THE SCIENCE
PUBLISHING HOUSE

The Role of the Egyptian Leadership in Fighting Corruption: Insights from Egypt

Amr Mohamed Abdeldayem ⓘD
International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), Laxenburg, Austria.
Correspondent Author Email: Amrodayem@yahoo.com

Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze the various types of corruption that have been prevalent in Egypt over the past eight years. It was conducted due to the increasing role of the country's leadership in fighting these types of corruption. For 60 years, the political structure in Egypt had remained relatively static. Consequently, several circumstances contributed to Egypt's revolution on January 25, 2011. Moreover, Egypt has embarked in a comprehensive National Anti-corruption Strategy since 2019. So, the objective of the study was to gather information about the various levels of corruption in Egypt, including the role of the government and its agencies in fighting it. Through a series of online interviews, the study would be able to gather important information about the country's civil society and public officials. Through a qualitative approach, the study was able to identify the various factors that contribute to corruption in Egypt. It also conducted an online interview to collect the necessary data. Through content analysis, as well as reviewing the literature (e.g. Badean 2013; Hakal 2017 & Nouioua 2020) the researcher was able to identify the various sentiments expressed by the participants regarding the role of the Egyptian government in fighting corruption. The results indicated a strong belief that the country's leadership has a vital role to play in fighting corruption. The results of the survey indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that the Egyptian government's leadership has a vital role to play in fighting corruption. Also, the impression that the country has seen significant improvement in its efforts to combat corruption was supported by the data analysis.

Keywords: Fighting Corruption, Anti-corruption, Egyptian Leadership, Governorate Owned Enterprises, Administrative Control Authority, Egypt.

Introduction

The Purpose of this study is to analyze the various types of corruption that have been prevalent in Egypt over the past eight years. It was conducted due to the increasing role of the country's leadership in fighting these types of corruption. For 60 years, the political structure in Egypt had remained relatively static. Consequently, several circumstances contributed to Egypt's revolution on January 25, 2011

Previous research in this area revealed that fighting corruption may vary with the level of economic development of countries (see Badran, 2013; Hakal, 2017; and Nouioua, 2020). Therefore, the anti-corruption paradigm of developed countries does not appropriately reflect the problems of developing countries and thus cannot be applied to developing countries. Unlike fighting corruption in developed countries, fighting corruption in developing countries is usually prescribed by the International Donor agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as a prerequisite for development and for obtaining structural adjustment loans. Thus, these facts make research into fighting corruption experience in Egypt the more interesting to evaluate.

The above findings have drawn attention toward reviewing the corruption and anti-corruption literature as global phenomenon and the Egyptian experience in particular. Hence, section 2 is devoted to reviewing these issues throughout the world, whilst section 3 focuses on the study methodology.

Literature Review

Leadership and corruption is one of the oldest relationships in social sciences Scholars such as: (Abdel Salam, Shawky, El-Nahas, & Nawar, 2013); (Al-Ali & Dafel, 2013). (Aponte-Moreno, 2020); (Ferreras-Garcia, Hernández-Lara, & Serradell-López, 2019), elieve that Egypt was more successful than Mesopotamia in building a stronger civilization. However, there are similarities and differences between the different types of corruption. The social structure of Egypt was more favourable than others. Both the leadership and corruption had similar status, but Egyptian leadership had the edge over corruption. One of the biggest advantages that Egypt had over corruption was its politicians. The history of Egypt and its civilization includes Mesopotamians. This study has a specific focus on corruption and its relationship with Egyptian leadership, but we have to develop an argument that clarifies how the circumstances of the country put stress on people to go for corruption.

There were differences in religion between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Religion played an important role in the unification and success of Egypt and gave its people a common goal under the Pharaoh. Mesopotamia was a diverse society, where internal conflicts were always on a high level. Egyptians used to

work together for a common goal, but Mesopotamians used to work for individual goals, which led to their downfall. They were always in pursuit of wanting more and more, which further aggravated society's greed, ultimately leading to its downfall (Al-Ali & Dafel, 2013).

