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## **How Does Integrity Education Influence the People's Willingness to Report Corruption?**

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**[Abstract]** Reporting of corruption by public is a critical prerequisite for effective anti-corruption efforts. Hong Kong, China, has achieved notable success in this area through integrity education. Based on annual survey data from Hong Kong from 2017 and 2021, this study empirically examines the impact of receiving integrity information, as a form of integrity education, on the public's willingness to report corrupt behavior. The findings indicate that such exposure significantly enhances such willingness. This influence operates through two sequential mediating mechanisms - increased awareness of corrupt behaviors and reduced tolerance for corruption - with both forming a chain mediation pathway. Further analysis reveals that the impact of integrity education varies by education level and over time. The study recommends that integrity education should be systematically promoted at societal level, with emphasis on strengthening public cognition of corruption, lowering corruption tolerance, and strategies towards different population segments.

**[Keywords]** Integrity education; willingness to report corruption; corruption tolerance; Hong Kong

Reporting by public is a vital source for uncovering corruption and a crucial condition for effective anti-corruption efforts. With the deepening of anti-corruption campaign in the Chinese Mainland of China, greater emphasis has been placed on encouraging the public to report corruption. The Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stated, "To improve the Party's ability to purify itself, it is essential that we strengthen Party's self-supervision and subject ourselves to public oversight" and called for "establishing a corruption reporting platform that covers both disciplinary inspection commissions and supervision agencies".<sup>1</sup> In 2020, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee issued the *Work Rules for*

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<sup>1</sup> 习近平：《决胜全面建成小康社会夺取新时代中国特色社会主义伟大胜利——在中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会上的报告》，北京：人民出版社，2017年，第67页。

*Discipline Inspection and Supervision Organs on Handling Reports and Accusations*, further safeguarding the public's right to supervision and standardising reporting procedures. The Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection explicitly emphasized the need to ensure smooth channels for reporting via letters and visits, guiding the public to reflect problems according to law and in an orderly manner.<sup>2</sup> Despite these efforts, public willingness to report corruption remains low.<sup>3</sup> A nationwide survey found that only 12.15% of respondents indicated that they would report corruption if encountered.<sup>4</sup> Motivating public to report corruption has therefore become a key issue in anti-corruption efforts.

Previous studies mainly examine reporting willingness from two perspectives: institutional and cultural. Studies from the institutional perspective argue that institutional arrangements such as accessible and efficient reporting channels,<sup>5</sup> whistleblower protection mechanisms,<sup>6</sup> the independence of anti-corruption agencies,<sup>7</sup> and the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts and the public's confidence in it<sup>8</sup> significantly shape reporting intentions. Studies from cultural perspective hold that the public's willingness to report is related to the broader socio-cultural environment: individuals' corruption tolerance<sup>9</sup> and their perceived corruption levels<sup>10</sup> may have negative impacts on the willingness to report corruption, and different motivations for civic engagement lead to varied anti-corruption participation patterns.<sup>11</sup> From a cultural viewpoint, the fight against corruption requires not only institutional reforms but also cognitive and cultural transformation that form societal norm of zero tolerance for corruption, and promotes values that honor integrity and stigmatise graft.<sup>12</sup> Integrity

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<sup>2</sup> 李希：《深入推进党风廉政建设和反腐败斗争以全面从严治党新成效为推进中国式现代化提供坚强保障——在中国共产党第二十届中央纪律检查委员会第四次全体会议上的工作报告》，《人民日报》2025年2月28日，第2版。

<sup>3</sup> 徐玉生：《检举举报：人民有序监督的路径及其实现》，《河南社会科学》2019年第1期。

<sup>4</sup> 倪星、张军：《我国公众反腐败行动的现状及其影响因素研究——基于2015年度全国廉情调查数据的实证分析》，《兰州大学学报（社会科学版）》2017年第3期。

<sup>5</sup> 张锐昕、王玉荣：《网络举报：反腐效用、影响因素及突破路径》，《理论探讨》2017年第6期。

<sup>6</sup> 徐玉生：《检举举报：人民有序监督的路径及其实现》，《河南社会科学》2019年第1期。

<sup>7</sup> 乔德福：《群众举报腐败行为工作机制探究》，《郑州大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2007年第6期。

<sup>8</sup> 岳磊、刘乾：《腐败治理如何影响公众的反腐败参与意愿——腐败程度感知与腐败容忍度的链式中介效应》，《广州大学学报（社会科学版）》2022年第6期。

<sup>9</sup> 倪星、张军：《文化环境、反腐绩效、制度安排与公众反腐败意愿——基于2016年度全国廉情调查数据的分析》，《河南社会科学》2017年第5期。

<sup>10</sup> 尚汉字、公婷：《腐败容忍度与“社会反腐”：基于香港的实证分析》，《公共行政评论》2016年第3期。

<sup>11</sup> 余雅洁：《基层腐败治理中公众参与差异性生成机理——基于自我决定理论分析框架》，《广州大学学报（社会科学版）》2023年第4期。

<sup>12</sup> 任建明、胡光飞：《文化反腐：历史反思、特点分析及手段策略》，《理论视野》2018年第9期。

education plays a key role in achieving these goals. However, existing studies on integrity education mainly focuses on school-based settings, particularly theoretical analyses targeting university students, resulting in a narrow scope dominated by normative rather than empirical studies. Crucially, there is insufficient attention to the general public, whose diverse social identities and backgrounds pose complex challenges. How integrity education can effectively reshape public attitudes towards corruption and boost reporting willingness among heterogeneous populations remains underexplored empirically.

