

# Does Pakistani Society Accept Corruption as a Changed Value with Reference to Cultural Perspective?

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## ABSTRACT

The major objective of this research study was to assess the impact of corruption upon the prevalent social values in Peshawar city, Pakistan. A sample size of 150 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling to ascertain respondents' attitudes towards phenomena at hand with Likert scale as measurement tool. At first stage uni-variate analysis and then bi-variate analysis were carried out to determine outcomes. The dependent variable (corruption perception) was cross-tabulated with the independent variable (social values and its societal aspects). A chi-square test was used to determine the association between dependent and independent variables. In addition, Gamma ( $\gamma$ ) statistics were applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship. The study found a significant and positive association between corruption perception with social values safeguarding the interest of rich ( $P=0.022$ ), morality as existing behavioral standard in society ( $P=0.000$ ), experience of corruption ( $P=0.000$ ), significance of social pressure ( $P=0.000$ ), use of social pressure ( $P=0.000$ ), degradation of social values in society due to corruption ( $P=0.000$ ), biased evaluative standards for various social classes ( $P=0.000$ ). In addition, people who refused to accept and pay bribes, had followers in the society ( $P=0.037$ ), increasing the magnitude of corruption with an increase in official rank ( $P=0.007$ ), and finally, that an ethical environment based on social norms and values reduces corruption ( $P=0.000$ ). The study concluded that, in the site of study, the social order is under deterioration due to corruption assuming the status of an emerging social value due to its practice amongst members of society in various fields of life. However, people still considered the prevalent social order strong enough to combat this changing dynamic by creating an ethical environment based on social alienation for those who acted corruptly.

**Key Words:** Corruption, Social values, Social mechanisms of dynamics.

**GEL Classification Code:** Z10; Z11; Z13

## INTRODUCTION

The social order in any society across the globe functions through a well integrated system of norms and values. This system is responsible for providing a basis to the prevalence of healthy traditions and for devising the rules and norms which governs the relative society. Although, change has been witnessed in the history of both human beings and societies such change occurs in a subtle manner which tends to guarantee consistency to social equilibrium of a system. Any deviation or disregard to the existing value system can result in leading a society into a social disintegration and disorganization of its social fabric. Such a situation can also lead towards circumstances where individuals can be in disconformity to their cognitive beliefs and emotions (Moss & Susman 1980). Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) point out that values and beliefs are the evaluative standards by which people are sensitized through experience in an understanding of their surroundings, and thereby understanding and indentifying the differences between truth and falsehood. This chain of operative mechanics provides a broader base of acting's in a number of social situations based on the demand of the task of nature ought to be performed as rightly been asserted by Parson and Shills (1951) wherein purposes and means have been identified as major drives behind social actions. These actions are usually derived from morality, aesthetics and cognitions. Cultural values are synonymous standards of evaluation criteria humanly operational through social system. These cultural basis and norms are allocated at special positions and internalization of values generated by the individuals is a unique social mechanism displayed by any society (Rockeach, 1973). Changes in the evaluative norms and standards of a society are imperative with the social transitions from simple to complex. This trend of transition is also reported by (Thorton, 1985; Alwin, 1994; and Pope, 1997) that the strength of social values lie in the conformity to the social system where individuals and groups participate. The major reason attached to this phenomenon is the impression left on the mind map of people with respect to social values in a system. This system works as a catalyst for bringing stability, personality development and consistency to the prevalent cultural values. Disconformities and less regard to cultural value always hamper the prevalent value system thus by taking the whole phenomenon to complete disintegration where the proscribed norms and values sprout. This eruption of values in total disconformities comprehensively shatters the very basis of the social systems in many societies across the globe. Corruption is a value, every society is witnessing in the present day scenario due to the complex social systems based on new economic values which dictates for competition and development through both on individual to group endeavors. The concept of this competitive sense ought to have been controlled, governed and directed by the existing cultural and social practices. Any society having a broader base for internalizing the fragmentation within their social fabrics succeeded in controlling and directing the change. While others with less capacities to absorb, suffered with the menace of new values in total contrast to the operational social system identified and called as corruption.

