



Center for Strategic Studies – Jordan University
CORRUPTION: A PUBLIC FIELD SURVEY
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INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts. The phenomenon of corruption ranges from the single act of a payment contradicted by law to an endemic malfunction of a political and economic system. The problem of corruption has been seen either as a structural problem of politics or economics, or as a cultural and individual moral problem. The definition of corruption consequently ranges from the broad terms of “misuse of public power” and “moral decay” to strict legal definitions of corruption as an act of bribery involving a public servant and a transfer of tangible resources.

Accordingly, the study of corruption has been “multi-disciplinary” and dispersed, ranging from universal theoretical modeling to detailed descriptions of single corruption scandals. It has been studied as a problem of political, economic, cultural or moral underdevelopment, and mostly as something in between. The complex nature of corruption has made most observers agree that it pervades many societies and that there are no quick-fix solutions to it. The “Source Book” of Transparency International does for instance maintain that public programmes, government reorganization, law enforcement, public awareness and the creation of institutions to prevent corruption, are but elements in a long-term process. The process needs to be supported from above and below and calls for attitude changes at all levels. Furthermore, it has been noted that corruption does not disappear as countries develop and modernize, but rather that corruption takes on new forms.

DEFINITIONS, FORMS AND PRACTISES

Economic and political competition, government transparency and accountability, coupled with the democratic principles of checks and balances, are necessary instruments to restrict corruption and power abuse. Most of these mechanisms are also largely the same instruments suggested for consolidating and enhancing democratic rule and “good governance”.

The decisive role of the state is reflected in most definitions of corruption, which is usually delineated as a particular (and, one could say, perverted) state-society relation. Corruption is conventionally understood, and referred to, as the private wealth-seeking behavior of someone who represents the state and the public authority. It is the misuse of public resources by public officials, for private gains. It is the abuse of public power for private benefit (or profit). Corruption may exist in the ‘gray area’ - at the interface

of the public and private sectors - as a transaction between private and public sector actors through which collective goods are illegitimately converted into private payoffs.

An updated version with the same elements identifies corruption as “behavior that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private and interchangeable motives such as wealth, power, or status”.

By looking at the different kinds of resources transferred, a distinction has been made between corruption in economic terms and corruption in social terms. Economic corruption takes place in a market-like situation and entails an exchange of cash or material goods, which is basic to corruption. This is a strict definition of corruption, reflected in the regulations that stipulate limits to what amounts can be “given” before it is considered a bribe. Transfers, however, are not only in cash or other tangibles, however since the exchange takes place in a social setting with a number of cultural and moral meanings.

From this sociocultural perspective, some main forms or manifestations of corruption can be identified. For pragmatic research purposes, the working definitions may be used and applied in the Arab/Islamic cultural contexts (including Jordan) and, indeed, in similar socio-cultural environments in the Less Developed World.

In terms of public perception field surveys, these ‘corrupt practices’ were structured in a questionnaire form, operationalized, explored, documented, measured and analyzed. The main ‘practices’ considered by the Centre for Strategic Studies - Jordan University in this survey are: Bribery, Embezzlement, Fraud, Extortion, Favoritism and Nepotism (the last two are broadly defined as ‘Wasta’). As shown in Annex (A), the concepts, and their Arabic equivalents, are more or less clearly defined. The survey questions, as in Annex (B), presented the respondents with examples of such practices to evaluate and appraise.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CSS SURVEY

The survey aimed at exploring the attitudes and perceptions of a national public sample of respondents to the corruption phenomenon in Jordan; its significance and importance; its prevalence in government ministries and offices and formal institutions and public services establishments. The survey also aimed at understanding the respondents' evaluation of the role, performance and effectiveness of a number of institutions in the public sector and in civil society in the areas of control, follow-up and disclosure of corrupt practices such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud and favoritism/wasta. The field study also sought to solicit the views of the public on the role, performance and effectiveness of a number of institutions in the public sector as well as in civil society in following up, controlling and disclosing corrupt practices. These include the anti-corruption department, the public accounting bureau, the control and inspection bureau, the legal system, the parliament, the media and the NGO's. The survey also tried to discern the attitude of the public toward tolerance or rejection of such corrupt practices.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A random sample of 1200 people over the age of 18 were interviewed face-to-face in Jordan's 12 Governorates during the period 10-15 February 2002. The interviews were conducted in randomly selected homes, and the respondents inside each unit were also randomly selected. Following data collection and questionnaire screening, 1139 entries were tabulated and analyzed.