The literature on the subject is constructed from the observation, depiction and evaluation of appropriately executed anticorruption activities that in the Egyptian case torment practically all the writing regarding the matter, even before the ongoing enemy of defilement strategy of the Public Enemy of Debasement Framework (Al-Ali & Dafel, 2013).

Besides, the book reference and research follow policy management, regulatory, sacred and criminal regulation methodologies, and official methodologies. All in all, many examinations have overlooked the political theory examination points of view in Egypt because of most exploration on debasement in political theory seeks after administration, resident support, straightforwardness, and responsibility approach (Masrawy, 2018). Past investigations have disregarded the strategy approach. Thus, to dissect the improvement of the battle against defilement and the counter debasement organization in Egypt, the ideas, classifications, and entertainers in the battle against defilement will be utilized under a public strategy approach. The investigation of public strategies has a strong and immense writing, both worldwide and public. Nonetheless, the writing zeroing in explicitly on the examination of public strategy definition is somewhat more modest and is many times moved toward inside the writing on the plan of public approaches

There is a gap in the literature on the analysis of public policies aimed at fighting corruption. Most of the research and literature on this subject focuses on various public management issues, environmental programs, and social and economic issues. On the other hand, the literature on corruption focuses on indirectly combating it. (Al-Sisi, 2018).

In the last two decades, the fight against corruption in international literature has developed the literature on so-called anti-corruption activities, within which anti-corruption policies have emerged as a bridge between political science studies and public policies (Fadel, 2011).

In August 2014, nearly two months after the current Egyptian leadership assumed the presidency of the Republic, his Excellency visited the headquarters of the Administrative Control Authority (ACA), where he attended a meeting of the National Coordination Committee for Combating Corruption, and delivered a speech that confirmed the direction of the state towards fighting and eliminating corruption. Through this important visit, the president wanted to send several messages, the most important of which is that the political leadership emphasizes the role that the commission will play among the Egyptian state's institutions in the next stage and has as its goal the fight against

corruption and its elimination. When we look at the tremendous efforts exerted by members of the oversight in the cases documented by the commission through its engagement and overlapping arms in state institutions, starting with controlling corruption foundations in various ministries and bodies, we are well aware of the role of the supervisory body in the Arab world and the dangerous tasks it undertakes in eliminating corruption and the establishment of rules of transparency and integrity.

Since 2014, many ACA investigations and arrests across the public area have been considered in the Egyptian media. Up until this point, arrests have occurred of representatives in somewhere around nine services, seven state offices and six governorates (Noll, 2019). Corruption is not only about money. It also includes the services and the rights of other people.

The rationale for involving leadership research goes beyond the attention generated by the corruption scandals in the country that have been made public since the 1970s. This leadership–ethical conjunction is due to reasons such as those raised by (Fagerberg & Srholec, 2008), who affirm that it is necessary for leaders, through their ethical decisions and actions, to become an example of integrity for the interest groups of the country to which they belong. In addition, there is the great challenge of restoring trust, faith and optimism in Egypt in the current climate of uncertainty. In short, people want trustworthy, positive and honest leadership, that is, ethical leadership

Furthermore, Egypt has embarked in a comprehensive National Anti-corruption Strategy since 2019. The main objectives of this strategy are as follows:

Objective 1: Development of Efficient and Effective Administrative Body

Objective 2: Providing High Quality Public Services

Objective 3: Activating Transparency and Integrity Mechanisms

Objective 4: Development of the Legislative Structure in Support of the Fight against Corruption

Objective 5: Modernization of Judicial Proceedings for the Achievement of Prompt Justice

Objective 6: Support for Law Enforcement Agencies to Prevent and Combat Corruption

Objective 7: Raising Community Awareness of the Importance of Preventing and Combating Corruption

Objective 8: Activating International and Regional Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Corruption

Objective 9: Participation of Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector in the Prevention of Corruption

Methodology

The main purpose of this section is to provide an outline of the research methods used and to explain the procedures employed to collect the data.

Interviews Methodology

In order to achieve the objective of this study, which is highlighting the Egyptian role in fighting corruption, a qualitative research design has been followed. It is important to choose samples and utilize ideas about probability and chance to predict the probability of events occurring in similar cases outside the sample. This strategy means studying large numbers of cases, something which qualitative researchers have not found easy since their research approach relies on studying individual cases in depth or rather sometimes just a single case (Seale, 1999).