Corruption is usually studied in relation to transitions within societies. It can be considered that corruption is usually less acceptable in traditional societies in contrast to the societies where value change is frequent. It is generally assumed that a moral breach, irrespective of the fact whether existing law is broken or not, provides an opportunity for corruption to occur. The 'principle of neutralization', which covers the moral defect for actions not to be exposed, can serve as a harbinger to the occurrence of corruption (Chiabi, 2006; Sykes & Maztza, 1957). Local cultural circumstances play an imminent role in making the idea of corruption either "excessive" or "appropriate" within a culture. Olivier (1999) claims that basically a loose cultural structure works for the growth of corruption as those affected consider it specific to cultural norms. This sense of ownership by those affected result in justifying the illegitimate

deeds as legitimate, legal and consistent to the local culture. Thus the social norms give tacit approval to the prevalent behavior to support and dissolve corruption as a friendly value. In such culture undertaking favors to relatives and/or doing immoral acts in a form of reciprocity can be viewed as solidarity within the group.

In Pakistan corruption remained was a priority problem area right from the independence (National Accountability Bureau, 2007), which has deep roots (Noman, 1988) as has been ranked worst than average in the international surveys on corruption (Mauro, 1995). Rose-Ackerman & Stone (1996) have linked corruption with poor governance which in turn impedes economic growth and slows down the development of a healthy private sector. In Pakistani society this phenomenon can also be viewed through the experience of harassment, hassle, 'red tapeism' and delays in accomplishing the legal tasks that provide few incentives for good performance (Murray-Rust & Vander Velde, 1994). Within the context of the relatively bleak picture of Pakistani society with reference to effects of corruption on its social order, this study was designed to explore these issues further, while proceeding with the objective of associating the people's perception on corruption with deteriorated social values.

## Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Peshawar City, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Drawing on a method devised by Sekaran (2003) a sample size of hundred and fifty (150) respondents were interviewed. In the assumption that leaders within society can be tested to view any changes within that society, these respondents were further categorized as Academicians, Anti Corruption Personnel and Religious Scholars as being the custodians of dynamic authority and thereby predicting the social value of transition in their society.

A conceptual framework was devised and questions were asked accordingly from the respondents through Likert scale. The dependent variable (Corruption Perception) was indexed to ascertain the level of association with independent variable (social values and its societal aspects). This association at bi-variate level was tested through Chi-square test outlined by Tai (1978) through the equation below;

Figure 1. Chi-square test equation

$$(\chi^2) = \frac{\sum \sum \frac{(f_{ij} - F_{ij})^2}{F_{ij}}}{F_i F_j}$$

The assumptions for the  $(\chi^2)$  test were that the subjects for each group are randomly and independently selected, the groups are independent, and each observation will qualify for one and only one category. Furthermore, the sample size must be fairly large that no expected frequency is less than 5, for  $r$  and  $c > 2$ , or  $< 10$ , if  $r = c = 2$ . These assumptions, however, were challenged several times during analysis and therefore, the Fisher Exact Test which also is known as Exit Chi-square Test was used instead of a simple Chi-Square, to overcome the violation of Chi-Square assumptions. The relationship developed by Fisher to overcome such violation is given in equation below (Baily, 1982).

Figure 2. Fisher Exit Test Probability

$$\text{Fisher Exit Test Probability} = \frac{(a+b)! (c+d)! (a+c)! (b+d)!}{N! a! b! c! d!}$$

**GAMMA:**

Gamma was used to measure the strength and direction of association between dependent and independent variables as devised by (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

Figure 3. Gamma test

$$\text{Gamma } (\gamma) = \frac{\text{NS} - \text{ND}}{\text{NS} + \text{ND}}$$

NS=Same order pair

ND= Different order pair

**Results and Discussion****Frequency and Percentage Distributions Regarding the Societal Aspects of Corruption**

The socio-cultural roots of corruption in this study, were limited to a certain statement, attributing corruption to have association with culture, social change, social structure and social control. As depicted in Table-1, a majority of respondents (i.e. 62.6%) considered morality as a standard for human behavior with slight acceptance to corruption, 98.6% viewed corruption deteriorating the social values, 91.3% disclosed that acceptance of corruption is high among people who had experienced it.

