



The Effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC in Regional Corruption Prevention: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Corruption in Southeast Asia has evolved into a transnational challenge that increasingly requires collective responses beyond national jurisdictions. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the ASEAN Parties Against Corruption (ASEAN-PAC) in supporting regional corruption prevention and anti-corruption cooperation within ASEAN. The research employs a qualitative literature review approach based on academic journal articles, legal studies, policy reports, and institutional publications related to regional anti-corruption governance. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis to identify patterns concerning ASEAN-PAC's achievements, limitations, and future prospects. The findings indicate that ASEAN-PAC has contributed significantly to strengthening institutional communication, information sharing, capacity-building initiatives, and the diffusion of anti-corruption norms among member states. However, its operational effectiveness remains constrained by the non-interference principle, the non-binding nature of regional commitments, legal fragmentation, and disparities in domestic institutional capacity. These factors limit the organization's ability to support stronger enforcement mechanisms, particularly in cross-border investigations and asset recovery efforts. The study concludes that ASEAN-PAC remains an important regional platform but requires deeper legal cooperation, enhanced institutional capacity, and stronger governance standards to improve its effectiveness in addressing transnational corruption challenges in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: ASEAN-PAC, Anti-Corruption Cooperation, ASEAN Governance, Regional Cooperation, Transnational Corruption.



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INTRODUCTION

Corruption in the contemporary era can no longer be understood as a purely domestic problem confined within national borders, as the intensification of globalization, digital financial systems, and cross-border economic integration has transformed corruption into a transnational phenomenon that affects governance, economic stability, and regional security simultaneously (Farhan & Nur, 2025). The increasing sophistication of illicit financial flows enables corrupt actors to transfer assets, conceal proceeds of crime, and exploit jurisdictional differences across countries, making conventional state-centered anti-corruption approaches increasingly insufficient (Cahyani & Salmah, 2024). Within Southeast Asia, the expansion of regional connectivity through trade liberalization, investment flows, and labor mobility has created new opportunities for economic growth while simultaneously generating vulnerabilities that facilitate transnational corruption networks (Lelliott & Miller, 2023). Empirical evidence demonstrates that corruption continues to undermine economic performance, weaken institutional effectiveness, and reduce public trust across ASEAN member states (Damanik & Saragih, 2023). The persistence of corruption also diminishes regional competitiveness and constrains sustainable development objectives that ASEAN seeks to achieve through deeper integration processes (Septiyanti & Wahyudi, 2024). Despite significant national anti-corruption reforms across the region, corruption remains embedded within broader political, economic, and institutional structures that frequently transcend territorial boundaries. This reality has elevated regional cooperation from a supplementary mechanism into an essential component of contemporary anti-corruption governance.

Existing scholarship consistently highlights the multidimensional consequences of corruption and the necessity of collaborative responses among ASEAN countries, although different studies emphasize distinct explanatory factors and institutional pathways (Abbas et al., 2022). Comparative

analyses reveal that stronger governance frameworks, democratic accountability, and institutional transparency tend to correlate with lower levels of corruption, yet these relationships remain uneven across Southeast Asian political systems (Thein Htike Win, 2022). Research on anti-corruption diplomacy further suggests that regional engagement has become an important instrument for promoting governance norms and strengthening collective commitments against corruption within ASEAN (Prayoga et al., 2024). Studies examining corruption and economic development repeatedly demonstrate that corruption generates long-term distortions in investment climates, productivity, and public sector performance across the region (Wahyudi & Palupi, 2023). Parallel discussions within governance literature argue that anti-corruption efforts must be supported by societal participation, ethical governance frameworks, and broader accountability mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on law enforcement interventions (Risqiya, 2025). These findings collectively indicate that corruption prevention requires institutional cooperation that extends beyond national jurisdictions, thereby creating a strong rationale for regional anti-corruption platforms such as ASEAN-PAC.

