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STRUCTURAL POLICY CORRUPTION IN ARCHITECTURAL PROCUREMENT: EVIDENCE OF TOR MANIPULATION IN THAILAND

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Abstract

This study investigates structural policy corruption within public architectural procurement in Thailand, focusing on the strategic manipulation of Terms of Reference (TOR). Moving beyond transactional bribery, it conceptualizes TOR formulation as an institutionalized mechanism that deliberately distorts transparency, professional accountability, and fair competition. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study collected data through fifteen interviews and extensive document analysis, guided by the Governance, Risk, and Compliance framework and the COSO Enterprise Risk Management model. The empirical findings reveal four pervasive mechanisms of TOR manipulation: restrictive eligibility criteria, opaque cost estimation practices, superficial public consultation, and the systematic exclusion of independent architectural professionals. These structural vulnerabilities severely compromise design quality and erode public trust, mirroring broader procurement governance challenges across Asian nations. To mitigate these systemic issues, the research strongly advocates for comprehensive governance reforms. Key recommendations include establishing independent TOR review mechanisms, deploying digital procurement platforms, and expanding the regulatory mandate of professional architectural councils to enhance overall transparency and long-term public accountability in future national infrastructure development.

Keywords: Policy Corruption, Public Procurement, Terms of Reference, Architectural Design, Governance Reform

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Introduction

Public procurement is widely recognized as one of the government functions most vulnerable to corruption, particularly in construction and infrastructure sectors. Recent global assessments indicate that procurement-related corruption continues to generate substantial economic losses and undermine public trust in state institutions (Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023; Mergel et al., 2019). Beyond direct financial losses, contemporary scholarship emphasizes that corruption is increasingly embedded in procurement system design, shaping rules, procedures, and oversight mechanisms in ways that normalize exclusion and discretion (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Pinto, 2023). In Asia, construction and infrastructure projects are consistently identified as high-risk domains, reflecting structural weaknesses in procurement governance rather than isolated incidents of misconduct (Owusu et al., 2019; Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023).

Architectural procurement occupies a distinctive position within this landscape. Although architectural design contracts typically involve smaller budgets than large-scale infrastructure projects, their public impact is substantial, as architectural decisions directly influence the quality, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the built environment. Recent studies argue that corruption in design procurement should therefore be understood not merely as a financial irregularity but as a governance failure with long-term social and spatial consequences (Osborne, 2018; Houry, 2021). However, much of the existing literature on procurement corruption remains concentrated in public administration, economics, and political science, with limited attention paid to the professional role of architects as key actors within procurement systems.

In architectural procurement, structural corruption frequently manifests through the formulation of Terms of Reference (TORs). Rather than functioning as neutral instruments to ensure fair competition, TORs may be strategically designed to restrict eligibility, manipulate cost baselines, or marginalize independent professionals. Such practices exemplify what recent governance literature calls policy corruption: institutionalized misconduct embedded in formal rules and procedures rather than overt bribery or collusion (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Persson et al., 2013). Empirical evidence from Thailand suggests that TORs in public architectural projects are often drafted to favor specific firms, impose narrowly defined experience requirements, or rely on opaque cost estimation practices, undermining transparency and accountability in procurement governance (Owusu et al., 2019; Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023).

Comparable patterns have been documented across Asia. In China, procurement frameworks in state-led construction projects often include hidden criteria that privilege state-owned enterprises, reinforcing monopolistic structures in the design market (Gong & Zhou, 2015). In India, urban redevelopment programs have been criticized for TORs that systematically exclude small and medium-sized architectural firms through restrictive experience requirements (Datta, 2015). Indonesia's decentralization reforms, while expanding local autonomy, have fragmented procurement oversight and increased opportunities to tailor project-level specifications (Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023). In the Philippines, weak TOR transparency and superficial consultation processes have been linked to recurring procurement scandals in public infrastructure design (Suardi et al., 2024). Together, these studies show that TOR manipulation is a regional governance challenge with systemic implications, not an anomaly confined to a single national context.

Despite these insights, the architectural profession itself remains underexplored in corruption and governance research. Architects occupy a dual role as technical experts and ethical professionals entrusted with safeguarding public interest through design quality, sustainability, and social responsibility (Houry, 2021). In several international contexts, professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the

American Institute of Architects (AIA) have historically contributed to procurement integrity by setting ethical standards and monitoring design competitions (Osborne, 2018). In Thailand, however, the Council of Architects remains primarily oriented toward licensing and disciplinary regulation, with limited involvement in procurement oversight. This institutional gap has reduced the profession's capacity to act as a countervailing force against structurally embedded corruption in architectural procurement.