Hong Kong's anti-corruption experience offers a compelling case for understanding how integrity education influences the general public. Since its inception, the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong (ICAC) has adopted a three-pronged anti-corruption strategy combining law enforcement, systemic prevention, and public education. In about a decade of its establishment, Hong Kong transformed from a corruption-prone environment to a clean society with a high level of integrity, and has maintained this ever since. A cornerstone of this success was the ICAC's sustained effort to transform the prevailing corruption culture through public integrity education, mobilising mass public support for anti-corruption efforts with particular emphasis on increasing willingness to report.<sup>13</sup> In the ICAC's early years, public willingness to report was very low, with widespread fear or reluctance to report. The 1977 public opinion survey showed that only 21% of residents expressed willingness to report corruption.<sup>14</sup> In response, alongside vigorous law enforcement and strengthened whistleblower protections, the ICAC launched continuous, territory-wide integrity education campaigns to actively convey messages such as "Corruption is harmful", "Zero tolerance for corruption", "The ICAC is trustworthy and effective", and "Reporting corruption".<sup>15</sup> By 1993, reporting willingness had risen to 54.4%,<sup>16</sup> and in recent years, it has approached or exceeded 80%.<sup>17</sup> The ICAC's successful experience demonstrates that integrity education can effectively enhance the public's willingness to report corruption.

Building on this insight, this paper adopts a "cognition–attitude–behavior" analytical framework and uses ICAC Annual Survey data from 2017 to 2021 to

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<sup>13</sup> 公婷：《社会反腐三要素：信任、共识、参与》，《广州大学学报（社会科学版）》2022年第3期。

<sup>14</sup> 香港廉政公署：《1977年廉政公署周年民意调查报告》，1977年，第51-52页。

<sup>15</sup> 施易安、公婷：《直面挑战——香港反腐之路》，邬彬、韩琳译，北京：中国方正出版社，2021年，第131-132页。

<sup>16</sup> 香港廉政公署：《1993年廉政公署周年民意调查报告》，1993年，第23页。

<sup>17</sup> 香港廉政公署：《2021年廉政公署周年民意调查报告》，2021年，第11页。

empirically investigate how receiving information concerning the ICAC, as a form of integrity education, influences reporting intentions by reshaping public awareness and attitudes toward corruption. This research addresses the lack of empirical research and provides theoretical insights and practical lessons for integrity education in the Chinese Mainland of China.

## **I. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses**

### **(1) Integrity Education and Public Willingness to Report Corruption**

Integrity education refers to the dissemination and promotion of knowledge about corruption and anti-corruption work implemented by anti-corruption agencies for the general public. Its core mission and goal are to correct misconceptions, shape attitudes, and foster integrity, thereby cultivating individual value and social culture that treasure integrity.<sup>18</sup> Unlike school education, integrity education directed at the general public faces a highly diverse and complex audience, making it difficult to adopt fixed-time, systematic theoretical instruction. Consequently, such integrity education exhibits pronounced “mass-oriented” characteristics, placing greater emphasis on accessible, popularised content and flexible, varied communication formats tailored to the public’s cognitive traits and information reception preferences.

According to signaling theory, under conditions of information asymmetry, signal recipients make decisions based on specific signals sent by signalers. Integrity education serves as a specific anti-corruption “signal” disseminated by the government to the public. On one hand, it clearly conveys the government’s determination and will for zero tolerance towards corruption, alleviating public concerns about potential retaliation for whistleblowing. On the other hand, it fosters social moral constraints by cultivating shared rejections of corruption. Research suggests that under an environment with strong anti-corruption law enforcement, the greater the public’s confidence in anti-corruption efforts, the stronger their willingness to participate in anti-corruption work.<sup>19</sup> The experience of ICAC demonstrates that consistently sending clear signals such as “the ICAC is reliable and efficient” and “reporting is safe and protected” significantly enhances the public’s willingness to report corruption.

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<sup>18</sup> 任建明、杜治洲：《腐败与反腐败：理论、模型和方法》，北京：清华大学出版社，2009年，第182页。

<sup>19</sup> 杜治洲：《公众参与反腐倡廉的影响因素及其挑战》，《理论视野》2013年第3期。

Integrity education directly influences one's psychological and cognitive processes, helping to dispel the public's misconception of corruption, thereby strengthening their willingness to engage in anti-corruption cause. The research by Hauser shows that businessmen who had received anti-corruption training were more likely to reject corruption.<sup>20</sup> Integrity education also disseminates knowledge and information about identifying corruption, reporting channels, complaint handling procedures, and investigation mechanisms. Mastery of knowledge about reporting procedures help individuals to report.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, integrity education informs the public about whistleblowers' legal rights and the systems protecting them, making them more confident in the safety of reporting actions. Cho and Song's study of federal government employees of the United States shows that education about reporting procedures and rights has a positive effect on their reporting willingness.<sup>22</sup> Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Integrity education positively influences the public's willingness to report corruption.

## **(2) The Mediating Role of Corruption Awareness**

Corruption awareness encompasses an individual's understanding of the nature, manifestations, harmful consequences, and relevant laws and regulations related to corruption. Individuals with higher levels of corruption awareness are generally better able to identify corrupt acts and understand their severe consequences, and are thus more inclined to report corruption. Information dissemination activities such as education and training influence individuals' behavior by shaping or changing their cognitive structures. As an organised form of knowledge dissemination and skills training, integrity education affects the public's corruption awareness. Specifically, integrity education improves the public's understanding of the specific manifestations, legal definitions, and consequences of corruption through various means such as case analysis and legal interpretation. For example, it has been the long-term strategy of the ICAC to use television, advertisement, community workshops, and online courses to disseminate information about corruption cases and their negative

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<sup>20</sup> Hauser C., "Fighting Against Corruption: Does Anti-Corruption Training Make Any Differences?" *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 159, 2019, pp. 281-299.

<sup>21</sup> Miceli M.P., Near J.P., "The Relationship Among Beliefs, Organisational Position, and Whistle-blowing Status: A Discriminant Analysis", *The Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1984, pp. 987-705.