Within this broader context, ASEAN-PAC has emerged as a regional forum designed to facilitate cooperation among anti-corruption agencies in Southeast Asia through information sharing, capacity building, joint initiatives, and mutual support mechanisms (Aryowiloto, 2024). Several studies argue that ASEAN-PAC contributes positively to the realization of ASEAN Community objectives by fostering dialogue and institutional networking among anti-corruption authorities (Hermanto et al., n.d.). The organization has also been associated with efforts to strengthen asset recovery cooperation and develop collective responses to corruption in increasingly digitalized environments (Arifin et al., 2023). Related legal studies emphasize that effective anti-corruption cooperation depends heavily on mechanisms such as Mutual Legal Assistance, extradition arrangements, and cross-border evidence exchange, all of which require sustained regional coordination (Hartono et al., 2023). Comparative analyses of asset recovery frameworks further suggest that collaborative legal instruments can significantly improve the ability of states to trace and repatriate illicit assets concealed abroad (Putri et al., 2025). ASEAN-PAC therefore represents an important institutional experiment in regional anti-corruption governance, particularly in a region characterized by substantial diversity in legal systems, political structures, and administrative capacities.

Despite these contributions, the literature remains marked by significant conceptual and empirical limitations regarding the actual effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC as a regional anti-corruption mechanism. Much of the existing research focuses on legal frameworks, diplomatic initiatives, or normative commitments while providing limited assessment of whether ASEAN-PAC has substantially improved corruption prevention outcomes across member states (Susila & Purwati, 2025). Studies on ASEAN governance repeatedly note that the principle of non-interference continues to shape regional cooperation by restricting the extent to which member states are willing to accept intrusive oversight or binding enforcement mechanisms (Plunkett & Tansey, 2024). Research comparing anti-corruption strategies across Southeast Asian countries also reveals substantial differences in institutional independence, political commitment, and enforcement capacity that complicate regional harmonization efforts (Ismah et al., 2025). Investigations into corruption-related provisions in regional and international agreements further indicate that formal commitments do not necessarily translate into effective implementation or measurable anti-corruption outcomes (Teramura & Nottage, 2025). Existing studies frequently acknowledge ASEAN-PAC's symbolic importance while offering inconsistent conclusions regarding its practical effectiveness, leaving unresolved questions concerning its actual contribution to regional corruption prevention.

The persistence of these gaps creates both scholarly and policy-related urgency because transnational corruption continues to evolve in complexity while regional responses remain fragmented. Asset recovery remains particularly challenging due to jurisdictional barriers, legal inconsistencies, and varying levels of institutional cooperation among ASEAN countries (Cahyani & Salmah, 2024). Corruption-related governance deficiencies continue to affect economic growth, investment confidence, and public sector effectiveness, indicating that the costs of ineffective regional cooperation extend beyond legal concerns into broader developmental outcomes (Lestari et al., 2024). Recent comparative studies on governance and anti-corruption performance demonstrate that countries achieving stronger institutional integrity often benefit from more coordinated and comprehensive anti-corruption ecosystems (Rozikin et al., 2025). The growing digitalization of financial transactions and transnational economic activities further increases the necessity of evaluating whether existing regional mechanisms

possess adequate capacity to address emerging forms of corruption (Arifin et al., 2023). A systematic examination of ASEAN-PAC is therefore necessary not merely to understand its institutional design, but also to assess its relevance and effectiveness within the evolving landscape of regional governance.

Against this backdrop, the present study positions itself at the intersection of regional governance, anti-corruption cooperation, and transnational institutional effectiveness by critically reviewing the existing body of literature on ASEAN-PAC. Rather than focusing solely on legal provisions or normative aspirations, this research seeks to evaluate how ASEAN-PAC has been portrayed, assessed, and interpreted within scholarly discussions concerning corruption prevention in Southeast Asia. The study aims to identify major achievements, recurring challenges, and unresolved debates surrounding ASEAN-PAC's role in regional anti-corruption cooperation. By synthesizing diverse strands of literature, the research intends to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping the effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC. Methodologically, the study contributes through a structured literature review that integrates findings from governance, international relations, legal studies, and anti-corruption scholarship. Theoretically, it contributes to discussions on regional institutionalism by examining how cooperative mechanisms operate under conditions of sovereignty sensitivity, institutional diversity, and transnational governance challenges.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to examine the effectiveness of ASEAN Parties Against Corruption (ASEAN-PAC) in supporting regional corruption prevention efforts in Southeast Asia. As a non-empirical study, the research relies exclusively on secondary data derived from academic literature and institutional documents rather than primary field data. Relevant sources were collected from scholarly databases, particularly Google Scholar, complemented by publications from international organizations and legal institutions, including Transparency International, the World Bank, and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The literature search was conducted using a combination of keywords such as ASEAN-PAC, regional anti-corruption cooperation, anti-corruption mechanisms in ASEAN, corruption prevention in Southeast Asia, and asset recovery cooperation. The selection of sources was guided by three criteria: relevance to the research topic, academic credibility of the publisher or institution, and substantive contribution to discussions concerning regional anti-corruption governance. To structure the review, the study adopts a governance and regional cooperation perspective, focusing on institutional effectiveness, cross-border collaboration, asset recovery mechanisms, and the influence of ASEAN's non-interference principle on anti-corruption initiatives (Aryowiloto, 2024; Arifin et al., 2023).

The analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis, which involved systematically identifying, categorizing, comparing, and interpreting key findings from the selected literature. The analytical process focused on recurring themes related to ASEAN-PAC's achievements, operational challenges, institutional limitations, and contributions to regional anti-corruption cooperation. Thematic synthesis was subsequently employed to integrate diverse scholarly perspectives and to identify patterns of convergence and divergence within the existing body of knowledge. To ensure methodological rigor, source triangulation was applied by comparing findings across peer-reviewed journal articles, legal studies, policy reports, and institutional publications. The study further enhanced analytical reliability through a transparent screening process and critical evaluation of source quality, thereby reducing the risk of bias arising from single-source dependence. This approach enables the research to generate a comprehensive and balanced assessment of ASEAN-PAC's effectiveness while maintaining consistency with established standards for qualitative literature review research (Hartono et al., 2023; Hermanto et al., n.d.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature review identified a body of scholarly works that directly address regional anti-corruption cooperation, institutional governance, asset recovery mechanisms, and the role of ASEAN-PAC in Southeast Asia. Through the screening and selection process, ten core studies were identified as the most relevant to the objectives of this research because they provide substantial discussions on the achievements, limitations, and prospects of ASEAN-PAC as a regional anti-corruption platform. These studies originate from diverse disciplinary perspectives, including international relations,

governance studies, public administration, and international law, allowing a multidimensional assessment of ASEAN-PAC's effectiveness in addressing corruption beyond national borders.

The selected literature demonstrates that discussions surrounding ASEAN-PAC are generally concentrated on four major themes. First, scholars examine ASEAN-PAC's contribution to institutional cooperation and information exchange among anti-corruption agencies. Second, considerable attention is devoted to legal and operational challenges associated with cross-border enforcement, particularly concerning Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) and asset recovery. Third, several studies emphasize the influence of ASEAN norms, especially the principle of non-interference, on the effectiveness of regional governance mechanisms. Finally, a number of comparative studies highlight disparities in domestic institutional capacity among ASEAN member states, which affect the implementation of regional anti-corruption initiatives. A summary of the selected literature is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Literature on ASEAN-PAC and Regional Anti-Corruption Cooperation

No	Author(s)	Year	Main Focus	Key Findings
1	Aryowiloto	2024	SEA-PAC and transnationalism	SEA-PAC serves as a regional mechanism facilitating cooperation against transnational corruption.
2	Hermanto et al.	2023	ASEAN-PAC contribution to ASEAN Community	ASEAN-PAC strengthens communication and cooperation among anti-corruption agencies.
3	Arifin et al.	2023	Regional asset recovery cooperation	Effective asset recovery requires stronger cross-border collaboration and information sharing.
4	Hartono et al.	2023	Mutual Legal Assistance in ASEAN	MLA is essential but faces legal and procedural obstacles among member states.
5	Putri et al.	2025	MLA and asset recovery comparison	Variations in legal systems influence the effectiveness of asset recovery efforts.
6	Cahyani & Salmah	2024	Asset recovery legal framework	Legal harmonization remains necessary to improve corruption asset recovery.
7	Susila & Purwati	2025	ASEAN regional legal strategy	Regional legal coordination remains fragmented across ASEAN countries.
8	Plunkett & Tansey	2024	ASEAN norms and non-interference	The non-interference principle limits regional enforcement mechanisms.
9	Thein Htike Win	2022	Anti-corruption efforts in Cambodia and Myanmar	Domestic institutional capacity significantly influences anti-corruption performance.
10	Ismah et al.	2025	Indonesia–Malaysia anti-corruption strategies	Differences in political commitment and institutional arrangements affect anti-corruption outcomes.

