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Ethical Mechanisms in Preventing Bureaucratic Corruption: A Comparative Study across Indonesian Government Institutions

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Abstract

Bureaucratic corruption in Indonesia remains a serious problem despite the establishment of various oversight institutions since the 1998 Reform era. This article aims to analyze the role of ethical mechanisms in preventing bureaucratic corruption through a comparative study of three main institutions: Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI), and Inspectorate General (Itjen) within the ministry. This research uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods, analysis of official documents, and utilization of online data from credible sources. The findings show that the implementation of bureaucratic ethics plays a significant role in reducing the potential for corruptive behavior. KPK implements a strict internal code of ethics and manages various integrity strengthening programs such as the Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) and Integrity Zone (ZI) to instill an anti-corruption culture within the government. ORI focuses on preventing maladministration and enforcing ethical standards in public services, which serves as a bulwark against petty corruption. Meanwhile, Itjen carries out the function of internal supervision and fostering the integrity of the state civil apparatus (ASN), although it faces challenges in terms of independence and limited resources. Comparatively, the three institutions complement each other. KPK has an advantage in terms of national prosecution and coordination, ORI excels in monitoring public service ethics, and Itjen plays a role in early detection of internal bureaucratic irregularities. Ethical mechanisms such as the implementation of a code of ethics, the development of an integrity system, and the implementation of ethics-based supervision have proven effective in improving accountability and preventing bureaucratic corruption.

Keywords: Bureaucratic ethics, corruption prevention, code of ethics, bureaucratic reform

Abstrak

Korupsi birokrasi di Indonesia masih menjadi persoalan serius meskipun berbagai lembaga pengawas telah dibentuk sejak era Reformasi 1998. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran mekanisme etik dalam mencegah korupsi birokrasi melalui studi komparatif terhadap tiga institusi utama: Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK), Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (ORI), dan Inspektorat Jenderal (Itjen) di lingkungan kementerian. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur, analisis dokumen resmi, serta pemanfaatan data daring dari sumber yang kredibel. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penerapan etika birokrasi berperan signifikan dalam mengurangi potensi perilaku koruptif. KPK menerapkan kode etik internal

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yang ketat serta mengelola berbagai program penguatan integritas seperti Survei Penilaian Integritas (SPI) dan Zona Integritas (ZI) guna menanamkan budaya antikorupsi di lingkungan pemerintah. ORI berfokus pada pencegahan maladministrasi dan penegakan standar etika pelayanan publik, yang menjadi benteng terhadap praktik korupsi kecil (petty corruption). Sementara itu, Itjen menjalankan fungsi pengawasan internal dan pembinaan integritas aparatur sipil negara (ASN), meskipun menghadapi tantangan pada aspek independensi dan keterbatasan sumber daya. Secara komparatif, ketiga institusi tersebut saling melengkapi. KPK memiliki keunggulan dalam hal penindakan dan koordinasi nasional, ORI unggul dalam pengawasan etika pelayanan publik, dan Itjen berperan dalam deteksi dini terhadap penyimpangan internal birokrasi. Mekanisme etik seperti penerapan kode etik, pembangunan sistem integritas, dan pelaksanaan pengawasan berbasis etika terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan akuntabilitas dan mencegah korupsi birokrasi.

Kata Kunci: Etika birokrasi, pencegahan korupsi, kode etik, reformasi birokrasi

INTRODUCTION

Corruption in the Indonesian bureaucracy is a chronic problem that hampers efforts to realize good governance and effective public services (Hidayat, 2023; Kasim, 2013; Labolo & Indrayani, 2019). Although it has been more than two decades since the 1998 Reformation and various supervisory institutions have been established, corruption cases are still common. The government has established internal supervisory institutions such as inspectorates in each agency, as well as external institutions such as the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI). However, many public officials are still caught in corruption cases, even through sting operations (OTT) by law enforcement officers.

Former Vice President Jusuf Kalla's statement highlighting the large number of supervisory institutions but still rampant corruption is a critical reflection on the effectiveness of the existing supervisory system. This indicates the need for evaluation and strengthening of the ethical mechanisms underlying bureaucratic oversight. Basically, all supervisory institutions have a preventive function, namely preventing deviations through an early warning system and providing solutions (Mait et al., 2021; Tarjo et al., 2022; Zhuang & Wei, 2023).

Bureaucratic ethics are believed to play a central role in efforts to prevent corruption. Corruption is a form of deviation from ethics and morality, especially in the abuse of office for personal gain (Dinarjo Soehari & Budiningsih, 2020; Dumisa, 2015; Sööt, 2012; Yustia & Arifin, 2023). Civil servants who uphold the values of honesty, integrity and justice tend to avoid corrupt behavior. On the other hand, the weakness of ethical culture in bureaucracy opens up space for abuse of authority. Therefore, building a work ethic based on integrity is

a prerequisite for clean governance.