<sup>22</sup> Cho Y.J., Song H.J., "Determinants of Whistleblowing within Government Agencies", *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2015, pp. 450-472.

consequences, enabling the public to intuitively understand the evils and legal consequences of corruption, thereby improving their ability to identify corrupt acts and their corruption awareness.

Corruption awareness is the psychological foundation for the public to report corruption. Higher corruption awareness can effectively boost the willingness to report corruption. On the one hand, higher corruption awareness increases the public's sensitivity and ability to identify corrupt acts, enabling more accurate detection and identification of corruption, thereby triggering the willingness to report. On the other hand, enhanced corruption awareness enables the public to have better understanding of knowledge such as reporting channels and evidence collection and preservation, strengthening their confidence and determination to report. Empirical research by Jaunky *et al.* found that understanding and mastery of anti-corruption laws and regulations is an important cognitive prerequisite for enhancing the public's willingness to report corruption.<sup>23</sup> This shows that corruption awareness plays a key mediating role in connecting integrity education and the willingness to report corruption. Specifically, integrity education enhances the public's level of corruption awareness by imparting anti-corruption knowledge and skills, thereby increasing sensitivity and identification ability towards corruption, ultimately improving their willingness to report corruption. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Corruption awareness plays a mediating role in the impact of integrity education on the public's willingness to report corruption.

### **(3) The Mediating Role of Corruption Tolerance**

Corruption tolerance refers to the degree to which an individual tolerates or accepts corrupt acts. Generally, the lower an individual's corruption tolerance, the higher the likelihood of reporting corruption. Individuals with high corruption tolerance are more inclined to choose acquiescence or avoidance when facing corruption, while individuals with lower corruption tolerance are more likely to develop strong resistance, leading to taking real actions to report.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Jaunky V.C., Jeetoo J., Bajah C., *et al.*, "The Importance of Understanding the Anti-Corruption Legislation to Promote Corruption Reporting: Lessons from Mauritius", *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 43, No. 15, 2020, pp. 1282-1292.

<sup>24</sup> 岳磊、刘乾：《腐败治理如何影响公众的反腐败参与意愿——腐败程度感知与腐败容忍度的链式中介效应》，《广州大学学报（社会科学版）》2022年第6期。

An individual's attitude is an important psychological precondition for their behavior. An individual's attitude or value orientation towards a certain behavior often determines whether to take corresponding action.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, in the context of reporting corruption, the public's attitude towards corruption is the psychological condition for reporting behavior to occur. Corruption tolerance essentially reflects an individual's anti-corruption attitude. When the public generally holds the value of "intolerance towards corruption", it is easier to trigger reporting behavior.

Integrity education can reduce the public's corruption tolerance by acting on individual psychological attitudes and moral judgments. On the one hand, by demonstrating the evils of corruption to society and individuals, integrity education prompts individuals to develop moral rejection and psychological resistance to corrupt acts at both emotional and rational levels, thereby reducing acceptance of corruption. Research by Peiffer and Walton points out that when the public understands the harm corruption causes to local communities and families, they are more likely to report corruption.<sup>26</sup> Hong Kong's experience also shows that continuously conveying the negative impacts of corruption and the positive values of integrity to the public can effectively shape a social cultural atmosphere of "zero tolerance for corruption", prompting the public to actively reject corrupt acts and enhancing their willingness to report.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, through presenting corruption cases, integrity education stimulates public empathy and moral indignation, reinforcing individual emotional resistance to corrupt acts, further solidifying the moral judgment of "zero tolerance for corruption". Research by Yue indicates that corruption information disseminated through mass media or educational channels can significantly reduce public corruption tolerance and effectively increase public willingness to participate in anti-corruption.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, corruption tolerance plays an important mediating role between integrity education and the public's willingness to report corruption. Specifically, integrity education, by disseminating the negative social impacts of corrupt acts

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<sup>25</sup> Ajzen I., Fishbein M., "Attitude-Behavior Relations: The Theoretical Analysis and Review of Empirical Research", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 5, 1977, pp. 888-918.

<sup>26</sup> Peiffer C., Walton G.W., "Getting the (right) Message Across: How to Encourage Citizens to Report Corruption", *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 40, No. 5, 2022, e12621.

<sup>27</sup> 公婷、王世茹：《腐败“零容忍”的政治文化——以香港为例》，《复旦公共行政评论》2012年第2期。

<sup>28</sup> 岳磊：《制度、文化与传播对公众腐败容忍度的影响——基于对河南省居民的调查分析》，《武汉大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2017年第4期。

to the public, triggers emotional and moral rejection, lowers public corruption tolerance, and thereby increases willingness to take action to report corruption. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Corruption tolerance plays a mediating role in the impact of integrity education on the public's willingness to report corruption.

#### **(4) The Chain Mediating Role of Corruption Awareness and Corruption Tolerance**

According to the “Knowledge-Attitude-Practice” theory, knowledge is the foundation for attitude formation, and attitude change further drives behavior, with a clear chain transmission path existing among the three.<sup>29</sup> Integrity education, as a culture-based anti-corruption means centered on knowledge dissemination, has the core task of addressing three key issues for individuals regarding corruption and integrity: “knowledge”, “attitude”, and “skills”. Among these, “knowledge” refers to an individual's understanding of the nature, manifestations, and severe consequences of corruption and integrity issues; “attitude” is the individual's moral evaluation and value orientation towards corrupt acts; “skills” refer to specific methods and strategies for individuals to identify and resist corrupt acts. Integrity education needs not only to impart relevant anti-corruption knowledge to the public but also to guide individuals in forming the value of “zero tolerance for corruption” in their mind, ultimately achieving integrity, self-discipline, and resistance to corruption through the transformation of knowledge and attitude.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, integrity education first enhances the public's ability to identify corruption and their level of awareness, enabling the public to clearly understand the specific manifestations and severe damage of corrupt acts.<sup>31</sup> When the public's awareness of corruption improves, they gradually form negative evaluations of corrupt acts at rational and emotional levels, thereby strengthening the moral attitude of “zero tolerance for corruption”.

