

# Measuring Corruption Risk in the South African Public Service

## An Institutional Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*Corruption features prominently in assessments of the governance, performance and capacity of South Africa's public service. However, accounts of corruption too often fail to offer systematic appraisals of its occurrence within the diverse institutional makeup of the public service. This article seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between the level and type of corruption, and the institutional characteristics of government departments. Based on an original dataset which assembles published data on financial misconduct, staffing and budgetary information, the article examines whether the institutional makeup of national departments render some more susceptible to corruption than others. The findings highlight the multi-dimensional nature of corruption, indicating that departmental risk should not simply be judged on its cumulative or aggregate effect: how much corruption do departments sustain, but incorporate the proportional effect of corruption: how much does it matter? Indicators such as overall staff size, ratio of supervisory to non-supervisory staff and functional orientation are necessary but insufficient indicators of corruption risk, whilst budget size appears to have little bearing on increased risk; although there is more, though not unequivocal, reason to be concerned about departments with a higher percentage of their budgets allocated to goods and services spending.*

### INTRODUCTION: ANTI-CORRUPTION ENFORCEMENT AND CORRUPTION RISK IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PUBLIC SERVICE

The pervasivity of corruption is well documented across the array of government, academic and grey literature on South Africa's public service. In response to the problem, the country has adopted a law-enforcement/organisational control approach to combatting corruption, comprising a mix of statutory, policy and institutional measures (Naidoo 2013). Statutory reforms include the passage of a Prevention and Combating of Corrupt

Activities Act (Number 12 of 2004) which contains a relatively extensive legal definition of corruption applying to both the public and private sectors. It also distinguishes 'general' from more activity-specific instances where corruption is alleged to have taken place, including through contractual as well as procurement/tendering instruments. Specific anti-corruption legislation has been augmented by general public sector regulations containing anti-corruption provisions. This includes a Code of Conduct that stipulates conduct that officials are barred from engaging in (e.g. relating to corruption and misuse of official office for private ends). The Regulations were later amended (Government Gazette 2001b) to include provisions requiring the disclosure of financial interests by senior public servants and rules governing the acceptance of gifts.

Other measures to address corruption include the publication of a Public Service Anti-Corruption Strategy (DPSA 2002). This document refers to 'dimensions of corruption' described as the 'various forms in which corruption manifests itself in the Public Service and elsewhere ...' This includes 'embezzlement' (theft of resources by persons entrusted with authority and control of resources); 'fraud', which relates to deceitful or dishonest actions by public officials which derives a personal and therefore undue benefit; and 'conflict of interest', which essentially relates to a public servant's public duties being employed to benefit him/her privately (DPSA 2002:7-8). These acts have legal roots in public finance legislation (e.g. Public Finance Management Act, Number 1 of 1999) and its accompanying Regulations, which specifically contain provisions concerning the misuse of public funds through unauthorised, irregular-including tendering procedures, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, and the prevention of fraud (*Government Gazette* 2001a).

The existence of a law enforcement/organisational control framework have not prevented weaknesses from appearing in the public sector's internal capacity to combat corruption. In its government-wide appraisal of the strategic policy priorities for South Africa, the National Development Plan (NPC 2011:401) acknowledged that 'high levels of corruption' are undermining governance in a context in which the state's response has been 'uneven'. In a 2003 corruption country assessment report, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2003:7, 67) also observed that the 'public sector has uneven capacity to enforce and comply with the [anti-corruption] legislation', especially in the areas of risk management and fraud prevention.

In a subsequent critique of the public sector's anti-corruption capacity, the DPSA (2008:25) observed that although departmental capacity had generally increased through an expansion of measures to prevent and combat corruption, internal capacity also varied across departments. Weaknesses existed in investigative capacity and detection through weak compliance with whistle-blowing measures. In response, the DPSA (2006) published criteria requiring public sector departments to meet a minimum set of anti-corruption standards. The 'minimum anti-corruption capacity requirements', or MACC, covers a spectrum of corruption responses, including prevention, detection, investigation and resolution measures. The MACC criteria can be traced to the 2002 PSACS, which called for increased institutional capacity to fight corruption. An audit of departmental anti-corruption capacity quoted in a report by an inter-departmental anti-corruption co-ordinating committee (DPSA not dated), revealed the extent of the public sector's failure to put in place requisite standards, and highlighted the varying capacity that existed across departments. In a sample of eighty-five national and provincial departments, 57% had a dedicated anti-corruption unit; 30% had



a whistle-blowing policy and mechanism in place; and only a minority of departments in a smaller sub-sample had what was described as advanced investigative capacity.

A more recent PSC (2011b) report sought to profile and analyse the nature and scale of corruption by identifying the most common manifestation of corruption experienced by national and provincial departments. The Commission sampled nine national departments and departments from three provinces in the period 2004 – 2010, and found similar unevenness in anti-corruption response. This included only half of respondents indicating that their departments had ‘clearly written objectives’ for fighting corruption; the same proportion indicating that their department’s anti-corruption units were under-capacitated; and as much as 80% of respondents stating that their department’s anti-corruption units had ‘unclear responsibilities and powers to investigate cases of alleged corruption (PSC 2011b:8-10).