Research by Indra Kristian et al. (2022) states that bureaucrats who internalize ethical values in carrying out their duties will be more likely to reject corrupt acts because they are aware of their deviation from moral norms. Meanwhile, Tri Yogi (2020) emphasized the importance of public administration ethics and bureaucratic integrity as a preventive strategy against criminal acts of corruption. Integrity is the most basic principle for rejecting all forms of deviation in bureaucracy. Ethical mechanisms play a strategic role in preventing corruption in the Indonesian bureaucratic environment. A number of recent studies show that the application of ethical principles of public administration can create a more transparent, accountable and service-oriented work culture. Apriansya and Meiwanda (2021) emphasize the importance of moral values in every bureaucratic action, as well as the need for preventive supervision and law enforcement as an integral effort. Masdika et al.'s (2025) research shows that bureaucratic reform that emphasizes good governance, merit-based recruitment, and internal supervision is an important foundation in forming an ethical state apparatus. A comparative study by Putri et al. (2024) emphasizes that Indonesia can learn from the more advanced bureaucratic ethics models of Singapore and Malaysia, especially in terms of incentive systems, ethics education, and consistent political commitment. Meanwhile, Rachman and Sutrisno (2025) identified that the main obstacles in implementing bureaucratic ethics in Indonesia lie in political intervention and weak enforcement of ethical rules, although regulations such as the ASN Law and the role of the KPK have become important pillars. Setiawan and Fadhillah (2025) in their systematic review emphasize the need for integration of anti-corruption policies in the national integrity system, including strengthening aspects of procurement of goods/services, ASN management, and village fund management.

The government has made various efforts to strengthen bureaucratic ethics, including through the implementation of a code of ethics and code of conduct for state civil servants (ASN). Government Regulation No. 42 of 2004 concerning the Development of the Corps Spirit and the Civil Servant Code of Ethics requires every agency to have a code of ethics and a Code of Ethics Council as its enforcer. Ethical values such as upholding Pancasila, integrity, not abusing authority, and setting an example are the guidelines for ASN behavior. After the enactment of Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning ASN, supervision of the ASN code of ethics has been further strengthened by involving the ASN Commission.

Along with this, supervisory institutions with specific functions are also formed or strengthened. The KPK was established in 2003 as an ad hoc institution with a dual mandate, namely to prosecute and prevent corruption on an ongoing basis. The Indonesian Ombudsman was established based on Law No. 37 of 2008 to supervise public services to ensure they are free from maladministration and practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN). Meanwhile, the Inspectorate General (Itjen) in each ministry/institution and regional inspectorates (APIP) are strengthened to carry out internal supervision in order to create an

accountable bureaucracy.

Recent literature emphasizes the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to corruption prevention. Legal enforcement alone is not enough; it is also necessary to build an ethical organizational culture and an effective monitoring system. The principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency, and integrity are pillars in strengthening a bureaucracy that is free from corruption. Maladministration is seen as the gateway to corruption, especially bureaucratic corruption such as extortion, bribery and small gratuities in public services—areas that are the focus of the Ombudsman’s supervision. Meanwhile, large-scale political corruption (grand corruption) is the main area of action for the KPK. Thus, the three institutions have different mandates that complement each other in building a bureaucratic ethics ecosystem.

The research gap that is the background to this study is the absence of a comprehensive study that compares ethical mechanisms in various supervisory institutions. Previous studies tend to be conceptual or only highlight one institution separately, such as an analysis of public administration ethics or an evaluation of the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) and the Ombudsman individually. There has not been much research that comparatively analyzes how ethical instruments are applied by each institution and their effectiveness in the context of post-Reformation bureaucracy. Therefore, this paper highlights novelty by presenting a comparative study between institutions based on the current regulatory context and practices.

Therefore, this study aims to: (1) describe the ethical mechanisms used by the KPK, Ombudsman, and Inspectorate General in preventing bureaucratic corruption; (2) compare the effectiveness and challenges of ethical approaches in each institution; and (3) identify best practices and areas that need improvement in synergy between institutions to strengthen bureaucratic integrity. This study focuses on the post-Reformation period (around 2000 to present) by considering regulatory changes and the dynamics of bureaucratic reform. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of ethics in preventing corruption and become a basis for formulating more effective public policies in the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature study methods and comparative analysis. The main data sources come from official documents such as laws and regulations, internal regulations of institutions, annual reports, and publications from related institutions such as the National Corruption Prevention Strategy (Stranas PK) report, the KPK bulletin, and ASN ethics guidelines.