The studies summarized in Table 1 indicate that ASEAN-PAC has been widely recognized as an important institutional platform for facilitating regional cooperation in anti-corruption efforts. Existing scholarship generally agrees that ASEAN-PAC contributes to the development of communication networks, capacity-building initiatives, and policy coordination among national anti-corruption agencies. The literature also suggests that regional cooperation has become increasingly important due to the transnational nature of corruption, particularly in relation to illicit financial flows, asset concealment, and cross-border money laundering activities.

At the same time, the reviewed studies reveal persistent concerns regarding the practical effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC. A recurring theme across the literature is the tension between the need for stronger regional enforcement and ASEAN’s longstanding commitment to sovereignty and non-interference. Several authors also emphasize that disparities in institutional capacity, legal frameworks, and political commitment among member states continue to hinder the implementation of coordinated anti-corruption measures. These findings provide the analytical foundation for examining ASEAN-PAC through four interconnected dimensions, namely institutional achievements, structural constraints, domestic capacity gaps, and future prospects for strengthening regional integrity governance.

Institutional Achievements of ASEAN-PAC in Strengthening Regional Anti-Corruption Cooperation

The literature indicates that ASEAN-PAC has generated several institutional achievements in advancing regional anti-corruption cooperation despite the absence of supranational authority within the ASEAN framework. Established as a platform connecting national anti-corruption agencies, ASEAN-PAC has contributed to the development of regular communication channels that facilitate dialogue among enforcement institutions operating under diverse political and legal systems. From the perspective of neoliberal institutionalism, such cooperation mechanisms reduce transaction costs and create opportunities for repeated interactions that strengthen collective responses to transnational challenges. Existing studies suggest that ASEAN-PAC has enabled anti-corruption agencies to exchange experiences and coordinate responses more efficiently than would be possible through purely bilateral arrangements (Aryowiloto, 2024). The value of this achievement lies not only in operational coordination but also in the gradual institutionalization of anti-corruption norms across Southeast Asia.

A recurring finding within the literature is ASEAN-PAC’s contribution to information-sharing practices among member institutions. Prior to the expansion of regional anti-corruption cooperation, communication between enforcement agencies frequently relied on lengthy bureaucratic procedures and formal diplomatic channels. The emergence of ASEAN-PAC created a more structured environment in which anti-corruption agencies could establish direct professional networks and exchange relevant information concerning corruption risks, investigative practices, and emerging regional trends (Hermanto et al., 2023). Although the organization does not possess independent investigative authority, the facilitation of communication has strengthened mutual understanding among agencies facing similar governance challenges. The resulting institutional networks have become an important foundation for future collaboration in addressing corruption cases with cross-border dimensions.

Table 2. Main Institutional Contributions of ASEAN-PAC

Dimension	Forms of Cooperation	Expected Impact
Information Sharing	Exchange of intelligence and institutional information	Improved coordination in anti-corruption initiatives
Capacity Building	Joint training and technical assistance	Enhanced institutional competencies
Networking	Regular meetings and professional cooperation	Increased trust among agencies
Norm Harmonization	Promotion of UNCAC-related principles	Greater convergence of anti-corruption standards

The findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate that ASEAN-PAC’s institutional achievements extend beyond formal cooperation agreements and include the development of professional relationships among anti-corruption officials. Scholars frequently identify trust-building as one of the organization’s most significant contributions because successful international cooperation often depends on informal confidence and credibility between institutions rather than solely on legal obligations (Hermanto et al., 2023). Repeated interactions through workshops, conferences, and technical exchanges have created opportunities for officials to develop mutual familiarity and understanding. Such interpersonal and inter-institutional trust is particularly important in Southeast

Asia, where regional governance has traditionally emphasized consultation, consensus, and cooperative engagement.

