law, standards, or protocols for personal gains. A clear identification of participants' descriptions of corruption was important for the purpose of this study. Equally important was identification and description of the approaches in mitigating corruption (see Table 3).

Table 3

Themes Regarding Policies and Programs

Categories	Words/Phrases	Participants
Prevention	System and processes review, policies, and ethics, monitoring compliance, risk assessment, training, service charters, cash handling, community meeting, monitoring and compliance, risk assessment, media, thematize, workshops, scorecards, handbooks, visit, Integrity Management Committees (IMC), radio, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), National Anti-Corruption Strategies (NACS), Internal audits, policy guidelines, manuals, local council, steering committee, meet-the-school, Civil Societies Organization (CSO), public education, procurement.	10
Prosecution	Confrontation, investigation, asset declaration, Act, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), intelligence, penalties and fines.	6

Participants' invariant descriptions of the policies and programs used in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies were categorized under two themes: prevention and prosecution (Themes 4 and 5, respectively).

All 10 participants (100% of sample) identified policies and programs that were preventive. Only six of 10 (60% of sample) participants identified programs relating to prosecution. Under the prevention theme, participants described five main programs: NACS, systems-and-processes review, policy and ethics, systems and compliance, and

public education. Under the prosecution theme, the participants described programs such as confrontation, investigation, asset declaration, and confrontation. P5 said, "We do have prevention, we do have public education, we do have confrontation, and we do have NACS, that is a national anticorruption strategy paper." All participants spoke about the programs and policies, and P2 noted that programs in their organization are based on the NACS:

> NACS is basically talking here about strategies and national strategies that capture all the views and voices and actions of the people of Sierra Leone to fight against corruption collectively…We have been able to establish what we refer to as integrity management committees in all of the MDAs and councils right across the country… They are like an internal organ in the MDAs, and the councils fight against corruption even before ACC get there.

As suggested by P2 that the NACS encompassed all national strategies, some participants (P1, P10) described the functions of some programs in the national strategies. P10 said:

> We have the prevention unit. Our own responsibility is to prevent corruption. We have the public education unit; their own responsibility is to educate the public about the odds and dangers of corruption…under the prevention, like I said, we have the three categories, the three units under the prevention: systems review procedures and practices, ethics and policies…and the monetary and compliance unit.

Three categories under prevention theme (systems review procedures and practices, ethics and policies, and monitoring and compliance unit) were further described by other participants. Regarding systems-and-processes unit, P9 said:

> The unit that is charged with the responsibility of preventing corruption. They will be called upon to look at the systems and processes in that organization to see if there are any loopholes of corruption and how they can recommend that particular organization on the control of corruption.

Regarding ethics and policies program, both P6 and P10 described it as identifying policy gaps in the organization and creating policies for organizations. P6 noted:

> We also have a policy guide that will also guide in the area of developing or designing a policy mitigation or policy gap, identifying policy gaps, designing a risk assessment or policy risks assessment in the MDAs that have the potential or opportunities to perpetuate corruption in those MDAs. So, those policies that we put together guide us in policy, in how system should behave, that are supposed to help us.

Monitoring and compliance program was described by P8 and P10 as the follow-up program implemented after the systems-and-processes program and the ethics program. P10 said:

> After the systems unit have made their review, and they conducted their reviews, make recommendations, policy have come in, after policy and they make their policies, develop their policies for this particular organization, after three months…the monitoring and compliance unit, they will go in there to monitor if

these recommendations that were proffered by the systems units, these policies that were put in place by the policy and ethics unit, if this particular MDA is adhering to these policies and recommendations.

These four programs (NACS, systems-and-processes review, ethics and policy, monitoring, and compliance) were the major programs discussed under the theme of prevention. However, another important program participants did not categorize under prevention but described separately was the public education program. Both P1 and P2 described the public education program as one that reaches out to people in every sector of society to enable them to understand the consequences of corruption. P1 said, "We have what we call a public educational and external outreach… We do wider awareness-raising activities to ensure people are aware about the dangers of corruption and what they can do in the help in the fight against corruption." For this study, I categorized public education under prevention based on P1's description of the program as awareness-raising activities, which constitutes an invariant description of prevention. The underlying theme in the public education program is to create public awareness of corruption, to recognize it as bad, and to encourage citizens to take up civic responsibility and join the ACC to fight corruption.

In addition to the main prevention programs, participants described some subprograms: media (P5, P8), phone-in (P8), training (P1), workshops (P10, P6), community meetings (P10, P8), meet-the-school campaign (P10), pay-no-bribe (P7), steering committees (P6), service charters (P5), audits (P6, P5), scorecards (P3, P5, P6),

and regular visits (P1). The following are some individual textual descriptions of participants' experiences with the subprograms.

Regarding regular visits, P1 said, "We normally visit them in different villages on a monthly basis…We don't only preach to them about corruption, we empower them." The community visits consisted of community meetings, meet-the school, pay-no-bribe campaigns, and service charters. According to P10, "They have community meeting[s], they have the meet-the-school campaign, which is called catch-the-students-when-they-young, and we go to workshops." The meeting sometimes turned into a community campaign focused on reducing bribery. On the issue of bribery, P7 said:

> Well, as of now we still have the pay-no-bribe campaign, the program that was launched some years ago, but we are still implementing it even though the funds have dried up…Whenever we have an opportunity to interface with the public, we share the number for pay-no-bribe, which is 515, and tell them about what the pay-no-bribe campaign is all about.

To enhance public awareness and reduce bribery, P5 disclosed that service charters were created: "We prepare service chapters for service deliveries for them, so that when you enter into hospitals, you will know that I should not pay for a doctor to see me."

Participants discussed public education programs exhaustively and mentioned they covered most public domains in public education. P3 disclosed that participants go into public bodies:

> To provide them support based on the results that we get from the general public or systemic reports that come off in the general audit report… we had the scorecard system for councils, now across the country in every district we have councils.

In addition to regular visits, three participants (P1, P3, P5) described using media outlets to sensitize and train citizens about corruption. P5 emphasized the use of the media: "the radios and media, using television, customized meetings, websites, social media extensively, we do much of writing on social media and websites." To ensure the proper implementation of the programs, the participants also described the monitoring and compliance programs. P6 said:

> There is a steering committee also established through the office of the vice president at State House. That committee also supervises the NACS secretariat, the National Anticorruption secretariat that sits within the ACC. And that secretariat monitors these IMCs that are within the MDAs in order to identify or to understand how far they have gone with some of the recommendations.

The programs described constitute the prevention programs. Six of 10 participants (60% of sample) also described prosecution programs they used when there were alleged corruption offenses, including the ACC Act, confrontation, investigation, asset declaration, intelligence, penalties, and fines, the NACS, and refunds. The following are some textual descriptions of prosecution programs. P9 said, "The next stage of it is the prosecution aspect, wherein those have been investigated and are being charged to court will have their day in court to defend themselves of the charges that have been brought

against them." Participants alleged the prosecution power is enshrined in the ACC. P4 said, "There was an anticorruption act of 2000 that was passed in Parliament...in 2008, another act empowered the commission to really take the bold step and be independent enough in prosecuting people."

P2 acknowledged the shortcomings of the ACC Act and the need to amend it as necessary, as they did in 2019. P2 noted, "The other element that has to do with reformation, legal reformation or, or new clauses within the ACC Act, is that now we have a strategy wherein we would ask public officers to declare their assets and liabilities." Although the ACC has been empowered to probe allegations of corruption and indict culprits, participants added that not all alleged acts of corruption were prosecuted. P5 and P8 suggested that prosecution occurred when there was a clear case of corruption. P5 disclosed that prosecution occurs "if that case reaches the threshold of where it should be sent to the courts." The previous discussion represents the programs discussed by the participants.

P4 said:

> We have the recent 2019 amendment, which is one of the solid policies, the anticorruption act now the 2019 act as amended… we have the asset declaration policies**,** but these are all provisions embedded in the anticorruption act of 2019 as amended.

P6 said:

> The process of conducting these systems-and-processes reviews, we come up with what? Policies. We design policies, but there is a policy for that direct the way 1.

> how staff in the commission conduct themselves, 2. as to how you go about doing the job as you are going out to the public. The reason being we are aware that there are policies in place in all of the MDAs that we are working, and we are also aware there are regulations that are in place that guide the manner in which we are conducting ourselves. So, we put together and present a systems-and-processes review policy that actually guide ourselves to what would be in compliance with those policies that are working in place. So, what we actually do at the end of the day here, we come up with a kind of report that would also, at the end of the day, would serve as a policy that informs them of the way that they should conduct themselves.

P6 further claimed there are different policies for each department and at each level:

> For institutional policy for the prevention department, we have the prevention manual, which we use as a policy. For the monitoring and compliance unit, we have the compliance sanction handbook designed in 2021. For the policy and ethic unit, they also have a policy guideline that they use in their own way of doing their work. Systems-and-processes review unit, prevention policies and processes review guidelines that they use. And for the NACS, national anticorruption strategy, they are using the national anticorruption strategy framework.

Participants' description of their approaches (programs and policies) in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies produced two underlying themes: prevention (Theme 4) and prosecution (Theme 5). The tables in Appendices C and D

summarize the individual textual accounts of the lived experiences of the public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. The combined total lived experiences are described as both positive and negative. Thematic outcomes are separated into two categories: negatives (see Appendix C), Themes Regarding Challenges or Negatives, and positives (see Appendix D), Themes Regarding Accomplishments or Positives. The textual descriptions of the themes regarding negative experiences of participants (allegiances, influence-peddling, resource constraints, resistance, fear or threat of violence, negative relationships, frustration, and system lapses) are discussed.