Data collection techniques were carried out by collecting , reviewing, and selecting written

information related to ethical mechanisms and efforts to prevent bureaucratic corruption. All data obtained were then verified to ensure their credibility. The main focus was given to three supervisory institutions, namely the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI), and the Inspectorate General (Itjen) within the ministry. For each institution, information was collected regarding ethical regulatory instruments (such as codes of ethics and standards of behavior), organizational structures that handle ethical supervision, integrity programs implemented, and evaluations of effectiveness based on performance data or previous studies.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative-comparative analysis methods. The first step is to describe descriptively the ethical mechanisms in each institution. Next, a systematic comparison is made based on a number of criteria: (1) the existence and enforcement of a formal code of ethics; (2) the preventive approach used (preventive or repressive); (3) the scope of the institution's authority (internal or external); (4) the integrity program initiatives implemented; (5) indicators of effectiveness based on official reports or academic studies; and (6) the obstacles faced in implementing ethical mechanisms. To clarify the comparison, a tabulation of the main points is used and, where relevant, a comparative table is also presented as a visual illustration.

The limitations of this research lie in its reliance on the availability of public data and open documentation. However, researchers have conducted a strict selection of data sources, prioritizing official publications and up-to-date references up to 2024, in order to maintain the relevance and accuracy of the findings with actual conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and Ethical Mechanisms in Preventing Bureaucratic Corruption

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is an independent anti-corruption agency that has a dual mandate, namely law enforcement and corruption prevention. In the context of bureaucracy, the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) emphasizes the importance of developing an integrity system and anti-corruption culture in government agencies. Internally, the KPK implements the KPK Personnel Code of Ethics which binds all employees and leaders, with demands for high standards in terms of morality, integrity, independence, fairness, and professionalism. Following the revision of the KPK Law in 2019, a Supervisory Board was formed which has the authority to oversee compliance with the code of ethics and impose sanctions in the event of violations. Several cases of ethical violations, even by high-ranking officials, have been prosecuted by the Supervisory Board, which indicates the KPK's commitment to maintaining internal credibility and being an example of integrity for other public institutions.

On the external side, the KPK has developed a number of ethics-based mechanisms to

strengthen corruption prevention in the bureaucracy. One of the main instruments is the Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI), which is conducted annually to measure the perceptions of employees, service users, and experts regarding corruption risks and prevention efforts in ministries/institutions and local governments. SPI is the main indicator in assessing agency performance through the Bureaucratic Reform Index and functions as a benchmark for a Virtuous bureaucratic culture. The results also impact reputation and performance benefits, leading to more measurable improvements in structural integrity. Follow-up to SPI results is jointly supervised by the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPANRB), including management of conflicts of interest.

In an effort to form a culture of integrity from an early age and in the work environment, the KPK through the Deputy for Education organizes various training programs and anti-corruption value campaigns such as Anti-Corruption Counselors, Agents of Change, and the I Am an Anti-Corruption Woman (SPAK) movement, as well as the issuance of guidelines such as the Conflict of Interest Guidelines and Gratification Control Guidelines. Anti-corruption education has also begun to be integrated into the national education curriculum. In addition, the KPK requires all state administrators to submit a State Administrators' Wealth Report (LHKPN) periodically as a form of transparency and personal accountability, while other ASN submit LHKASN to the Inspectorate General. LHKPN can be used as a basis for investigation if irregularities in wealth are found.

Strengthening the internal integrity system is carried out through collaboration with the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform to encourage policies on controlling gratification, conflict of interest management, development of a whistleblowing system (WBS), and management of public complaints. National reporting channels such as JAGA and SP4N-LAPOR! are also strengthened to encourage a culture of openness and accountability. On the other hand, the KPK recognizes the vital role of APIP (Government Internal Supervisory Apparatus) in initial supervision of the bureaucracy. KPK data shows the dominance of corruption cases at the regional level, making strengthening APIP a priority program, including special supervision and increasing capabilities through digitalization of audits, providing integrity-based incentives, and structural advocacy so that the inspectorate has higher independence. The KPK also emphasized that the failure of APIP in preventing corruption by regional heads is an indication of weak internal supervision.

As part of bureaucratic reform, the KPK runs the Monitoring Center for Prevention (MCP), a platform for assessing the achievements of regional corruption prevention efforts, including aspects of budget planning, licensing, ASN management, village fund governance, APIP supervision, and public services. Ethical values such as transparency, complaint handling, and implementation of integrity pacts are also elements of the assessment. MCP synergizes

with Stranas PK (National Strategy for Corruption Prevention) together with various agencies to strengthen the development of Integrity Zones (ZI) in public service units.

The KPK as an anti-corruption institution actually carries out the KPK approach in strengthening bureaucratic ethics which has produced quite significant results. The development of the Integrity Zone towards a Corruption-Free Area (WBK) and a Clean Serving Bureaucracy Area (WBBM) is a real indicator of success. Integrity and service quality indices are now important components in performance evaluation, in addition to Ombudsman surveys and public satisfaction. However, challenges remain. The 2019 revision of the KPK Law has raised concerns regarding the independence of the institution and the KPK's moral authority. Several ethical controversies, including alleged violations by KPK leaders, have occurred. However, the existence of the Supervisory Board has proven capable of handling violations transparently, including imposing sanctions on the Deputy Chairman of the Corruption Eradication Committee. This shows that the KPK's internal monitoring system, although not yet perfect, is still working.