Guided by the unique purpose of the study, the intention was to undertake a series of online semi-structured interviews with several managers and senior staff of the Egyptian general public and public institutions (e.g. civil societies, local administration offices, municipalities, police, tax authority, NGOs and fringe watch organization) to further ascertain the role of Egyptian leadership in fighting corruption. It was deemed necessary that participants should meet certain requirements of having a comprehensive knowledge and wide experience in the role of Egyptian leadership in fighting corruption. In short, the criteria utilized for selecting the interviewees were as follows:

They should have comprehensive knowledge and experience of at least 5 years of working in their field of work with the Egyptian government.

They are either from major governmental institutions or distinguished bodies such as civil societies, local administration offices; municipalities; police; tax authority; NGOs, and fringe watch organizations.

Accordingly, the number of such participants was limited. Thus, the number of interviewees selected in this study and who met the above criteria was 25 Egyptian experts from 25 public and governmental institutions. Due to the problems of access during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the time scale that the researcher was working to, not all the interviews were able to take place, and only 17 participants eventually offered access. Although this group of interviewees is not representative it provides important information to understand. It is rather an opportunity to gather invaluable information from key people and experts with many years of work experience who were involved in the Egyptian public service, and aware of corruption and anti-corruption issues in Egypt. In addition, websites of the different organizations in Egypt were checked, and data from the national ministries of the country were examined

Empirical data and analysis

To further ascertain the role of Egyptian leadership in fighting corruption, the interviews that were conducted with 17 participants have been analysed in

International Journal of Green Management and Business Studies
Vol. 2, No. 2. Dec. 2022
Available online at www.scipubhouse.com

five themes, as shown below.

1. Anti-corruption strategies and how to avoid corruption in your organization

Ways to avoid corruption in different Egyptian institutions and authorities have been revealed by several participants during the interview. P1 stated that 'First of all, understanding and interpreting law articles and applying regulations to all members of staff. Not to be discriminated against by, or biased towards, some members.' P2 and P3 add that 'establishing a meaningful system of assessment and activating its application is crucial to avoid corruption'. Therefore, following a code of ethics within the organization is rather important for reviewing and revising the law and regulation articles to be updated according to any surrounding forces.

In line with this, P4 adds, 'It starts by defining what is considered corruption, then to show your employees that you have a zero tolerance policy against it; then we set up an anti-corruption programme and measure the impact of this programme, keeping an eye on it and working on its improvements all the time.'

P7 also agrees with this point of view and indicates, 'I can avoid corruption in my organization by monitoring everything and trying to make a connection between the amount of work and the money everybody is getting.'

However, P12 and P15 have different opinions. P12 indicates, I think we should define a chart of authorities and policies clearly. Apply an audit cycle using internal and external audit teams. Avoid allowing solo signatures for transactions with higher values based on company turnover and workflow. Use a secure digital signature like Adobe Acrobat DC. Activate tenders for company purchases between suppliers to ensure getting the best price in trade.'

These different points of view mean that corruption has not been thoroughly investigated by the Egyptian community and anti-corruption strategies may have a better position in the future, but now the issue of discovering and fighting corruption in Egypt has become a top priority for the Egyptian leadership.

2. Common corruption case(s) in your organization

The issue of common corruption cases in different Egyptian organizations and authorities was discussed with the participants of the interview. P7 indicates, 'I think that common corruption occurs when people use their connections to get things done faster than by using the standard ways.'

Other participants in the interview also agreed on this point of view. P9 reveals, 'Accepting high-cost gifts from suppliers… as well as giving favour to some customers (citizens) with outstanding prices are examples of common corruption cases in my organization.'

P.2 adds 'the most common corruption case in my organization is getting paid without doing any work.'

However, P10, comments, 'I think that no common case of corruption has been witnessed in my organization in the last seven years.'

P11 adds, 'The Egyptian leadership has set new policies, rules and strategies not only to discover corruption cases but also to prevent any new cases from occurring'.