The impact of integrity education on the public's willingness to report corruption is not a single linear process but unfolds through a “knowledge-attitude-practice” chain path. First, integrity education can enhance the public's

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<sup>29</sup> 张平：《大学生主流意识形态认同教育的实证研究——基于知行模式的理论视角》《教育学术月刊》2021年第3期。

<sup>30</sup> 任建明：《我国大学生廉洁教育的理论框架与实践经验》，《湖北行政学院学报》2016年第5期。

<sup>31</sup> 樊养才、宋世勇：《廉政法治教育价值探析——以香港 ICAC 肃贪倡廉实践经验为视角》，《社会主义研究》2012年第4期。

awareness of the nature and evils of corrupt acts, improving their ability to identify corruption. Subsequently, higher corruption awareness is further transformed into resistance towards corruption, lowering corruption tolerance. Finally, under the combined effect of knowledge and attitude, the public develops the willingness to report corruption, forming a “knowledge-attitude-practice” chain mechanism. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Corruption awareness and corruption tolerance play a chain mediating role in the impact of integrity education on the public’s willingness to report corruption, following the influence path of “integrity education → corruption awareness → corruption tolerance → reporting willingness”.

## **II. Research Design**

### **(1) Data Source**

The data for this paper come from annual public opinion surveys commissioned by the ICAC and conducted by independent research firms. The survey started in 1992, and since 2010, it has adopted a face-to-face household interview method, selecting respondents from randomly sampled households using the “Next Birthday” method. The survey content covered public corruption awareness, corruption tolerance, willingness to report corruption, experience with corruption, and evaluation and suggestions regarding the ICAC’s work. The survey results are used to map out anti-corruption strategies, especially optimising integrity education for the public.

This study uses pooled cross-sectional data from surveys conducted between 2017 to 2021. The reason for selecting this data is that the key measurement indicators in the questionnaires during this period, especially the scenario-based questions for “corruption awareness” and “corruption tolerance”, maintained high consistency, ensuring measurement quality and reliability. Meanwhile, the ICAC has been purposefully disseminating anti-corruption information for over 50 years, with matured and stabilised integrity education model and mechanism. Data from five consecutive years (2017-2021) are sufficient to robustly verify the mechanism of integrity education’s impact on the public’s willingness to report corruption.

## (2) Variable Selection

### 1. Willingness to Report Corruption

The public's willingness to report corruption is the dependent variable in this paper. The measurement item is: "If you are aware that someone has committed corruption, will you report it?" The answers set in the questionnaire are "Will", "Will not", and "Depends on circumstances". This paper assigns a value of 3 to "Will", 2 to "Depends on circumstances", and 1 to "Will not". A higher score indicates a stronger willingness to report corruption.

### 2. Receiving Integrity Information

Integrity education is the core explanatory variable in this paper. Generally, the more resources invested in integrity education, the more diverse its forms and channels, and the wider its coverage, the more significant its impact on public behavior. The type and quantity of integrity education received by respondents can reflect differences in the level of exposure to integrity education and its cumulative effect, indicating the actual situation of exposure to integrity education by the public. Considering whether the public has received anti-corruption information is a fundamental condition for the success of integrity education, this study regards whether the public has received anti-corruption information as an indicator to measure integrity education. The survey questionnaire explicitly asks respondents whether they have received integrity information through five types of channels in the past year: television, radio, newspapers/magazines, internet, and offline channels. Drawing on the measurement practices of related studies,<sup>32</sup> each channel is set as a binary variable (0=not received, 1=received), and then the exposure across channels is summed to form an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 5. A higher score indicates that the respondent has been exposed to integrity education information through more channels and with greater volume, implying a greater potential impact of integrity education on them.

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<sup>32</sup> 盖豪、颜廷武、周晓时：《政策宣传何以长效？——基于湖北省农户秸秆持续还田行为分析》，《中国农村观察》2021年第6期。

### 3. Corruption Awareness

Corruption awareness is a mediating variable in this paper. The survey questionnaire measures this variable by designing specific scenarios. Respondents were asked to read a series of scenarios describing potential corrupt acts and judged whether these acts were illegal. Since the scenario questions in the survey questionnaire vary year to year, to ensure measurement consistency and comparability, this paper selects four identical questions from the 2017-2021 period for measurement. See Table 1 for the specific questions. For each question, answering “Yes” (illegal) is assigned a value of 1, and “No” (not illegal) is assigned 0. An individual’s corruption awareness is measured using the total score (0 - 4) of all questions. The higher the score, the higher level of corruption awareness.

Table 1: Measurement of corruption awareness and corruption tolerance

Scenario	Measurement of Corruption Awareness		Measurement of Corruption Tolerance	
	Question	Value	Question	Value
1 An employee claims business entertainment expenses higher than the actual amount from his/her company				
2 A civil servant helps his/her relative to bid for the department’s works project tender by providing with internal information	Is such conduct illegal?	1 – Yes; 0 - No	Do you think the conduct in these scenarios is acceptable or not?	1 – Acceptable; 2 - Depends on circumstances; 3 - Unacceptable
3 A candidate of the District Council Election offers a free one-day local tour to electors and asks them to vote for him/her				
4 A cleaning company supervisor accepts money from job seekers for securing employment				

### 4. Corruption Tolerance

Corruption tolerance is a mediating variable in this paper. The annual survey questionnaire also uses specific scenarios to measure an individual’s corruption tolerance. To ensure measurement consistency and comparability, this paper also uses four identical questions from the 2017-2021 period for measurement. These questions are the same as those used to measure corruption awareness (see Table 1). For each question, answering “acceptable” is assigned a

value of 3, “Depends on circumstances” is assigned 2, and “Unacceptable” is assigned 1. Corruption tolerance is measured by the total score (4 - 12) of all questions. A higher score indicates higher corruption tolerance. It should be noted that although the variables “corruption awareness” and “corruption tolerance” are both measured by questions with the same stems, they significantly differ in concept and essence. The former measures an individual’s awareness of corrupt acts, i.e., whether the individual accurately understands the illegality of corrupt acts; the latter measures an individual’s acceptance of corrupt acts, i.e., whether the individual can tolerate such behavior morally.

