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Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence: An Antidote for Procurement Professionals' Trust Gain, Corruption Reduction, and Organizational Reputation in Ghana Public Institutions: The Issue of Ignominious Theory

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The absence of a value-driven procurement culture has enabled the continued operation of what Ignominious Theory describes as a cycle of dishonor, where corruption begets more corruption, and reputation damage becomes normalized. This problematic reality raises critical questions: To what extent can procurement ethics and integrity adherence serve as antidotes to the erosion of public trust, the deep-seated corruption in procurement systems, and the tarnished image of procurement professionals?

Methodology: An explanatory research design is adopted to identify and clarify cause-and-effect relationships among the variables under investigation. Quota sampling was employed to select 400 procurement managers from public institutions in Ghana. Common method bias was controlled by temporally separating the measurement of variables. Specifically, respondents first completed the questionnaire related to the independent variables, and after a six-month interval, the same respondents were asked to respond to the dependent variable items.

Findings: The result indicates a positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics and integrity on organizational reputation. The study further indicates a positive statistically significant effect of Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence on Corruption Reduction. Finally, the study establishes a positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics and Integrity Adherence on Procurement Professionals' Trust Gain.

Unique Contribution to theory, policy and practice: This study contributes to the advancement and contextualization of ignominious theory by providing empirical evidence that ethical procurement practices serve as critical mechanisms for avoiding organizational disgrace, reducing corruption risk, and enhancing both internal and external trust. Procurement roles should require certification in ethics and compliance as a minimum standard, and ethics violations should be formally recorded and acted upon. Leaders should integrate ethical standards into procurement manuals, supplier selection protocols, and contract management processes.

Keywords: *Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence, Procurement Professionals Trust Gain, Corruption Reduction, Organizational Reputation*

1.1 Background of the Study

Public procurement remains a vital mechanism through which governments deliver goods, services, and infrastructure to citizens. However, it is increasingly marred by ethical challenges, corruption, and a general decline in public trust. The procurement profession, which should ideally uphold integrity and transparency, is frequently besieged by unethical practices such as bribery, favoritism, kickbacks, and fraudulent collusion (OECD, 2019). These unethical behaviors not only inflate project costs and delay service delivery but also significantly erode the reputation of procurement professionals and public institutions alike (Ameyaw, Mensah & Osei-Tutu, 2017). The concept of procurement ethics and integrity adherence has emerged as a pivotal framework for promoting accountability, transparency, and efficiency in procurement processes. Ethics in procurement refers to a system of moral principles that guide decision-making, particularly in relation to fairness, honesty, and professionalism (Basheka, 2018). Integrity, on the other hand, encompasses the consistent demonstration of ethical standards even in the face of pressures or temptations (World Bank, 2020). When procurement professionals commit to these principles, it becomes a strategic antidote for restoring trust, reducing corruption, and enhancing reputational capital. The issue is further compounded by what may be termed the Ignominious Theory—a theoretical lens suggesting that the procurement function is systematically subjected to reputational disgrace due to the persistent association with corrupt practices, regardless of the actions of a few ethical professionals. This theory underscores how systemic corruption and lack of integrity adherence can lead to a collective loss of dignity and societal respect for the procurement profession. Thus, even well-meaning practitioners often suffer from the negative perceptions shaped by the actions of a corrupt minority (Agyepong & Nhamo, 2020).

Corruption in procurement systems is not merely a local challenge but a global governance issue. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020) estimates that corruption increases the cost of public procurement projects by up to 20%, with developing countries being the most affected. In Ghana, for example, the Auditor-General's reports consistently highlight procurement irregularities as a major source of financial mismanagement in public institutions (Ghana Audit Service, 2021). These ethical lapses not only compromise service delivery but also severely damage public trust in institutions. Against this backdrop, promoting ethics and integrity adherence among procurement professionals is more than a regulatory imperative—it is a moral and strategic necessity. When procurement officers uphold ethical standards, they help to build trust among stakeholders, including suppliers, the general public, and oversight bodies. Trust is an intangible asset that enhances collaboration, reduces the transaction cost of oversight, and improves procurement outcomes (Karim, 2019).

Moreover, adherence to ethical standards enhances the professional image of procurement practitioners, enabling them to be seen as facilitators of national development rather than as conduits for misappropriation. Furthermore, global initiatives such as the World Bank's Procurement Framework (2020) and the OECD's Guidelines on Integrity in Public Procurement (2016) emphasize the need for ethical conduct, professionalization, and integrity systems as central pillars of

an effective procurement regime. The Ghana Public Procurement Authority (PPA), for instance, has introduced Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and capacity-building programs to foster ethical conduct, but implementation gaps and enforcement weaknesses still exist (Asare & Prempeh, 2022).