However, 33.3% of respondents did not accept that corrupt people are becoming social ideals. Moreover, 64.7% respondents validated that people refused accepting the bribe to generate pressure in the shape of followers in society, while 94.7% agreed that social pressure was insufficient to control corruption, and 94.6% authenticated that people with varied position on socio-economic strata possess different evaluative standards of life. Further some 86.6% of respondents viewed an increase in corrupt scale with increase in official rank of a corrupt person, while 89.3% considered that a social alienation of corrupt individuals by sidelining them in future involvement in various decisions may reduce corruption, and similarly, 79.3% of respondents opted for creating an ethical environment based on upholding existing norms and values to curb corruption.

It could easily be inferred from the above findings that corruption can be seen as becoming rooted within the social system and perhaps become an integral component to it, thereby creating a weak and fragile functional aspect of the social system. It is pertinent to note that respondents continued to have faith in a value system which does not support corruption, however, it can also be concluded that changing life patterns based on economic positions are the main drivers in pushing forward a societal acceptance of corruption.

These findings are in support to the findings of Sykes & Matza (1957) that an increase in corruption is inversely related to a strong value system, which abhors corruption as a resultant factor devising own evaluative standards by the people for justifying the deeds. Loss of control over corruption creates fissures in the social system, which breeds different evaluative standards with conspicuous reference to economic and power structures. The situation deteriorates further as the rules of doing business become increasingly more flexible and where multiple norms from rigid to flexible prevail for doing the same job. This can both directly and indirectly shape the individual's behavior with a slight degree of variation (Myrint, 2000; Sardan, 1999).

**Table:1 Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Responses Regarding the Societal Aspects of Corruption**

N=150

Statements Regarding Societal Aspects of Corruption	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
Morality is still the standard for human behavior with slight acceptance to corruption.	19 (12.7)	22 (14.7)	15 (10)	77 (51.3)	17 (11.3)
Corruption in society is deteriorating social values.	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	53 (35.3)	95 (63.3)
Acceptance of corruption is high among people who have experienced corrupt practices.	0 (0)	7 (4.7)	6 (4)	86 (57.3)	51 (34)
Corrupt people are becoming social ideals	3 (2)	50 (33.3)	30 (20)	42 (28)	25 (16.7)
People who refuse to pay or accept bribes find several followers in society.	1 (0.7)	30 (20)	22 (14.7)	69 (46)	28 (18.7)
Social pressure has become insufficient to control corruption.	1 (0.7)	5 (3.3)	2 (1.3)	82 (54.7)	60 (40)
People varying in economic and social power have different evaluative standards of life.	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	6 (4)	116 (77.3)	26 (17.3)
A corrupts scale increases with increase in official rank of a corrupt person.	1 (0.7)	10 (6.7)	9 (6)	77 (51.3)	53 (35.3)
Social alienation of corrupt people by not involving them in decisions, and social relations, can reduce corruption.	0 (0)	8 (5.3)	8 (5.3)	86 (57.3)	48 (32)
Creating an ethical environment and following social norms and values can reduce corruption.	0 (0)	11 (7.3)	20 (13.3)	89 (59.3)	30 (20)

\* Number in table represent frequencies and number in parenthesis represent percentage proportion of respondents.

## Association between Societal Principles and Corruption

To test the association of societal aspects (especially culture) and corruption reliably, perceptions of these variables were limited to some specific statements. Findings on the association are given in Table- 2 and discussed below.

A highly significant ( $P=0.000$ ) and positive ( $\gamma = +0.043$ ) relationship was found between morality as existing behavioral standard in society and corruption perception. The positive relationship suggests that the greater the acceptance of morality as a standard of behavior in the society the more would be clarity in corruption perception thus minimizing corruption as reported by Sykes & Matza (1957) where corruption is considered as a moral breach over societal values, ethics and moralities. However, corruption can provide justification for itself by making people believe that no moral violation has occurred, which breeds corruption.