## 5. Control Variables

The control variables in this paper include the respondents’ gender, age, education level, corruption experience, evaluation of anti-corruption performance, and time (year). Among these, gender is set as a binary variable, with “female” assigned 0 and “male” assigned 1; age is set as a continuous variable; education level is assigned values from 1 to 6 for “Primary education or below”, “Lower secondary education”, “Upper secondary education”, “Tertiary education (non-degree course)”, “Tertiary education (degree course)”, and “Master degree course or above” respectively; corruption experience is set as a binary variable, with “had not come across corruption” assigned 0 and “had come across corruption” assigned 1; evaluation of ICAC anti-corruption performance is measured using the question in the questionnaire: “Do you think the ICAC’s anti-corruption work is effective?” Answers are assigned values of 4 for “Very effective”, 3 for “Quite effective”, 2 for “Not quite effective”, and 1 for “Very ineffective”. To control the time effects, categorical variables representing the year are set with 2017 as the base year. The descriptive statistics of the related variables are shown in Table 2.

### **(3) Model Specification**

The dependent variable “willingness to report corruption” is an ordinal variable. For ordinal variables, ordered logistic regression (Ordered-Logit) or ordered probit regression (Ordered-Probit) models are usually used for regression analysis. Both regression models are used to analyse the related variables, and their Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values are compared. The results show that the AIC and BIC values of the Ordered-Probit model are both smaller than those of the Ordered-Logit model,

indicating that the Ordered-Probit model has a better fit on the data in this paper. Therefore, when conducting regression analysis on the dependent variable “willingness to report corruption”, this paper adopts the Ordered-Probit model. The mediating variables “corruption awareness” and “corruption tolerance” are continuous variables, analyzed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model. Referring to the studies by Wen *et al.*<sup>33</sup> and Fang *et al.*<sup>34</sup>, this paper uses the stepwise test method to verify the independent mediating effects and the chain mediating effect.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
Willingness to Report	2.764	0.532	1	3
Receiving Integrity Information	2.164	1.468	0	5
Corruption Awareness	3.087	0.611	0	4
Corruption Tolerance	5.682	1.039	4	12
Gender	0.479	0.500	0	1
Age	44.900	14.042	15	74
Education Level	3.212	1.348	1	6
Corruption Experience	0.014	0.118	0	1
ICAC Anti-corruption Performance	2.994	0.632	1	4

### III. Empirical Test Results and Analysis

#### (1) Regression Analysis Results

This paper uses the software, Stata, for analysis. Prior to regression analysis, a multicollinearity test was conducted on the data. The results showed that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each variable in every model was less than 3, indicating no multicollinearity problem. Next, a heteroscedasticity test was performed on the data. The results indicated the presence of heteroscedasticity in all models. To address the impact of heteroscedasticity, robust standard errors were used for statistical inference in the regression analysis. Additionally, since the data in this paper are pooled cross-sectional data with independent datasets each year, autocorrelation is typically not an issue, no autocorrelation test was necessary.

<sup>33</sup> 温忠麟、叶宝娟：《中介效应分析：方法和模型发展》，《心理科学进展》2014年第5期。

<sup>34</sup> 方杰、温忠麟、张敏强：《类别变量的中介效应分析》，《心理科学》2017年第2期。

To verify the impact of receiving integrity information on the willingness to report corruption, as well as the independent mediating effects of corruption awareness and corruption tolerance and their chain mediating effect, this paper uses the stepwise test method and establishes 5 regression models. Model 1 uses the Ordered-Probit model to analyze the impact of receiving integrity information on the willingness to report corruption. Model 2 uses the OLS model to analyze the impact of receiving integrity information on corruption awareness. Model 3 uses the OLS model to analyze the impact of receiving integrity information on corruption tolerance. Model 4 uses the OLS model to analyze the impact of corruption awareness and receiving integrity information on corruption tolerance. Model 5 uses the Ordered-Probit model to analyze the integrated impact of receiving integrity information, corruption awareness, and corruption tolerance on the willingness to report corruption. The regression results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression results for Models 1-5

Variable		Willingness	Awareness	Tolerance	Tolerance	Willingness
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Receiving Integrity Information		0.060*** (0.015)	0.012** (0.006)	-0.030*** (0.008)	-0.015** (0.007)	0.047*** (0.017)
Corruption Awareness					-0.802*** (0.044)	0.124** (0.054)
Corruption Tolerance						-0.202*** (0.037)
Gender (Male)		0.099** (0.040)	-0.018 (0.015)	0.074*** (0.021)	0.049*** (0.018)	0.146*** (0.045)
Age		-0.008*** (0.002)	0.002*** (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.010*** (0.002)
Education Level		0.02 (0.018)	-0.019*** (0.007)	0.031*** (0.010)	0.017** (0.008)	0.036* (0.020)
Corruption Experience		-0.435*** (0.136)	0.065 (0.054)	0.153 (0.096)	0.099 (0.077)	-0.493*** (0.150)
ICAC Anti-corruption Performance		0.129*** (0.033)	0.004 (0.012)	-0.018 (0.017)	-0.012 (0.014)	0.109*** (0.036)
Year	2018	0.043 (0.060)	-0.150*** (0.022)	0.253*** (0.033)	0.076*** (0.027)	0.158** (0.067)
	2019	0.095 (0.063)	-0.131*** (0.019)	0.262*** (0.029)	0.130*** (0.025)	0.175** (0.070)
	2020	0.125* (0.068)	-0.194*** (0.024)	0.277*** (0.033)	0.078*** (0.027)	0.245*** (0.077)
	2021	0.04 (0.064)	0.708*** (0.024)	-1.598*** (0.033)	-1.073*** (0.047)	-0.323*** (0.085)
Constant			2.968*** (0.059)	5.936*** (0.084)	8.307*** (0.153)	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> or R <sup>2</sup>		0.018	0.285	0.444	0.637	0.035
Wald Chi <sup>2</sup> or F value		100.79***	146.57***	387.96***	662.43***	154.704***
Observations		5262	4593	5051	4499	4420

Note: \*, \*\*, \*\*\* represent significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels respectively. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Same below.