In light of the Ignominious Theory, failure to reinforce ethical standards and integrity adherence can perpetuate a vicious cycle where procurement systems become havens for unethical conduct. This not only damages professional reputations but also undermines developmental objectives and economic efficiency. Thus, understanding how procurement ethics and integrity can serve as strategic tools for trust restoration, corruption reduction, and professional reputation building is of critical relevance. This study seeks to explore the role of procurement ethics and integrity adherence as an antidote to the deteriorating trust, pervasive corruption, and declining reputation associated with the procurement profession, especially within the context of developing economies like Ghana. It will investigate the extent to which ethical adherence can counteract the implications of the Ignominious Theory and restore honor and effectiveness to procurement practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence

Procurement ethics refer to the moral principles and standards that govern the behavior of individuals involved in the acquisition of goods and services, while integrity adherence denotes a steadfast commitment to fairness, transparency, and accountability throughout the procurement process (Ameyaw et al., 2012). These principles are essential in preventing corruption, promoting value for money, and ensuring public trust in procurement activities. The significance of ethical procurement practices has increasingly gained attention, particularly in environments where procurement accounts for a significant portion of public expenditure. According to Gelderman et al. (2006), unethical practices such as favoritism, bribery, and collusion compromise competitive bidding and lead to inflated costs and substandard outcomes. Therefore, procurement professionals are expected to act with honesty, impartiality, and due diligence to safeguard public and organizational interests (OECD, 2016).

Integrity in procurement is not only about compliance with rules but also about fostering a culture of accountability. The institutionalization of ethical codes of conduct, supplier charters, and whistleblowing mechanisms plays a critical role in promoting adherence to integrity (Thai, 2001). Furthermore, ethical training and leadership commitment are pivotal in reinforcing ethical behavior among procurement staff. Transparency International (2021) emphasizes that robust procurement integrity systems reduce opportunities for fraud and enhance the credibility of procurement outcomes.

2.1.1 Procurement Professionals Trust Gain

Trust is an essential intangible asset in the procurement profession, shaping stakeholder relationships, governance quality, and procurement outcomes. The

concept of Procurement Professionals' Trust Gain refers to the extent to which procurement practitioners can earn and maintain the confidence of stakeholders—suppliers, regulatory bodies, the public, and organizational leadership—through ethical behavior, transparency, and consistent professional conduct (Karim, 2019). Trust gain is not automatic; rather, it is a cumulative process influenced by adherence to integrity, fairness in decision-making, accountability, and resistance to undue influence. In contexts where public procurement systems are marred by scandals and unethical behavior, procurement professionals are often viewed with suspicion regardless of their individual integrity (Agyepong & Nhamo, 2020).

2.1.2 Corruption Reduction

Corruption reduction refers to the deliberate implementation of legal, institutional, and ethical measures to limit the misuse of public power for private gain. It is a multidimensional process aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and integrity in public and private sector governance (Transparency International, 2020). At its core, corruption reduction involves eliminating opportunities for bribery, embezzlement, favoritism, and other unethical practices that distort resource allocation and undermine development outcomes. Institutional theory posits that weak regulatory frameworks and poor enforcement mechanisms provide fertile ground for corrupt behavior, particularly in developing countries (North, 1990). Therefore, robust anti-corruption laws, independent oversight institutions, and judicial autonomy are foundational to effective corruption control. For instance, the establishment of anti-corruption commissions with prosecutorial powers has proven vital in countries like Rwanda and Botswana (Johnston, 2018).

2.1.3 Organizational Reputation

Organizational reputation refers to the collective assessment of an organization's past actions and the expectations of its future behavior, which influence stakeholder perceptions and decisions (Fombrun, 1996). It encompasses a multidimensional construct shaped by performance, ethical conduct, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. A strong reputation is considered an intangible strategic asset that enhances competitive advantage, customer loyalty, investor confidence, and employee commitment (Walker, 2010). Reputation is often distinguished from corporate image, which is more transient and perception-based, while reputation evolves over time based on consistent organizational behavior (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006). In this regard, signaling theory suggests that organizations communicate their values and credibility through observable actions such as corporate social responsibility, quality certifications, or ethical business practices (Connelly et al., 2011). These signals shape stakeholder interpretations and trust, particularly in high-uncertainty environments.