Despite formal statutory and regulatory efforts introduced to combat corruption, along with a recognition that uneven capacity exists to enforce these measures, there is lack of research on the consequences of uneven capacity for mitigating corruption risk. As a result, there is a gap in understanding the institutional risks to sustaining corruption in the public service.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research examined institutional risk to corruption in the public service, by investigating the relationship between the level and type of corruption recorded in government departments, and their core functional characteristics. It was specifically interested in learning if and how significant these features are in explaining levels and types of corruption. The primary source material consisted of quantitative data comprising the number of cases of ‘financial misconduct’ recorded per department. This information has been regularly collected and published by the Public Service Commission (PSC). A variety of other quantitative data on the functional characteristics of government departments was also sourced and collated, such as staff size, staff composition, budget size and budget composition. By statistically relating these two sets of data, it was possible to draw impressions about the association between the amount and type of corruption sustained by a department, and key elements of its institutional makeup. This relationship provided impressions about institutional risk.

Departments functioning at the national level of government comprised the population for this study. Whilst the initial population numbered 33 departments, due to zero financial misconduct cases being recorded for some departments, including zero or limited cases recorded for new departments created after a 2009 cabinet restructuring, the population was finally reduced to 27 departments. Data was collected on departments over a five-year time-span, from 2006/7 – 2010/11. It was not possible to expand the timeframe beyond 2010/2011. The PSC (2013) published a financial misconduct report for the period 2011-2012, however, it noted that up to nineteen national departments reported a ‘nil’ report for that period, meaning that no financial misconduct cases were finalised. This would have made year-on-year comparison difficult with previous years. Furthermore, the PSC has not published financial misconduct reports beyond the 2011/2012 period.

The dependent variable in this study represented cases of financial misconduct documented by national departments. Financial misconduct is a generic term which covers ethical, criminal and financial management offences as prescribed by public finance legislation. As

such, it comprises several sub-categories including 'corruption', as defined in the Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act (2004); 'fraud'; 'financial mismanagement'; 'gross negligence'; 'theft'; 'fraud'; and 'misappropriation and abuse'. Corruption is therefore just one of several ethical and administrative transgressions which make up financial misconduct, although the term is often employed generically to describe any and all misconduct.

The independent variables comprised a mixture of core departmental functional characteristics. These included:

- Total staff, which served as an indicator of a department's human resource management burden to police unethical conduct by its members;
- Staff composition: supervisory versus non-supervisory personnel, measured by the number of individuals employed in the 'senior management service' as compared to all other staffing categories. This was calculated as a 'staffing ratio', which measures the number of senior managers per 100 other employees. This served as an indicator of a department's management oversight burden in policing corruption, which speaks to principal-agent arguments in the corruption literature (e.g. Klitgaard 1988).
- Budget size, which served as an indicator of a department's financial management burden, given that financial misconduct is often measured in monetary costs/losses. In this regard, internal financial management systems to control resource use has been counted amongst improved administrative practices to combat corruption (Langseth, Stapenhurst, Pope 1999:133)
- Budget composition: departmental budgets were also broken down into the proportion of funds appropriated for 'goods and services' spending, in order to test the susceptibility to tender/contract/procurement corruption. Procurement has been described as being 'particular[ly] ... notorious for the levels of corruption attained by dishonest politicians and officials' (Pope 1999:114).

Data on the dependent and independent variables was captured and analysed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Quantitative data on the independent variables was mainly sourced from departmental annual reports which, by-in-large, publishes this information in a standard format. Data on the dependent variable (financial misconduct) was obtained directly from the PSC through a written request, and supplemented by the Commission's published financial misconduct reports.

The limited number of recorded corruption cases for most departments coupled with a limited population made anything more than a descriptive statistical enquiry unviable. As such, statistical analysis was limited to frequency distributions for individual variables which in some instances allowed for ratios between certain variables. As a result, the ability to attribute institutional risk factors to the frequency of corruption in either a correlative or causal sense was not possible. Having said this, no previous research has attempted to statistically relate cases of corruption to the functional characteristics of public service departments in South Africa. Therefore, the value of this research is that it can at least confirm or discount, through a systematic comparison between the amount of corruption in a department and its functional makeup, the risk profile that departments exhibit in comparison to their counterparts. A further limitation is that it was not possible to obtain a departmental breakdown of financial misconduct cases by type for the reporting year



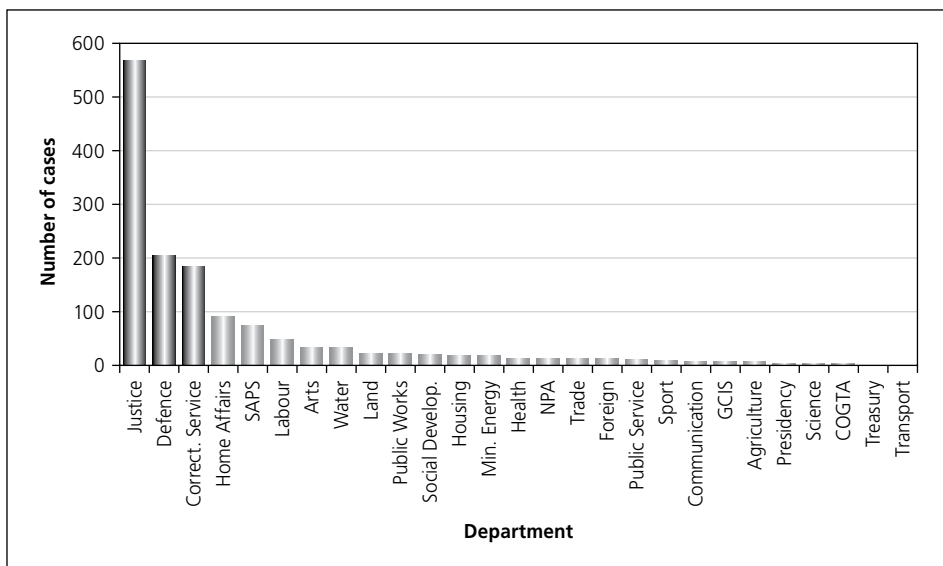
2006/7. This level of disaggregation is not available in the published PSC report, nor was it possible to obtain it directly from the Commission.