P17 confirms: 'It is hard to tell exactly, though it might happen in accordance with cheating in the exam papers or student results confusion... or sometimes accountancy issues, such as playing with staff due compensations or vacations.'

3. Differences between bribery and high-cost gifts:

During the interview, participants were asked about the main differences between bribery and high-cost gifts. P1, indicates, 'Bribes are directly related to an expected benefit or return. A gift is given without any expectation of benefit or return. Gifts are common in weddings, birthdays, success or any social event but bribes have a political or economic reason.'

P5 reveals, 'Bribery always gives the hope to the providers to get some benefits in return while a gift does not.'

P3 also confirms, 'The difference between bribery and a gift is that the bribe is the amount of money allocated for a service to be done. The gift is when you give a person a chocolate to appreciate his or her service.'

However, P8 comments, 'I believe they are the same. Gifts should not be allowed to people who offer us direct services.'

Furthermore, P11 states, 'A bribe is not made in public (they are made "under the table") while gifts should be in public as a reward for cooperation, outstanding support, or excellent business results after informing all stakeholders in my company and even in the receiver company about the reason behind giving this gift.

P12 adds, 'Gifts tend to be seen as a form of bribe; this is why most professionals in healthcare and others are not allowed to accept them. Bribes are also often in the form of gifts. This is why I believe that gifts shouldn't be offered to anyone other than friends or only after someone has helped you and it will not impair any further services.'

P16 also comments, 'In business, gifts are not allowed unless they are officially provided for performance and for all employees on certain occasions.'

4. Do you have facilitation payments in your organization to accelerate the process?

Participants were also asked whether they have a facilitation payment in their organizations to accelerate the service process. P1 reveals "yes we do", while, P3 replies 'no we don't have a facilitation payment in our organization to

facilitate any process;'

P6, adds, 'definitely yes, I do not see how this is different from bribes.'

P11 comments, 'Yes but when everyone uses them things are no longer accelerated.'

P8 and P9 states that, 'I don't know what a facilitating payment is.'

Moreover, P4 expressed his point of view by highlighting that 'we should not make facilitation payments to speed up the performance of a function by a government official, unless you are physically threatened'.

Therefore, we need to educate Egyptian people to take part in the use of this type of facilitation payment and benefit from it without violating the principles of fairness and justice.

5. What has the new administration (Egyptian leadership) done to reduce (eliminate) corruption in your organization?

The role of the Egyptian leadership in fighting corruption has been discussed in depth with the participants of the interview. P7 indicates, 'To reduce the corruption in the organization the new administration introduced automatic electronic payment so we can monitor what goes into everybody's account and the second step is preventing gifts throughout the organization.'

P14 confirms, 'Despite the Egyptian Bribery Act coming into force in 2014 as one of the toughest anti-bribery laws in the country, bribery remains a significant risk for organizations in Egypt. Almost a quarter of businesses have experienced bribery and corruption in the three years to 2020, according to Price Water House Coopers (PWC) Global Economic Crime Survey.'

P15 adds, 'Staff awareness of anti-bribery policies is only half the story. Creating an anti-bribery culture needs a clear and consistent set of messages coming from the top.'

Overall, the interview survey participants generally confirmed the role of the Egyptian leadership in fighting corruption. Also, the impression from the interviews support the findings of the data analysis and suggest that the Egyptian leadership has brought about significant improvements in fighting different types of corruption in Egypt.

Conclusions

This research pursued the study of the fight against corruption and the leadership in Egypt through the description and analysis of the anti-corruption policy formulation process that gave rise to the ACA. For this, the literature on the subject was reviewed to generate a conceptual analysis and locate the categories that would allow the description and analysis of the object of study

The development of anti-corruption activities in Egypt began to gain strength at the end of the twentieth century, when social actors, motivated by a

series of scandals and economic crises, began to pressure the Federal Government, specifically the President of the Republic, to take action. As a result, necessary actions to combat the phenomenon were taken, however, the measures undertaken by the Federal Executive were indirect actions to combat corruption since the implemented mechanisms were limited to specific tasks of transparency, supervision and internal control.