Textural Description Regarding Negative Themes

Allegiances

Six of the 10 participants (60% of sample) shared their lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies from the perspective of personal allegiances or loyalty to a group, a culture, or an individual. P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, and P10 described their lived experiences from the perspective of a culture of subservience. From issues of dealing with close relatives, to loyalties to political elites or political groups or idolizing their leaders (P2, P3, P4, P6) and local cultural ostracization (P10), participants described how unwavering loyalties affected their implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies. P1 said:

> He has been my rock, for me to be who I am, and then all of a sudden, I was to investigate him. So, I was left in a situation, I had to protect my office, for which I love my job, my country, because we are doing it for my country and the same

> time him…you know our staff rule, from our Muslim staff rule, if you do anything to your family, you will face ostracization from your community. I said I am not going to be able. At the end of the day, they had to send the report to another individual.

From personal loyalties to group loyalties, another participant described the lived experiences of dealing with chronic, prevalent corruption and the unwavering loyalty of some groups of people to their political elites. P3 said:

> Political parties, especially the opposition party supporters, at a point in time …obstructed our work when we invited the former president to come in. There was this huge crowd of people who came out in support and said that he should not be interviewed at all.

The idolization of leaders was evident at workplaces as well. P6 described the lived experience of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies with workers who idolized their bosses and did whatever they were told without question. P6 stated:

> Looking at them…they are powerful people. And it but it might be that they are powerful people but might be powerful to the extent the people they work with sometimes tend to fear them and sometimes look at them as demigods…that is to say, whatever they say is final… you will find out that a subordinate will undertake an activity just because a vault controller says we should do, and they will do it without asking any questions before doing it.

Even regarding outside workplaces, another participant described how group loyalty behavior by different local communities affected implementation. P10 discussed

tribal culture: "culture also is another issue…I am only finding it peaceful over here to work because, when I go the region, when I go to the chiefdom, I have to speak what they understand." The participants' description of the cultural and political allegiances could be summed up as "normal." P2 said:

> Corruption has been in the public service of this country for a long time, and the sad part of it is that, at a particular time, people within the public, some sectors within the public, have accepted corruption as a livelihood, as a way of living.

The acceptance of corruption as a livelihood constitutes systemic corruption, which is manifested in various ways and influences.

Influence-Peddling

Six of the 10 participants (60% of sample) described their lived experiences regarding influence-peddling, including dealing with the influences of politically connected paramount chiefs (P10), crafty politicians (P4), their own bosses (P1, P6, P10), and bribery (P3). P10 described how connections and interference affect their implementation of anticorruption strategies:

> You will go to this paramount, and you know he is the Alpha and the Omega in the chiefdom. He is everything there, and…a particular paramount that we went to said who are you to talk to me? When I want to talk to you, I could talk to the president.

P4 described how these powerful leaders influenced both the executive arm of the government and the public they rule over. P4 explained how political leaders lied to their subjects and used tribal sentiments to gain public favor when under investigation for

corruption: “You know the corrupt people are so very crafty, and they are so highly intelligent that they have injected into their followers that people are following me because I am from this tribe.” Influence-peddling was described extensively from many perspectives, including how members of the public took advantage of certain situations to get what they wanted. P1 said:

> People now use the ACC to threaten, or for them to get what they want here. When they have issues at their offices, or maybe with their local authority, they will tell you I am going to report you to the ACC. And so, if they say that they are going to report you to the ACC, they will have to come to our office, they will make reports... As soon as we call the suspect for us to take another statement from them, the suspect will have to meet the complainant at the end of the day. So, when he or she goes to the complainant, maybe at the end of the day, they will end up giving the complainant money, and at the end of the day, you will see the complainant come into our office and say I don’t want the case again. I do not want to report again this person; we have settled.

P1 also discussed influence-peddling from the perspectives of executives:

> We do receive complaints, we receive complaints; they will refer it to us from the report center after they have done a lot of deliberations. So, they sent it to us. There are times when you go there, you will just receive a call from home, your boss telling you that you should leave that place. It has happened to me once. Just forget everything, they would not give a reason for you to go ahead or not to go ahead. They will just ask you to just leave.

In addition to authoritative influences, two of 10 participants (20% of sample) discussed influence-peddling in the form of bribery. P3 and P6 noted that members of the public will seek every means to reach you and offer bribes. P3 said:

> People will still try to bribe you. The aspect of bribery is something that you deal with every time. You know, if you have to pull a tough one, there is a tendency for people to come; some people will even want to come to your home.

Similarly, P6 described a situation in which someone tried to offer a bribe, but the offer was declined. That person, however, found a way to meet the supervisor in charge. P6 stated, "he said that is okay, no problem… The next day we were asked, that area don't do much there, try to do to another area." Another form of influence-peddling is begging. P4 said:

> There are times when you are out there, and you are faced with certain situations. You have stakeholders who may want you to compromise and beg you not to do this. But one think that I am aware of, the kind of, the nature of job I am involved in, let's say I tend to compromise, but for sake of humanity, people have begged you not to prosecute this matter, then at the end of the day, you have a spillover, because we are in the social media world, and we have citizen journalism. Everybody is a journalist.

The phrase "everyone is a journalist" was also underscored by P8:

> You have paramount chiefs there now of chiefs, not paramount chiefs who have taken monies from people who are beneficiaries of the social safety nets, but they took the monies from them and gave them to the wrong beneficiaries, and they

> reported the matter to us. That shows the level of understanding they have got about corruption, how they can prevent corruption.

Participants also disclosed that another great challenge they faced in their implementation of anticorruption strategies was a lack of adequate resources.

Resource Constraints

Five of the 10 participants (50% of sample) explained how helpful it would be if there were adequate resources allocated to the fight against corruption. P8 mentioned the problem of inadequate resources: "Programs may be there, and they are approved, [but] they will say that there [are] no funds; you have to wait." From inadequate funding (P6, P8, P10) to human resources issues (P4, P6, P7) and vehicle shortages (P4, P9, P6), participants identified and described resource constraint issues that affected their implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies. P4 said:

> Unfortunately, within the entire commission, the human resources are not entirely up to that task. Let us say we are even less than 300. For 300 staff, active staff, to fight against a population of over seven million people, then it becomes a very huge and herculean task.

The constraint on resources was not limited to the participants' organizations. Other participants described the experience of inadequate funding from the government to institutions, as well as the institutions not using the available resources as intended. P6 said:

> One billion leones will be allocated to the MDAs but, at the end of the day, you will find out the actual allocation is not given to them…so, you will find out that

> what was approved was not given to the MDAs, and what was given to the MDAs is not being utilized for the intended purpose.

Seven of the 10 participants (70% of sample) described public education as a major public outreach program, particularly in the hinterlands. The participants described the inaccessibility of some parts of the hinterlands because of poor road networks, meaning good vehicles are necessary. P9 stated:

> We have only one vehicle in the office. And we have two units; we have the public education unit; we have the investigation unit. So, there are times when you want to go out as an investigator, maybe the vehicle is with the manager, or it is with the public education unit. So, it means you won't have to work at that particular period. And finding the evidence has some time constraint. It is time-sensitive going in search of evidence. So, for me, the most important thing that has really hindered our work is the availability of resources, especially those which have to do with mobility.

In addition to lack of adequate resources, the willingness of people to comply with the programs and policies to control corruption was emphasized as resistance to change.

Resistance

Despite the consistent public sensitization to corruption, five of 10 participants (50% of sample) described their lived experiences as people being recalcitrant (P7), resistant to changing patterns of behavior (P3), and refusing to join the fight against corruption (P4). Their (P1, P3, P4, P5, and P7) described lived experiences constitute resistance in the fight against corruption. P3 said:

> My experience, I have to tell you honestly, sometimes you find that public office, officials are committed to implementing these things, but sometimes breaking habits can be tough. Daily patterns, getting people to move away from the patterns they are used to, can be challenging…we have deliberate, intentional, and consistent sensitization programs.

Even with consistent public sensitization, P4 expressed disappointment with the slow pace of change. There is an urgent need for every citizen to join the fight against corruption. P4 said:

> The things we are suffering from are as a result of corruption. The 11 years of barbaric brutal civil war was as a result of corruption due to the TRC report. One key element that led to those brutal and ugly eras will not be unconnected to corruption. But then the negative aspect of it is the fact that you still have people who see the fight against corruption as only the fight for the anticorruption commission.

One participant described various ways citizens resisted joining the fight against corruption. P5 spoke about people's refusal to divulge information regarding asset declaration:

> You know the asset declaration is an act from Parliament, in which every public official should make sure that he or she declare his or her assets, income, and liabilities in coming into the office and even exiting the office…one of the experiences that I got is people refuse to divulge information about themselves; it

> is an experience that is so tough; you have to lure them; you have to tell them the dangers of not declaring.

The various forms of resistance to change described by five of 10 participants (50% of sample) were summed up by P7, who said, "people are just too recalcitrant." One of the many reasons for people being recalcitrant is the difficulty proffered by another participant. P3 said, "Getting people to move away from the patterns they are used to can be challenging."

Four of 10 participants (40% of sample) described resistance in terms of public fear and fear of violence.