The following caveats should also be noted. This study deliberately excluded provincial government departments, for which financial misconduct data is available and is typically published by the PSC alongside national departments. This exclusion was intentional in order to maintain parsimony in the dataset and minimise the scope of statistical analysis to test the significance of the relationship. Depending on initial results obtained at a national level, the author intends to expand the dataset to provincial departments. Finally, as the dependent variable for this study is defined by finalised cases of financial misconduct, or in other words, represents cases of misconduct that have been formally investigated by departments, this study cannot claim to represent all potential or unreported misconduct occurring in departments. There is a wide quantitative variance between allegations of financial misconduct, such as those reported through anonymous hotlines, and cases formally investigated by departments. In the former case, a PSC (2011a) report documenting cases of ‘alleged’ corruption reported to the National Anti-Corruption Hotline between 2004 and 2010, recorded 3 545 reports of corruption referred to national departments.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first query shows the results of the total cumulative cases of financial misconduct over the five year period (2006/7 – 2010/11), by department. As shown in figure 1.1, the great majority of departments recorded less than one hundred cases with little deviation between them. The exception was the Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development (DJCD), Defence (DoD), and Correctional Services (CS), which together accounted for 66% of the total. The bars representing these departments are shaded in black.

**Figure 1.1: Cumulative financial misconduct cases by department, 2006/7 – 2010/11**



**Figure 1.2: Cumulative financial misconduct cases by department, 2006/7 – 2010/11**

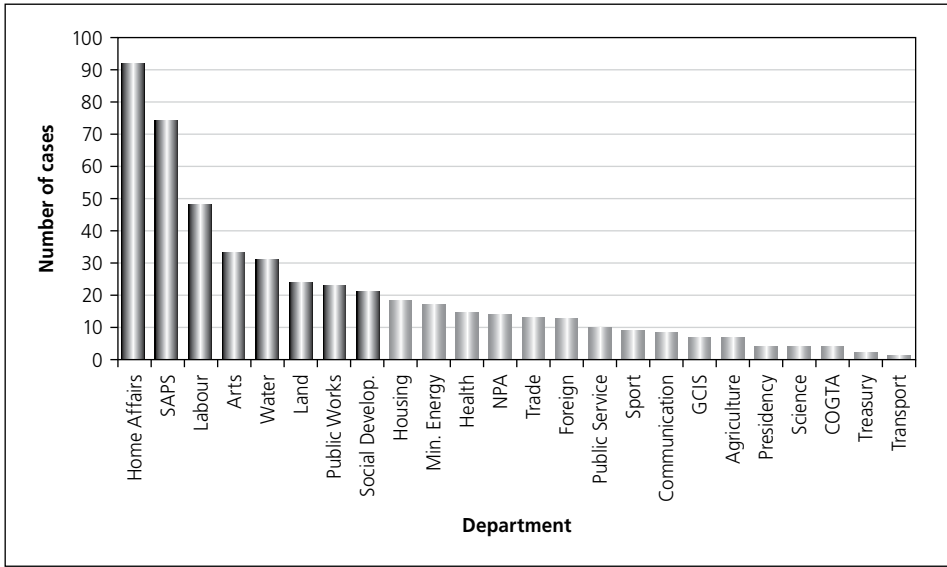
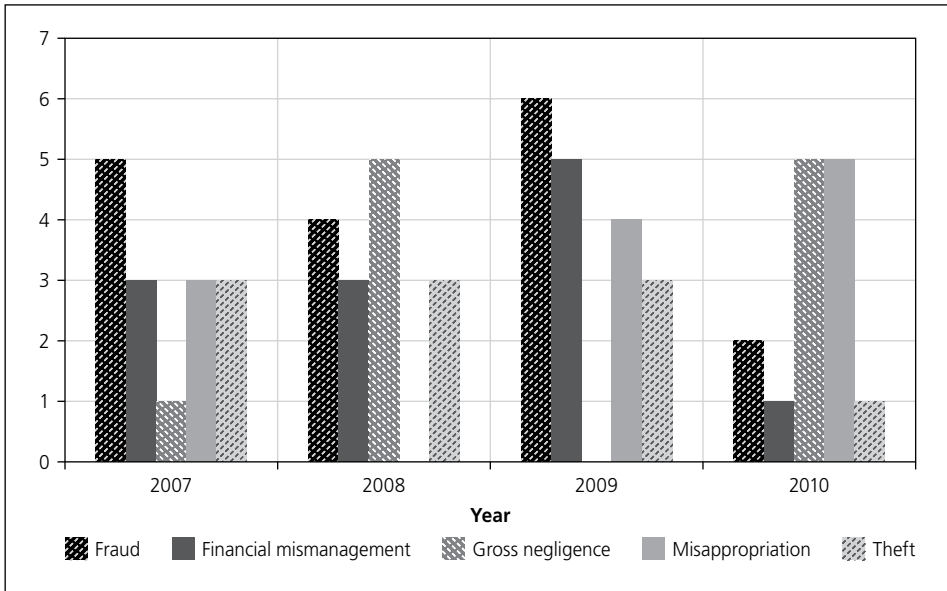