Sample Characteristics:

Sex: 49.5% were Male, 49.5% Female.

Occupation and Workforce Distribution:

Employed: 28% of the sample respondents; (of whom 36% are in the Government/Public Sector, and 63% in Private Sector, which includes the Self-Employed);

Non-employed: 72% of the sample respondents (persons who are retired and not working, unable or not available for or not seeking work/ Students / Housewives/).

Education: 11% Literate and Semi-Literate, 65% Completed Secondary/Vocational Education, 23% College and University Education

Marital Status: 71% Married, 27% Single

Country of Origin: 55% Jordanians, 44% Jordanians of Palestinian Origin.

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The CSS Public Field Survey on Corruption in Jordan: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESULTS

1. The majority of respondents (54%) believe that the most important problem facing Jordan now is the difficult economic situation and the lack of sufficient work opportunities. This perception has been demonstrated in all the recent surveys and public polls conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies in Jordan. It is interesting though that managerial, financial and moral corruption ranked second in this survey – and by (13%) of the sample. In terms of significance, it was paralleled only by the direct Israeli danger and the political stability in the area (13%), followed by the water problem (11%).
2. About a quarter (24%) of the sample believe that corruption exists to a large degree in the Government/Public sector in Jordan, and a larger segment of the respondents, (39%) think that it exists to a medium degree. A smaller proportion (16%) denied the existence of corruption in the Public Sector.
3. A relatively low proportion of the respondents, that account for (6%) of Jordanian adults, referred to a direct experience with corruption situations. However, over a quarter (28%) of the sample, stated that favoritism and ‘wasta’ are, to a large degree, prevalent corrupt practices in the Public Sector, and, in the minds of (51%) of the respondents, are the most widespread. These are followed by embezzlement of public money (16%) and bribery, (13%). Of these respondents, (16%) denied the existence of corruption in the Public Sector.
4. According to (43%) of the respondents, favoritism and wasta enjoy a large measure of social acceptance and tolerance. In the public view, this measure of social tolerance is at its lowest in the cases of fraud, embezzlement, extortion and bribery.
5. The volume and density of corrupt practices in the various public institutions and service facilities are differentially assessed by the following proportions of the survey respondent: (16%) in Social Aid, Building Permits, Income Tax and Water (9% - 7%). The institutions that are believed to be the most involved in corruption are: Public Health, Building Permits, Social Aid and Income Tax.
6. In the view of various portions of the respondents, the practice of favoritism and wasta in particular in some public departments is socially acceptable: Public Health (31%), Education (37%), and Social Aid (31%). These are followed by bribery in the Building Permits Department (16%) Traffic Police and Income Tax (12%).
7. Over one third of the respondents (35%), have not heard of the Anti-Corruption Department (ACD), which had been established six years ago. Those who are aware of the existence and activities of the ACD amount to (50%) of the sample. However, they expressed differential views in appraising its performance and effectiveness in fighting the various forms of corruption in the country. About (45%) of them believe that the ACD succeeded only in fighting small corrupt

cases, and (40%) in medium corruption issues and another (40%) believe that the anti-corruption department succeeded in handling big corruption practices (The percentages of the respondents here go beyond 100% since the type and scale of corruption cases were stated in three separate questions). The survey questionnaire, however, did not ask the respondents to identify their definition of the significance of corruption issues, whether big, medium or small.