The ethics mechanisms developed by the KPK include two main channels, internal ethics enforcement for employees and external strengthening of bureaucratic integrity through various national programs. This combination is an important foundation for systemic and sustainable corruption prevention. A comprehensive strategy that combines repressive and preventive approaches is considered quite effective, although it still requires further refinement and cross-sector synergy. The main determining factors for success remain the leadership's exemplary behavior, program sustainability, and responsiveness to public evaluation.

Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI) and Ethical Mechanisms in Preventing Bureaucratic Corruption

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI) is an independent state institution that has a mandate to oversee the implementation of public services by government institutions and state/regional-owned enterprises. Based on Law No. 37 of 2008, ORI aims to encourage the implementation of effective, efficient, honest, open, clean government, and free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism. In practice, the Ombudsman functions as a guardian of public administration ethics with a primary focus on preventing maladministration. Deviations in the form of abuse of authority, delays in service, extortion, discrimination, and administrative negligence are critical points monitored by ORI because they are considered to be the seeds of corruption, especially small-scale corruption (petty corruption) at the frontline service level of the bureaucracy. The impact that is directly felt by the community makes the role of the Ombudsman very vital in building public trust in the bureaucracy.

In carrying out its duties, the Ombudsman applies various ethics and integrity-based mechanisms, both internally and externally. Internally, this institution has a Code of Ethics for Ombudsman Personnel as regulated in the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman Regulation

Number 7 of 2011, which applies to all commissioners and assistants. The code of ethics affirms the principles of integrity, independence, professionalism, confidentiality, and the prohibition on accepting gratification or illegal rewards. Enforcement of this code of ethics is carried out by the internal Ethics Committee. Violation cases are relatively rare to expose, indicating success in maintaining internal ethical standards. On the other hand, external mechanisms involve public participation through a system of reporting alleged maladministration. Each report is independently investigated, and if violations are proven, the Ombudsman will provide recommendations to the relevant agencies. These recommendations, although not legally binding, have high moral and political power. In many cases, these recommendations have succeeded in encouraging public service reforms, such as the return of illegal levies, improvements to SOPs, and administrative sanctions for perpetrators. In situations where recommendations are ignored, ORI can publish the names of agencies openly as a form of social sanction, and the President can even take action against officials who ignore the recommendations.

In addition to acting reactively, the Ombudsman also implements a preventive strategy by conducting a systemic review of public service sectors that are prone to maladministration. One of the concrete implementations of this strategy is the Compliance Assessment of the implementation of Public Service Law No. 25 of 2009. This assessment measures the extent to which public service units have fulfilled mandatory components such as procedural information, service requirements, costs, completion time, and the presence of complaint officers. The survey results published in the form of zones (green, yellow, red) provide moral pressure on agencies to improve their services. This compliance assessment is even used as an indicator in the Bureaucratic Reform Index and shows a positive correlation between compliance with service standards and decreasing levels of public complaints and the risk of extortion. In this way, ORI strengthens a culture of service ethics that prioritizes the principles of transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination.

ORI also contributes to the development of the Integrity Zone (ZI) towards a Corruption-Free Area (WBK) and a Clean and Serving Bureaucratic Area (WBBM). In accordance with Permen PANRB No. 10 of 2019, the Ombudsman is involved as a witness to the launch of ZI and a member of the National Assessment Team. In this process, ORI monitors compliance with the integrity pact signed by the leaders and employees of the agency. If serious violations are found after the WBK/WBBM predicate is awarded, ORI can recommend its revocation to KemenPANRB. Assessment indicators include the implementation of internal control systems, quality of complaint management, compliance with service standards, and control of gratification, including the ethical attitudes of public service officers. With this approach, ORI emphasizes that ZI is not merely symbolic, but must be realized in real change. The Ombudsman also encourages institutions and local governments to build a Whistleblower

System (WBS) as a safe channel for reporting violations by the public, which then synergizes with reporting platforms developed by the KPK such as JAGA and SP4N-LAPOR !.

Collaboration between ORI, KPK, and APIP further strengthens ethics-based corruption prevention. The 2019 Memorandum of Understanding between KPK and ORI clarifies the complaint transfer mechanism to be in accordance with authority: administrative reports are transferred to ORI, while those that lead to criminal acts of corruption are forwarded to KPK. Data exchange and joint study results are also strategic instruments in exploring the correlation between corruption and the quality of public services. At the regional level, the Ombudsman acts as an extension of the KPK in socializing anti-corruption programs, while on the other hand, ORI supports the strengthening of internal oversight functions by APIP, by providing systemic input on findings of maladministration that have the potential to cause state losses.