Figure 1.2 excludes these three departments and shows the distribution of cases for departments with less than one hundred cases. There are at least three discernible clusters of departments: Home Affairs (HA), the South African Police Service (SAPS) and Department of Labour (DL); the departments of Arts, Water, Land, Public Works, Social Development; and the remainder.

**Figure 2: Most prevalent type of financial misconduct by department**



Source: Public Service Commission, in response to an information request by the author on types of financial misconduct reported by national departments, 2012.

The subsequent analysis concentrated on the first two clusters together with the DJCD, the DoD and CS, totalling eleven departments. The bar graph results for this sub-set of departments are shaded in black in the following figures to separate them from the remainder of the population. The intention was to subject this sample of the total population with relatively higher number of cases to more detailed analysis. Although the cut off mark of less than twenty cases was arbitrary, it did enable a more focused look at a salient segment of the population. An initial impression that can be drawn from these eleven departments is that institutions responsible for law enforcement, including safety, security and criminal justice (e.g. SAPS, Defence, Justice, Correctional Services, Home Affairs) appeared more susceptible to corruption, followed by institutions responsible for economic development (e.g. Labour, Land Affairs, Public Works) and social protection (Arts, Social Development, Water). Pope's (1999:114) listing of government activities most commonly associated with corruption also included areas such as policing and immigration.

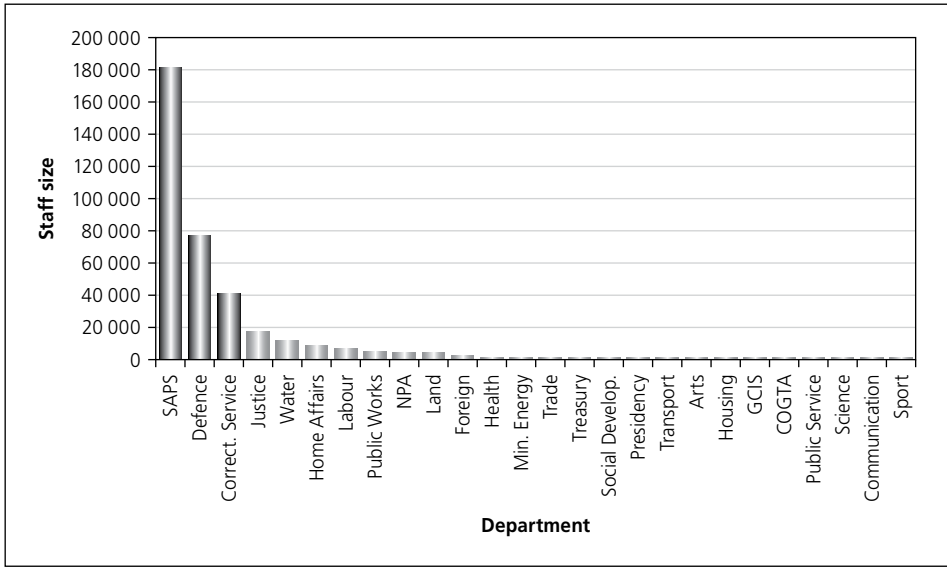
The next query sought to observe the most prevalent type of financial misconduct. For this question, data on the type of misconduct cases recorded for national departments was analysed for specific years, as supplied to the author by the PSC. The 'most prevalent type' of misconduct for each national department in specific years was defined as that category which constituted the largest single group in a given year.

Although the department numbers are limited on this measure, the data indicates that more departments cited fraud as the most prevalent type of misconduct in all years except for 2010. In its report on the most common manifestation of corruption, the PSC (2011b: 31-32) also cited fraud, together with bribery, as the most prevalent types of corruption, but distinguished amongst types of fraud relating to services such as identity document applications, social grants, and RDP housing. Of the three departments overseeing these services: Home Affairs, Social Development, and Human Settlements, two were in the sub-sample of departments with the highest number of cases, with the other—Human Settlements—just outside this group.

In comparison to fraud, other categories of financial misconduct held steady or showed some upward movement, including financial mismanagement—with the exception of 2010, misappropriation and gross negligence. Theft also remained generally constant, although at a relatively lower level. The shape of this graph suggests that departments remain susceptible to various forms of more sophisticated types of misconduct (i.e. if we exclude theft) that pertain to unlawful as well as irresponsible and excessive use of public assets, and might be worryingly indicative of shortcomings in mitigation efforts.