## 1. Overall Impact of Receiving Integrity Information on Willingness to Report Corruption

The regression results of Model 1 and Model 5 in Table 3 show that the coefficient for receiving integrity information is positive and significant at the 1% level, indicating that receiving integrity information has a significant positive impact on the public's willingness to report corruption, verifying Hypothesis H1.

## 2. The Mediating Effects of Corruption Awareness and Corruption Tolerance

### *(1) The Impact of Receiving Integrity Information on Corruption Awareness and Corruption Tolerance*

The regression results of Model 2 in Table 3 show that the coefficient for receiving integrity information is positive and significant at the 5% level, indicating that receiving integrity information significantly increases corruption awareness. The results of Model 3 show that the coefficient for receiving integrity information is negative and significant at the 1% level, indicating that receiving integrity information significantly reduces corruption tolerance.

### *(2) The Impact of Corruption Awareness and Corruption Tolerance on Willingness to Report Corruption*

The regression results of Model 5 in Table 3 show that the coefficient for corruption awareness is positive and significant at the 5% level, indicating that corruption awareness has a significant positive impact on the willingness to report corruption. Simultaneously, the coefficient for corruption tolerance in Model 5 is negative and significant at the 1% level, indicating that corruption tolerance has a significant negative impact on the willingness to report corruption.

In sum, corruption awareness has an independent mediating role in the relationship between receiving integrity information and the willingness to report corruption. That is, receiving integrity information improves an individual's corruption awareness, thereby enhancing their willingness to report corruption, verifying Hypothesis H2. Similarly, corruption tolerance has an independent mediating role in the relationship between receiving integrity information and the willingness to report corruption. That is, receiving integrity information reduces an individual's corruption tolerance, thereby enhancing their willingness to report corruption, verifying Hypothesis H3.

### 3. The Chain Mediating Effect of Corruption Awareness and Corruption Tolerance

The regression results of Model 4 in Table 3 show that the coefficient for corruption awareness is negative and significant at the 1% level, indicating that corruption awareness significantly reduces corruption tolerance. Meanwhile, Models 2 and 5 show that receiving integrity information has a significant positive impact on corruption awareness, while corruption tolerance has a significant negative impact on the willingness to report corruption. Therefore, corruption awareness and corruption tolerance play a chain mediating role in the relationship between receiving integrity information and the willingness to report corruption. That is, receiving integrity information increases an individual's level of corruption awareness, which in turn lowers their corruption tolerance, thereby enhancing their willingness to report corruption, verifying Hypothesis H4.

### 4. The Impact of Control Variables on Willingness to Report Corruption

The regression results of Model 1 and Model 5 in Table 3 show that gender has a significant impact on the willingness to report corruption. Compared to women, men have a higher willingness to report. Age has a significant negative impact on the willingness to report corruption, meaning that the older the individual, the lower the willingness to report. Education level has no significant impact on the willingness to report corruption. Corruption experience has a significant negative impact on the willingness to report corruption. Citizens without corruption experience have a higher willingness to report corruption compared to those with such experience. Evaluation of the ICAC's anti-corruption performance has a significant positive impact on the willingness to report corruption. The higher the evaluation of the ICAC's anti-corruption effectiveness, the stronger the willingness to report corruption. The effects of the control variables are largely consistent with existing research findings.

In gist, receiving integrity information has a significant positive impact on the public's willingness to report corruption, and its effect pathways operate through the independent mediating roles of corruption awareness and corruption tolerance, as well as their chain mediating role (see Figure 1).

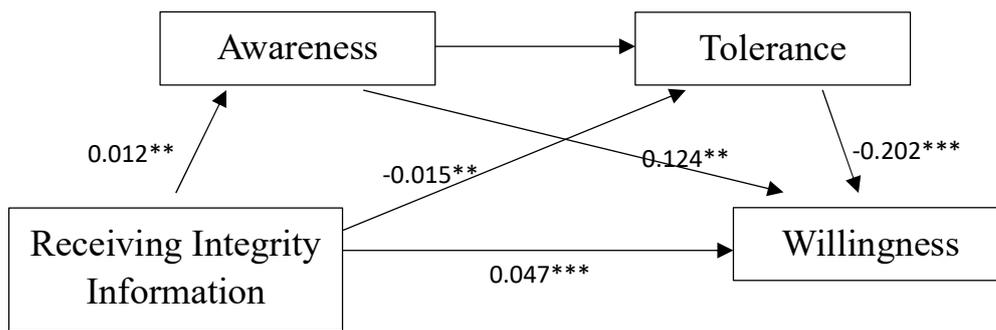


Figure 1: The mechanism through which receiving integrity information influences the public’s willingness to report corruption

## (2) Further Analysis

### 1. Analysis of the Dynamic Time Effect of Receiving Integrity Information

To understand the impact mechanism of receiving integrity information on the public’s willingness to report corruption more comprehensively, this paper further analyses whether the impact of receiving integrity information changes over time. Specifically, this paper constructs an interaction term “Receiving Integrity Information  $\times$  Year” by using year as a continuous variable and including it in the regression equation. To avoid multicollinearity, the year and receiving integrity information variables were centered before constructing the interaction term. The regression results are shown in Table 4.