Similarly, a positive ( $\gamma = +0.311$ ) and significant ( $P=0.000$ ) relationship was detected between experience of corruption and corruption perception. This association is a clear indication of greater clarity of corruption perception when a person comes across an event of corruption. This relationship further confirms the existence of corrupt practices in our society. The above results are similar to the findings of Darr (2003) who explained that when corruption is profuse, it become part of culture which is determinant in making decision of what is excessive or appropriate. Similarly, significant ( $P=0.000$ ) and positive ( $\gamma = +0.439$ ) relationship was found between significance of social pressure and corruption perception. It could be concluded from

this result that social pressure could significantly contribute in displaying right image of corrupt practices by allowing the event to go through the process of social sanctions, which would then result in reducing corruption in the society. This could lead to performance of a consensus for curbing corruption as righteously portrayed by Myint (2000) that when social control over corruption is lost, it becomes a suitable way of life. A positive ( $\gamma = +0.233$ ) and significant ( $P=0.000$ ) relationship was found between use of social pressure and corruption perception. This relationship suggests that use of social pressure to alienate corrupt people from society can have a two fold effect in reducing corruption, as first, it forces corrupt people to conform to the norms of honesty and second, the general population would be educated to consequences of corruption resulting in possibly more conformity to social values. Sardan (1999) found similar results, whereby cultural measures are termed as controlling mechanics for corruption rather than any formal steps taken by the state/government.

While making the association between the idea of degradation of social values in society due to corruption and corruption perception, a negative ( $\gamma = -0.141$ ) but significant ( $P=0.000$ ) relationship was established. It is quite evident from this relationship that degradation of values was taken as ideal condition for corruption to appear. However, a distortion of the value system in the existing culture was not supported as indicated by Gamma analysis. It suggests that cultural mechanisms could be used as instruments to control corruption and as reported by Sardan (1999) that a revitalization of social values signifies the effects to control corruption (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Similarly a moderate negative ( $\gamma = -0.407$ ) but significant ( $P=0.000$ ) relationship of was found between biased evaluative standards for various social classes and corruption perception. It is obvious from this result that the people considered the existing value system free from any bias to the existing classes in the society. This could be due to a strong faith and belief in the values, working as guiding factor in different situations with little support to unpleasant deeds against the prevalent social standards. A similar situation was also reported by Sardan (1999) in his study where a more flexible frame of social values usually generates contradictory norms of addressing a single act, a characteristic based on dilemma of income power only.

A non significant but positive ( $\gamma = +0.276$ ,  $P=0.208$ ) relationship was found between corrupt people become social ideals with perception of corruption. This result highlights the status of the corrupt people in the relative social milieu with little acceptance as ideals in the society. This result is further supported while ascertaining the relationship between the people who refused to accept and pay bribes, had followers in the society with significant ( $P=0.037$ ) but with mild negative ( $\gamma = -0.132$ ) relationship. A negative value of Gamma analysis indicates for a slighter change of losing the support from the society for those neither pay or accept bribes. Furthermore, a magnitude of corruption increases significantly ( $P=0.007$ ) and positively ( $\gamma = +0.231$ ) with a perception of corruption because of the determination to accumulate and execute power. Vital (2005) described such situation of value transition indicative of change in individual's sense of value inside the society. However, a highly significant ( $P=0.000$ ) with negative ( $\gamma = -0.292$ ) relationship was traced between an ethical environment based on social norms and values reduces corruption with corruption perception. It is because people had a faith in ethics, however, that the application of ethics is wrongly interpreted for personal gains. Similar values based remedial measures were also proposed by Parson & Shills (1951) because of moral, aesthetic and cognitive basis of such social values.