The most recently available secondary source to have evaluated national department anti-corruption mitigation efforts is a study conducted for the DPSA (2010) on compliance with the MACC framework. The author obtained a copy of the study although it has never been publicly released by the DPSA. As such, it is not possible to cite data from the report. Having said this, and based on a more general impression of the overall compliance ranking that national departments obtained, it was evident that anti-corruption efforts vary widely across departments, averaging out at what the authors classified as a 'reasonable' level. It was however pointed out that most individual departments had scores which were only 'moderately' compliant, or below the reasonable level. Rankings for our sub-set of eleven departments which recorded the highest number of misconduct cases were not, as might be assumed, clustered at the bottom of the scale, but were counted amongst the

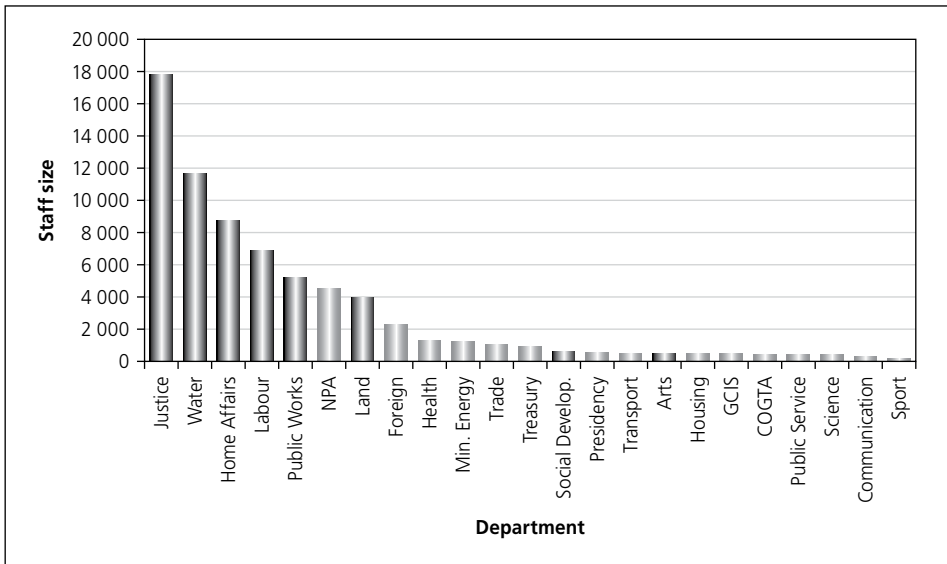
**Figure 3.1: Average staff size of departments, 2006/7 – 2010/11**



majority of moderately compliant departments. Only eight of the eleven departments in the sub-set had a ranking in the MACC audit, and three were judged to have reasonable to strong compliance.

While it is evident that most national departments were muddling through in response to anti-corruption enforcement, which is consistent with weaknesses in mitigation efforts, it is also apparent—when isolating our sub-set of eleven departments—that there is no clear pattern that matches the weakest compliance with the highest misconduct. This invites

**Figure 3.2: Average staff size of departments (cont.), 2006/7 – 2010/11**





further questions about how the efficacy of departmental enforcement measures is tested by their operational conditions.

The next set of queries attempted to relate the number of misconduct cases by department to core functional characteristics including staffing profile, budget size and composition. These features are the mainstay of any public administration system and operate at the frontline of both corruption risk and mitigation.

The first query looked at overall staff size. Departments were positioned in order of staff size, where particular attention was paid to the sub-set of departments with the largest number of misconduct cases. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 shows the average staff size of departments, encompassing the five-year study period. The Department of Agriculture was excluded as the size of its staff increase in 2010/11 would have skewed the result.

The figures show that departments with the highest number of recorded misconduct cases tend to also be the departments with the largest staff contingents. This was evident in eight of the eleven departments in the sub-set. The departments of Social Development and Arts and Culture were notable exceptions, falling in the lower half of the staff size distribution. One way of interpreting this finding is that departments carrying large staff complements are geared towards more labour-intensive direct goods and services provision, rather than focused on policy formulation, oversight, support and regulation. For instance, the PSC (2011b:25) has argued that '... a department whose core business represents services/items that are of great value, or touches upon deeply vested human interests may be more susceptible to acts of corruption'. It cited examples of how departments transacted with the public, e.g. inmates bribing officials of Correctional Services to improve their conditions, clients bribing officials of the DHA for identity documents, and clients bribing officials of Social Development for social grants.