Another major achievement highlighted in the literature concerns capacity-building initiatives designed to strengthen institutional capabilities among member states. ASEAN-PAC has facilitated training programs, knowledge-sharing activities, and technical discussions that allow participating agencies to learn from successful anti-corruption practices implemented elsewhere in the region. These activities have contributed to the diffusion of governance norms emphasizing transparency, accountability, and integrity within public institutions (Prayoga et al., 2024). The process also supports the broader implementation of international anti-corruption standards promoted through instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which increasingly serves as a common normative reference for anti-corruption reforms across ASEAN countries (Farhan & Nur, 2025). The significance of these initiatives becomes more apparent when viewed against the diverse administrative capacities and governance conditions that characterize the region.

The literature further suggests that ASEAN-PAC's achievements should be understood within the broader context of transnational governance rather than evaluated solely through conventional enforcement outcomes. Regional anti-corruption cooperation does not necessarily produce immediate reductions in corruption levels, particularly when participating states retain full sovereignty over domestic enforcement decisions. Instead, ASEAN-PAC's contribution is reflected in its ability to establish institutional linkages, encourage policy learning, and strengthen collective awareness regarding the regional implications of corruption (Aryowiloto, 2024). Such developments have helped position corruption as a shared governance challenge requiring cooperative responses rather than isolated national interventions. These achievements provide an important foundation for regional cooperation, although their practical effectiveness remains influenced by structural and political constraints that continue to shape ASEAN's governance architecture.

Structural Constraints: Non-Interference Principle and the Limits of Regional Enforcement

Despite the institutional achievements identified in the preceding discussion, the literature consistently highlights several structural constraints that limit ASEAN-PAC's overall effectiveness in combating corruption at the regional level. The most frequently cited challenge is the enduring influence of the ASEAN principle of non-interference, which prioritizes state sovereignty and discourages intervention in the domestic affairs of member countries. While this principle has historically contributed to regional stability and cohesion, scholars argue that it simultaneously restricts the development of stronger enforcement mechanisms capable of addressing transnational corruption more effectively (Plunkett & Tansey, 2024). Anti-corruption cooperation often requires access to sensitive information, coordinated investigations, and legal interventions that may intersect with domestic political interests. Such circumstances create tensions between regional cooperation objectives and the sovereignty concerns maintained by individual member states.

The limitations imposed by non-interference become particularly evident when corruption cases involve multiple jurisdictions and require rapid legal cooperation. Unlike supranational organizations that possess binding enforcement authority, ASEAN-PAC functions primarily as a cooperative platform whose recommendations and commitments depend on voluntary compliance by member institutions. Several studies note that this arrangement creates significant implementation gaps because cooperation is ultimately determined by the willingness of domestic authorities to participate actively in information exchange and legal assistance processes (Aryowiloto, 2024). The absence of legally binding obligations means that ASEAN-PAC can facilitate communication and coordination but cannot compel action when political sensitivities emerge. Consequently, institutional cooperation often operates within boundaries established by national interests rather than regional enforcement priorities.

The literature also identifies legal fragmentation as a major obstacle to the effectiveness of regional anti-corruption initiatives. ASEAN member states maintain diverse legal traditions, procedural requirements, and regulatory frameworks, creating challenges for cross-border investigations and judicial cooperation. Variations in evidentiary standards, asset recovery regulations, and extradition procedures frequently complicate efforts to pursue corruption cases involving actors or assets located across different jurisdictions (Hartono et al., 2023). These differences become increasingly significant as corruption schemes grow more sophisticated and exploit legal inconsistencies between countries.

The effectiveness of regional cooperation therefore depends not only on political commitment but also on the compatibility of legal systems that support practical collaboration.