The effectiveness of the ethical mechanism implemented by ORI can be seen from the successful resolution of various public complaints without having to go through a long legal process. The corrective steps recommended by the Ombudsman are able to return public services to the right track, restore community rights, and educate officials about the importance of administrative ethics. ORI's annual report shows a significant increase in agency compliance with service standards since Compliance Assessments have been conducted periodically. Even the results of the KPK integrity survey accommodate data from ORI as an important component in assessing institutional integrity. However, the challenges faced by ORI are quite large, especially related to the limitations of execution authority. The effectiveness of recommendations depends largely on political will and the willingness of the bureaucracy to follow up. In addition, the broad scope of supervision, limited number of personnel, and potential political intervention in the appointment of commissioners are structural challenges that must continue to be mitigated. However, the existence of representative offices in 34 provinces, collaboration with the media, NGOs, and academics are important assets in expanding the impact of ethical supervision.

Overall, the Indonesian Ombudsman fills an important space in the architecture of bureaucratic ethics supervision in Indonesia. Its role is to bridge the grey area between administrative violations and criminal acts of corruption through a corrective, collaborative and public participation-based approach. The ethical mechanism implemented by ORI strengthens accountability and transparency of public services and encourages the transformation of a more responsive and integrated bureaucratic work culture. In the future, strengthening aspects of follow-up recommendations, digitizing service standards, and institutionalizing ethical values in the bureaucratic system through adaptive public service

reforms are strategic agendas that need to be continuously encouraged.

Inspectorate General (APIP) and Internal Ethics Mechanism in Preventing Bureaucratic Corruption

The Inspectorate General (Itjen) in ministries and Regional Inspectorates in provinces, districts, and cities function as the Government Internal Supervisory Apparatus (APIP) which has a strategic role in ensuring that the implementation of government runs according to the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with regulations. APIP is the vanguard in detecting and preventing deviations early on through various forms of supervision such as compliance audits, budget evaluations, program monitoring, and investigations into alleged misappropriation. In the scope of ethics, APIP has the responsibility to enforce the ASN code of ethics and discipline so that bureaucrat behavior remains within the corridor of integrity and professionalism.

In its operations, the inspectorate has several ethics-based mechanisms. First, enforcement of the ASN code of ethics and discipline is carried out through coordination with personnel units based on regulations such as PP No. 94 of 2021 and PP No. 42 of 2004. When a serious violation occurs, the inspectorate conducts an internal inspection and recommends sanctions to the Personnel Development Officer. The sanctions can range from a warning to dismissal depending on the level of violation. To strengthen the system, a Code of Ethics Council was formed in many agencies, with the inspectorate as a member or secretariat. This assembly serves as an internal forum to adjudicate ethical violations such as accepting gratuities, abuse of office, or moral deviations. With this model, state apparatus is expected to be more disciplined because sanctions and reputation are real consequences of ethical violations.

Second, risk-based internal audits are an important tool in strengthening ethics. In addition to financial audits, the inspectorate also conducts compliance and performance audits that assess the appropriateness of procedures, the existence of conflicts of interest, and the effectiveness of internal controls. Audit findings can reveal administrative irregularities such as budget mark-ups or fictitious procurement. The inspectorate then provides recommendations for improvement and acts as a consultative partner, helping work units achieve their goals in an accountable manner. This approach reflects the ethical values of government which do not merely punish, but also foster. In cases of suspected fraud, investigative audits are conducted and the results can be the basis for imposing sanctions or being referred to law enforcement if it involves state losses.

Third, controlling gratification and conflict of interest is an important part of strengthening bureaucratic ethics. Several APIPs manage Gratification Control Units and work together with the KPK in monitoring reports from employees. LHKPN and LHKASN reporting is also monitored by the inspectorate. Non-compliance is reported to management and can result

in internal sanctions. To prevent conflicts of interest, employees assigned to vulnerable positions such as tender committees or selection teams are usually required to sign a conflict-free statement that is monitored by the inspectorate. This step builds individual ethical awareness and creates accountability at the micro level.

Fourth, the implementation of the Government Internal Control System (SPIP) based on PP No. 60 of 2008 is a pillar of bureaucratic ethics development. APIP helps to develop and implement the SPIP framework, starting from a control environment that reflects integrity values, to monitoring that is carried out periodically. The SPIP maturity level assessment is carried out by BPKP and agencies with high scores demonstrate an established culture of integrity. The Inspectorate encourages this maturity through training, socialization of anti-corruption values, and development of policies such as whistleblowing systems and the provision of ethical incentives. Several ministries such as the Ministry of Finance have achieved a high level of maturity thanks to the support of the inspectorate which is active in fostering the organization's core values.

Fifth, in the Integrity Zone development program towards WBK/WBBM, APIP acts as a team to strengthen the change area, especially in performance supervision and accountability. The Inspectorate verifies supporting data, supervises the implementation of bureaucratic reform, and helps form change agents in each unit. Change agents are assisted by APIP in initiating activities that foster the values of integrity, such as campaigns for services without extortion, no gift policies, and internal complaint forums. Through this participatory approach, the inspectorate also helps to sow ethical values from the grassroots of the bureaucracy.