Public Fear

P1 described resistance not only in terms of personal choices but also in situations in which people feared trouble, especially when there were potential consequences of imprisonment or a fine or both. P1 described an experience in which an individual almost fainted when they visited the institution:

> We greeted her, and then she said hi. When she asked me, where are you from? We said we were from anticorruption, almost she fainted instantly. She fainted. People sometimes panic and faint when you call ACC; people become jittery.

The fear of implicating others or being implicated in a corruption investigation may also explain why some people resist reporting corruption. P4 said, "You go out there and talk to people to report, but then they will still find it difficult to report…even when the suffering they are going through is as a result of their interaction with people throughout their environment." However, P2 intimated that people's fear to report corruption may be

genuine: “For me…a big, big issue: whistle blowing, the refusal of a whistle blower to provide specific evidence even when they have it, for fear of being victimized in their offices.” The victimization of whistleblowers or those implementing corruption-mitigation strategies was described by 3 out of 10 participants (30% of sample) regarding the threat of violence.

Threat of Violence or Retaliation

Three out of 10 participants (30% of sample) who described the fear and threat of violence disclosed various scenarios, from being almost pelted (P1) to being chased out of the institution they visited, (P4) and to situations of insecurity when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. P1, describing the situation in which an individual almost fainted after they introduced themselves, said, “We were almost pelted; so, you have to be very careful when you are going to work.” The same threat of violence was described by another participant in a different situation.

P4 recounted an incident in which they were monitoring students taking examinations:

> We were chased out, we had to run for our lives on that very day. We were stoned; stones were pelted on us. It only took the grace of God for us to escape with our lives that very blessed day.

P7 said, “I don’t think, actually, I am secure in doing my job. It only takes the grace of God.”

Two of 10 participants (20% of sample) described nonviolent reactions from the public from the perspective of personal relationships. The two participants intimated their

loss of relationship was another problem they experienced when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies.

Negative Relationships

Two of the 10 participants (20% of sample) described their experiences of losing relationships when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. P4 said, "The worst part of it, you are a public enemy. You are a public enemy; you have little or no friends because everyone sees you as an enemy, public enemy, no friends." P1 described a more serious loss of relations, including family members: "It affects my relationship with friends and family… you don't have friends any longer, I am telling you." If negative relationships were not frustrating enough for some participants, two of the participants presented accounts of the situation from the angle of deep frustration.

Frustration

P2 and P6 described their experiences with implementing corruption-mitigation strategies as frustrating. P6 outlined experiences ranging from people's refusal to tackle corruption to the unwavering loyalty to corrupt public leaders: "So, these are all the vices that at times put you in the position that probably make me want to leave this fight." P6 expressed:

> There is a compliance sanction that tells you that you should fine that individual for not more than 50 million leones. But like you fine someone 50 million leones for not implementing your recommendations, and one billion leones has been allocated to the person; it is easy for him to keep at least 100 million leones or 200 million leones at least to respond to your fines.

P6 described the issue of the punishment not being commensurate with the crime. P6 added:

> Until and unless the vault controllers are heavily charged, prosecuted, that would be one of the aspects of solving the problem…So you see, most of these days, I ask myself if we can actually mitigate corruption or we can just succeed in scaring them in a way of saying that there is somebody fighting corruption somehow…so, the experience here is combated with a huge sum of challenges... it is too much. You go today, and you conducted a system review today, tomorrow you will see other things happen.

The frustrations described by P2 and P6 were echoed by another participant regarding system lapses.

System Lapses

P4 described their lived experiences pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in terms of system lapses:

> So, the problem was my whole experience in working with the private public sector, the MDAs in terms of fighting corruption, I saw a kind of collusion, collusion in doing their job. I saw a kind of influence from the superior to the subordinate and from the subordinate to those they are working with, influencing the situation.

The experiences described here outlined challenges participants faced. However, positive experiences were also disclosed. Positive themes that resulted from thematic outcomes of participants' account of their situations were stakeholder support, (Theme

14), policies and programs (Theme 15), and personal commitments (Theme 16). Positive thematic outcomes are discussed.

Textural Description Regarding Positive Themes

Stakeholder Support

All 10 participants (100% of sample) described stakeholder support in the following ways: receiving information, physical and material support, staff support, public appreciation, and morale. Regarding receiving information, the experiences of the participants were disclosed in various ways, such as people coming forward to report community members' corrupt acts (P2), serving as monitors or watchdogs (P4), and whistleblowers (P5). Other participants described eliciting and receiving information from all sectors of the public (P7, P10) and accounts of the instrumentality of the media (P8). P10 said:

> I can say we work hand in glove with journalists, with the police, Family Services Units (FSUs), even MDAs; we work hand in glove with them. There is a situation where we cannot be everywhere; we don't have the power to be everywhere. So, we rely on those people for reliable information for doing our jobs; they are just like whistleblowers for us.

The reliance of stakeholders was described in terms of both material and physical support by four participants. The range of support included signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and funding programs by partners (P2), building trusted relationship with partners (P3), working with civil-service organizations (P6), and helping with arrests by the Sierra Leone police (P9). P2 noted:

> Partnership is very critical to the work of the ACC because we believe that the work cannot be done without it. The ACC has 40, has drafted 40 MOUs with institutions right across the country, you know. And this is to open the space, you know, to enhance inclusivity.

As critical as these partnerships are to the works of the participants, P3 described how they have a system that has built trusted relations with their partners:

> We also have very strong monitoring systems, even from outside, through civil society organizations that we partner with. And we provide, we have signed MOUs with quite a lot of them. So, you find that they are now seen as baby ACC or mini-ACC kind of. So, you find that these civil-service organizations, these partners that we have are also strategic monitors for our programs or policies that we are implementing.

As noted previously by P10, the participants do not have the power or means to be everywhere, and the media was described as highly instrumental. P8 said, "The radio program, they broadcast to the people, and when one radio program's broadcast, it goes far because it covers a lot of areas."

Participants recognized that external stakeholder (partnerships with other organizations, media) support was critical for implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. They also disclosed that staff, especially executive support, was equally important. P1 described an executive leader as being a pacesetter and highly supportive:

> They reported me to…and said that I am not giving them a chance. I am pressuring the children because of exams, this and that. I am making things

> difficult for them. And then my boss had to call me and said...I know what it is, just continue to do your work, just continue to do your work.

P3 echoed this sentiment of executive support and setting the pace for other members of staff to emulate: "For me, the commissioner has set a very high standard. The current commissioner, Francis Ben Kelfala, Esq., has set a very high standard. And naturally, we are all expected to toe the line."

In the same way P1 and P3 described their respect for and support of their bosses, P2 and P4 stated they enjoyed acknowledgment and respect from the public. P2 said:

> Visitors from other parts of West Africa, for example, from Liberia, from Gambia, and who have actually come to pick our brains, to learn from us. Now in such an instance, it gives us the encouragement that we are doing the job.

P4 claimed they received respect from the public from both within and beyond their localities:

> I see from the public, respect. In other words, the job I do carries maximum, enormous respect. So that has always placed me strategically to do my job. The way you do it the more respect you have, so respect. The moment you are a member of staff of the anticorruption commission, you are kind of, you are supposed to live as an example. You are supposed to personally shape your life to suit the job that you are doing. So that has helped me individually to even tailor my own life, living up to the expectation of the public opinion.

For P4, the respect they received from the public for doing their job had a profoundly positive impact:

> When you go down to those hard-to-reach communities and you see the suffering nature of the people there, you see how they, you are accommodated; you see how you are welcomed in their midst; you see how appreciative they are to have you in their midst; and the moment you tell them why in the first place why the anticorruption was established, the things the ACC has done, and you see them appreciating you, it revives your soul. It makes you feel so good that you say, anyway, I am doing this for my people, and it is a fight worth being part of.

Policies and Programs

Another important theme was policies and programs. Policies and programs were described in various forms by all 10 participants (100% of sample) as key elements for implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. Below are a few examples of the programs and policies described by participants, beginning with the NACS as the major policy guideline. P10 described it as public education and prevention. P8 noted that the positive gains are the results of all the policies that are put in place. P6 disclosed that people are calling for a system review because the system reviews work. P5 described how public education informed people who were unaware of signs of corruption. P4, P1, P3, and P7 described various policies, such as compensation, ACC acts and refunding monies, service relocation, and service charters, respectively.

P3 said:

> Anticorruption strategies, which is the NACS and that, provide the national guidance. The NACS is not an ACC document. That is a national document, our lead document put together by a team of seven consultants and Sierra Leoneans

> that traveled across the country. The current NACS will expire in 2023. It provides guidance for all MDAs, for government institutions and NGOs and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and even religious bodies, and civil society of course and community-based organizations. So that is our major document for the whole of Sierra Leone. We had consultations with all levels and all walks of life, including local traditional authorities, bike riders, civil societies, media, government agencies, and everything that has to do with us in Sierra Leone.

As with many policies and programs that may require reviewing and necessary changes to them over time, the NACS document has been adjusted. P2 said:

> In 2021…the anticorruption act of 2008 was amended. A lot of clauses were amended…In the 2008 act, the minimum prison term for an act of one count of corruption act was three years, but that has been increased to five years with the 2019 amendment…ACC has been able to establish its own courts, to have a court within the High Court of Sierra Leone, with five very capable judges, which actually means that ACC cases are expedited…And the other element that has to do with reformation, legal reformation or, or new clauses within the ACC Act.