Accordingly, this research is guided by an integrated set of objectives that meticulously bridge governance theory with architectural professional practice. The study comprehensively analyzes how policy corruption becomes structurally embedded within the formulation of terms of reference in Thailand's public architectural procurement. It also examines the professional and institutional consequences of this manipulation, focusing on how these practices erode professional integrity, stifle fair competition, and compromise the overall quality of public infrastructure. To counter these entrenched vulnerabilities, the research advocates decisive governance-oriented reforms, including establishing independent review mechanisms, deploying digitally enabled procurement platforms, and expanding regulatory mandates for professional architectural councils to enforce transparency and accountability. By situating the Thai experience within a broader Asian context, this study elucidates architectural governance as a vital intersection of professional ethics, institutional design, and sustainable public procurement.

Literature Review

The literature on corruption in public procurement has evolved from a narrow focus on transactional misconduct toward broader structural and institutional analyses. Early studies conceptualized corruption primarily as bribery, collusion, and embezzlement, emphasizing individual incentives and principal-agent problems (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993). More recent scholarship, however, argues that corruption is often embedded within formal rules, procedures, and oversight arrangements, producing systemic vulnerabilities that persist even in the absence of overt illegality (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Pinto, 2023). This shift toward institutional perspectives is particularly relevant in construction and infrastructure procurement, which consistently ranks among the sectors most exposed to corruption risks worldwide (Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023).

Within the built environment, architectural procurement represents a critical yet underexamined domain of structural corruption. Terms of Reference (TORs), which are formally intended to ensure fairness, transparency, and value for money, may be strategically designed to restrict eligibility, inflate cost baselines, or marginalize independent professionals. Comparative studies across Asia demonstrate that such practices are neither incidental nor country-specific but reflect broader governance pathologies. In China, procurement frameworks in public construction projects often include hidden criteria that privilege state-owned enterprises, reinforcing political patronage and monopolistic market structures (Gong & Zhou, 2015). In India, urban redevelopment initiatives have been criticized for TORs that impose narrowly defined experience requirements, systematically excluding small and medium-sized architectural firms and constraining design innovation (Datta, 2015). Indonesia's decentralization reforms, while enhancing local autonomy, have fragmented procurement oversight and increased opportunities for project-level specification tailoring (Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023). Similarly, in the Philippines, weak TOR transparency and symbolic consultation processes have been linked to recurrent procurement scandals and inflated public infrastructure costs (Chan & Owusu, 2017).

Thematic syntheses across these cases confirm that TOR manipulation constitutes a form of policy corruption, a structural mode of misconduct embedded in institutional design rather than isolated acts of wrongdoing. Such practices undermine professional integrity, distort

competition, and erode public trust in procurement systems. At the same time, international counterexamples demonstrate that these outcomes are not inevitable. Singapore's GeBIZ platform and South Korea's KONEPS e-procurement system are frequently cited as effective digital governance mechanisms that reduce administrative discretion, enhance real-time transparency, and lower opportunities for collusion (Khorana et al., 2024; Mergel et al., 2019). Empirical evaluations suggest that these platforms have contributed to cost savings, improved accountability, and increased public confidence in procurement processes. The contrast between jurisdictions affected by persistent TOR manipulation and those that have adopted digitally enabled oversight reinforces the argument that institutional design, rather than political culture alone, fundamentally shapes procurement integrity.

Beyond governance mechanisms, literature increasingly emphasizes the role of professional ethics and institutional responsibility in safeguarding procurement integrity. Professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Japan Federation of Architects & Building Engineers Associations have historically contributed to procurement oversight through ethical codes, design competition guidelines, and peer-review mechanisms (Osborne, 2018; Doloi, 2011). In contrast, Thailand's Council of Architects remains largely focused on licensing and disciplinary regulation, with limited engagement in procurement governance. This institutional absence has weakened the profession's capacity to act as a countervailing force against structurally embedded corruption. Recent studies argue that architects' ethical obligations extend beyond technical competence to include public value creation, sustainability, and intergenerational equity, particularly in publicly funded projects (Khoury, 2021). Neglecting these responsibilities in procurement oversight risks undermining the legitimacy of professional institutions themselves.