2.2 Ignominious Theory

The Ignominious Theory, developed by (Ofori, 2025), provides a framework for understanding human actions based on three tenets: Repercussion, Posterity, and Realization. The theory posits that individuals make decisions based on their awareness of consequences, their perception of future impacts, and their ability to

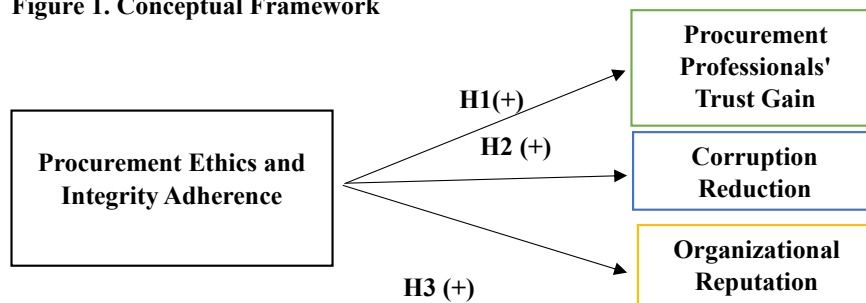
change behavior upon enlightenment. By dissecting these components, the theory aims to explain patterns of decision-making in various social, economic, and political contexts.

Repercussion refers to situations where individuals act with the full knowledge of the consequences of their actions. This principle suggests that people may proceed with certain behaviors despite knowing the potential negative outcomes. Examples include unethical business practices where companies deliberately exploit resources despite knowing the long-term harm to the environment. In governance, leaders may make self-serving decisions, fully aware of the detriment to public welfare, yet proceed due to personal or political interests. The underlying factor in this tenet is that awareness of consequences does not always deter action.

The principle of Posterity addresses instances where individuals act without recognizing or predicting the long-term negative implications of their choices. This is common in decision-making influenced by short-term gains, ignorance, or limited foresight. For instance, historical industrialization efforts led to immense economic growth but also contributed to climate change, a consequence that was not fully understood at the time. Similarly, individuals may engage in lifestyle choices such as excessive debt accumulation without considering its impact on future financial stability. This tenet highlights the gap between present actions and future consequences.

Realization represents the point at which individuals, upon being sensitized, acknowledge the adverse impact of their actions and take corrective measures. This tenet emphasizes the transformative power of education, awareness campaigns, and societal evolution. For example, movements advocating for sustainability and corporate social responsibility have led many organizations to adopt eco-friendly practices after realizing their previous missteps. In personal behavior, individuals may modify unhealthy habits upon gaining knowledge about their long-term repercussions. Realization serves as the catalyst for meaningful change, bridging the gap between ignorance and informed decision-making. The Ignominious Theory by (Ofori, 2025) presents a compelling perspective on human behavior, explaining how actions are driven by knowledge of consequences, ignorance of future impacts, and the potential for change upon realization. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers, businesses, and individuals can better navigate decision-making processes to mitigate harm and promote responsible actions. This theory offers a foundation for critical discussions on ethics, responsibility, and the need for continuous awareness in shaping a better future.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



2.3 Relationship between Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence and Procurement Professionals Trust Gain

Procurement ethics and integrity adherence are foundational to building trust among procurement professionals. Procurement ethics refers to the application of moral principles such as fairness, accountability, and transparency in procurement decisions, while integrity adherence reflects a consistent commitment to ethical standards and resistance to corrupt practices (Basheka, 2018). When procurement professionals exhibit ethical conduct and integrity, they signal reliability and credibility to stakeholders—including suppliers, regulatory bodies, and the public—thereby enhancing trust gain (Karim, 2019). Trust is not automatically conferred; it is earned through consistent ethical behavior and institutional reinforcement. Ignominious Theory by (Ofori, 2025) offers an insightful framework to understand decision-making within the procurement sector, particularly how ethics and integrity adherence influence procurement professionals' trust gain. The theory's three key tenets—Repercussion, Posterity, and Realization—help explain the dynamics of trust-building in environments where procurement is often seen as a high-risk area for corruption and unethical practices.

Repercussion refers to the awareness individuals have about the consequences of their actions, which, in the context of procurement, suggests that professionals often understand the potential harm caused by unethical behavior. Despite this, some may still engage in corrupt practices for short-term benefits, such as kickbacks or favoritism, because they believe the immediate rewards outweigh the risks. This aligns with the observation that many procurement professionals, particularly in corrupt systems, might continue unethical practices even though they know the long-term damage it can do to their personal reputation and the trust of their stakeholders (Ofori, 2025).

The tenet of Posterity reflects how procurement professionals, like others in society, may often make decisions that prioritize short-term gains without considering the long-term consequences, such as the erosion of trust, public scandal, or loss of stakeholder confidence. The theory suggests that this mindset can lead to systemic

inefficiencies and a decline in organizational reputation. For example, procurement officers who overlook the ethical aspects of their decisions in favor of quick results fail to realize that their actions will ultimately harm their credibility and the public's trust in the procurement process. This gap between short-term behavior and long-term effects highlights the importance of fostering an ethical culture within procurement systems to ensure that professionals prioritize long-term gains such as trust, fairness, and transparency (Ofori, 2025).