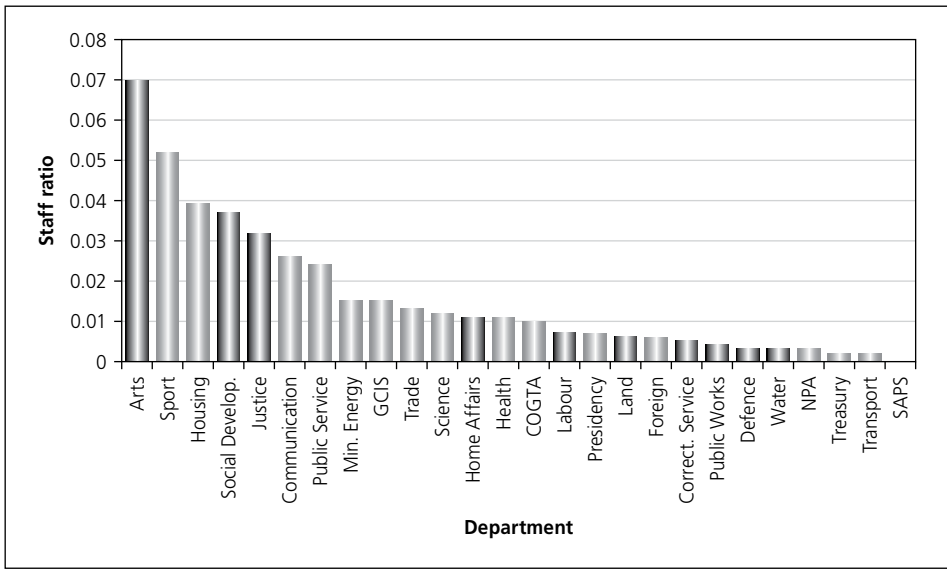
One means of testing this interpretation is to categorise national departments according to their core business, as having a predominately policy focus or an implementation focus. Although this might be a crude distinction to make, and risks playing into the disputed policy/implementation dichotomy, it could reinforce the significance of staff size on corruption risk by classifying departments by their primary functional orientation. Features or indicators which distinguish policy-focused from implementation-focused departments might include the proportion and makeup of staff rendering services directly to the public, a breakdown and description of a department's programming areas, and the extent of a department's institutional decentralisation, i.e. network of geographically-dispersed satellite offices. Departmental annual reports were again analysed for the median year in this study (2008/9) to inform these indicators. The findings showed that ten of the eleven departments in the sub-set, with the exception of Social Development, can be classified as having an implementation focus, thereby confirming a strong link between staff size and functional orientation.

One shortcoming of the staff size-misconduct relationship is the obvious and perhaps intuitive belief that departments sustaining higher cases of financial misconduct will necessarily employ more people, as corruption is perpetrated by human resources. In an effort to control for this, an additional query sought to measure a department's misconduct cases as a direct proportion of its staff size.

It would also test the importance of core business or functional orientation. The results are shown in figure 4 and again exclude the Department of Agriculture.

The results show a dramatic contrast with figures 3.1 and 3.2, where the sub-set of eleven departments are no longer clustered at the top end of the size scale, but when

**Figure 4: Ratio of misconduct cases to average staff size of departments**

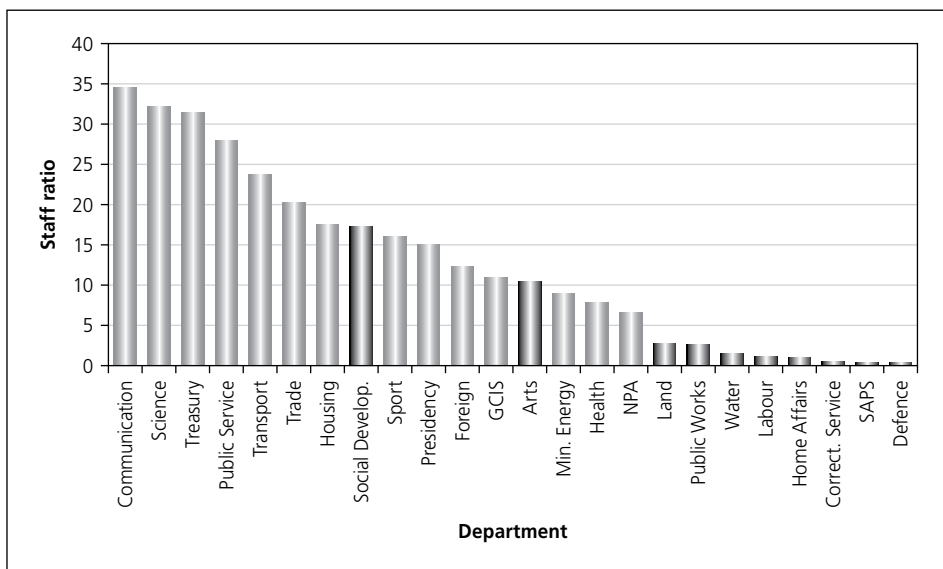


misconduct is measured as a proportion of each department’s size, are dispersed throughout the population. Moreover, it is also evident that within the sub-set, departments that did not have the highest staff size experienced proportionally more misconduct, notably the departments of Arts and Culture and Social Development. This, when coupled with the fact that several departments which were not in the sub-set also sustained proportionally more misconduct, indicates that absolute size and functional orientation are insufficient indicators of misconduct risk. In other words, risk is not one dimensional, but should also incorporate proportional effect. It also reinforces the importance of understanding how the prevailing operational conditions in individual departments affect their mitigation efforts. Moreover, when financial misconduct is measured as a direct proportion of an individual department’s staff size, policy oriented departments are more heavily represented.

Another perspective on the staff size – misconduct relationship is based on the staffing ratio in departments, which looks at the breakdown of supervisory and non-supervisory staff. The theoretical significance of this measure stems from assumptions in principle-agent approaches to anti-corruption enforcement, emphasising the importance of oversight and enforcement capacity represented by senior or supervisory officials (i.e. principals) policing misconduct amongst their subordinates (agents). The staffing ratio of each department was obtained by calculating the number of senior managers per 100 other employees. This was then averaged out for the five year period.

Figure 5 averages the staff ratio in departments over the five year study period. The departments of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and Justice, were excluded as they each experienced a significant rise in the number of senior managers in specific reporting years, which would have skewed the result. The Department of Agriculture was also excluded for the reason mentioned earlier, where staff ratio is a function of overall staff number. The higher the average staff ratio figure, the higher the number of senior managers per other staff.