Emerging interdisciplinary research further highlights the growing role of digital technologies in addressing structural corruption. Theories in governance and infrastructure management demonstrate that artificial intelligence, blockchain, and BIM-based platforms can enhance transparency by reducing discretion, improving traceability of design and procurement decisions, and enabling ex post auditing of TOR modifications (Pinto, 2023). For countries such as Thailand, where BIM adoption and digital construction management are expanding, the integration of e-procurement systems with architectural practice presents an opportunity to mitigate corruption risks and enhance design quality simultaneously.

This study's theoretical foundation strategically integrates the Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) framework with the COSO Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) model to rigorously conceptualize TOR manipulation as a manifestation of structural corruption. The GRC framework provides a critical analytical lens to examine how overlapping deficiencies in governance arrangements, unmanaged risks, and weak compliance mechanisms intersect and amplify vulnerabilities within public procurement systems (Arena et al., 2010). Complementing this, the COSO ERM model broadens the perspective by explicitly emphasizing ethical culture, strategic alignment, and non-financial risks, showing how deeply ingrained organizational values and decision-making norms shape a system's susceptibility to corruption (Prewett & Terry, 2018; Too & Weaver, 2014). Rather than treating these theoretical frameworks as parallel constructs, this study conceptualizes GRC as the foundational structural architecture of procurement governance. At the same time, the COSO ERM operates as the underlying risk logic explaining how ethical, strategic, and cultural risks are either effectively internalized or systematically neglected within that architecture.

This seamlessly integrated framework aligns with broader accountability theory, which posits that the integrity of procurement processes depends not solely on formal institutional controls, but equally on robust professional and societal oversight mechanisms (Bovens,

2007). Applied to architectural procurement, the framework clarifies a causal pathway: governance failures enable restrictive TORs, the normalization of unmanaged risks legitimizes opaque cost estimates, and pervasive compliance gaps chronically weaken enforcement of professional ethics. Situating these insidious dynamics within Bovens' (2007) theory—which views corruption as the inevitable outcome of unchecked administrative discretion—further reinforces the interpretation of TOR manipulation as a systemic, institutionalized practice rather than an isolated irregularity. By bridging governance theory, risk management principles, professional ethics, and digital innovation, this comprehensive framework positions architectural procurement as a central arena for advancing transparent, sustainable, and equitable public infrastructure development across Asia, offering both profound theoretical insights and actionable practical contributions.

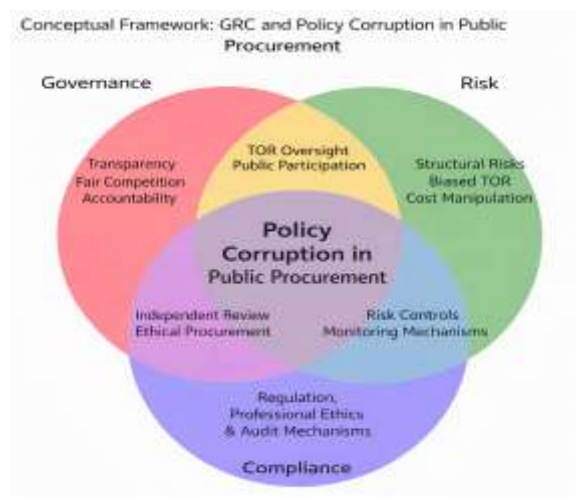


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Governance-Risk-Compliance (GRC) and Policy Corruption in Architectural Public Procurement

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the structural mechanisms of policy corruption embedded in architectural design procurement in Thailand. A qualitative approach was selected on the premise that corruption in public procurement is rarely reducible to isolated events and is better understood as an institutionalized practice shaped by rules, procedures, and professional norms (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Pinto, 2023). The case study strategy enabled in-depth exploration of governance dynamics within their real-world context and is widely recognized as appropriate for analyzing complex, multi-actor institutional phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Primary data came from fifteen semi-structured interviews with key informants, including procurement officials, practicing architects, professional council representatives, and policy experts actively involved in public architectural projects. To capture governmental and professional perspectives across institutional levels, participants were purposively selected based on direct engagement in architectural procurement processes, at least five years of professional experience, and intimate familiarity with formulating or evaluating terms of reference.