8. The overall results of the survey suggest that the public looks with much reserve and little optimism to the prospects of delimiting corruption in the foreseeable future. In their appraisal of the achievements during the last three years, the respondents, in considerable proportions, expressed the view that corruption has increased (30%), or remained unchanged (23%), or simply said they do not know (18%). As for the next three years, (27%) said that corruption practices will increase, and (11%) predicted that they will remain unchanged, and (18%) of the sample said they would not know.
9. The attitude of the skeptics or pessimists toward a successful fight against corruption may be very closely associated with the role and performance of both the public and non-governmental bodies in that direction. The overall response of the respondents was generally lukewarm if not altogether negative toward the efficiency and effectiveness of these institutions in performing the roles they are supposed to play. The Control and Inspection Bureau is perhaps an exception; it is believed to be effective in fighting corruption to a large extent by (25%) of the sample, and to a medium degree by (20%). The proportions were much lower among those respondents who made such evaluation of the activities of other institutions, such as the Accounting Bureau, the House of Deputies, the Media, and the NGOs. According to the responses of (25%) and (23%) of the respondents respectively, the House of Deputies, then the NGO's, have in effect failed completely in fighting corruption.
10. The last section of the survey questionnaire centered on one of the most delicate and sensitive dimensions of this study on corruption. The attitudes of the public here provided a continuum of social and cultural perceptions toward corrupt practices. The spectrum of public views ranged from a measure of social tolerance at one end, to an expectation or demand for subjecting the corrupters to legal accountability at the other. It may be noted here that there is a sense of correspondence between the respondents' attitudes to this issue and their answers to other questions relating to the existence of corrupt practices in the government/public sectors.
11. The measure of tolerance - or mild social acceptance - on the one hand, and the call for legal accountability on the other are consistent with the public perception and assessment of the severity and cost of the respective practice to the public interest. The results suggest that certain proportions of the respondents take the perceived damage to the public interest as the criterion for tolerating corrupt practices or for holding the official corrupters legally responsible for their actions.
12. The range of Tolerance vs. Rejection is, for instance, (29% - 57%) for a parliament candidate who pledges government jobs for his electors. The

proportion of respondents who can show tolerance or demand legal accountability moves on from (29%) against (32%) for an official who secures a public office to one of his friends or relatives; (14%) against (68%) for illegally providing some families with regular cash aid; (4% - 76%) for providing a contractor or bidder with confidential information on a certain tender; (7%) against (72%) for requesting a bribe in cash or in kind; (5%) against (77%) for receiving a financial reward for exempting someone from established fees or charges; and (3%) against (77%) for extortion or blackmail.

13. The rate of those who express tolerance, and those who articulate rejection and demand legal accountability, reaches its minimum and maximum limits (2%) against (32%), in two particular cases: fraud and forgery of documents and data for personal material benefit; and embezzlement and theft of public money in cash or in kind for personal benefit.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1. In order to provide a proper contextual perspective for understanding the salient results of this survey, a number of significant points may have to be taken into account.
 - The CSS data collectors left the field in mid-February 2002, at about the same time the Banking Facilities issue started to be vaguely and sporadically disclosed to - and by - the media in Jordan.
 - Four weeks earlier, and around mid-January, the director of the Anti-Corruption Department (ACD) held a press conference at which he presented an elaborate report on the achievement and activities of his department in the year 2001. The report stated that the ADC had recovered and restored over JOD5 million to the public treasury.
 - The Banking Facilities issue turned out to be one aspect of a major anti-corruption campaign that is still continuing in terms of investigation, follow-up and legal action against growing numbers of corruption suspects in both the public and private sectors. This campaign is being pursued with the strongest political support from the highest level in the state and with relatively wide media coverage. The press coverage and the endorsement of high authorities must have heightened public interest and concern, and enhanced public awareness of this issue which, according to the result of this survey, represents the second most important problem facing Jordan.
2. The CSS corruption survey nevertheless demonstrates that the majority of the Jordanian public were aware that a number of corrupt practices (as defined elsewhere in this study), were widespread in the government public sector. The majority of the respondents believe that the public may show very little social tolerance or acceptance to mild and minor corrupt practices. The public will nevertheless voice a strong rejection – and demand legal accountability and action - against cases that may bring serious damage to public interest, like embezzlement, bribery and fraud/forgery.
3. The majority of the respondents in this survey hold a grim and negative view of the performance of almost all the bodies, in government and in civil society alike, that are supposed to stand against and delimit serious corruption practices in the country. Notable among these deficient bodies that, in the public perception, totally failed to fight corruption in the public sector are the Parliament and the NGOs.
4. Under the circumstances, a second complementary and systematic corruption survey is called for. The objective of the proposed field research would be more or less the same as the aims of this survey. The national public sample, however, would at once include policy-makers and public sector executives, managers in the private business sector, and representatives of the academic, media and intellectual circles.