Realization, the third principle of the theory, plays a critical role in transforming procurement professionals' behavior. When procurement officers become aware of the long-term detrimental impacts of their unethical decisions—such as loss of credibility, diminished stakeholder trust, and institutional collapse—they may take corrective actions. For example, ethical training programs, compliance systems, and transparency initiatives can help procurement professionals realize the importance of integrity in decision-making, thereby guiding them towards ethical adherence. This realization, in turn, enhances their ability to regain and sustain trust with stakeholders, as it signals a commitment to responsibility and ethical behavior (Karim, 2019). By applying the Ignominious Theory, it becomes evident that procurement ethics and integrity adherence are central to building and maintaining trust.

H1: Procurement ethics and integrity adherence have a positive and significant influence on procurement professionals' trust gain.

2.3.1 Relationship between Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence and Corruption Reduction

Procurement ethics and integrity adherence are critical mechanisms for reducing corruption in public procurement systems. Ethical procurement practices—centered on transparency, fairness, and accountability—minimize opportunities for favoritism, bribery, and misappropriation of public funds (Basheka, 2018). Integrity adherence further reinforces this ethical posture by ensuring that procurement officers remain committed to moral and legal standards, even under pressure or in high-risk environments (Karim, 2019). When professionals consistently act with integrity, it deters corrupt practices and fosters a culture of accountability. Corruption thrives where ethical lapses are tolerated and systems lack proper enforcement mechanisms. The OECD (2016) emphasizes that strong procurement ethics and institutional integrity frameworks are essential in limiting discretionary power and strengthening oversight.

Moreover, Agyepong and Nhamo (2020) highlight that adherence to ethical codes significantly curtails procurement fraud, especially when combined with training and whistleblower protections. Thus, procurement ethics and integrity adherence not only foster trust but serve as proactive tools for corruption reduction by enhancing transparency and moral accountability. The tenet of Repercussion emphasizes that individuals, despite knowing the consequences of their actions, may still proceed with unethical behavior, such as corruption in procurement. In the context of procurement, this suggests that professionals may engage in corrupt practices, like accepting bribes or manipulating bidding processes, fully aware of the damage it may cause to both their personal integrity and the reputation of the

organization. However, short-term personal gains—such as financial benefits or career advancement—may overshadow the long-term repercussions, indicating that awareness of consequences alone does not deter unethical behavior. This principle underscores the necessity of reinforcing ethical standards and accountability in procurement to mitigate such behaviors, highlighting the importance of aligning individual actions with organizational and societal expectations (Ofori, 2025).

The second tenet, Posterity, reflects situations where individuals fail to recognize the long-term consequences of their actions, particularly in relation to corruption. Procurement professionals may act in ways that benefit them in the present, such as accepting unethical incentives, without considering the enduring harm their actions will cause to the organizational culture, public trust, or long-term sustainability. The Ignominious Theory suggests that this lack of foresight is a key factor that perpetuates corruption. By fostering an awareness of the long-term impact of unethical decisions—such as the erosion of trust, legal consequences, and damage to the organization's reputation—procurement systems can reduce instances of corruption. Engaging procurement professionals in discussions about the consequences of their actions in the future could lead to more ethical decision-making and long-term organizational success (Ofori, 2025).

Finally, the Realization component of the theory emphasizes the transformative power of education, awareness campaigns, and enlightenment. In the context of procurement, realization occurs when professionals, after being sensitized, acknowledge the detrimental effects of unethical practices like corruption. For example, procurement officers may change their behavior after understanding the harmful impact of corruption on the organization's sustainability, governance, and public image. Realization, as proposed by the Ignominious Theory, serves as the key driver for the reduction of corruption. By empowering procurement professionals with knowledge about the importance of ethics and integrity, and providing them with the tools to make informed, ethical decisions, organizations can foster a culture of accountability and transparency, ultimately reducing corruption (Ofori, 2025). The Ignominious Theory provides a valuable lens through which the relationship between procurement ethics, integrity adherence, and corruption reduction can be understood. By addressing the three tenets—Repercussion, Posterity, and Realization—this theory helps explain how procurement professionals' awareness of the consequences, foresight of future impacts, and realization of the need for corrective action can collectively reduce corruption in procurement practices. Promoting awareness, education, and ethical adherence in procurement processes will not only foster trust but also play a critical role in curbing corruption.

H2: Procurement ethics and integrity adherence have a negative and significant relationship with corruption in public procurement.

2.3.2 Relationship between Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence and Organizational Reputation

Procurement ethics and integrity adherence play a vital role in shaping an organization's reputation, particularly within the public sector. When procurement

professionals act in alignment with ethical standards—such as fairness, transparency, and impartiality—they contribute to a perception of trustworthiness and professionalism, which enhances organizational reputation (Basheka, 2018). Integrity adherence, defined as the consistent application of moral and regulatory standards even under pressure, reinforces this perception by demonstrating a strong ethical culture (Karim, 2019). Organizations with a reputation for ethical procurement are more likely to attract credible suppliers, retain public trust, and secure stakeholder support. According to OECD (2019), a transparent and integrity-driven procurement system signals accountability and deters corruption, both of which are critical to maintaining a positive public image. Moreover, Agyepong and Nhamo (2020) argue that ethical lapses in procurement, even if isolated, can severely damage an organization's credibility and legitimacy. Thus, procurement ethics and integrity adherence are not just internal values but strategic imperatives for organizational reputation management.