Subsequently, the data analysis used an iterative, layered approach that integrated deductive and inductive coding techniques. The analysis progressed from initial open coding to identify core concepts, through axial coding to determine interrelations among categories, and ultimately to selective coding, which synthesized the emerging themes into overarching analytical dimensions. These dimensions closely reflected the Governance, Risk, and

Compliance (GRC) framework and the COSO Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) model (Prewett & Terry, 2018; Avianti & Handoyo, 2025). This dynamic movement between theory-driven and data-driven analysis, supported by NVivo software to ensure coding consistency, culminated in a precise coding framework that effectively mapped empirical observations onto established theoretical constructs, thereby significantly enhancing the overall robustness and transparency of the analytical process.

To ensure the utmost trustworthiness of the findings, the study strictly applied Lincoln and Guba's evaluative criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility was substantially strengthened through extensive data triangulation—cross-referencing insights from interviews, official documents, and media reports—as well as member-checking, in which selected participants validated the interview summaries. Furthermore, prolonged engagement with the field, achieved through a sustained, in-depth review of audit reports and policy documents, deeply reinforced this credibility. Dependability was maintained by establishing a meticulous audit trail documenting methodological decisions, coding revisions, and analytical interpretations, complemented by rigorous peer debriefing sessions with fellow researchers to cross-examine coding logic. Transferability was facilitated by providing thick descriptions of Thailand's architectural procurement context, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of these findings to other Asian settings.

Crucially, the study addressed confirmability through a deliberate process of reflexivity. The researcher, operating as a practicing architect, explicitly acknowledged their dual positionality as both a professional insider and an objective academic analyst. To mitigate potential interpretive bias, the researcher maintained a comprehensive reflexive journal to document underlying assumptions, emotional responses, and analytical shifts throughout the research lifecycle. Peer debriefing further supported this reflective practice to sustain critical self-awareness (Berger, 2015). By combining transparent sampling, rigorous coding protocols, robust strategies to enhance trustworthiness, and an explicit reflexive stance, this methodology provides a strong foundation for analyzing policy corruption as a deeply embedded structural and professional phenomenon. Consequently, it contributes to contemporary methodological debates in qualitative governance research, showing how disciplined professional reflexivity can be productively harnessed in the study of corruption and complex institutional design.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Research, Kasem Bundit University, Thailand, approved the study (Certificate of Approval No. R004/67P, approved 11 April 2024), and all participants provided informed consent before data collection. Pseudonyms were used and sensitive data anonymized and securely stored in line with international research ethics standards, including the Declaration of Helsinki.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. Access to detailed government procurement data was occasionally restricted, particularly regarding internal budget justifications and deliberative processes, limiting full triangulation in some cases. Interviews with public officials may also reflect social desirability bias, despite assurances of confidentiality. While triangulation with audit reports and independent investigations helped mitigate these constraints, partial disclosure may still occur. Additionally, the study was bounded by a single procurement cycle, restricting longitudinal analysis. These limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings but highlight areas for future research, including longitudinal and comparative studies across multiple procurement cycles and national contexts.

By combining transparent sampling, rigorous coding procedures, systematic strategies to enhance trustworthiness, and an explicit reflexive stance, the methodology provides a robust foundation for analyzing policy corruption as a structural and professional phenomenon in

architectural procurement. In doing so, it contributes to methodological debates on qualitative governance research and demonstrates how professional reflexivity can be productively integrated into the study of corruption and institutional design.

Research Results

The empirical findings demonstrate that the manipulation of terms of reference within Thailand's public architectural procurement does not manifest as isolated irregularities, but rather operates as a recurrent, deeply entrenched mechanism within standard procurement practices. An analysis of the examined cases consistently reveals a convergence around four dominant dimensions of structural policy corruption. These interrelated practices include imposing restrictive eligibility criteria, relying on inherently opaque cost estimation, conducting superficial public consultations, and systematically excluding independent architectural professionals. These vulnerabilities align closely with contemporary scholarship on structural corruption, suggesting that the challenges observed in Thailand reflect a pervasive regional governance phenomenon marked by systemic institutional deficits rather than individual misconduct (Gong & Zhou, 2015; Prasad et al., 2024; Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023).