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ANNEX (A)

Concepts and Definitions

“Bribery” [rashwah] is the payment (in money or kind) that is given or taken in a corrupt relationship. To pay or receive a bribe is corruption per se, and should be understood as the essence of corruption. A bribe is a fixed sum, a certain percentage of a contract, or any other favor in money of kind, usually paid to a state official who can make contracts on behalf of the state or otherwise distribute benefits to companies or individuals, businessmen and clients.

There are many equivalent terms to bribery, like [rashwah, barteel, ikramiyyah, baksheesh,] kickbacks, gratuities, “commercial arrangements”, sweeteners, pay-offs, speed-and-grease money, which are all notions of corruption in terms of the money or favors paid to employees in private enterprises, public officials, and politicians. These are payments or returns needed or demanded to make things pass swifter, smoother or more favorably through the state or government bureaucracies. By “greasing palms” corporations and business interests can for instance buy political favors and escape the full burden of taxation and environmental regulations, they can buy protected markets and monopolies, import/export licenses and quotas, and get access to large state contracts on capital goods, ongoing supplies, major civil engineering projects, construction works, and so on.

“Embezzlement” [Ikhtilas, Sariqah] is theft of resources by people who are put to administer it; it is when disloyal employees steal from their employers. This is a serious offence when public officials are misappropriating public resources, when state official steals from the public institution in which he or she is employed and from resources he is supposed to administer on behalf of the public.

Embezzlement is not considered as corruption from a strict legal point of view, but is included in the broader definitions. In legal terms, corruption is a transaction between two individuals, one state agent and one “civilian”, where the state agent goes beyond the limits of the law and regulations in order to secure himself a personal benefit in the form of a bribe. Embezzlement is regarded as theft because it does not involve the “civilian” side directly. The general public is deprived when public funds are embezzled, but no individual property is stolen and individual citizens are bereft of legal rights to present themselves as forfeited.

“Fraud” [Tazweer, Khidaa’, Ghish] is an economic crime that involves some kind of trickery, swindle or deceit. Fraud involves a manipulation or distortion of information, facts and expertise, by public officials positioned between politicians and citizens, who seeks to draw a private profit. Fraud is when a public official (agent), who is responsible for carrying out the orders or tasks assigned by his superiors (principal), manipulates the flow of information to his private profit; hence the widely used principal-agent or incentive theory employed by economists to study this phenomenon. Fraud is also a broader legal and popular term that covers more than bribery and embezzlement. It is fraud for instance when state agencies and state representatives are engaged in illegal trade networks, counterfeit and racketing, and when Forgery, smuggling and other organized economic crime is propped up by

“official” sanction and/or involvement. It is fraud when politicians and state agents take a share for closing their eyes on economic crimes, and it is serious fraud when they have an active role in it.

“Extortion/Blackmail” [Ibtizaaz/Khawa] is money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or the threats to use force. Blackmailing and extortion are corrupt transactions where money is violently extracted by those who have the power to do it, but where very little is returned to the “clients” (perhaps only some vague promises of exception from further harassment). “Protection” or “security” money can be extorted in the classical, well-known mafia style, where organized criminals use insecurity, harassment and intimidation to extort money, (or ‘Khawa’) from individual citizens, private businesses and public officials.

“Favoritism/Cronyism/ Clientelism” [Mahsoubiyah] [Wastah] is a mechanism of power abuse implying “privatization” and a highly biased distribution of state resources, no matter how these resources have been accumulated in the first place. In popular jargon and, on occasion, in official discourse, the term “wasta” is mistakenly and loosely used to indicate all kinds and forms of corrupt practices, such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud and nepotism. Favoritism is the natural human proclivity to favor friends, family and anybody close and trusted, without proper regard to merit or professional standards or legal legitimacy. It is the penchant of state officials and politicians, who have access to state resources and the power to decide upon the distribution of these, to give preferential treatment to certain people. Clientelist favoritism is the rather everyday proclivity of most people to favor his own kin (family, clan, tribe, ethnic, religious or regional group or friendship cliques). Favoritism or cronyism is for instance to grant an office to a friend or a relative, regardless of merit. It is a basic political mechanism in many authoritarian and semi-democratic countries. In most non-democratic systems, the head of state has for instance the constitutional right to appoint all high-ranking positions, a legal or customary right that exceedingly extends the possibilities for favoritism. It easily adds up to several hundred positions within the ministries, the military and security apparatus. The same process is introduced or activated in the parastatal and public companies, in the diplomatic corps and in the ruling party.