However, the effectiveness of APIP in preventing corruption still faces a number of challenges. Although they have a strategic position as internal supervisors, APIPs are often not structurally independent because they are directly under the leaders they supervise. This creates a potential conflict of interest that can hinder the objectivity of the audit or even result in the removal of the inspector if they are too vocal. Alex Marwata from the KPK said that the pressure on APIPs is very real, especially in the regions, and many inspectorates are weakened by political and structural intervention.

In addition, limited human resources and budget are classic problems. Many regional inspectorates do not have adequate certified auditors, with very few personnel to oversee a budget of hundreds of billions of rupiah. The lack of competence in technology-based audits also makes it difficult for APIP to deal with increasingly sophisticated forms of corruption. The old paradigm that positions the inspectorate as a "fault finder" is still often attached, so a cultural transition towards a role as a coaching partner is needed. Regarding authority, some APIPs do not have the authority to conduct special investigative audits without the approval of the leadership, thus slowing down the response to alleged violations.

While the challenges are significant, there are a number of good practices. Several ministries have placed inspectorates directly under ministers to increase independence,

and there is talk of regional inspectorates being supervised directly by BPKP to ensure the quality of supervision. The Inspectorate is now required to create a supervisory action plan that is reported to the KPK via the MCP platform. These efforts have shown results in the form of increased SPIP scores and decreased BPK findings in various agencies. In terms of personal integrity, APIP is required to have higher moral standards than other units because they are a mirror for the bureaucracy. Therefore, mental coaching, ethics training, and job rotation are part of efforts to maintain neutrality and avoid conflicts of interest. In fact, the inspectorate itself is being encouraged to build an Integrity Zone within itself as proof of its ethical commitment.

Overall, the Inspectorate's position as an internal supervisor makes it a unique actor in the anti-corruption architecture of the bureaucracy. The potential for influence is very large because it has direct access to the organization's internal systems and is able to carry out prevention from within. However, to make APIP truly effective as an ethics guardian, institutional reform is needed that guarantees independence, strengthening of human resource capacity, and consistent political support. If these prerequisites are met, the inspectorate can transform into a spearhead in corruption prevention efforts based on strong and sustainable professional ethics.

Comparison of Ethical Mechanisms and Best Practices in Bureaucratic Corruption Prevention

Aspect	Corruption Eradication Commission	Indonesian Ombudsman	Inspectorate/APIP
Main mandate	Eradication of corruption (prosecution and prevention of large-scale and systemic corruption).	Supervision of public services (prevention of maladministration and petty corruption/extortion).	Internal supervision of the agency (audit, review, prevention of internal deviations).
Internal code of ethics	There is (KPK Personnel Code of Ethics, supervised by the Supervisory Board; violations are subject to strict sanctions)	There is (2011 Ombudsman Code of Ethics; demands integrity & impartiality of ORI employees)	There is (ASN Code of Ethics according to PP 42/2004; Code of Ethics Council in each agency; supervised by the inspectorate).
Main approach	Legal approach + integrity system. Focus on building an integrity system: SPI, gratification, LHKPN, WBS, Integrity Zone, etc. Also repressive legal action as a deterrent.	Ethical public service approach. Focus on compliance with service standards, resolution of public reports, corrective recommendations, systemic evaluation. Using soft power and moral suasion.	Internal control approach. Focus on audit & inspection, early detection of fraud, ASN discipline enforcement, process improvement. As a consultant and assurance for good governance.

Authority	Strong (investigation, legal enforcement, coordination with other agencies , monitoring, public education).	In progress (non-judicial investigation, summoning officials for clarification, issuing recommendations to be followed up, publication).	Internally limited (inspection is limited to the agency itself, recommendations to the agency leader, cannot punish directly except through superiors).
Flagship integrity program	✓ National Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) ✓ Stranas PK & Integrity Zone (collaboration with other Ministries/Institutions) ✓ Anti-corruption education (extension workers, change agents). ✓ Control of gratification & LHKPN. ✓ Whistleblower System (JAGA). ✓ MCP (Regional Prevention Monitoring).	✓ Public Service Standards Compliance Assessment ✓ Proactive supervision (service inspections, thematic studies). ✓ KPK Collaboration (MoU 2019: data exchange & joint education). - Integrity Zone Guard (integrity pact witness, WBK monitoring) ✓ Public Campaign Program (ombudsman enters campus/school regarding anti-maladministration).	✓ Maturation of SPIP (comprehensive internal control system). ✓ Risk Based Audit (prioritize corruption-prone areas). ✓ Gratification Control Unit & Internal WBS ✓ Change Agent/Internal Integrity Champions. ✓ Procurement & Conflict of Interest Consultation (review of tender documents, etc.).
Effectiveness	Very effective in preventing major corruption (KPK's OTT has a broad deterrent effect). Integrity programs have begun to be adopted by agencies (for example, SPI is used as an RB indicator. However, challenges: politicization, resistance from individuals, high workload.	Quite effective in suppressing petty corruption (many service problems are resolved without criminal charges). The public is increasingly aware of their rights, agencies are improving due to Ombudsman assessments. Challenges: the strength of recommendations depends on the willingness of the agency, the Ombudsman's human resources are limited vs. the breadth of supervision.	Varies between agencies. Effective if the leadership supports (many potential deviations can be prevented). However, in many cases, APIP failed to prevent corruption by leaders (for example, 155 corrupt regional heads were caught. Need to strengthen independence and capacity.
Ethical Challenges	Maintaining the internal integrity of the KPK itself (issues of ethical violations by leaders). Building public trust after the change in the law. Balancing the role of enforcement vs prevention.	Maintaining political neutrality (because of monitoring officials who may be close to local power). Ensuring recommendations are not ignored. Avoiding publications that could lead to legal conflicts (counterclaims).	Pressure from superiors (loyalty vs objectivity). Conflict of interest when auditing your own colleagues. The dual duties of consultant and supervisor are sometimes confusing. APIP motivation needs to be maintained so that it does not "catch a cold".