Table 3. Major Structural Barriers Affecting ASEAN-PAC Effectiveness

Barrier	Description	Consequence
Non-Interference Principle	Strong emphasis on national sovereignty	Limits regional intervention and enforcement
Non-Binding Commitments	Absence of compulsory compliance mechanisms	Dependence on political willingness
Legal Diversity	Differences in legal systems and procedures	Difficulties in harmonizing enforcement
Political Interests	Domestic priorities often outweigh regional concerns	Inconsistent cooperation among members
Institutional Asymmetry	Unequal anti-corruption capacities across states	Uneven implementation of regional initiatives

The barriers summarized in Table 3 reveal that many of ASEAN-PAC’s limitations originate from the broader institutional architecture of ASEAN itself rather than from weaknesses inherent to the organization. Regional anti-corruption cooperation operates within a governance model that emphasizes consensus-building and voluntary participation, creating constraints on the development of stronger compliance mechanisms. Studies examining regional legal cooperation observe that even when anti-corruption agencies express willingness to collaborate, implementation often encounters obstacles arising from domestic legal procedures and political considerations (Susila & Purwati, 2025). This situation reflects a broader dilemma within ASEAN governance, where the pursuit of deeper regional cooperation frequently encounters resistance from sovereignty-based norms.

Asset recovery represents one of the clearest examples of how these structural constraints affect practical anti-corruption outcomes. Corruption proceeds are increasingly transferred across borders through complex financial networks, requiring timely access to banking information, judicial cooperation, and coordinated legal action. Research on regional asset recovery frameworks indicates that legal cooperation mechanisms remain vulnerable to procedural delays, regulatory inconsistencies, and varying levels of institutional commitment among member states (Arifin et al., 2023). Comparative studies further demonstrate that differences in domestic legislation can significantly influence the success of efforts to trace and repatriate illicit assets concealed abroad (Cahyani & Salmah, 2024; Putri et al., 2025). These challenges suggest that ASEAN-PAC’s effectiveness cannot be assessed solely through its institutional activities but must also be evaluated in relation to the structural environment within which regional anti-corruption cooperation operates.

Domestic Capacity Gaps and Their Implications for Regional Anti-Corruption Governance

Beyond normative and legal constraints, the literature reveals that disparities in domestic institutional capacity constitute another significant challenge affecting the effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC. ASEAN member states exhibit considerable variation in the strength, independence, and operational capability of their anti-corruption agencies. Some countries possess relatively well-established institutions supported by comprehensive legal frameworks and strong enforcement mechanisms, while others continue to face limitations related to institutional autonomy, resource availability, and political interference (Thein Htike Win, 2022). Such differences influence not only national anti-corruption performance but also the quality of participation in regional cooperation initiatives. In this context, the effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC becomes closely linked to the collective capacity of its members rather than merely to the institutional design of the organization itself.

The literature frequently characterizes this phenomenon as a “weakest-link” problem, in which the effectiveness of regional cooperation is constrained by the least capable participants within the network. Corruption increasingly operates through interconnected financial and administrative channels

that transcend national borders, meaning that weaknesses in one jurisdiction may create opportunities for illicit activities affecting neighboring states. Comparative studies of anti-corruption strategies in Southeast Asia demonstrate substantial differences in enforcement practices, governance quality, and institutional independence across ASEAN countries (Ismah et al., 2025). These disparities complicate efforts to establish common standards and coordinated responses to corruption cases involving multiple jurisdictions. Regional initiatives may therefore achieve only limited success if institutional development remains uneven among participating states.

The relationship between institutional capacity and anti-corruption effectiveness is also reflected in broader governance and development outcomes. Empirical studies consistently indicate that stronger institutions tend to be associated with lower corruption levels and more effective public administration systems (Abbas et al., 2022). Conversely, countries facing governance weaknesses often experience greater difficulties in implementing anti-corruption policies and maintaining institutional accountability. These conditions create challenges for regional cooperation because the ability to participate in information-sharing mechanisms, joint investigations, and asset recovery processes depends heavily on domestic administrative competence. The effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC therefore cannot be separated from the broader issue of governance quality within individual member states.