P7 described other documents they produced to help implement corruption-mitigation strategies:

> I was part of a team that went … to produce a citizens' service charter…It is a document developed to informed members of the public about cost, the duration, and the service that the entity is rendering. It is a document that helps to enhance

> transparency and accountability. Because many a times, you know corruption normally takes place where people are ignorant about what should happen inside their entity.

Reforms and changes in the NACS documents (described by P2) have been initiated in part because of the feedback the ACC has received from implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. P6 said, "People are also calling for systems review." Another example of feedback participants received was complaints about corruption. P10 said:

> We take those complaints, and then we act on them. We have what we call meet-the-school campaign. In other words, we say catch-them-young. We have integrity clubs in schools. We go to schools; we create integrity clubs. We keep them informed that this is not good…those are some of the corruption-mitigation policies that we have in our organization. To crown it all, two units carry out most of the corruption mitigation: the public education department and the prevention department.

P10's claim that the public education department and the prevention department carried out most of the corruption mitigation was echoed by others (P5, P6, P8). P5 said:

> We have these strategies that we put together, so that we will mitigate corruption. Public education, we educate the public, we tell them what corruption is, because some of these people they don't know, especially in the remote regions. They don't know the signs of corruption.

In addition to the many programs, P6 noted that each department has handbooks and manuals as policy guides:

> So, for institutional policy for the prevention department, we have the prevention manual, which we use as a policy for the monitoring and compliance unit; we have the compliance sanction handbook designed in 2021. For the policy and ethic unit, they also have a policy guideline that they use in their own way of doing their work. Systems-and-processes review unit, prevention policies and processes review guidelines that they use. And for the NACS, national anticorruption strategy, they are using the national anticorruption strategy framework.

An example of crucial policies described by P1 was punishment:

> So let me say the Act, the ACC Act also protects us because, according to the ACC Act, while I am doing my job, if I am obstructed, it is an offense. So, the Act also helped me to continue because, within the Act, it said you should not disrupt an ACC officer whilst he/she is carrying out their job.

Another example of the policies at the ACC was described by P3:

> Sometimes, if someone is in that, is in an office and we find that reports are coming in consistently from that department, right, we are talking about patterns now. So how do we deal with that? Sometimes we recommend to management, can you relocate this person and let's see what happens? And sometimes when that particular staff is relocated, we notice that difference in that unit.

P9 described the issue of policies at ACC as follows: "For anticorruption in Sierra Leone, our fundamental policy is to see how best to prevent the occurrence of corruption. Prevention is better than cure."

In addition to stakeholder support and programs and policies, personal commitment was discussed as another important factor that helped the participants with their implementation.

Personal Commitment

Seven of 10 participants (70% of sample) described their experiences regarding personal commitment pertaining to the implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies. The participants' (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, and P9) accounts of personal commitment were categorized under the themes of personal resolve, continuous learning, and continuous practice.

P4, P8, and P9 described their feelings of utter personal resolve to implement corruption-mitigation strategies in organizations. P4 said, "I have tailored my life that this should be a fight to fight because never in the history of Sierra Leone again we wish for such an era." The feeling of utter personal resolve was enhanced by the willingness of participants to do their work. P8 said, "My experience here is very good because we have done that… through the systems reviews, through the public education and through even investigation. But community sensitization is key here." Equally important as their willingness to implement were the control mechanisms in place. P9 said:

> Well, at the ACC here, the system at the ACC is so thorough that there is not room for corruption to thrive in the ACC. That I will say without any iota of

> doubt. The level of control at the ACC is at the level at which for corruption to thrive is extremely difficult…The systems, the checks and balance at the ACC to mitigate corruption is topnotch, that I can say.

Despite their personal resolve, willingness, and control mechanisms that helped their implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies, P3 disclosed that people still resisted. The participants identified various other ways that helped them to maintain commitment. P3 noted:

> You know, at work we find that people sometimes resist; that is an experience, but we keep sensitizing and at least we are getting some results out of that. I feel that every district, every chiefdom, and almost every town, they have heard about the anticorruption commission, and our presence is felt through our community monitors, district monitors…every local county of Sierra Leone have heard of what do as a government institution.

To maintain compliance, P7 described how they invoked certain sanctions and levied punishments whenever people fail to adhere to these policies, such as the educational policies in their organization. P7 said, "My experience in that regard, especially when it comes to the education policy, it gives me the opportunity to understand that, if there are laid down procedures, we need to adhere to them." P1 described more subtle ways of how they maintained their commitment, such as resorting to having offenders refund the money stolen or misappropriated instead of levying fines and engaging the public constantly. P2 said, "We meet them, engage, and then we make suggestions. We make recommendations and proffer the solutions and help them

implement the solutions, so that all of those corruption vulnerabilities and loopholes are addressed."

P5 stated there have been tremendous gains because of their commitment to implementing corruption-mitigation strategies: "We have made so much gains with the just-concluded CPI perception index. We see that we make gains from 35 to 85%, beating 70 countries, 40 countries in Asia and Africa." Both P5 and P10 attributed the success in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies to continuous learning on a broad range of issues related to anticorruption, as well as being versatile, patient, and tolerant. P10 described the experience of being versatile:

> In the regions, you are versatile. You are a prevention officer; sometimes you will even act as security officer, because when our security officer is not in, you book people when they come. When you have visitors, you will book them, direct them. You serve as an admin officer; you take reports from people. Prevention officer, you do preventive work. You serve as an intel officer; you give intelligence news to the investigators. You serve as an investigator officer; you investigate issues. So, another experience is that you know the work of every department.

However, P10 summarized the essence of personal commitment as being tolerant: "I have learned now to be more patient, how to be more tolerant and to embrace culture because of diversity; everybody has his own way of thinking… I say you develop the culture of Ubuntu." P10's description of the culture of Ubuntu as mixture of tolerance, patience, and understanding diversity emphasized the sense of total community

involvement as an essential element in implementing corruption strategies. A summary of the textual descriptions of the participants' experiences is provided.

Summary of Textual Description

Lived experiences of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies by public officials in Sierra Leone were captured under the following categories: meaning of corruption, approaches used, and lived experiences. Regarding lived experiences, interview questions solicited participants' total experiences. Interview questions focused on participants' general lived experiences, contexts, factors that helped or hindered, external factors, and any other factors that influenced their implementation. Regarding meaning of corruption, participants' descriptions included words or phrases with invariant categories of abuse or misuse of power, breaking laws or protocols, and greed or selfish gains.

Regarding approaches, participants described three main programs: prevention, public education, and prosecution. For this study, the programs were reduced to two main themes: prevention and prosecution, with public education integrated with prevention because of the shared meaning of the elements of both programs. Some of the subprograms described included the NACS, community meetings, service charters, meet-the-school campaign, handbook and manual, training, and radio. Under the category of prosecution, participants described programs and policies such as investigation, audits, penalties and fines, ACC Act, manuals, and handbooks.

Participants' invariant account of their lived experiences pertaining to implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies produced the following themes:

allegiances, influence peddling, resources constraints, fear and threat of violence, negative relationship, resistance, frustration, system lapses, personal commitment, stakeholder support, and policies and programs. Regarding allegiances, participants described their experiences of dealing with situations in which people demonstrated unwavering loyalty to a group or an ideology that affected their implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies. Participants also described their experiences of people displaying great resistance, such as refusing to divulge information, refusing to join in the fight against corruption, and finding it difficult to change their habits. Participants outlined experiences with the threat of violence and citizens' genuine fear of being prosecuted and persecuted. They also disclosed reality of losing relationships with friends and relatives. Some participants described their experiences with a wide range of influence-peddling activities, such as bribery, extortion, and political and social connections. One of the most described experiences was resource constraints, which included inadequate human and material resources.

Participants also described their lived experiences regarding personal commitment pertaining to implementing corruption-mitigation strategies, as well as their experiences in terms of continuous practice, continuous learning, and personal resolve. Regarding stakeholder support, participants described their lived experiences in terms of staff, especially executive support. Participants described support from their supervisors and how public acknowledgment and respect affected their implementation of anticorruption strategies.

Participants also identified policies and programs as key elements to implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. All participants (100% of sample) identified policies and programs in various forms, including public education and prevention, and different policies, including compensation, refunding monies, service relocation, and service charters.

Structural Description

Results of the study revealed thematic outcomes under three main sections. The first three themes (misuse or abuse, private gain, and law) were described structurally as a local or contextual understanding of corruption. The second set of themes (prevention and prosecution) was called applied approaches. The structural themes that emerged from lived experiences were challenges or negatives, and accomplishments or positives. P7 said: "My experiences with respect to implementing corruption strategies within our organization is a mixed bag: one of compliance and that of compelling people."

Accomplishments or positives covered the following themes: personal commitment, stakeholder support, and programs and policies. These themes were identified and described by participants as underlying elements that supported accomplishments and positive results pertaining to implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. The negatives or challenges theme consisted of all other (allegiances, fear/violence, loss of relationships, influence-peddling, resource constraints, and system lapses) underlying elements that made implementing corruption-mitigation strategies highly challenging. Sentiments such as fear of ostracization for breaking Muslim rules (P1), not finding databases of suppliers (P6), and people being too recalcitrant (P7)

emphasized the serious challenges the participants experienced when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies.