**TABLE 2 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF SOCIETAL PRINCIPLES AND CORRUPTION**

Societal Aspects of Values	Attitude	Corruption Perception					Total	Statistics (P Value)
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Morality is still the standard for human behavior with slight acceptance to corruption.	Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	19 (12.7)	0 (0)	19 (12.7)	$\chi^2= 50.421$ (0.000) $\gamma = +0.043$
	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	7 (4.7)	5 (3.3)	9 (6)	22 (14.7)	
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (10)	0 (0)	15 (10)	
	Agree	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	12 (8)	56 (37.3)	7 (4.7)	77 (51.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2.7)	12 (8)	1 (0.7)	17 (11.3)	
Corruption in the society is deteriorating the social values	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	$\chi^2= 158.925$ (0.000) $\gamma = -0.141$
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	
	Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	11 (7.3)	40 (26.7)	1 (0.7)	53 (35.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	12 (8)	66 (44)	16 (10.7)	95 (63)	
Acceptance of corruption is high among people who have experienced corrupt practices	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	5 (3.3)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	7 (4.7)	$\chi^2= 53.580$ (0.000) $\gamma = +0.311$
	Uncertain	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	3 (2)	1 (0.7)	6 (4)	
	Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (8.7)	63 (42)	10 (6.7)	86 (57.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	4 (2.7)	40 (26.7)	6 (4)	51 (34)	
Corrupt people are becoming social ideals.	Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	3 (2)	$\chi^2= 20.284$ (0.208) $\gamma = +0.276$
	Disagree	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	7 (4.7)	30 (20)	11 (7.3)	50 (33.3)	
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (3.3)	25 (16.7)	0 (0)	30 (20)	
	Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	6 (4)	31 (20.7)	4 (2.7)	42 (28)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)	20 (13.3)	2 (1.3)	25 (16.7)	
People who refuse to pay or accept bribe find several followers in society.	Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	$\chi^2= 27.453$ (0.037) $\gamma = -0.132$
	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	6 (4)	22 (14.7)	1 (0.7)	30 (20)	
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	19 (12.7)	1 (0.7)	22 (14.7)	
	Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (8.7)	46 (30.7)	10 (6.7)	69 (46)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	1 (0.7)	20 (13.3)	5 (3.3)	28 (18.7)	
Social pressure has become insufficient to control corruption.	Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	$\chi^2= 47.579$ (0.000) $\gamma = +0.439$
	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	3 (2)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	5 (3.3)	
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	
	Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	13 (8.7)	54 (36)	14 (9.3)	82 (54.7)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	6 (4)	50 (33.3)	3 (2)	60 (40)	
People varying in economic and social power have different evaluative standards of life.	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	$\chi^2= 108.700$ (0.000) $\gamma = -0.407$
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)	3 (2)	0 (0)	6 (4)	
	Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (10.7)	92 (61.3)	8 (5.3)	116 (77.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	4 (2.7)	11 (7.3)	9 (6.0)	26 (17.3)	

A corrupt scale increases with increase in official rank of a corrupt person.	Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	$\chi^2 = 33.243$ (0.007) $\gamma = +0.231$
	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	4 (2.7)	5 (3.3)	0 (0)	10 (6.7)	
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (5.3)	1 (0.7)	9 (6)	
	Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (8.7)	50 (33.3)	14 (9.3)	77 (51.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	2 (1.3)	6 (4)	43 (28.7)	2 (1.3)	53 (35.3)	
Social alienation of corrupt people by not involving them in decisions, and social relations, can reduce corruption.	Disagree	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	4 (2.7)	3 (2)	0 (0)	8 (5.3)	$\chi^2 = 45.488$ (0.000) $\gamma = + 0.233$
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)	2 (1.3)	3 (2)	8 (5.3)	
	Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	14 (9.3)	66 (44)	5 (3.3)	86 (57.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.3)	36 (24)	9 (6)	48 (32)	
Creating an ethical environment, following social norms and values can reduce corruption.	Disagree	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	3 (2)	6 (4)	0 (0)	11 (7.3)	$\chi^2 = 47.789$ (0.000) $\gamma = -0.292$
	Uncertain	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2.7)	16 (10.7)	0 (0)	20 (13.3)	
	Agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (8)	71 (47.3)	6 (4)	89 (59.3)	
	Strongly Agree	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	4 (2.7)	14 (9.3)	11 (7.3)	30 (20)	

\*Values in table represent frequencies and values in parenthesis represent percentage proportion of respondents

## Conclusions

The study concluded that respondents had a clear vision about corruption as being lethal and as leading to deterioration of social order. Such corruption was prevalent among the practitioners of corrupt practices only. Social pressure (existing) was not enough to curb corruption in various social layers of different nature i.e. economic and social. It was identified as result of official business in an ordinary life. The study suggests that it could easily be concluded on empirical basis that morality, while under the changing dynamics with notion to corruption as emerging social values. However, people still considered the prevalent morality as the real tool to enable a curbing of this harmful practice along with creating an ethical environment through a model of social alienation.

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