**Figure 5: Average staff ratio in departments, 2006/7 – 2010/11**

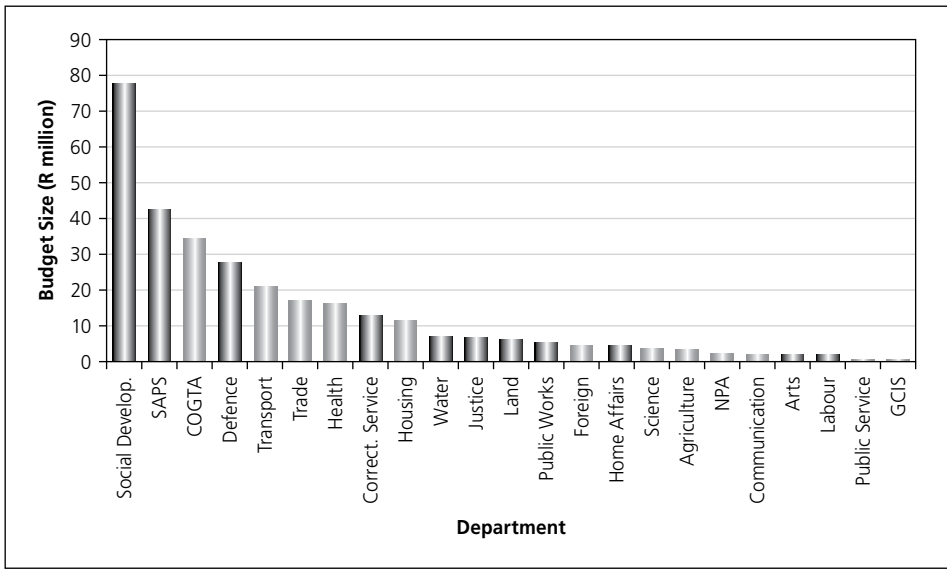


The results show that departments with relatively fewer numbers of senior managers are also those departments with the highest number of misconduct cases, thereby affirming the principal-agent argument. As many as eight of the eleven departments in our sub-set were at the bottom-end of the average staff ratio scale. The departments of Social Development and Arts and Culture again stood out from the rest of the subset. One conclusion that can be drawn is that departments with fewer numbers of principals relative to the size of their agent corps risk higher levels of misconduct, leading to the proposition that increasing the staff ratio will reduce misconduct risk. This assumes however that senior managers will always play the role of good principals, or anti-corruption enforcers, and aren't themselves implicated in financial misconduct. This has in reality been challenged both in the literature (see Persson, Rothstein 2013; Langseth, Stapenhurst, Pope 1999) and empirically in the PSC's financial misconduct reports. Between the period 2006/7 and 2009/10 these reports showed that the number of misconduct cases involving senior managers was greater than their proportional share of total public service employment, despite the largest number of cases being committed by non-supervisory staff. In this regard, increasing the staff ratio seems a necessary but insufficient response to reducing misconduct risk.

A further set of results looked at the relationship between financial misconduct and departmental budgets. Financial misconduct is committed by human resources; hence the importance of staff size and composition, but it primarily results in financial gain for those individuals involved. Therefore, does the size and composition of a department's budget tell us anything about its susceptibility to misconduct? In figure 6, departments were compared against the size of their budgets, based on the final appropriation of funds averaged across the five reporting years. The departments of Minerals and Energy, Sport, Treasury and the Presidency were excluded from the results because large year-to-year swings in their budgets would have skewed the result.

The result indicates that budget size does not increase the risk of experiencing more financial misconduct, or, there is no consistency between departments with the highest

**Figure 6: Average budget size of departments (Rand, billions), 2006/7 – 2010/11**

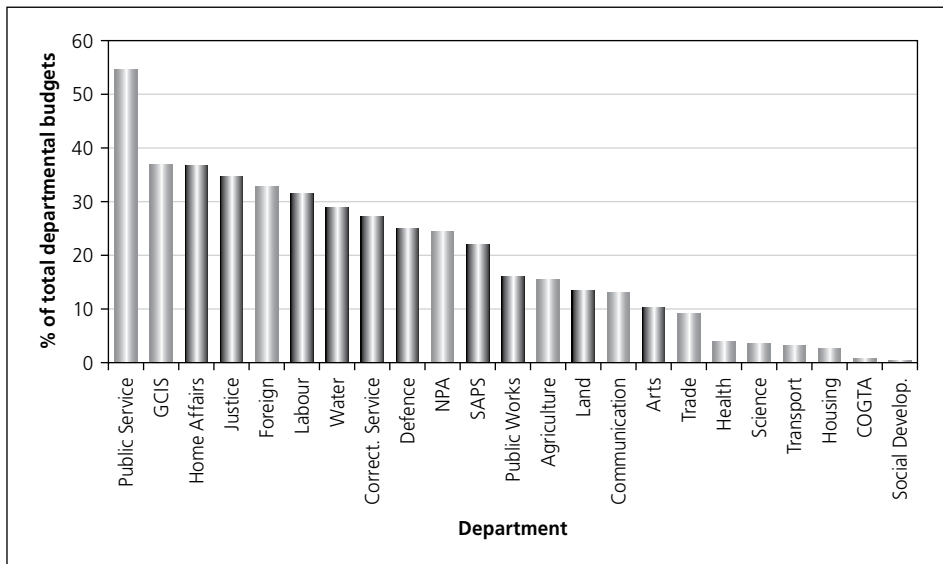


number of recorded misconduct cases and departments with the largest budgets. This is in clear contrast to average staff size. The sub-set of eleven departments with the highest cumulative cases was spread throughout the budget spectrum. This might, in one sense, be explained and even expected, where the number of financial misconduct cases may be more sensitive to the risk of misconduct being committed as the number of potential offenders’ increases, as opposed to the pool of resources available.