Source: Processed by Author, 2025

Analysis of the ethical mechanisms implemented by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI), and the Inspectorate General (Itjen) shows that all three have different characteristics and approaches but have the same goal, namely to build a bureaucracy with integrity and prevent corruption as early as possible. The KPK, with its law enforcement powers, not only acts within the legal realm but also sets standards of integrity that must be achieved by public institutions. ORI encourages the creation of clean, responsive, and fair public services, and strengthens bureaucratic awareness of community rights. On the other hand, the Inspectorate General strengthens aspects of internal compliance and administrative discipline to ensure that all apparatus carry out their duties according to procedures and uphold the principles of ethical governance.

From the comparison of the three institutions, a number of best practices were found that can be used as a reference for strengthening bureaucratic ethics. First, the integration of ethical assessments into bureaucratic performance measurement is a significant innovative step. The integration of the results of the SPI conducted by the KPK and the public service compliance survey by ORI into the Bureaucratic Reform Index makes the integrity dimension an integral part in assessing the success of an agency. This practice can be expanded by adding indicators such as the SPIP maturity score developed by APIP to create a more holistic and value-oriented performance measure.

Second, the implementation of the Integrity Zone program and the signing of the Integrity Pact witnessed directly by the KPK and ORI have encouraged collective moral commitment in the bureaucracy. The success of several work units in achieving the WBK/WBBM predicate was followed by various real improvements such as accelerated services, increased transparency, and reduced extortion practices. However, this predicate must be maintained through continuous monitoring so that it does not become a symbol without substance.

Third, synergy between supervisory institutions is the best practice in closing the gaps for corruption. Formal collaboration between the KPK and ORI through a memorandum of understanding in 2019 allows for effective and efficient delegation of reports according to authority. The KPK also involves APIP in implementing prevention programs in the regions, while ORI coordinates with APIP in efforts to improve maladministration. The integration of the SP4N-LAPOR! complaint system is a concrete example that with a structured reporting mechanism, public complaints can be channeled to the right institution. This approach strengthens the presence of the community as an active supervisory actor.

Fourth, the importance of implementing a balanced approach between soft power and hard power can be seen from the role of each institution. The KPK prioritizes a tough approach through law enforcement and strict sanctions, ORI carries a moral persuasion and public education approach, while APIP is tasked with carrying out systematic internal supervision. This study found that these three approaches, if implemented simultaneously, can provide

pressure from various sides that accelerate behavioral change and reform in government agencies. When the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) issued a stern warning to the weak inspectorate, and ORI released low assessment results regarding service quality, APIP was expected to respond with comprehensive internal improvements.

Fifth, the integration of ethics education in state civil service training is also a strategic step in fostering a culture of integrity from an early age. The KPK focuses on anti-corruption counseling, while ORI emphasizes the importance of public services that are free from maladministration. Currently, the ASN training curriculum has begun to include anti-corruption and excellent service materials, which should continue to be expanded to cover all levels of bureaucracy.

Experiences from other countries can provide additional lessons. In the Nordic countries, the position of the Ombudsman is highly respected and its recommendations are almost always implemented due to the strong legal culture. In Singapore, internal oversight is very effective thanks to the synergy between the special investigation agency and the internal audit unit. The low levels of corruption in these countries indicate that the success of ethics mechanisms depends heavily on the leadership's exemplary conduct, strong political support, the independence of the supervisors, and active public participation.