The theory's three core principles—Repercussion, Posterity, and Realization—offer valuable insights into how decisions made in procurement can directly impact an organization's reputation. The Repercussion tenet highlights that individuals may engage in unethical procurement practices despite being fully aware of the negative consequences. In the procurement field, this could manifest in corrupt practices such as awarding contracts based on favoritism or bribery, even when the detrimental impacts—like legal repercussions, loss of trust, or damage to the public good—are clear. However, procurement officers or leaders may still choose to prioritize personal or organizational short-term gains, undermining ethical standards. This awareness of consequences without the subsequent corrective behavior can severely damage an organization's reputation, highlighting the need for a strong ethical framework to prevent such actions (Ofori, 2025).

The Posterity principle addresses situations where individuals fail to recognize the long-term consequences of their actions. In procurement, this manifest when decisions are made without considering the future implications, such as the erosion of public trust or long-term legal liabilities. For example, awarding a contract to a vendor with subpar products or services for the sake of immediate cost savings may lead to long-term damage to the organization's reputation. This gap between present actions and future outcomes can be mitigated by fostering a culture of foresight and accountability in procurement practices, where ethical decision-making is not just based on short-term results but on long-term organizational well-being (Ofori, 2025).

The Realization tenet of the Ignominious Theory offers hope for organizational change. It asserts that when individuals are made aware of the consequences of their actions, they can modify their behavior. In the procurement context, this principle suggests that awareness campaigns, ethics training, and transparency initiatives can encourage professionals to adopt higher standards of integrity. As organizations become more sensitized to the importance of ethical procurement, they can take corrective actions to restore or enhance their reputation. For instance, embracing corporate social responsibility and ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines can improve public trust and reinforce the organization's long-term success (Ofori, 2025). The Ignominious Theory provides a critical framework for understanding

how procurement ethics and integrity adherence affect organizational reputation. By addressing the roles of awareness, foresight, and education, this theory highlights the importance of cultivating ethical decision-making in procurement to safeguard an organization's reputation and promote responsible practices in the long term.

H3: Procurement ethics and integrity adherence have a positive and significant influence on organizational reputation.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted the positivism research philosophy, which is grounded in the belief that reality is objective, observable, and measurable through empirical evidence (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The positivist stance supports the use of structured instruments such as questionnaires to collect quantifiable data, allowing for statistical analysis and generalizable conclusions. Given the aim of this study—to investigate the relationships among procurement ethics, integrity adherence, trust gain, corruption reduction, and organizational reputation—positivism is appropriate as it facilitates hypothesis testing and the derivation of objective insights.

3.1 Research Approach

The quantitative research approach was employed to collect and analyze numerical data using structured tools. This approach allows for measuring the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative design aligns with the objective of this study, which seeks to explain causal relationships and test hypotheses regarding procurement ethics and outcomes such as trust and organizational reputation.

3.2 Research Design

An explanatory research design is adopted to identify and clarify cause-and-effect relationships among the variables under investigation. Specifically, this study seeks to explain how procurement ethics and integrity adherence influence professionals' trust gain, reduce corruption, and enhance organizational reputation. This study also employed a longitudinal data approach, which involves collecting data from the same subjects at multiple points over time. This approach is appropriate for assessing changes, trends, and causal relationships among procurement ethics, integrity adherence, trust, corruption, and organizational reputation within procurement institutions.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Quota sampling was employed to select 400 procurement managers from public institutions in Ghana. The sample was stratified based on institution type ministries, departments, and agencies reflecting their estimated proportions in the overall procurement management structure. Within each stratum, participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate, ensuring that the sample

adequately represented the diversity within the public sector procurement landscape.

3.4 Common Method Bias

Common method bias was controlled by temporally separating the measurement of variables. Specifically, respondents first completed the questionnaire related to the independent variables, and after a six-month interval, the same respondents were asked to respond to the dependent variable items. This approach reduces the likelihood that participants' responses to the dependent variables are influenced by their earlier responses to the independent variables, thereby minimizing consistency motifs and recall bias. Temporal separation is a widely recommended procedural remedy for reducing common method variance in survey research (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.899
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6439.409
	df	561
	Sig.	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy for the dataset is 0.899, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.80, indicating marvelous sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974). This suggests that the partial correlations among variables are small and that factor analysis is likely to yield reliable factors. These results justify proceeding with further analyses, including reliability and validity testing.