Restrictive eligibility criteria emerged as the most pervasive mechanism of TOR manipulation. Interview data revealed that TORs frequently required prior experience in identical project types or projects of comparable scale, effectively excluding many qualified architectural firms. As one architect observed, "It is as if the TOR is designed with a single company in mind; the conditions are impossible for outsiders to meet" (P8). Another respondent emphasized the cumulative effect of such criteria: "Young architects cannot break into the system because every TOR repeats the same requirement for past projects. It is a circle that protects incumbents" (P11). These findings indicate that eligibility requirements function not merely as technical safeguards but as structural barriers that reinforce inequality between established firms and emerging professionals. Comparable practices have been reported in India, where narrowly defined experience requirements in redevelopment projects systematically marginalize small and medium-sized architectural firms (Prasad et al., 2024).

Opaque cost estimation was another recurrent pattern. Procurement officials acknowledged that baseline cost figures were often derived from data submitted by potential contractors, with limited independent verification. One official stated, "We relied on cost sheets submitted by companies. They became official benchmarks even though no independent check was made" (P3). A practicing architect further noted, "We know the baselines are inflated, but unless you have political connections, you cannot question them" (P5). These accounts suggest that reliance on vendor-provided data normalizes cost manipulation and constrains professional scrutiny. Similar vulnerabilities have been identified in Indonesia, where fragmented oversight following decentralization reforms weakened cost verification mechanisms (Alsamarraie & Ghazali, 2023). The findings point to cost estimation as a critical site where governance deficits and risk normalization intersect.

Although procurement regulations formally mandate public consultation, the results suggest these processes are often symbolic rather than substantive. Participants described hearings as brief, poorly attended, and unlikely to influence final TORs. A council representative remarked, "The meetings look participatory, but in reality, the TOR is finalized before we even sit down" (P12). Another participant added, "Officials take notes, but those notes never appear in the final TOR. Participation is only symbolic" (P9). These observations echo findings from studies in the Philippines, where consultation procedures are often ritualized and disconnected from decision-making outcomes (Ferwerda et al., 2017). The data suggest that consultation functions primarily as a mechanism of procedural legitimacy rather than accountability.

The cumulative effect of restrictive eligibility, opaque costing, and superficial consultation is the systematic exclusion of independent architects from public procurement. Interviewees expressed frustration at being eliminated despite meeting formal professional qualifications. One participant noted, “Even with the license and years of experience, you can still be eliminated for arbitrary reasons” (P7). Younger architects often feel discouraged from entering public competitions; one noted, “Innovation is part of our training, yet survival requires adapting to corruption” (P10). These findings highlight the professional consequences of TOR manipulation, including disillusionment and reduced engagement with public-interest projects. Comparable exclusionary dynamics have been documented in China, where state-owned enterprises dominate procurement due to hidden TOR conditions (Gong & Zhou, 2015).

In comparative terms, the findings reveal notable parallels across Asian contexts. Restrictive eligibility criteria were observed in all countries reviewed, while opaque cost estimation practices were particularly prominent in Thailand, China, and Indonesia. Superficial consultation processes were common in Thailand, China, and the Philippines, whereas exclusion of independent professionals was evident across all cases. These similarities suggest that TOR manipulation constitutes a regional governance syndrome rather than a uniquely national pathology. Thailand stands out for the limited involvement of professional councils in procurement oversight. In contrast, countries such as Japan and South Korea retain at least partial consultative roles for professional bodies, indicating that alternative institutional arrangements are feasible.

Overall, the results demonstrate that TOR manipulation produces structural consequences for architectural procurement governance. By distorting competition and marginalizing professional expertise, these practices undermine public trust and weaken the architectural profession's social responsibility. The findings further suggest that procurement corruption should be understood not only as a governance failure but also as a professional crisis that constrains architects' capacity to contribute to public value, innovation, and sustainable development. These results provide an empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion of policy and institutional reforms.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings extend beyond diagnosing instances of corruption to illuminate the structural and professional implications of policy corruption in architectural procurement. By demonstrating how TOR manipulation is embedded within governance arrangements, risk practices, and compliance gaps, the study reinforces recent arguments that corruption should be understood as an institutional phenomenon rather than a series of isolated irregularities (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Pinto, 2023). This perspective has important implications for both the architectural profession and public procurement reform in Thailand and across Asia.