The great change occurred in 2012 when the president-elect and his party presented an initiative to create an anti-corruption commission. In that same year, a political consensus emerged (Pact for Egypt) in the Congress of the Union from which a series of general guidelines in the fight against corruption were drawn up.

Minimally skipping the political process already developed in supra lines, in 2016 a package of laws was promulgated, among which the General Law of the National Anti-corruption System stands out, which is the general framework of the anti-corruption entity (National Anti-corruption System). This standard sets out the aims and objectives of the system as a policy and expresses the configuration of the system as an entity, by exposing its organization and functions.

The formulation of the National Anti-corruption System was not only the result of a political concession at the national level but was more due to a crisis of legitimacy of the Egyptian State, as a consequence of the high level of corruption perceived by the citizens, as pointed out by some international indices (TI Corruption Perceptions) (Index, 2018). This led to the creation of the National Anti-corruption System as a policy and entity to combat the phenomenon. Hence the interest in knowing the type of strategy that it represents as a policy, and the agency model that it will form as a collegiate body; although the system is under construction, the analysis and description of its political design provides a catalogue to understand its structure and anti-corruption actions.

For the analysis of the object of study, documentary information on the subject was collected from interviews. From the literature review, a large bibliography on corruption was found, which mostly covers the ethical, legal and philosophical analysis of corruption. These analyses mostly address the theoretical and conceptual study of the phenomenon, paying little interest to operational and practical concepts of corruption. With regard to the anti-corruption study, there exists a partial gap in the national literature since the few works do not exceed 20 years and are directed toward transparency, accountability and public administration.

However, the international literature provides a series of documents and texts that help to understand anti-corruption activities and mechanisms. Regarding the historical development of the fight against corruption in Egypt,

there is a wide development in journalistic publications and opinion articles. However, scientific publications are difficult to find since they are usually investigations carried out by foreigners. Regarding the analysis of public policies, the literature is abundant both internationally and nationally and can be found in research studies, articles, books and manuals

Recommendations

One of the most applied and even recommended practices and strategies by international organizations is to combat endemic or systemic corruption through anti-corruption entities – 'anti-corruption agencies' – however, the creation of these agencies requires a great political consensus or the presence from a strong corruption crisis added to a certain temporal, political and social context to develop special anti-corruption agencies.

However, the literature highlights the success of two anti-corruption agencies and the existence of anti-corruption agency models, which were mentioned in the previous chapter. These success stories explain why special agencies were developed in those countries and partial or indirect agencies in the Egyptian case.

References:

Abdel Salam, E. M., Shawky, A. Y., El-Nahas, T., & Nawar, Y. S. (2013). The Relationship among Job Satisfaction, Motivation, Leadership, Communication, and Psychological Empowerment: An Egyptian case study. S.A.M. . *Advanced Management Journal,* , 78(2), 33–50.

Al-Ali, Z., & Dafel, M. (2013). Egyptian Constitutional Reform and the Fight against Corruption. *Consolidating the Arab Spring* , (Vol. 1).

Al-Sisi. (2018). Egypt is secure, and I won't let any corrupt persons near the seat of the presidency. (2018). Youm7 [Ar]. http://bit.ly/2rHSz4G. *Youm7* , [Ar]. http://bit.ly/2rHSz4G.

Aponte-Moreno, M. A. (2020). Developing Empathetic Leaders through Storytelling: The Global Citizen Story Exercise. . *Organizational Aesthetics,* , 9(1), 109–118.

Fadel, M. (2011). Public corruption and the Egyptian revolution of January 25: can emerging international anti-corruption norms assist . *Egypt recover misappropriated public funds?*

Fagerberg, J., & Srholec, M. (2008). Technology and development: Unpacking the relationship(s. . *TIK Working Papers on Innovation Studies,*, 20080623.

Ferreras-Garcia, R., Hernández-Lara, A. B., & Serradell-López, E. (2019). Entrepreneurial competences in a higher education business plan course. .

Education+ Training.

Index, C. P. (2018). Corruption perception index. . *Transparancy International*.

Noll, J. (2019). Fighting corruption or protecting the regime. *Egypt's Administrative Control Authority*.

Seale, C. (1999). The Quality of Qualitative Research. . *SAGE.*