Editorial: Rethinking the fight against financial crime

This issue of the *Journal of Financial Crime* brings together diverse contributions that examine the interactions between corruption, regulation, technology and enforcement. In today's world where financial instability, political distrust and digital transformation are shaping academic discourse, articles in this issue establish that the ways to fight financial crime is through future innovation and having strong institutions and local awareness. While the breadth of topics within the issue offers a plethora of avenues for discussion, it is equally compelling to understand how these themes connect across the issue to shape proposals for change.

Several articles in this issue evaluate how well anti-corruption mechanisms work where institutions are weak or still developing. Guritno *et al.* (2025) explore how public sector remuneration policies act as a moderator for the rule of law, regarding corruption levels in developing countries. Similarly, Zabyelina and Pozsgai-Alvarez (2025) examine whether anti-corruption frameworks are linked to transparency, secrecy and fraud prevention across jurisdictions in the Western Hemisphere. One of the interesting outcomes that these studies contribute involves the role of institutional and anti-corruption strengthening relative to decreased secrecy and increased transparency. A trend has been observed in which greater implementation of anti-corruption policy is accompanied by more fraud incidents and increased corruption. This observation can act as a reminder for governments regarding the importance of simplicity and clear definitions when drafting legislation.

Two papers explore Nigeria as a key site of analysis, providing insights on anti-corruption efforts, while making recommendations for improvement. Umar *et al.* (2025) analyse the financial incentive for whistleblowing policy, which was introduced in 2016 and then consequently failed to encourage whistleblowing for 6 years post-implementation. For example, in the UK, whistleblowing is protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998; however, whistleblowers still often face retaliation, social ostracism or even career setbacks, which are all aspects that are touched upon within the article. Interestingly, Salihu (2025) re-examines the "fraud hexagon" model, comprising opportunity, pressure, rationalisation, capability, arrogance and collusion, and explores how as causative components of fraud influence regulatory undertakings and corporate disclosures in deterring corruption. The contributions by Umar *et al.* (2025) and Salihu (2025) demonstrate how anti-corruption efforts must be embedded in broader political and institutional reforms if they are to succeed.

The theme of professional accountability and fraud management also act as a focal point in this issue. Jiménez Serrano *et al.* (2025) offer a combined quantitative and qualitative assessment of how fraud manifests within organisations and how it is managed, or mismanaged, in practice. Sanseverino and DePrizio (2025) examine the importance of accounting professionals in guiding multinational companies, focusing on those that aim to address human rights violations and corruption. As professional service providers become both targets and gatekeepers in the fight against financial crime, the boundaries of responsibility, legal, ethical and territorial, continue to shift. The issue of professional accountability remains an important topic of public debate given exposés, like the Panama Papers, which show the extent of white-collar crime and the use of anonymous shell companies to facilitate corporate financial crimes (ICIJ, 2016). Given the further exposés by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) highlight the need for continued research into accountability and the management of responsibility and anti-corruption policies within organisations.

Digitalisation and the future of enforcement are also central to this issue. Cardão-Pito (2025) assesses the geopolitical implications of decentralised finance using the Binance saga as context through which to examine regulatory evasion, jurisdictional arbitrage and state sovereignty. The collapse of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX in 2022 revealed how decentralised and lightly regulated financial systems can operate beyond the effective reach of national regulators, creating enforcement deficiencies across multiple jurisdictions (Tiwari *et al.*, 2025). Meanwhile, Trabelsi *et al.* (2025) demonstrate how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to reveal criminal characteristics. This is an intriguing development, as AI-based tools, such as transaction anomaly detection systems have enabled financial institutions to flag suspicious patterns in real time, allowing for earlier intervention in fraud and money-laundering cases (Flinders *et al.*, 2025). Digitalisation and AI are areas that will only grow in relevance as financial crime becomes more technologically advanced and sophisticated.

Regional insights further highlight this issue's global relevance, with international focus turning towards South Africa and Colombia. Sullivan *et al.* (2025) offer practical lessons and normative arguments in favour of asset forfeiture, while Macias and Farfan-Lievano's (2025) case study in elite collusion reveal how a leading stockbroker defrauded its investors by enriching its directors. These studies remind us that emerging markets are not just passive recipients of global norms, but also resist and innovate in the fight against financial crime. While both jurisdictions have a history of cases relating to asset forfeiture, for example, the Gupta family case in South Africa, and the 2012 InterBolsa case in Colombia (see Murphy and Bocanegra, 2012; Smith, 2021), ongoing research on these topics allows for new and relevant recommendations for change.

Finally, the article by Kalembe *et al.* (2025) offers important insights into how individual nudges as behavioural or psychological interventions can improve tax compliance among small and medium enterprises. They critically evaluate the positive effects of reminders, social norms and simplified tax laws when it comes to tax compliance. The theory of nudges being used for tax compliance has been a "hot" topic of research since 2024, and the results show that nudges work positively across various jurisdictions, including Uganda (Kalembe *et al.*, 2025) and Lebanon (Ficani and Mekdessi, 2024). As Fellner *et al.* (2013) found, people who receive a letter as a reminder are "four times more likely to pay tax" than those who did not receive a letter. These observations are important in understanding the measures required for improved tax compliance.