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items	Composite Reliability	Convergent Validity	Discriminant Validity
Procurement Ethics and Integrity	.927	8	.948	.696	.835
Procurement Professionals Adherence	.923	10	.959	.702	.838
Gain	.929	8	.969	.798	.893
Corruption Reduction	.925	8	.932	.632	.795
Organizational Reputation					

All constructs exhibit high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.923 to 0.929, which exceed the conventional threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This indicates that the items within each construct reliably measure the same underlying concept. Each construct's Composite Reliability value is well above the 0.70 benchmark, ranging from 0.932 to 0.969, further affirming the internal consistency and measurement precision (Hair et al., 2019). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs is above the threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), with values ranging from 0.632 to 0.798. This confirms that the items explain a substantial portion of the variance in their respective latent variables. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of AVE for each construct (e.g., 0.8345 for PEI, 0.838 for PPT, 0.893 for CR, and 0.795 for OR) is greater than the correlations with other constructs. This suggests that each construct is empirically distinct from the others.

Table 3 Items Factor Loadings

Items	Loadings	Items	Loadings	Items	Loadings	Items	Loadings
PEI1	.829	PPT1	.813	CR1	.936	OR1	.853
PEI2	.859	PPT2	.864	CR2	.861	OR2	.771
PEI3	.741	PPT3	.870	CR3	.900	OR3	.794
PEI4	.802	PPT4	.797	CR4	.888	OR4	.756
PEI5	.733	PPT5	.763	CR5	.903	OR5	.818
PEI6	.923	PPT6	.804	CR6	.889	OR6	.810
PEI7	.845	PPT7	.834	CR7	.888	OR7	.820
PEI8	.920	PPT8	.787	CR8	.879	OR8	.729
		PPT9	.915				
		PPT10	.916				

All items demonstrate strong standardized factor loadings, ranging from 0.729 to 0.936, which exceed the recommended 0.70 threshold for confirming individual item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). This indicates that all items are valid indicators of their respective constructs. Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence (PEI): All 8 items show excellent loadings, with the highest being .923 (PEI6). Procurement Professionals Trust Gain (PPT): All 10 items are well-loaded, with PPT10 showing the strongest loading at .916. Corruption Reduction (CR): Factor loadings are exceptionally high across all 8 items, notably CR1 (.936) and CR5 (.903). Organizational Reputation (OR): Loadings are strong, with all items exceeding the 0.70 threshold, validating the structure.

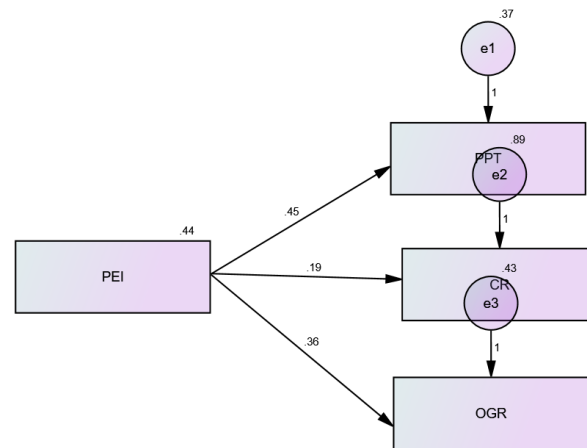


Figure 2 Direct Path

Table 4 Regression Weights Results

Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence - - > Organizational Reputation	.355	.066	5.420	.000	Supported
Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence - - > Corruption Reduction	.185	.094	1.972	.049	Supported
Procurement Ethics and Integrity Adherence - - > Procurement Professionals Trust Gain	.446	.060	7.400	.000	Supported

The result indicates a positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics on organizational reputation. The estimate of 0.355 implies that a one-unit increase in PEI leads to a 35.5% increase in OGR. This reinforces the notion that ethical adherence in procurement enhances stakeholders' trust and confidence, which is pivotal in shaping a favorable organizational image. Although the effect is relatively modest, the relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level. A positive estimate of 0.185 suggests that ethical procurement practices contribute to minimizing corrupt behaviors within procurement processes. The near-threshold p-value (.049) and lower critical ratio (C.R. < 2.0) indicate a weaker but meaningful

impact. The standardized estimate of 0.446 demonstrates a robust positive effect, indicating that enhanced ethical standards substantially build trust among procurement professionals. A high C.R. of 7.400 reinforces the reliability of this relationship. Trust among professionals is essential for teamwork, compliance, and effective implementation of procurement strategies.