The regression analysis results indicate that when the two mediating variables, corruption awareness and corruption tolerance, are not included, the coefficient of the “Receiving Integrity Information  $\times$  Year” interaction term is significantly positive at the 1% significance level. After incorporating the two mediating variables, the coefficient of the “Receiving Integrity Information  $\times$  Year” interaction term remains positive and is statistically significant at the 10% level, close to 5% ( $p=0.06$ ). This result shows that the positive impact of receiving integrity information on the public’s willingness to report corruption exhibits a clear strengthening trend over time, indicating long-term accumulative effect of receiving integrity information. As the public continuously receives integrity information, their willingness to report corruption significantly increases.

Table 4: “Receiving Integrity Information  $\times$  Time” interaction term on willingness to report corruption

Variable	Willingness to report corruption	
	Model 6	Model 7
Receiving Integrity Information	0.075*** (0.015)	0.092*** (0.017)
Year	0.025 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.019)
Integrity Education $\times$ Year	0.030*** (0.012)	0.026* (0.014)
Corruption Awareness		0.085 (0.056)
Corruption Tolerance		-0.126*** (0.036)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> or R <sup>2</sup>	0.018	0.029
Wald Chi <sup>2</sup> or F value	99.68***	117.70***
Observations	5287	4440

The positive effect of receiving integrity information is not static but continuously accumulates and deepens over time, indicating that integrity education is a long-term task that should be carried out continuously over the long-term to achieve more lasting and profound social anti-corruption effects.

## 2. Heterogeneity Analysis of the Mediating Mechanism Based on Education Level

To further explore the applicability and effect differences of the mediating mechanism among different social groups, this paper uses education level as the grouping basis to examine whether the influence path of receiving integrity information on willingness to report through corruption awareness and corruption tolerance exhibits heterogeneity due to differences in education level. Specifically, based on the average years of education for the respondents' age group, those with education years above the group average are classified as the “high-education group”, whilst those below are classified as the “low-education group”. This controls for potential bias from the interaction between education level and age. On this basis, a three-stage chain mediation model is constructed separately for the high-education and low-education samples. Results are shown in Table 5 and Table 6.

The analysis results indicate that the chain mediation mechanism exhibits structural differences among education groups, mainly in three aspects: First, the mediating path through corruption awareness is established in the high-education group but not significant in the low-education group. Specifically, receiving

integrity information can significantly enhance the corruption awareness of high-education individuals, thereby increasing their willingness to report; but for the low-education group, receiving integrity information does not significantly improve their corruption awareness. This suggests that the improvement of public corruption awareness through receiving integrity information may be related to the cognitive foundation of the audience. Second, the mediating path through corruption tolerance shows a significant negative effect mechanism in both education groups. Receiving integrity information significantly reduces corruption tolerance, and the decrease in corruption tolerance further stimulates the willingness to report, indicating that this path has a robust influence across different education levels. Third, the chain mediating path through corruption awareness and corruption tolerance is only significant in the high-education group. After receiving integrity information, the high-education group is more likely to increase their awareness of the nature and harm of corrupt acts, thereby lowering corruption tolerance, and ultimately promoting the willingness to report corruption.

Table 5: Impact of Receiving Integrity Information and mediating variables on willingness to report corruption in different education groups

Variable	Willingness			
	Low-education	High-education	Low-education	High-education
Receiving Integrity Information	0.052** (0.022)	0.062*** (0.021)	0.034 (0.025)	0.057** (0.024)
Corruption Awareness			0.104 (0.078)	0.140* (0.076)
Corruption Tolerance			-0.187*** (0.049)	-0.217*** (0.055)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> or R <sup>2</sup>	0.021	0.016	0.033	0.038
Wald Chi <sup>2</sup> or F value	79.631	61.614	46.168	79.281
Observations	2529	2733	2105	2315

Table 6: Impact of Receiving Integrity Information on mediating variables in different education groups

Variable	Awareness		Tolerance			
	Low-education	High-education	Low-education	High-education	Low-education	High-education
Receiving Integrity Information	0.001 (0.009)	0.021*** (0.007)	-0.018* (0.011)	-0.040*** (0.011)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.018* (0.009)
Corruption Awareness					-0.839*** (0.069)	-0.764*** (0.054)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> or R <sup>2</sup>	0.284	0.29	0.443	0.449	0.647	0.629
Wald Chi <sup>2</sup> or F value	67.681	85.263	196.337	195.395	340.726	331.803
Observations	2214	2379	2398	2653	2159	2340

The results show that differences in education level significantly affect the strength of the two mediating paths of cognition and attitude. The high-education group, with higher comprehension ability and cognitive level, can better absorb and respond to integrity information. Through the dual mediation of cognition and attitude, this is transformed into behavioral willingness to report corruption. The low-education group is more influenced through changes in tolerance, reflecting the stratified and differentiated characteristics of the educational or cultural intervention mechanism. This indicates that future integrity education policies can implement precise interventions based on group characteristics in their design.

### **(3) Robustness Check**

To ensure the robustness of the model results, this paper re-runs the regression analysis by replacing variables. The dependent variable “willingness to report corruption” is set as a binary variable (Will=1, Will not or May=0). Given that the dependent variable is binary, a Probit regression model is chosen, with other settings unchanged. The regression results are shown in Table 7. Significant impacts are observed on the followings: receiving integrity information on willingness, corruption awareness, and corruption tolerance; corruption awareness on corruption tolerance and willingness to report; corruption tolerance on willingness to report; and receiving integrity information on willingness to report. Corruption awareness and corruption tolerance each play an independent mediating role, and they also exert a chain mediating role. This is consistent with the regression results above, verifying the robustness of the results.