The articles within this issue draw from different perspectives to provide a comprehensive view of financial crime. They highlight that while laws and regulations remain key, they are not sufficient on their own. Virtues, like institutional legitimacy, professional ethics, data capability and political will, remain central to creating lasting solutions for financial crime prevention. As editors of the *Journal of Financial Crime*, we are encouraged by the diverse approaches and perspectives represented within this issue. We hope that this issue serves as both a scholarly contribution and a policy resource, inviting further dialogue across disciplines and jurisdictions.

Marina Aristodemou
Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

References

Cardão-Pito, T. (2025), "Can cryptocurrency exchanges threaten sovereign states? Lessons and hypotheses from the Binance case", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1030-1040, doi: 10.1108/JFC-10-2024-0336.

Fellner, G., Sausgruber, R. and Traxler, C. (2013), "Testing enforcement strategies in the field: threat, moral appeal and social information", *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 634-660, doi: 10.1111/jeea.12013.

Ficani, A. and Mekdessi, S. (2024), "The impact of nudge on tax compliance: a study of taxpayers in Lebanon", *Arab Economic and Business Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 142-147, doi: 10.38039/2214-4625.1048.

Flinders, M., Smalley, I. and Schneider, J. (2025), "AI fraud detection in banking", available at: www.ibm.com/think/topics/ai-fraud-detection-in-banking (accessed 8 August 2025).

Guritno, D., Kurniawan, M., Mangkunegara, I. and Wiraatmadja, D. (2025), "Do public sector wages moderate the impact of institutional strengthening on corruption?", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 976-993, doi: 10.1108/JFC-12-2024-0381.

ICIJ (2016), "Panama Papers", available at: www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers (accessed 8 August 2025).

Jiménez Serrano, J., Delgado Rodriguez, M., Rodriguez Iglesias, I. and López Pérez, R.M. (2025), "Misappropriation of assets: a quantitative and qualitative analysis of occupational fraud management in organizations", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 994-1013, 10.1108/JFC-01-2025-0016.

Kalembe, D., Odongo, J., Kaawaase, T.K., Kalusa, L. and Okello, J. (2025), "Nudges as a panacea for tax compliance: a developing country perspective", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1099-1119, doi: 10.1108/JFC-02-2025-0038.

Macias, H.A. and Farfan-Lievano, A. (2025), "White-collar fraudsters in an emerging market: the case of Interbolsa in Colombia", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1120-1135, doi: 10.1108/JFC-09-2024-0291.

Murphy, H. and Bocanegra, N. (2012), "Colombia's Interbolsa brokerage to be liquidated", available at: www.reuters.com/article/business/colombias-interbolsa-brokerage-to-be-liquidated-idUSBRE8A61K8 (accessed 8 August 2025).

Salihu, A. (2025), "Re-examining the fraud hexagon through corruption deterrence by regulatory undertakings and corporate disclosures in Nigerian financial institutions", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1014-1029, doi: 10.1108/JFC-08-2024-0262.

Sanseverino, A. and DePrizio, D. (2025), "Extraterritorial laws and the accounting profession", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1080-1098, doi: 10.1108/JFC-04-2025-0102.

Smith, B. (2021), "How allies of South Africa's infamous Gupta family games the country's diamond trade", available at: www.occrp.org/en/investigation/how-allies-of-south-africas-infamous-gupta-family-gamed-the-countrys-diamond-trade (accessed 8 August 2025).

Sullivan, E.-M., Oellermann, C. and Mcintyre, J.-L. (2025), "Combating cartel behaviour in South Africa: lessons learned and the case for asset forfeiture", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1041-1058, doi: 10.1108/JFC-09-2024-0288.

Tiwari, M., Zhou, Y., Ferrill, J. and Smith, M. (2025), "Crypto crashes: an examination of the Binance and FTX scandals and associated accounting challenges", *The British Accounting Review*, p. 101584, doi: 10.1016/j.bar.2025.101584.

Trabelsi, W., Chaabane, N. and Mahfoudhi, S. (2025), "Uncovering financial crime patterns: a clustering approach to offender typologies", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1152-1169, doi: 10.1108/JFC-11-2024-0356.

Umar, M.A., Olowo, R. and Oyelere, P. (2025), "Rethinking financial incentive for whistleblowing in high corruption contexts: lessons from Nigeria", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1136-1151, doi: 10.1108/JFC-06-2024-0171.

Zabyelina, Y. and Pozsgai-Alvarez, J. (2025), "From commitment to impact: unpacking the relationship between anti-corruption implementation, secrecy and fraud", *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 1059-1079, doi: 10.1108/JFC-03-2025-0077.