4. Discussion of Results

A positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics and integrity on organizational reputation highlights the crucial role that ethical conduct plays in shaping how public institutions and firms are perceived. Procurement ethics and integrity encompass transparency, accountability, fairness, and adherence to due process in acquiring goods and services. When organizations prioritize these values, they build trust among stakeholders, including suppliers, employees, the general public, and oversight bodies. According to Boateng et al. (2021), adherence to procurement ethics leads to improved institutional image and stakeholder confidence, which directly enhances organizational reputation. Moreover, ethical procurement practices reduce the likelihood of fraud, favoritism, and corruption, thereby projecting the organization as reliable and principled (Agyekum-Mensah & Knight, 2020). Public trust, once eroded by unethical behavior, is difficult to rebuild; therefore, consistent ethical conduct in procurement sends a strong signal of integrity, reinforcing public confidence and long-term legitimacy. Additionally, Ameyaw et al. (2019) found that in Ghana's public sector, institutions that upheld procurement ethics were more likely to enjoy a favorable reputation and higher stakeholder satisfaction. Thus, the significant effect of procurement ethics and integrity on reputation is both practical and strategic, especially for public institutions aiming to gain public trust and international credibility. Organizations that prioritize procurement integrity are more likely to gain public trust and enjoy a favorable image, which enhances legitimacy and stakeholder support (Brammer et al., 2007; Transparency International, 2020). A robust ethical framework not only mitigates reputational risks but also acts as a cornerstone for long-term organizational credibility.

A positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics and integrity adherence on corruption reduction underscores the transformative power of ethical conduct in public procurement systems. Procurement processes are particularly vulnerable to corrupt practices such as favoritism, bribery, and bid-rigging due to the significant financial outlays involved. However, when organizations strictly adhere to procurement ethics emphasizing transparency, accountability, fairness, and compliance with regulatory frameworks the opportunities for corruption are significantly curtailed. According to Ameyaw et al. (2019), institutions that embed integrity in procurement processes often experience lower incidences of malpractice and greater procedural compliance. Similarly, Agyekum-Mensah and Knight (2020) observed that ethical enforcement mechanisms, such as independent oversight and ethical training, minimize discretionary abuse and deter corrupt behavior. In Ghana, for example, adherence to procurement ethics has been linked to increased detection and prevention of fraud in public sector contracts (Boateng et al., 2021). By ensuring that procurement decisions are based on merit and open competition, ethical adherence disrupts the informal networks that sustain

corruption. Therefore, strengthening procurement ethics and institutionalizing integrity measures are not only morally imperative but also strategic actions toward sustainable corruption reduction in public institutions. Even though the effect size is relatively small, it indicates that ethical procedures, such as open tendering, clear accountability, and compliance monitoring, can reduce unethical behaviors over time (Ameyaw et al., 2017; OECD, 2016). However, the modest magnitude implies that PEI alone may not be sufficient without systemic enforcement mechanisms and external oversight.

A positive and statistically significant effect of procurement ethics and integrity adherence on procurement professionals' trust gain highlights the centrality of ethical behavior in fostering confidence within and outside procurement functions. Trust among procurement professionals is built when ethical standards such as transparency, impartiality, fairness, and accountability—are consistently upheld. When professionals operate in an environment where rules are followed, conflicts of interest are avoided, and procurement decisions are made based on merit, mutual trust is reinforced. According to Agyekum-Mensah and Knight (2020), ethical adherence reduces suspicion, internal tension, and unethical influence, thereby promoting a culture of reliability and professionalism among procurement staff. Furthermore, Boateng et al. (2021) argue that procurement professionals are more likely to trust their peers, superiors, and institutional processes when they perceive that ethical guidelines are rigorously enforced and that misconduct is sanctioned. This internal trust is critical, as it improves collaboration, decision-making quality, and morale within procurement units. In addition, external stakeholders such as suppliers and oversight agencies are more inclined to trust procurement professionals who consistently demonstrate integrity in their actions, thereby enhancing professional credibility. Thus, adherence to procurement ethics not only curbs malpractice but also strengthens professional trust and cohesion within procurement systems. Professionals are more likely to demonstrate commitment, collaboration, and ethical behavior themselves when they perceive fairness and integrity in procurement processes (Kaptein, 2011; Maulidi & Kihara, 2023). Trust acts as both an outcome and a driver of ethical organizational culture, improving both employee morale and procurement efficiency. Collectively, these findings emphasize the strategic importance of ethics in strengthening the internal and external dimensions of organizational performance.

5. Managerial Implications

The strong positive relationship between procurement ethics and organizational reputation underscores the need for management to institutionalize ethical procurement policies. Leaders should integrate ethical standards into procurement manuals, supplier selection protocols, and contract management processes. This will signal transparency, fairness, and accountability core elements that strengthen stakeholder confidence and bolster public image. Although the impact on corruption reduction is modest, it is statistically significant implying that adherence to procurement ethics can meaningfully curtail unethical practices such as bribery, bid rigging, and favoritism. Managers should, therefore, reinforce internal controls such as segregation of duties, third-party audits, and whistleblowing mechanisms.