Composite Description

Participants' combined total lived experiences were identified and described regarding their understanding of the phenomenon of corruption, approaches used, and actual lived experiences in general and in the contexts of situations within and from outside their organization that helped or hindered implementation. Participants' invariant understanding of corruption was described as the misuse of public resources and breaking the law or society standard for private gain. The approaches described by participants were mixed, including programs and policies that focused on agency deterrence (individual penalties and fines, monitoring and compliance, prosecution) and collective action (system review and public education). Participants' lived experiences revealed both positive and negative themes. P4 said, "The experience will be put on two scales: negative and positive." P1 emphasized the same sentiment: "We have lots of experience: good experience and bad experience." Two main themes underlie participants' total accounts of their implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies: negatives or challenges, and positives or accomplishments. Negatives or challenges were described under themes of system lapses, frustrations, fear and threat of violence, allegiances, resource constraints, resistance, influence-peddling, and loss of relationships. Positives or accomplishments were described under themes of personal commitments, stakeholder support, and programs and policies.

Discrepant Cases

Two of 10 participants (20% of sample) expressed contradictory views regarding compensation for whistleblowers. P4 said, "The commission has 10% of that recovery, and from the commission's 10% you, the whistleblower, you also have 10% of that." However, P8 questioned the implementation of the whistleblower compensation policy: "The last time…we were saying that whistleblowing should carry some renumeration, but I don't think, I don't know how far that has been implemented, because we are in the regional offices."

Another discrepant case was the issue of security. Some participants expressed fear of violence from the public. P1 stressed the seriousness of the security: "There is always a threat to harm my family members, always a threat; they will burn down my house here."

P4 said, "I am not aware of any measures that are put in place to secure the workers of this great commission, because these are the things we normally discuss as colleagues." However, P10 stated, "We are protected because, when we go to the police station, when you have to work…we report first at the police station and tell them that we are around." P10 was describing the situations when they visit various towns and cities and inform the police of their presence and operation. There was no mention of whether they were assigned security personnel.

Another discrepant case was the issue of executive support. Two of the 10 participants (20% of sample) noted they received total support from their executive managers and supervisors. P10 said:

> One thing for free is we have the will of the executive. In any country, I can tell you for free, when the executive arm of the government…gives you the power, you are protected…They do no interference with our work. They allow us to do our work with all diligence.

P1 described their supervisors differently. P1 said, "There are times when they would not give reason for you to go ahead or not to go ahead. They will just ask you to just leave."

The examples of discrepant cases discussed support the underlying themes and essences of lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to the implementation of corruption-strategies in Sierra Leone. The experiences described by participants displayed an interplay of positives and negatives, accomplishments, and challenges. P3 said, "There is more work, and we are determined, committed to do more. There is light; there is hope; it will get better." P3's statement summarizes the overall essence of the participants' invariant accounts of the phenomenon of interest.

Summary

Outcomes of this study were generated from interview questions that were designed to address the purpose of this study. In this study, lived experiences of senior public leaders pertaining the implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone were identified and reported. Participants' lived experiences were identified from their responses to interview questions on the meaning of corruption, policies and programs, total lived experiences, and any additional comments.

Thematic outcomes under four structural categories were identified. The first three themes (misuse or abuse, private gain, and law) were categorized as local or

contextual understanding of corruption. The second set of thematic outcomes (prevention and public education and prosecution) was categorized as applied approaches. The third set of thematic outcomes (allegiances, fear/violence, loss of relationships, influence-peddling, resource constraints, and system lapses) was categorized as challenges or negatives. The fourth set of thematic outcomes (personal commitments, stakeholder support, and programs and policies) was categorized as accomplishments or positives.

A participant (P3) summarized positive themes that were identified and described by participants, which were categorized as accomplishments or positive, as such. P3 said, "There is more work, and we are determined, committed to do more. There is light; there is hope; it will get better," epitomizes the positive sentiments described by the participants." Negatives or challenges structural category consisted of factors that impeded participants' implementation of corruption mitigation strategies. Sentiments such as fear of ostracization for breaking Muslim rules (P1), not finding databases of suppliers (P6), and people being too recalcitrant (P7) underscored serious challenges participants experienced when implementing corruption mitigation strategies. P7's description of the lived experience encapsulates the total lived experiences of all the participants (Category 3 and Category 4). P7 said, "My experience with respect to implementing corruption strategies within our organization is a mixed bag, one of compliance and that of compelling people."

Outcomes of this study revealed challenges and accomplishments as underlying essences of participants' lived experiences. However, more participants endorsed prevention than prosecution, and there were many more themes pertaining to challenges

than to accomplishments. In Chapter 5, a brief review of the nature of the study is presented. This is followed by a discussion of study results and limitations, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

I identified lived experiences of public sector senior officials pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. The research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of senior public officials pertaining to implementing corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone? The conceptual framework justified the main research question as well as the methodology, and provided perspectives (Johnson et al, 2020) that helped with the interpretation and conclusions of the study.

Few studies have been conducted in Sierra Leone regarding implementing corruption strategies. Most studies on corruption in Sierra Leone have been broad and devoid of any specific focus on corruption in government institutions (Akosa et al., 2020; Andreoni, 2017; Kroukamp, & de Vries, 2020; Nicolaides, & Manyama, 2020; Olivier, & Schwella, 2018; Onwujekwe et al, 2020). The aim of this study was to explore that contextual gap by identifying and reporting lived experiences of senior public leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone.

The qualitative research method, specifically Husserl's transcendental phenomenology approach as well as Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of data analysis were used to address the research question. No software was used, only manual coding. Results revealed 14 thematic outcomes and four structural categories: local or contextual understanding of corruption, applied approaches, challenges or negatives, and accomplishments or positives. The underlying essences of the participants' lived experiences were challenges and accomplishments, with more endorsements of

challenges than accomplishments and more endorsements of prevention than prosecution. A common understanding of corruption among participants was evident.

Interpretation of Findings

This study revealed the following thematic outcomes: misuse or abuse of power, private gain, law, prevention, prosecution, allegiances, influence-peddling, resource constraints, resistance, fear, threat of violence, negative relationships, frustration, and system lapses. The first three themes (misuse or abuse of power, private gain, and law) represent local or contextual understanding of corruption. The second set of themes included prevention and prosecution, which were both categorized as applied approaches. The third set of themes (allegiances, influence-peddling, resource constraints, resistance, fear and threat of violence, negative relationships, frustration, and system lapses) was categorized as challenges or negatives. The fourth set of themes (stakeholder support, programs and policies, and personal commitment) was categorized as accomplishments or positives.

In this study, lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone were identified and reported. To achieve this, the literature review was focused on the phenomenon of corruption in general and in Sierra Leone. I interpreted the study by using both results and what was known in literature about the phenomenon of interest. In Chapter 5, I address the meaning of corruption, policies and programs, and negative and positive themes.

Interpretation of the Meaning of Corruption

All 10 participants (100% of sample) used the terms abuse or misuse of power and private gain to describe their understanding of corruption. Four of 10 participants (40% of sample) added other words or phrases, such as law, protocols, and standards. Corruption is a multidimensional phenomenon (Villeneuve et al., 2017). Therefore, a local or contextual understanding of what corruption constitutes is important (Wickberg & Mugellini, 2020). In this study, participants' invariant local understanding of corruption was described in terms of misuse of public trust, private gains, and the law. This view is consistent with the common definition of corruption in literature as the misuse of public power for private gain (Nye, 1967). However, as Rose (2018) suggested, it is difficult to get a conceptually robust definition of corruption. Addressing laws, protocols, and standards to describe corruption in this study could mean there was local acceptance and contextual understanding of what corruption meant to participants.

Interpretation of Policies and Programs

Participants' invariant descriptions of applied approaches regarding policies and programs used in implementing corruption mitigation strategies were categorized in terms of prevention and prosecution. All 10 participants (100% sample) identified and described policies and programs that were preventive. Only six of 10 participants (60% of sample) identified and described programs relating to prosecution. Gans-Morse et al. (2018) provided a list of corruption-mitigation policies and programs such as penalties, rewards, monitoring, recruiting, public education campaigns, etc., to name a few. Programs and policies that were identified and reported by participants in this study were

consistent with the main anticorruption policies and programs in the literature on corruption.

Anticorruption policies and programs participants described in this study (meet-the-schools, system reviews, workshops, investigations, penalties, fines) were rooted in two main anticorruption paradigms: corruption as an agency approach (Rose-Ackerman 1978), and corruption as a collective approach (You, 2018). The agency approach involves monitoring the agent, rewarding honesty, and issuing punishment, with strategies such as increasing costs and reducing benefits (De Graaf, 2007). Other agency approaches include deregulation and privatization to reduce discretionary power (Klitgaard, 1988). The collective action approach involves organizational and structural changes, culture, and rules to reduce justification for corruption through attitudinal change. Attitudinal changes may be facilitated by training and education campaigns, legal development of ethical codes of conduct, and dissemination of information (Baez Camargo et al., 2017).

The standard regarding corruption as well as agency and collective action approaches were also described by participants to prevent and prosecute corruption. P9 noted: “For the anticorruption in Sierra Leone, our fundamental policy is to see how best to prevent the occurrence of corruption. Prevention is better than cure.” All participants endorsed prevention, but only six endorsed prosecutions, demonstrating that participants focused more on prevention than prosecution.