“Nepotism” [Muhabah] is a special form of favoritism, in which an office holder (ruler) prefers his proper kinfolk and family members (wife, brothers and sisters, children, nephews, cousins, in-laws etc.). Many unrestricted heads of state have tried to secure their (precarious) power position by nominating family members to key political, economic and military/security positions in the state apparatus.

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ANNEX (B)

**Key Questions in the CSS Survey on
Corruption in the Public Sector**

(101) What are the three most important problems facing Jordan? Rank the three most important.

Problems:

Difficult economic situation

Water problem

Lack of sufficient work opportunities

Administrative and financial corruption

Moral corruption

Direct Israeli danger

Lack of political stability in the region

Housing problem

Drugs problem

No hope for a better future

Lack of progress in democratic practices

Others (specify)

(102) To what degree do you think that corruption exists in the government/public sector?

(103) Do you think that corruption in the government/public sector has increased, decreased or remained as it was over the last three years? (104) Do you think it will increase, decrease or remain as it is in the next three years?

(105) The corruption phenomenon has been classified into five types or practices. Please rank these types, by department or institution, in terms of their prevalence in the government/public sector. Please rank these types in terms of the damage they cause. (107, 108, 109, 110) Which of these practices enjoys the highest measure of tolerance in the Jordanian society? (Rank tolerance on a scale of I to 5, highest to lowest).

PRACTICES:

Bribe

Embezzlement

Fraud/Forgery

Extortion/Blackmail

Favouritism/Wasta

Institutions and Public Service Departments:

-Public Health

-Education

- Passports
- Traffic Department
- Security And Police Force (Except Traffic)
- Income Tax
- Building Permits
- Social Aid
- Judiciary And Courts
- Water
- Electricity
- Telecommunication
- Posts

(110, 111, 112) In the last 12 months, have you been through an experience where you had to offer something to a government department official to facilitate or fulfill your request? What did you offer this official? In which department?

(113 - 116) In the last 12 months, have you been through an experience where a government department official directly asked you for something to facilitate or fulfill your request? What did this government official ask for? Did you, or did you not, comply with his request, and why? Why did you comply with his request? Give reasons.

(117, 118, 119) Did you report this conduct to any party (governmental or non-governmental)? Which party? (In case of no-reporting) Why didn't you report this to any party? Give reasons

(120) Have you heard of the "anti-corruption department"? (121, 122, 123) What is the percentage of the big corruption cases/ medium corruption cases / small corruption cases that have been eliminated by the anti-corruption department?

(124) In your view, to what degree has each of the following institutions played an effective role in fighting corruption in the government/public sector?

Institutions:

- Accounting Bureau
- Control and Inspection Bureau
- House of Deputies (Parliament)
- The Media
- Civil Organizations

(125) I will cite to you a number of practices and conduct patterns. Please give me your judgment whether this conduct is socially acceptable or unacceptable, and whether it must be subject of legal accountability.

Practices:

1. A candidate to the parliament pledges that, if elected, he would to secure appointment in government offices to a group of his voters.

- 2. An executive official in a government department secures for one of his relatives or friends or acquaintances a formal appointment in a government department or public institution.**
- 3. An official in the government/public system provides confidential or classified information on particular tender to one of the contractors/suppliers/bidders.**
- 4. An official in the government/public sector presupposes for himself a reward or a share from individuals or establishments to which he offers services that are specifically stipulated as part of his official duties.**
- 5. An official in the government/public sector exempts an individual or establishment from established financial charges or dues in return for a private reward for himself.**
- 6. An official in the government/public sector manipulates or forges data or documents in order to acquire a private material or financial benefit for himself.**
- 7. An official in the government/public sector threatens to blackmail an individual or an establishment or to publicly disclose some data or information that may harm the individual or the establishment unless they pay him a certain reward.**
- 8. An official in the government/public sector pockets part of the public money, in cash or in kind, for himself or for his private personal account.**
- 9. An official in the public sector provides regular cash assistance on humanitarian grounds to a few families that are not qualified or eligible.**

(202 - 208)

Background Information on Respondents:

Age, Status in the Workforce, Employment Sector, Sex, Marital Status, Country of Origin, Educational Level.