## **IV. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the 2017-2021 ICAC Annual Survey data, this paper constructs a model of the impact of receiving integrity information on the public’s willingness to report corruption, introducing corruption awareness and corruption tolerance as key mediating variables to systematically explore their mechanisms. The study finds: (1) Receiving integrity information has a significant positive effect on the public’s willingness to report corruption. (2) Both corruption awareness and corruption tolerance play mediating roles in the impact of receiving integrity information on willingness to report corruption. Receiving integrity information can both enhance the public’s ability to identify corrupt acts and effectively lower their corruption tolerance, thereby individually strengthening

the willingness to report. (3) There is also a chain mediating relationship between corruption awareness and corruption tolerance. Receiving integrity information increases an individual’s corruption awareness, lowers their corruption tolerance, and ultimately increases their willingness to report corruption. (4) The impact of receiving integrity information on willingness to report shows a strengthening trend over time, indicating its long-term and cumulative nature. (5) For groups with different education levels, the influence paths of receiving integrity information differ. In the high-education group, the chain mediation mechanism is fully established. In the low-education group, only the corruption tolerance path is significant, indicating that an individual’s cognitive foundation affects the reception and effect conversion of receiving integrity information.

Table 7: Regression results after variable replacement

Variable	Willingness	Awareness	Tolerance		Willingness
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Receiving Integrity Information	0.050*** (0.016)	0.015** (0.006)	-0.035*** (0.009)	-0.015** (0.008)	0.040** (0.019)
Corruption Awareness				-0.802*** (0.043)	0.128** (0.056)
Corruption Tolerance					-0.207*** (0.039)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> or R <sup>2</sup>	0.018	0.285	0.444	0.637	0.039
Wald Chi <sup>2</sup> or F value	88.32***	146.57***	387.96***	662.43***	145.47***
Observations	5287	4613	5073	4519	4440

The conclusions of this paper have important implications for integrity education and integrity culture construction for the general public in the Chinese Mainland of China. First, integrity culture construction is the foundational work for achieving the goal of “not willing to corrupt” and building a clean society. Integrity education is the main channel for building integrity culture construction and should be rooted in the entire society as early as possible. Currently, the targets of integrity education mainly focus on Party and government officials, as well as university teachers and students, which are limited and far from the ideal. Based on the successful anti-corruption experience of Hong Kong, systematic integrity education for the general public is very effective in increasing public participation in anti-corruption efforts. Anti-corruption agencies should take the primary responsibility for integrity education, incorporating it into regular work plans, assigning professional personnel, and including it in formal budgets. Different propaganda departments such as education, culture and tourism, etc., should cooperate to form an integrity education framework with institutional support, financial guarantees, and coordination among various entities. At the same time, it should be noted that building an integrity culture is a long-term

process, and the effects of integrity education also have a time-cumulative effect. Continuous and long-term investment should be ensured with sustained effort. Starting from key industries and sectors, integrity education for the entire society can be achieved step-by-step in phases, driving the public to participate in anti-corruption, and forming a joint force for anti-corruption across society.

Second, integrity education should focus on cognition and attitude education, guiding the public to form accurate understanding and correct attitudes towards corruption. The research results show that an important path for integrity education to work is by revealing the evil of corruption, teaching people to correctly understand the nature of corruption, and guiding them to form an attitude of zero tolerance towards corruption. Thus, the scientific validity of the “three-key-element” education method of “cognition-attitude-skills” regarding corruption and integrity is verified.<sup>35</sup> The primary responsibility of the Community Relations Department of the ICAC in promoting integrity education is to “educate the public about the evil of corruption”, always making the eradication of a culture of corruption its core task. Currently, integrity education in Chinese Mainland of China remains warning-oriented, offering insufficient analysis of the nature and harm of corruption, and rarely publishing real-name cases. Emphasis should be placed on examining the harm of corruption, teaching people to correctly understand the nature, manifestations, and harm of corruption through case analysis and legal interpretation, in order to correct cognitive biases and misconceptions. On this basis, the public’s rational thinking about corruption and emotional resonance with integrity should be triggered, lowering people’s corruption tolerance, ultimately shaping the “zero tolerance” attitude towards corruption, achieving the effect of not willing to corrupt and aspiring for integrity.

Third, policies should be customized and promoted in categories according to its characteristics. Due to differences in cognitive foundations and reception methods among different social groups, the content, form, and strategies of integrity education should be tailored. For example, the high-education group has higher cultural levels and comprehension ability. Integrity education for this group should trigger deep thinking through lectures and case discussions. The low-education group has a slightly weaker cognitive foundation, the focus should be on enhancing communication effects and stimulating emotional resonance through easy-to-understand advertisements, dramas and television works, etc. At the same time, with the popularity of new online media, the application of new

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<sup>35</sup> 任建明：《我国大学生廉洁教育的理论框架与实践经验》，《湖北行政学院学报》2016年第5期。

media platforms such as WeChat public accounts, Weibo, and short videos should be leveraged to increase the interest and appeal of integrity education.

The marginal contributions of this paper are as follows: First, it demonstrates the mediating effects of corruption awareness and corruption tolerance, the cumulative effect of integrity education, and its stratified effects among different groups, deepening the understanding of the mechanism of integrity education. It provides empirical evidence for the necessity and effectiveness of integrity education for the public and offers reference paths for strengthening integrity culture construction in the new era. Second, it empirically verifies the “three-key-element” education method of “cognition-attitude-skills”, confirming that integrity education improves an individual’s corruption awareness ability (cognitive element), thereby influencing corruption tolerance attitude (attitude element), and ultimately increasing the willingness to report corruption.

This paper also has some limitations. First, the data used are pooled cross-sectional data. Although continuous across years, they are not balanced panel data, preventing tracking observations of the same respondents and limiting the study of the continuous effects of integrity education at the individual level. Second, this paper uses the public’s willingness to report corruption as the behavioral dependent variable, and there is certainly a difference between willingness and actual behavior. Future research could use tracking surveys, especially obtaining behavioral data, to further reveal the relationships and evolution paths between individual cognition, attitude, willingness, and behavior, and systematically explore the long-term effects of integrity education.