From a critical professional standpoint, the empirical findings underscore the profound vulnerability of architects operating within procurement ecosystems that systematically marginalize independent expertise through restrictive eligibility criteria and opaque cost frameworks. These entrenched practices do more than distort market competition; they fundamentally undermine the profession's core ethical tenets, rooted in public value creation, professional integrity, and broad social responsibility (Khoury, 2021). When architects are systematically obstructed from meaningful, competitive participation in public procurement, the entire profession's capacity to contribute to innovative, inclusive, and sustainable civic design is severely constrained. Consequently, these results illuminate that corruption within architectural procurement transcends simple governance failure; it constitutes a profound professional crisis that actively erodes public trust in both state institutions and established professional norms. This crisis is exacerbated by the limited regulatory role of professional

councils, such as Thailand's Council of Architects, which remains narrowly focused on licensing and disciplinary functions rather than active procurement oversight. Strengthening professional responsibility therefore urgently demands expanding institutional mandates to encompass comprehensive governance literacy, rigorous ethical oversight, and robust anti-corruption competencies, ensuring architects are empowered not merely as designers but as steadfast institutional stewards of transparency and public accountability.

From a definitive policy perspective, the findings substantiate that superficial procedural adjustments are profoundly inadequate for dismantling structurally embedded corruption. Meaningful reform requires a comprehensive institutional redesign to minimize administrative discretion, strengthen oversight, and integrate professional architectural expertise into the broader procurement governance framework. Establishing independent review mechanisms, backed by strong legal authority and transparent evaluation criteria, is critical to mitigating the risks of specification tailoring and exclusionary practices. Furthermore, evidence from advanced digitally enabled procurement ecosystems—such as Singapore's GeBIZ and South Korea's KONEPS—shows that automation, standardized digital documentation, and real-time monitoring can significantly reduce corruption vulnerabilities while improving operational efficiency and restoring public trust (Khorana et al., 2024; Mergel et al., 2019). Empowering professional architectural councils with a formal mandate to oversee procurement documentation would align Thailand's practices with rigorous international standards, thereby strengthening accountability across institutional and professional spheres. Such multifaceted reforms align with broader global governance objectives articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities), and SDG 16 (effective, accountable institutions). Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating the Governance-Risk-Compliance (GRC) framework with the COSO Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) model to analyze architectural procurement. This integration demonstrates how governance deficits create opportunities for TOR manipulation, how unmanaged risks normalize opaque practices, and how compliance gaps weaken the enforcement of ethical standards. By situating these dynamics within accountability theory and contemporary corruption scholarship, the study advances a conceptualization of policy corruption as a structural outcome of misaligned institutional and professional systems rather than individual misconduct alone (Bovens, 2007; Persson et al., 2013).

Professionally, the study reframes architects as central governance actors whose ethical obligations extend beyond technical design to include safeguarding public interest within procurement systems. This repositioning contributes to emerging debates on architectural governance, which seek to integrate professional ethics, institutional reform, and digital innovation into a unified analytical framework.

While the study offers important insights, several limitations warrant consideration. The analysis is bounded by a single procurement cycle and a national context, limiting the ability to capture longitudinal dynamics or variations across institutional reforms over time. Future research could address these limitations through comparative longitudinal studies examining the implementation and effectiveness of procurement reforms across multiple budget cycles and Asian jurisdictions. Further investigation into integrating Building Information Modeling (BIM), blockchain-based procurement tracking, and AI-enabled anomaly detection could also deepen understanding of how technological innovation reshapes corruption risks and professional accountability in public procurement.

In conclusion, this study argues that meaningful procurement reform in Thailand must be both systemic and professional. Addressing corruption requires institutional mechanisms that enhance transparency and accountability, as well as professional frameworks that empower architects to act as guardians of public value. By linking governance theory, risk

management, professional ethics, and digital reform, the study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing corruption in architectural procurement policy. Although grounded in the Thai context, the findings provide broader regional lessons for Asian countries seeking to align ethical responsibility with institutional resilience and sustainable development. In doing so, the research contributes not only to academic debates on corruption and governance but also to practical efforts to build fairer, more transparent, and more resilient public procurement systems.

This study reframes architects as governance actors rather than passive technical service providers, demonstrating how procurement systems marginalize professional expertise and undermine ethical responsibility in public architectural projects.

The findings highlight the need to expand the role of professional councils beyond licensing toward active procurement oversight, positioning architectural governance as central to protecting public value, design quality, and professional integrity.

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