Indonesia, through the KPK, ORI, and APIP, has begun to take a promising path of bureaucratic ethics reform. Diverse but complementary oversight mechanisms, strategies that combine education, internal control, and enforcement, as well as wider public involvement are important assets in creating a clean and serving bureaucracy. In the future, institutional strengthening, consistency of supervision, and institutionalization of ethical values in every public policy must continue to be a priority to ensure that integrity is not just a slogan, but becomes the main foundation of sustainable governance.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study confirms that ethical mechanisms play a very important role in preventing bureaucratic corruption in Indonesia. The three institutions analyzed, namely the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI), and the Inspectorate General (Itjen), have complementary roles in building the integrity of individuals and government systems. All three carry out their respective functions with different approaches, but with the same goal, namely to encourage clean and accountable governance.

The main findings of this study show that the KPK with its enforcement authority has succeeded in mainstreaming an ethical approach through various national programs such as the Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI), the development of Integrity Zones, strengthening the whistleblowing system, and the obligation to report assets. This approach has created

more concrete anti-corruption standards in the bureaucracy and provided incentives for improving governance. The Indonesian Ombudsman plays a role as a guardian of public service ethics, encouraging the prevention of small-scale corruption by enforcing service standards and taking action against maladministration as the initial entry point for corrupt practices. Meanwhile, the Inspectorate General acts as an internal filter that corrects procedural errors and enforces the ASN code of ethics before the problem develops into a more serious legal case.

An ethics-based approach has proven effective in complementing law enforcement efforts. Many corruption cases can actually be prevented early on when officials carry out their duties by upholding ethical values and when the internal control system functions optimally. These three institutions show that integrity as an organizational culture is able to reduce the risk of corruption. The success of the development of the Integrity Zone, the increase in public satisfaction scores, and the integrity survey conducted by the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) prove that agencies with leaders who are committed to ethics tend to show better performance. However, this effectiveness does not happen automatically. It depends on the commitment of the leadership and the political will to make ethics a primary value in bureaucratic governance.

Several challenges still need to be overcome. The interconnectedness and consistency between various ethical mechanisms is a major challenge. Corruption cases involving regional heads, for example, show that if the internal supervisory function (APIP) is weak, the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) must intervene at the final stage. Likewise, if the Ombudsman's recommendations are ignored, the resulting maladministration has the potential to develop into corruption. Therefore, synergy and intensive communication between supervisory institutions are very necessary. In addition, the issue of personal integrity is also a challenge, such as when APIP officials are indicated as not being neutral or the head of the anti-corruption agency itself violates the code of ethics. Layered supervision and transparency are key to maintaining accountability.

Based on the results of this study, there are a number of strategic recommendations that can be strengthened within the framework of strengthening bureaucratic ethics. First, strengthening the independence and capacity of the Inspectorate or Government Internal Supervisory Apparatus (APIP) is urgent considering its strategic role as an internal supervisor. APIP requires clear career protection, adequate budget support, and expanded investigative authority to be able to carry out its duties optimally. In addition, improving auditor competence, especially in technology-based audits and investigations, is very important to deal with increasingly complex corruption modes. Second, operational synergy between the KPK, the Indonesian Ombudsman, and APIP needs to be optimized. The KPK can periodically provide the latest information to APIP and the regional Ombudsman regarding corruption-prone areas based on the results of its studies, while the Ombudsman can involve APIP in handling

complex maladministration cases so that follow-up can be carried out immediately through internal improvements. A data and information exchange forum between supervisory institutions, including with BPKP and Itjen, needs to be institutionalized permanently, ideally under the coordination of the National Corruption Prevention Strategy (Stranas PK). Third, the systematic development of institutional integrity management must be a priority agenda in every agency. This includes the preparation of an institutional code of ethics, regular implementation of ethics training, independent internal integrity surveys, and a reward and sanction system based on ethical behavior. The Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) and the Ombudsman can collaborate to develop joint guidelines so that integrity management becomes an integral part of the bureaucratic performance management system, not just an incidental project. Fourth, public participation in monitoring bureaucratic ethics must continue to be expanded and strengthened. Socialization of reporting channels such as SP4N-LAPOR!, JAGA, and reporting channels to the Ombudsman and KPK need to be carried out comprehensively so that the public is encouraged to be actively involved in monitoring. The role of the mass media and non-governmental organizations is also very important in creating sustainable social control through public education, reporting on cases of ethical violations, and integrity advocacy. Fifth, further studies need to be conducted in more depth, especially at the regional level. Case studies that compare regions that have succeeded and failed in building a bureaucracy with integrity will provide a contextual understanding of success factors. In addition, international comparisons and long-term evaluations of programs such as the Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) and Integrity Zone will enrich the basis of evidence-based policy in designing more targeted ethics-based corruption prevention strategies.

In closing, the ethical approach to preventing corruption is not an instant solution, but rather a long-term investment in building a culture of integrity. When ethical values have taken root in the bureaucracy, they will become a natural shield that prevents the birth of corrupt intentions and opportunities. By strengthening ethical mechanisms in the KPK, Ombudsman, Inspectorate, and all other supervisory elements, Indonesia can move more surely towards a clean, serving, and corruption-free bureaucracy.

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