Corruption is a multifaceted phenomenon, and no single strategy is sufficient to tackle it (Castro e Silva, 2019). The NACS, 2019–2023 in Sierra Leone is multipronged

(Leone, 2020), with preventive and prosecution programs and policies. Outcomes of this study underscored use of more prevention anticorruption measures than prosecution measures.

Interpretation of Negative Themes

Regarding lived experiences of public sector senior leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone, results revealed themes (allegiances, influence-peddling, resource constraints, resistance, fear and threat of violence, negative relationships, frustration, and system lapses) that were categorized as challenges. Six of the 10 participants (60% of sample) discussed dealing with the challenges of both allegiances and influence-peddling. These two themes were the most endorsed by participants among the negative themes, followed by resource constraints and resistance, which were mentioned by five of 10 participants (50% of sample). Fear and threat of violence, negative relationships, frustration, and system lapses were mentioned by four of 10 (40% of sample), two of 10 participants (20% of sample), two of 10 participants (20% percent of sample), and one of 10 participants (10% of sample) , respectively.

The literature review revealed histories of political instability (Nkwede & Usonka, 2019), civil wars (Conteh-Morgan, 2018), poverty (Davis, 2002), tribal and ethnic allegiances (Gebremichael et al, 2019), clientelism and patronage, (Reno, 1997), and widespread impunity regarding corruption (Thompson & Potter, 1997) in Sierra Leone. These social, political, economic, cultural, and religious histories created the conditions for corruption, especially in an atmosphere of systemic exclusion, ethnic

politics, neglect of youths, politicizing the judiciary, and impunity in the public domain. As Hofstede (1980) highlighted, the culture of a particular group is defined by their behaviors resulting from their social consciousness. The cultures of tribal and ethnic loyalty and alliances, civil wars, poverty, clientelism or patronage, and collectivism may explain the results regarding negative themes in this study. These histories (political, social, economic, cultural, and religious) may serve as lenses for understanding the challenges or negative themes. For example, tribal and ethnic loyalty may explain allegiance and negative relationships, poverty may explain resource constraints, clientelism and patronage may explain influence-peddling, and civil war may explain the culture of violence. All of which may explain system lapses.

Furthermore, the matrix of allegiances may encourage influence-peddling. Antinori (2018) described corruption as the relationships between the corruptor, the corrupt act, and the intermediary. P4 said, "You know the corrupt people are so very crafty, and they are so highly intelligent that they have injected into their followers that people are following me because I am from this tribe." People may take advantage of tribal or various allegiances to influence others for personal gain.

The negative themes of allegiances and influence-peddling may distort the proper functioning of a system to the point of total collapse. Gebremichael et al. (2019) claimed the failure of state institutions in Sierra Leone may be explained in part by ingrained corruption as well as the mishandling of government assets, which often led to a lack of capacity to provide the necessary public services. Resource constraint, whether at the individual, societal, or institutional level, is a plausible explanation of system

lapses. This point may be especially true when the system is impeded by issues such as influence-peddling, which may obstruct the proper functioning of the system.

Addressing system problems is likely to encounter resistance. As Moro (2018) suggested, resistance to corruption is expected when measures are put in place to mitigate it. P7 described people as sometimes recalcitrant; P3 spoke of people being resistant to changing patterns of behavior; and P4 described people as simply refusing to join the fight against corruption.

People may not only display resistance but also, in some cases, fight back physically, especially when there is a history and culture of violence. The literature review revealed that the civil war in Sierra Leone, which lasted for eleven years, was caused by corruption (Gebremichael et al, 2019). There is a history and culture of violence in Sierra Leone. The adage "corruption fights back when you fight corruption" was underscored by Rothstein (2018). Rothstein acknowledged the dangers of fighting corruption because powerful economic, political, and criminal interests will fight back to preserve themselves. The participants described various scenarios, from being almost pelted (P1) to being chased out (P4). The participants expressed a sense of insecurity when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies.

The literature review also helped to explain the participants' frustrations when implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. Jackson and Köbis (2018) noted it is possible that seemingly sensible solutions may not stop the recurrence of corrupt behavior. There may be multiple reasons for the recurrence of corruption. Ledeneva et al. (2017) suggested that the problem may lie in the misunderstanding of corruption itself,

poor understanding of corrupt practices, wrong measure of corruption parameter, and poor policy design and implementation. For example, P6 was frustrated with the poor policy design on fines and said:

> But like you fine someone 50 million leones for not implementing your recommendations, and one billion leones has been allocated to the person. It is easy for him to keep at least 100 million leones or 200 million leones at least to respond to your fines.

Most of the negative thematic outcomes of this study mirror the nature of the phenomenon of interest, which is centered on people. People engage in corruption (Khan et al., 2019), and the most-endorsed negative thematic outcomes (allegiances, influence-peddling) are directly related to individual or group interactions. The high endorsement of both allegiance and influence peddling reinforces the notion that the individual does not operate in a vacuum, and therefore both agency (Rose-Ackerman 1978) and collective action (You, 2018) approaches are necessary to mitigate corruption. The least endorsed of the negative themes was system lapse, which may indicate that, regarding the phenomenon of corruption, people and their interactions with others matter more, and it is the individual who makes the system work.

Interpretation of Positive Themes

All 10 participants (100% of sample) endorsed both stakeholder support and programs and policies as positive elements in their mitigation efforts. The participants described stakeholder support regarding receiving information, physical and material support, staff support, public appreciation, and morale. P8 said, “There is a situation

where we cannot be everywhere, we don't have the power to be everywhere. So, we rely on those people." The stakeholder support theme also emphasizes an underlying essence for addressing corruption: the individual. As mentioned in the literature repeatedly, the individual engages in corruption, so the focus should be on the individual.

The thematic outcomes of positives or accomplishments (stakeholder support, policies and programs, personal commitments) were supported by the literature. Every organization or project has both internal and external elements working for and against them. For corruption mitigation generally, Baez-Camargo and Passas (2017) suggested that despite substantial investments in anticorruption by multilateral organizations, governments, and private entities across numerous countries, progress is limited and insignificant.

In the Sierra Leonean context, the literature revealed there was and still is massive stakeholder support for anticorruption efforts. For example, the literature review on corruption in Sierra Leone outlined the surge of persistent activism of CSOs and NGOs that has reinforced democratic and legal institutions (Gebremichael et al 2019; Maru et al., 2018). Other examples of stakeholder support include investigations of corruption conducted during the colonial era (Sankoh, 1999) and the postcolonial era (Bakarr Bah, 2011; Kpundeh, 1995), as well as the present anticorruption effort. There are many other support services, including the legal system, security sectors, agencies, and public support for anticorruption efforts.

Individuals and their organizations are great resources for helping to mitigate corruption, and they continue to develop and refine programs and policies to facilitate

work. All the participants endorsed programs and policies for mitigating corruption. The literature review revealed corruption studies are replete with a focus on specificity and context (Di Mascio, & Piattoni, 2020; McDonnell, 2020).

Additionally, the literature revealed the emergence of new schools of thought (Marquette, & Peiffer, 2018; Pertiwi, 2018). There are calls in the literature on corruption for more studies that highlight qualitative differences, such as a focus on specific types of corruption (Jancsics, 2019), using an integrated approach (Zimelis, 2020), employing a cross-disciplinary approach (Pertiwi, 2018), and using an indirect approach (Rothstein, 2018). Some authors (Adams & Fazekas, 2021; Shekshnia & Ledeneva, 2017; Zulu, 2018) have demonstrated the effectiveness of combining different interventions and concepts for policy design and implementation.

An example in this study of the focus on specific and qualitative differences was the use of an indirect approach. The meet-the-school program is one such example, about which the participants described efforts to educate young children on the ills of corruption. Furthermore, P3 revealed the policy of relocation based on an indirect approach and not personal confrontation: "Sometimes, we recommend to management, can you relocate this person and let's see what happens? And sometimes when that particular staff is relocated, we notice that difference in that unit."

The consistency of results between stakeholder support and programs and policies may indicate the themes complement each other. Individuals use programs and policies (the right tools) to facilitate work. However, stakeholder support and programs and policies may have been endorsed more than personal commitments because it is easier for

people to commit to a mission when equipped with the right programs and policies (tools).

The literature revealed an estimated rate of failure of between 30% and 70% regarding the development and implementation of strategic plans (Alharthy et al., 2017; Cândido & Santos, 2018). Gans-Morse et al. (2018), however, posited there are grounds for optimism despite the lack of rigorous empirical evaluation of most prescribed anticorruption policies. There has been renewed interest in searching for answers to address the elusive problem of corruption, with a renewed focus on specific aspects of corruption, such as the type (Magyar & Madlovics, 2019; Onwujekwe et al., 2018). There is also a renewed focus on the dimensions of studying corruption (Albanese & Artello, 2019; Mugellini et al, 2021) or the specific prevailing conditions, situation, or settings (Dávid-Barrett et al., 2020; Onwujekwe et al., 2018; Stapenhurst & Kpundeh, 1999).