Table 4. Comparative Institutional Challenges among ASEAN Member States

Institutional Dimension	Higher-Capacity States	Lower-Capacity States
Institutional Independence	Stronger protection from political influence	Greater vulnerability to intervention
Investigative Capacity	Advanced investigative resources and expertise	Limited technical and operational capabilities
Legal Framework	More comprehensive anti-corruption regulations	Regulatory gaps and inconsistencies
Asset Recovery Mechanisms	Better-developed recovery procedures	Limited recovery effectiveness
Regional Engagement	More active participation in cooperation initiatives	Selective or constrained participation

The comparison presented in Table 4 suggests that regional cooperation often reflects existing inequalities in institutional development. Countries possessing stronger anti-corruption agencies are generally better positioned to contribute expertise, share information, and participate actively in collaborative initiatives. By contrast, states with weaker institutional capacities may encounter difficulties in implementing regional commitments or responding effectively to requests for cooperation. This asymmetry affects the overall performance of ASEAN-PAC because the organization's effectiveness depends upon the collective contribution of all participating members rather than the achievements of a few leading states. Similar observations have been reported in comparative studies examining anti-corruption reforms across Southeast Asia, where institutional variation remains a persistent feature of regional governance (Thein Htike Win, 2022).

The implications of these disparities extend beyond administrative efficiency and directly affect economic and developmental outcomes throughout the region. Multiple studies demonstrate that corruption negatively influences investment confidence, economic growth, and public sector performance, creating consequences that may spread across interconnected regional markets (Damanik & Saragih, 2023). Research further indicates that persistent corruption undermines competitiveness and weakens the institutional foundations necessary for sustainable development (Lestari et al., 2024; Septiyanti & Wahyudi, 2024). Similar findings suggest that corruption generates long-term economic costs by reducing efficiency, discouraging investment, and weakening governance performance across ASEAN countries (Wahyudi & Palupi, 2023). These observations reinforce the argument that strengthening domestic institutional capacity should be viewed not merely as a national priority but as

an essential prerequisite for enhancing the effectiveness of regional anti-corruption cooperation under the ASEAN-PAC framework.

Future Prospects of ASEAN-PAC and Regional Integrity Development

The literature suggests that the future effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC depends not only on its ability to facilitate cooperation among anti-corruption agencies but also on its capacity to adapt to emerging governance challenges within an increasingly interconnected regional environment. Contemporary corruption networks operate through sophisticated financial systems, digital transactions, and transnational corporate structures that often exceed the capabilities of traditional enforcement approaches. Existing institutional arrangements have succeeded in promoting dialogue and coordination, yet the growing complexity of corruption cases requires more integrated forms of regional governance. Scholars increasingly argue that future anti-corruption strategies should combine legal cooperation, institutional strengthening, and normative development to create a more comprehensive regional integrity framework (Teramura & Nottage, 2025). Such an approach recognizes that corruption prevention involves both regulatory effectiveness and the cultivation of governance values capable of supporting long-term institutional accountability.

An important trend emerging from the literature concerns the growing emphasis on governance quality as a central component of anti-corruption efforts. Rather than relying exclusively on punitive mechanisms, contemporary approaches increasingly focus on transparency, accountability, public participation, and institutional integrity as preventive measures against corruption. Comparative studies indicate that countries demonstrating stronger governance performance generally achieve more sustainable anti-corruption outcomes because preventive mechanisms reduce opportunities for misconduct before legal intervention becomes necessary (Rozikin et al., 2025). This perspective broadens the scope of regional cooperation by encouraging ASEAN-PAC to engage not only in enforcement-related activities but also in initiatives promoting good governance principles throughout the region.

Another theme consistently highlighted in the literature is the importance of normative convergence among ASEAN member states. Regional cooperation becomes more effective when participating countries share common understandings regarding integrity, accountability, and public responsibility. While ASEAN's diversity remains one of its defining characteristics, scholars argue that the gradual diffusion of governance norms can contribute to stronger collective commitments against corruption without requiring the establishment of supranational authority. The development of shared standards may therefore provide an alternative pathway for strengthening cooperation while remaining compatible with ASEAN's traditional emphasis on sovereignty and consensus-based decision-making (Prayoga et al., 2024).