Mandatory ethics training and consequence management should be prioritized to build a corruption-averse procurement culture. The significant influence of ethics on trust gain among procurement professionals indicates that ethical environments foster mutual respect, morale, and loyalty. Management should encourage open dialogue, protect ethical employees from retaliation, and recognize ethical behavior in performance evaluations. When procurement staff perceive the system as just and value-driven, their trust in the organization increases, leading to greater engagement and reduced turnover. For sustained ethical procurement behavior, top management must lead by example. Ethical leadership sets the tone at the top, fostering an integrity-based organizational culture. Executive-level advocacy for ethical compliance supported by consistent communication and behavior ensures that ethics are embedded in both formal policy and daily decision-making. As procurement ethics improve organizational reputation, it indirectly enhances relationships with external stakeholders including suppliers, regulators, and civil society. Ethical procurement practices reduce conflicts, build supplier loyalty, and attract socially responsible investors. Managers should thus embed ethical compliance clauses in contracts and evaluate supplier performance not just on cost and quality but also on ethical alignment. Adhering to ethical procurement standards minimizes legal and reputational risks. Managers must align procurement practices with national procurement laws and international standards such as those from the World Bank, OECD, or ISO 20400. Establishing a compliance monitoring unit within procurement departments will help detect and address ethical breaches proactively.

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the advancement and contextualization of ignominious theory by providing empirical evidence that ethical procurement practices serve as critical mechanisms for avoiding organizational disgrace, reducing corruption risk, and enhancing both internal and external trust. It demonstrates that reputational capital, integrity systems, and professional dignity are interlinked, and that ethical adherence serves as both a proactive and protective organizational strategy especially in public procurement settings where the potential for ignominy is high. The study further adds to the theoretical understanding of procurement ethics in developing country contexts, where institutional voids, corruption risks, and reputational vulnerabilities are more pronounced. It shows that ethical behavior has tangible organizational and systemic benefits even in environments where enforcement and accountability may be weak offering a context-sensitive contribution to global procurement and governance theories. The positive and statistically significant relationship between procurement ethics and organizational reputation validates and extends ethical theory particularly deontological ethics and virtue ethics within the context of procurement. This finding reinforces the argument that ethical adherence is not just a moral imperative but also a reputational asset for organizations. By empirically linking ethical procurement conduct to enhanced organizational reputation, this study advances theory by providing evidence that organizational reputation is shaped not only by output quality or efficiency but also by the integrity of internal processes.

5.2 Policy Implication

Policymakers should prioritize the formal integration of procurement ethics and integrity standards into national procurement laws, regulations, and codes of conduct. These standards must be clear, enforceable, and embedded within every stage of the procurement cycle—from tender design to contract closeout. Such institutionalization enhances transparency, minimizes ethical ambiguity, and positions integrity as a non-negotiable benchmark, thereby strengthening organizational reputation across public entities. Ethical adherence must be reflected in recruitment, induction, promotion, and retention policies. Procurement roles should require certification in ethics and compliance as a minimum standard, and ethics violations should be formally recorded and acted upon. This elevates ethics from a voluntary value to a policy-mandated professional requirement. Finally, policies should support multi-stakeholder engagement, including civil society, private sector actors, and media, to co-develop, monitor, and enforce procurement ethics frameworks. This collective oversight boosts legitimacy and public trust while reinforcing the reputational benefits of ethical procurement behavior.

5.3 Recommendations

Organizations should formulate and implement clearly defined procurement ethics policies that outline adequate conduct, conflict-of-interest management, and integrity protocols. These policies must be enforced consistently to enhance public confidence and strengthen the organization's reputation. Thus, organizations must include ethics checklists and approval workflows for procurement processes and also require written declarations of impartiality and integrity before contract awards. Procurement officers, suppliers, and contract managers should undergo regular, mandatory ethics and integrity training programs. These programs should cover principles of ethical decision-making, anti-corruption practices, conflict of interest mitigation, and ethical leadership. Organizations should create independent internal or external procurement ethics oversight bodies or ethics committees to monitor compliance with integrity standards, conduct random and targeted procurement audits, and investigate ethical breaches with full transparency. Organizations should adopt ethics and compliance history as part of their supplier selection and evaluation process. Suppliers with proven integrity track records should be prioritized. Ethics clauses should be included in all contracts with provisions for termination if breached.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future studies

This study was conducted within the context of public institutions in Ghana, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries or sectors. Differences in procurement laws, cultural norms, governance structures, and enforcement mechanisms could affect the applicability of the results elsewhere. Future research should compare public and private institutions across different countries or regions to explore how cultural, legal, and institutional factors mediate the relationship between procurement ethics and organizational outcomes. This would provide a more global understanding of the theory's applicability.

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