The results regarding the theme of commitment reflected these grounds for optimism. Seven of the 10 participants (70% of sample) endorsed commitment as an underlying element of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. The results support the literature claim of at least a 30% failure rate of all implementation efforts. Commitments, therefore, it is important to address corruption. The literature review revealed the multidimensional nature of corruption, emphasizing its elusiveness. Therefore, not everyone will be fully committed to addressing the phenomenon of corruption due to its elusive nature, as expressed by P6: “So, these are all the vices that at times put you in the position that probably make me want to just leave this fight.” P6’s

disclosure revealed that not everyone was committed to fighting corruption at all costs because of the difficulties associated with it.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of this study was to set aside my prior of corruption, especially in the context of Sierra Leone, where I was born and raised. Giorgi (2009) claimed that a weakness of the qualitative phenomenological approach is the difficulty of setting aside any prior knowledge to avoid biasness. To maintain objectivity, I did my best to follow the interview protocols strictly and used only the participant's point of view. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argued that objectivity can be enhanced by the researcher acknowledging biases and prior knowledge, though it can never be fully achieved. I kept fieldnotes on my personal biases and ensured they did not influence the outcomes of the study. I used data that I obtained from the interviews with participants, which were transcribed, and I conducted both interview-script verification and engaged in the member-checking process to allow the participants to crosscheck their data for correctness.

There was also the possibility of dishonesty of the participants about their lived experiences. There are limitations with every research design (Lincoln et al., 1985), and interviews in phenomenological research may present limitations regarding the inability of the participants to clearly express their lived experiences. An underlying assumption in this study was that transcendental phenomenology would attempt to capture the whole story (Jackson et al, 2018). Furthermore, rich individual-context studies would produce

new constructs that may help develop new theories or concepts that are useful in different settings and contexts. However, the interview approach has its limitations.

To address some of the limitations and problems associated with interviews, the participants were notified of their right to desist from answering questions that did not want to address. They were also reassured of the confidentiality of the information that they provided. The participants were also given the choice of time and place for the interviews, as well as the choice of Zoom videoconferencing or Zoom-audio only. They were told the Zoom interviews were password-secured, and that Zoom has a waiting room for the researcher to allow the participants to join the Zoom conference. This aspect was important because, according to Webb and Welsh (2019), the population and the specific period of the data-collection process may affect the standard of information as well as the outcomes of the study.

In this study, only the lived experiences of public sector senior leaders in a specific sector in Sierra Leone was used, which implies that a homogenous population of trained public officials was used. There was a vast population or groups of people who were not interviewed and whose lived experiences of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies may add value to the phenomenon of interest.

Recommendations

Four main structural outcomes (local understanding, applied approaches, challenges, and accomplishments) defined this study. However, accomplishments and challenges were considered the core essences of this study. The local understanding of corruption in this study followed the common definition of corruption in the literature as

the misuse of public power for private benefit (Nye, 1967). Additional words used by the participants to describe corruption included laws, protocols, and standards, which may suggest the meaning of corruption was commonly understood and accepted by the public. One of the limitations of this study was the homogeneity of the population (trained staff of a particular organization with the same goal). The delimitation of this study to a specific public sector in Sierra Leone using a purposeful sample of only senior public sector officials impacted the heterogeneity of the sample. Future studies may consider the lived experiences of a more heterogeneous sample regarding implementing corruption-mitigation strategies.

The commonly used definition in the literature on corruption is the abuse of public power for private benefit (Nye, 1967). The literature, however, is replete with claims of a lack of consensus regarding a definition (Enste & Heldman, 2017; Wickberg & Mugellini, 2020) because of the different conceptions and various levels of tolerance for corruption in various contexts (You, 2018). Further studies could investigate a more heterogenous population sample to explore the claims in the literature of divergent meanings and nuances associated with the phenomenon of corruption (Ang, 2020; Bauhr & Charron, 2020). This approach would add value to the existing literature. As Heywood (2018) suggested, corruption can be addressed by understanding the drivers of individual behaviors. However, it may be easier to understand the drivers of corruption when there is a good local comprehension of corruption.

The structural outcomes of applied approaches provide some opportunities for future studies. The results of this study revealed more people endorsed prevention than

prosecution. Educational campaigns were among the comprehensive list of anticorruption programs and policies (Gans-Morse et al., 2018). In this study, a meet-the-school educational campaign aimed at educating the youths of Sierra Leone on corruption was discussed. The literature revealed that, in Sierra Leone, the historical approaches to corruption mitigation were more punitive than preventive. Anticorruption efforts consisted of few legal commissions of inquiries and dismissals or fines of public officials found guilty of corruption (Kpundeh, 1999). Introducing more preventive measures such as meet-the-school campaigns provides an opportunity for future researchers to study the implications of early interventions in corruption mitigation, as well as employing longitudinal studies.

A longitudinal study on implementing corruption-mitigation strategies may enhance the literature by revealing the long-term impact of early childhood interventions. The literature revealed that people engage in corruption regardless of the lenses used to understand what individuals grapple with when they engage in corrupt acts.

Implications

The subjective meanings and situations of the 10 participants regarding implementing corruption-mitigation strategies were investigated, and the essences of this study were challenges and accomplishments. In this study, there are potential connotations for positive social change of the essences (challenges and accomplishments) at the individual, family, and organizational levels. There are also implications for practice, theory, and research.

Implications for Social Change

Corruption impacts the lives of people (Dahal & Bista, 2018). The negative impacts may be poor standards of living for individuals and families, as well as ineffective organizations. The results revealed themes such as resource constraints, violence, and negative relations that may directly or indirectly impact the lives of individuals and families. For example, the literature review revealed that civil war, which lasted for 11 years in Sierra Leone, resulted from corruption (Bangura, & Kovacs, 2018; Conteh-Morgan, 2018; Gebremichael et al, 2019). Other themes revealed in this study, such as influence-peddling, allegiance, and resistance, may promote system lapses, which can lead to ineffective organizations.

The outcomes of this study may have generated a better understanding of the phenomenon of corruption in Sierra Leone. Ledeneva et al. (2017) advocated a clear understanding, modeling, design, implementation, and monitoring the phenomenon of corruption in context. Understanding the challenges and accomplishments pertaining to implementing corruption-mitigation strategies may enhance individual or organizational capability to create conducive environments and promote positive social changes. The opportunities for positive social changes for individuals, families, and organizations are tremendous. Individual standards of living may be enhanced by controlling corruption. Family units may have more resources to use. The development of family units may produce good, healthy, and educated individuals who are a potential force that organizations can use to achieve their objectives.

Knowing how to control the levels of corruption may also produce positive social changes regarding increased trust and cooperation among leaders and citizens. This increased trust may enhance citizens' positive perceptions of their leaders, which could produce reduced conflict and increased cooperation and collaboration among citizens. As Seifert (2018) suggested, trustworthiness in state institutions and its leadership may improve public trust at home and abroad, which may also trigger local and direct foreign investments. More public funds and resources may be available to improve social services and public goods, which could improve the lives of citizens of Sierra Leone.

Implications for Practice

In this study, the outcomes may also be useful to promote the effectiveness of public sector leaders and leaders of other organizations in mitigating the levels of corruption. As Kubbe and Engelbert (2018) posited, country-specific cultural contexts and characteristics impact the behavior of groups of people. The unique information that was generated in this study may be useful to help public sector leaders design and implement better corruption-mitigation programs and policies, which may positively impact lives of individuals, families, and organizations.

Implications for Theory

Academic research remains highly relevant for enhancing current theories on corruption and to serve as a knowledge base for future researchers for further theoretical development regarding the phenomenon of corruption. This study is important because corruption is pervasive and persistent (Dixit, 2018). Very few studies have been conducted in Sierra Leone in response to the call for research that addresses specificity

and context (Pertiwi, 2018). This study focused on addressing contextual gap by investigating the lived experiences of senior public sector leaders pertaining to implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. Jackson et al., (2018) posited that the transcendental phenomenological approach is useful for gathering full accounts of lived experiences of a phenomenon. Furthermore, using Moustakas'(1994) modified van Kaam methods of analysis, may have helped to provide invariant and generalizable insights that may serve as building blocks for developing new theories or concepts regarding the phenomenon of corruption. Giorgi (2009) postulated that transcendental phenomenology is pretheoretical, and theory is developed from pretheoretical claims into unambiguous and testable ones (Kolaiti, 2017). The knowledge gained from this study may prove highly useful because it confirmed the known elements in the literature on corruption and provides unique insights about corruption in Sierra Leone. As Kazanjian (2019) suggested, future research on corruption must reflect context. The rich description of cultural and other contextual experiences may increase existing bodies of knowledge on corruption.

Implications for Research

As noted regarding limitations of this study, only lived experiences public sector senior leaders in a specific sector in Sierra Leone were explored. Although there was no geographical limitation, there was a homogenous population of trained public officials within a special public institution. There is a vast number of senior public officials in Sierra Leone with experiences of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies who were not interviewed, and their lived experiences may add value to the phenomenon of

interest. Future studies could involve a nationwide sample of senior public officials from various institutions to obtain a broader perspective of challenges and accomplishments of implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone.

Additionally, other researchers could employ various research methodologies to enhance knowledge on the phenomenon of corruption. For example, quantitative researchers may use survey methods with more heterogeneous samples to carry out a national investigation on the thematic outcomes of this study, to determine which themes are most endorsed nationally. Mackey et al. (2018) argued it is critical to have greater clarity about specific types of corruption because of important differences between them. Knowledge of prevalent types of corruption will help public officials to design more effective policies and programs and to prioritize their implementation, especially when there are resource constraints.