In another sense however, it could be postulated that budget size may be a potentially significant risk factor to misconduct if the focus is not on the number of cases sustained but on the value of the losses incurred. In this regard, departments with larger budgets may be more susceptible to higher value misconduct offences where budget size may act to mask the scale of offences. This study attempted to quantify the financial cost (in Rand value losses) of financial misconduct, as this data is available in the PSC’s published reports. Unfortunately, it was not possible to compile full five-year data for the total population, owing in part to gaps in yearly figures. In addition, a scan of the available figures also showed that for most departments the cost of financial misconduct could swing widely from year to year, making it an unstable variable to measure misconduct risk across the population.

A final effort to drill down into the relationship between financial misconduct and departmental budgets looked at the composition of budgets. There is a strong public perception in South Africa that a considerable amount of corruption occurs in departmental tendering, contracting or supply chain management, which typically involves the expenditure of funds to procure or produce goods and services. This has resulted in terms such as ‘tenderpreneur’ becoming commonplace in public discourse around corruption. The PSC (2011b:25; 31-32) acknowledged this by citing amongst the types of corruption recorded in the public sector, bribery linked to individuals seeking departmental tenders, and procurement irregularities. According to guidelines published by the National Treasury (2004:11), supply chain management/tendering refer to the ‘acquisition and disposal of all

**Figure 7: 'Goods and Services' as a percentage of total departmental budgets (average between 2006/7 – 2010/11)**



goods, services, construction and road works and movable property'. In sum, that portion of a department's budget used for the acquisition and production of goods and services may be especially susceptible to corruption. It can therefore be assumed that departments with a relatively high proportion of their budgets made up of goods and services spending will also tend to have relatively high financial misconduct cases. This assumption was tested by recording the amount of a department's 'goods and services' spending, which is listed as a separate line item under the appropriation statement in departmental annual reports. This amount, which was first averaged across the five-year reporting period, was then calculated as a percentage of the average total departmental budget. The results are given in figure 7.

The results appear inconclusive, but also evocative. On the one hand, the sub-set of eleven departments is again spread across the population, rather than being clustered at the high percentage end. On the other hand, the majority of these departments are more narrowly dispersed and concentrated in the upper half of the scale, in comparison to figure 7, lending some, although not significant, impetus to believe that the acquisition or disposal of goods and services by government departments increases the risk of misconduct.

## CONCLUSION

Measuring corruption risk in South Africa's public service has revealed a mixed set of findings, highlighting the multi-dimensional appearance of corruption from an institutional perspective. One overarching impression made visible in this analysis was the importance of distinguishing between the cumulative or aggregate effect of corruption, which can be likened to the question: how much, and the proportional effect of corruption, which perhaps prompts us to ask: how much does it matter? Recognising this distinction should

not undercut the importance of anti-corruption enforcement and mitigation efforts to reduce the cumulative effect of corruption, but suggests that this should not be advocated in an unqualified and undifferentiated manner. Indeed, when compared against available data on anti-corruption enforcement capacity, it was clear that the level of misconduct experienced did not match the strength of enforcement regimes, where most departments displayed neither weak or strong enforcement but were middling their way through.

From an aggregate view of corruption, as measured by the cumulative number of financial misconduct cases, the findings showed that those departments in the law enforcement/criminal justice sector; those departments with the largest staff contingents and those which are more implementation-oriented were more susceptible to corruption. When cumulative misconduct cases was measured as a proportion of the size of individual departments however, there was a dramatic difference in the results, indicating that when controlling for difference in staff size, a higher number of misconduct cases does not necessarily translate into either the greatest effect or confirm a higher risk for implementation-oriented departments.

A similar finding, although not as explicit, was evident when measuring departmental staffing ratios, which looked at the breakdown of supervisory and non-supervisory staff. On the one hand, those departments which recorded the highest financial misconduct cases also had the lowest staffing ratio, or fewest supervisory to non-supervisory staff, affirming the importance of oversight capacity to combat corruption. On the other hand, data collected by the PSC on financial misconduct cases by salary levels has consistently shown that senior managers have been charged with misconduct at levels above their proportional makeup of public service employment.

There was no consistent relationship between the amount of corruption sustained by departments and the size of their budgets, signalling that at an aggregate level, how much (in budget size) doesn't appear to matter. When misconduct was compared to the portion of departmental budgets allocated to goods and services spending, the results showed that there was more, although not unequivocal, reason to believe that departments with a higher proportion of their budgets allocated to goods and services are at greater risk of misconduct.

Finally, there is considerable scope for expanding this analysis in future research by including provincial-level data on misconduct, which has also been collected by the PSC; and by expanding the number of independent variables to include more process-oriented indicators, such as departmental performance management and audit outcomes.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Ms Paula Jackson and Ms Jamy Felton for their assistance in compiling the dataset and running statistical queries.

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