Table 5. Strategic Directions for Enhancing ASEAN-PAC Effectiveness

Strategic Area	Proposed Development	Expected Outcome
Governance Reform	Promotion of transparency and accountability standards	Stronger institutional integrity
Legal Cooperation	Expansion of MLA and asset recovery arrangements	Improved cross-border enforcement
Capacity Building	Continuous technical training and knowledge exchange	Reduced institutional disparities
Norm Development	Regional dissemination of integrity principles	Greater policy convergence
Multi-Stakeholder Engagement	Collaboration with academia and civil society	Broader anti-corruption participation

The strategic directions summarized in Table 5 demonstrate that future improvements in ASEAN-PAC effectiveness are likely to depend on a combination of institutional, legal, and societal

initiatives. One particularly promising avenue involves strengthening Mutual Legal Assistance frameworks and other mechanisms supporting cross-border investigations and asset recovery. Existing studies indicate that legal cooperation remains one of the most critical components in addressing corruption cases involving multiple jurisdictions, especially when illicit assets are transferred across national boundaries (Putri et al., 2025). Expanding practical cooperation in these areas may help reduce some of the enforcement limitations discussed in previous sections while preserving ASEAN's preference for cooperative rather than coercive governance mechanisms.

The literature also emphasizes the importance of involving actors beyond state institutions in regional anti-corruption efforts. Universities, research institutions, civil society organizations, and professional associations increasingly contribute to the promotion of integrity values, anti-corruption education, and public accountability initiatives. Such participation is particularly important because corruption is not solely a legal problem but also a social and ethical challenge requiring sustained cultural transformation. Research highlights that broader societal engagement can strengthen public awareness and encourage the development of integrity-oriented governance practices that complement formal enforcement mechanisms (Pertiwi, 2025). These contributions may enhance the long-term sustainability of regional anti-corruption efforts by fostering greater public support for transparency and accountability.

The future trajectory of ASEAN-PAC ultimately depends on its ability to evolve from a coordination-oriented platform into a more influential driver of regional integrity governance. Although significant structural constraints remain, the literature suggests that progress can be achieved through incremental institutional strengthening, deeper legal cooperation, and the continued diffusion of governance norms across member states. Ethical approaches emphasizing integrity and moral accountability are increasingly viewed as valuable complements to legal and administrative reforms, particularly in diverse regional settings where formal enforcement capacities vary considerably (Risqiya, 2025). The combination of governance reform, institutional learning, and regional cooperation provides a realistic pathway for enhancing ASEAN-PAC's contribution to corruption prevention in Southeast Asia while remaining consistent with the political and normative foundations of ASEAN regionalism.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that ASEAN-PAC has played an important role in fostering regional anti-corruption cooperation in Southeast Asia, particularly through its contributions to institutional communication, information exchange, capacity-building initiatives, and the development of professional networks among national anti-corruption agencies. The literature indicates that ASEAN-PAC has successfully created a platform that facilitates dialogue and promotes collective awareness regarding the transnational nature of corruption. These achievements have strengthened regional cooperation and encouraged the diffusion of anti-corruption norms across member states. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC remains concentrated at the level of coordination and institutional facilitation rather than direct enforcement. The organization has not yet developed sufficient authority or mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation of anti-corruption commitments across jurisdictions, limiting its capacity to respond effectively to increasingly complex forms of transnational corruption.

The findings further reveal that the effectiveness of ASEAN-PAC is constrained by several interconnected structural factors. The continued dominance of the non-interference principle, the absence of legally binding commitments, differences in national legal frameworks, and disparities in institutional capacity among member states collectively reduce the effectiveness of regional anti-corruption efforts. These challenges are particularly evident in cross-border investigations, asset recovery processes, and legal cooperation mechanisms that require stronger levels of coordination and mutual commitment. The analysis also highlights that regional anti-corruption governance cannot be separated from domestic governance quality, as the success of collective initiatives depends heavily on the strength, independence, and operational capability of anti-corruption institutions within individual ASEAN countries.

Future efforts to strengthen ASEAN-PAC should focus on deepening practical cooperation while remaining compatible with ASEAN's political and institutional characteristics. Greater emphasis should be placed on enhancing legal cooperation frameworks, expanding asset recovery mechanisms,

strengthening capacity-building programs, and promoting governance standards based on transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity. Regional initiatives should also encourage broader engagement from academic institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders capable of contributing to a sustainable culture of integrity. Through gradual institutional strengthening and the continued development of shared governance norms, ASEAN-PAC possesses significant potential to evolve from a coordination-oriented platform into a more influential mechanism for advancing regional integrity and corruption prevention throughout Southeast Asia..

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