The connotations for positive social change are evident in the essences of this study (challenges and accomplishments). The challenges highlighted the areas of focus for public officials and other stakeholders for effectively implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. The accomplishments emphasized areas for continuous improvement to support corruption-mitigation strategies. The control of corruption should improve wellbeing of individuals, families, and organizations because of availability and fair distribution of public resources, which may create a positive environment for peace, unity, and progress. Results may also help public officials to design effective policies and programs to control the levels of corruption. In this study, results provide invariant and generalizable knowledge that may be used as building

blocks for developing new theories. Finally, use of transcendental phenomenology in this study offers other researchers the opportunity to employ various research methodologies to enhance awareness about the issue of corruption.

Conclusions

The overarching essences of this study were challenges and accomplishments. Results support literature regarding persistence and pervasiveness of corruption despite tremendous anticorruption efforts by governments and many NGOs (Gutterman, & Lohaus, 2018; Vian, 2020). Results revealed that more endorsement of challenges than accomplishments, which may indicate prevalence of corruption Sierra Leone.

Underlying the four most-endorsed themes in both essences – allegiances and influence-peddling (challenges), and stakeholder support and policies and programs (accomplishments) – were interactions of people and means that enhance those interactions. Literature revealed that corruption is centered on people. Gorsira et al. (2018) claimed that individuals or agents partake in corruption. The reasons for engaging in corruption may be individuals calculating cost versus benefits, or moral versus immoral considerations (De Graaf, 2007; Juraev, 2018). There is also a need to conform to social norms or institutional circumstances (Dimant & Tosato, 2018; Jetter & Parmeter, 2018; Zimelis, 2020).

Dixit (2018) postulated that anticorruption action in modern times must include schools as part of public education programs, because anticorruption must work to change social norms and culture. Dixit further claimed that the Hong Kong experience regarding anticorruption demonstrated the value of early childhood education. Literature

review covered the meet-the-school programs in the most recent NACS (Leone 2020) in Sierra Leone. Previous efforts regarding anticorruption focused only on investigation and prosecution, including a few legal commissions of inquiries, dismissals, or fines of public officials (Kpundeh ,1999).

Results revealed that corruption persists in Sierra Leone despite efforts by ACC in Sierra Leone to control it. Sierra Leone have experienced many challenges in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies. The Government of Indonesia, for example, has used direct, conventional approaches to eradicate corruption, with minimal results, and has resorted to providing anticorruption education to children with hope of breaking corruption trends (Al-Fatih, 2018).

Rothstein (2018) argued for using indirect strategies to change the basic social contract that compels individuals, rather than relying on laws and punishment, which are unlikely to work. Studies have revealed the positive impacts of early education in preventing corruption (Dewantara et al, 2021; Swanda, & Nadiroh, 2018; Tyas et al, 2020). The meet-the-school program holds great promise for transforming the minds of the children and young adults in Sierra Leone to develop a culture of trustworthiness and conformity to public values. There is a need for a national mentality that helps to mitigate corruption (Yusubboevich, 2021), and the focus, therefore, should be on developing minds of people, guided by policies and programs, to help them conform to social values of a particular context.

Results of this study revealed more endorsement of challenges than accomplishments, which may indicate that direct, conventional methods are not working

effectively. Focusing on an indirect approach, such as the meet-the-school program, may help to develop minds of children and offer hope of effectively mitigating levels of corruption in the future. This approach also offers an opportunity for researchers to assess how the meet-the-school program impacts corruption-mitigation strategies in the future.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee Code #:

Demographic Information

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Position:

Number of years in the current role:

Introduction

Hello, my name is Samuel Sam. I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I know your time is very valuable, and I appreciate you taking the time to assist with this study. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information from you that will help identify and describe the lived experiences of senior public sector officials like you in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in Sierra Leone. This interview will remain strictly confidential. Your personal information will be under a pseudonym to protect your privacy, and all the information you provide during the interview will be coded and stored securely with a password (electronic) and a lock and key (physical document). The current line on which we are communicating is secure with the best

technology available, and no one else is listening to our conversation to the best of my knowledge.

The estimated duration of the interview is about 30–60 minutes. The interview questions are semi-structured for consistency with all the other participants in this study. However, I may ask follow-up questions to clarify some of the responses you provide or to obtain more information on a particular question. I ask your permission to record our conversation to transcribe it verbatim, which will give you the opportunity to cross-check the accuracy of the information you provide. Your participation is purely voluntary, and you have the right to stop participating at any time if you so desire. You can email me or call me at any time after this interview with questions regarding the process. Do you have any questions about anything before we begin this interview?

Interview Questions

1. Can you please tell me about your role in this organization?
2. Can you tell me what corruption means to you?
3. Can you tell me what corruption policies and programs are in place in your organization?
4. Can you please describe your experience with implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization?
5. Please describe the context and situation that have typically influenced or affected your experiences in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization. How have these situations influenced your experiences in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies?

6. Please can you describe the situations that help your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization? How have these situations helped your implementation of such strategies?
7. Please can you describe the situations that hindered your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization? How have these situations hindered your implementation of such strategies?
8. Please can you describe situations from outside your organization that helped your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies? How have these situations helped your implementation of such strategies?
9. Please can you provide any additional information about your experiences with implementing corruption mitigation in your organization?

Closing Remarks

Well, this interview has finished. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Your contribution is very valuable to this study. You can ask me any other questions pertaining to this interview and study now. I will contact you if I need further clarification about any information you have provided. I would also like to share the results of this study with you when I am finished and give you the opportunity to comment on the findings. Please feel free to contact me anytime via email or telephone before the conclusion of this study if you have some thoughts or insights pertaining to this interview.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Can you please tell me about your role in this organization?
2. Can you tell me what corruption means to you?
3. Can you tell me what corruption policies and programs are in place in your organization?
4. Can you please describe your experience with implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization?
5. Please describe the context and situation that have typically influenced or affected your experiences in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization. How have these situations influenced your experiences in implementing corruption-mitigation strategies?
6. Please can you describe the situations that help your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization? How have these situations helped your implementation of such strategies?
7. Please can you describe the situations that hindered your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies in your organization? How have these situations hindered your implementation of such strategies?
8. Please can you describe situations from outside your organization that helped your implementation of corruption-mitigation strategies? How have these situations helped your implementation of such strategies?
9. Please can you provide any additional information about your experiences with implementing corruption mitigation in your organization?

Appendix C: Themes Regarding Challenges or Negatives

Categories	Words/Phrases	Participants
Allegiance	Muslim staff rule, P1, he is our man, P2, family ties, city barricaded, P4, look to them as demigods, P6, huge crowd of people who came out in support, P3, I have to speak what they understand, P10.	6
Influence Peddling	I could talk to the President; we should stop the investigation, P10, corrupt people are so very crafty, P4, extortion, bribery, P1, bribery attempts P3, don't do much there, try to do to another area, P6 if you are too familiar with people, P3, he is a friend, he is a brother, P6, call from your boss telling you that you should leave that place, P1, stakeholders who may want you to compromise, P4.	6
Resource Constraint	The human resource is not entirely up to that task, P4, what was approved was not given to the MDAs, P6 we don't have our first quarter finance, P10, we have only one vehicle P9, programs may be approved they will say that there no funds, P8, staff strength, P7, capacity training and vehicle, P6 old vehicles P4, least conditions of services, P4.	5
Resistance	Breaking habits can be tough, P3, corruption as only fight for the anticorruption commission, P4, refuse to divulge information, P5, too recalcitrant P7, hoarded, P5, not have the support of the reporter, P1, MDAs who are always defaulting, P5.	5
Fear/Threat of Violence	People become jittery, P1, find it difficult to report, fear of being victimized in their offices, P2, we were almost pelted, P1, we were stoned, P4, I am not secured in doing my job, P6.	4

Negative Relationship	You are a public enemy, P4, don't have friends, P1.	2
Frustration	Just leave this fight, P4, I do ask myself if we can, P4.	2
System Lapses	You will not find one of the data bases of supplier, P4, I saw a kind of collusion; collusion in doing their job, P6.	2

Appendix D: Themes Regarding Accomplishments or Positives

Categories	Words/Phrases	Participants
Stakeholder Support	stood up and reported P2, you see how you are accommodated, P4, continue to do your work, P1, ties with over 40 institutions, P2, commissioner has set a very high standard, P3, community monitors, P4, led by example, P7, backing of our supervisors, P9, my community, P1, have funded programs, P2, built trusted relations with our partners, P3, we do have whistleblowers, P5, support from the the civil society, P6, eliciting information from from members of the public, P7, the media has been very instrumental, P8, help of the Sierra Leone Police, P9, willingness of the people, P10, come to pick our brains, P2, public respect, P4.	10
Policies and Programs	Public education and prevention, P10, these policies have been put in place to help us, P8, people are also calling for systems review, P6, we educate the public, P5, compensation for whistleblowers P4, the Act as well helped me, P1, now they are refunding the money, P1, reformation or, or new clauses, P2, service charter, P7, staff is relocated, we notice that difference P3.	10
Personal Commitment	My experience here is very good because we have commitment, P8, the level of control, P9, officials are committed, P3, this is a humanitarian fight P4, we continue to ensure that we compel them, P7, lot of ways on how we can mitigate corruption, P8 but we keep sensitizing, P3, all that knowledge, P5, I have learned now to be more patient, P10, punishments have been levied, P7, help them, P2, willingness of the staff is there, P8, engaging the public almost on a daily or weekly, P4, we must do it, P1, live as an example, P4, presence is felt, P3,	7

a fight to fight, P4, know the work of every department, P10, we have made so many gains, P5.