

**Corruption in Civil Servants:  
A Cultural Context with Specific Reference to Administrative Norms in  
Pakistani Society**

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**Abstract**

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the series of papers on corruption in bureaucracy in Pakistan. Corruption is believed to be widespread in civil bureaucracy. The focus of the current article is to determine the cultural contexts of corruption with specific reference to administrative norms within Pakistani society. A total of 384 respondents were selected from four public sector organizations including Excise and Taxation, District Police, Revenue and Estate, and Forest departments. Data was collected through the Likert scale based questionnaire. Statistical analysis using the Chi-square test was used to evaluate and establish associations between the variables. At the bivariate level, statistical analysis revealed that corruption perception was found to be significantly associated to certain variable. Based on the comprehensive findings of this research, a number of policy recommendations and proposals

**Keywords:** Corruption, Culture, Cultural Norms

**Introduction**

Corruption is more acceptable in some countries to their natives (Olivier and Jean, 1999) because of a cultural prerogative, thus, the officials involved in corruption justify their deeds due to the consistence in local culture. Moreover, strong flexible norms for the prevalence of such rules of business help corrupt officials and corrupt forces within the masses to perpetuate without any fear from government or system. In such a situation the bureaucratic system is also not more than a ghost as the state equilibrium is not supposed to determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the deeds. Gupta (1995), while working on the developed and underdeveloped nations, concluded corruption as a phenomenon purely social in nature but with variations from culture to culture. In most

under developed countries bribery and other illegal contacts are usually given a place ultra to negative meaning. Payment has been connected to the solution of a problem without any other exit to do so. The feeling of mutual obligations are met with two apparent reasons; initially failure to reciprocate or self interest in the back of mind with the notion that helping other means helping one's own self. Corruption usually suffer a member of organization for the sins they committed as elders because it is trickling down to new generations as a deviance and thus labeling their ancestors as deviant. It is usually taken up as less acceptable in traditional societies, where value change is infrequent. It is usually considered as an outcome of moral breach without consideration, whether the existing law is broken or not. Cultural perspectives widely cover the actions of corruption either excessive or appropriate. A loose culture may work as a harbinger to the growth of corruption by taking the corrupt practices as cultural norm. This sense of ownership by those affected results in justifying the illegitimate deeds as legitimate, legal and consistent to the prevalent culture. Thus the social norms give taste approval to the prevalence of such behavior to support and dissolve corruption as an augmenting value to the prevalent culture (Yang, 1994; Chiabi, 2006; and Olivier and Jean, 1999).

### **Review of Literature**

DeBacker et al. (2012) studied that illegal corporate activities are influenced by cultural norms and implementation rules. They concluded that owners of firms belonging to corrupt countries tended to evade tax in the U.S. This trend of avoiding tax is high for small firms and decreases with increase in size of firm. The governments introduced several regulations and devised policies since 2000 to improve tax deposition. The effect of these rules and policies to enhance tax compliance was found insignificant on those firms that were owned by owners from corrupt countries. The authors concluded that legal activism faced great challenge from cultural norms of corruption inherited from parental country.

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Truex (2011) made a comparison on the basis of petty and grand corruption in developed and developing nations. The author stated that in these nations, despite of hatred for corruption, some corruption norms are stickier than others. The people hate government employee for asking bribe but they ignore establishment of social solidarity networks through favoritism and giving small gifts.

Fisman and Miguel (2007) observed that economic and financial motivations are major driving forces for corrupt activities like tax evasion; however, these are not the only reasons for tax evasion in US. The culture also has important contribution in illegal activities. The authors studied illegal parking behavior in UN diplomats posted in New York City. They reported that color of corruption norms in home country of diplomats is vivid in their illegal parking behavior in New York City. Although the diplomats are on the same role and status in New York City, they draw the same benefits; however, the diplomats from nation with corruption culture are trendy in illegal parking behavior, which emanates the role of culture in promotion of illegal practices.

Macionis (2005) has highlighted social values as the standards that are defined and outlined by a specific culture. These act as terms and provide guidance to human behavior. People of a society assess their acts on the standards of these norms.

Myint (2000) stated that people pay bribe to save time or to get escape from procedural fatigue. Processes of routine works like getting permission, permits and licenses etc. are accelerated by payment of bribe. Bribe money, therefore, is rightly called as “grease money” as it keep bureaucratic wheel moving swiftly in getting personal work done. Bureaucratic desire for hunger of money is ever increasing; therefore, the authorities deliberately design such rules and procedure that causes greater obstacles in getting work done. People in need, therefore, are trapped in net to pay higher bribes with greater frequencies.

Frey (1997) proposed extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors for tax payment. The extrinsic factors are based on laws and regulations which include penalties for tax nonpayment. The intrinsic factors, however, are based on cultural values, social norms and personal interests that motivate for tax payment. These include the driving forces like willingness for public welfare and charitable thinking.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To know the cultural contexts of corruption with specific reference to administrative norms in Pakistani society.
2. To identify the perception of the people in different positions from sampled organizations towards corruption.
3. To put forward recommendations / Suggestions on the basis of study findings for curtailing / minimizing the menace of corruption from society.

### **Materials & Methods**

The present study, being quantitative in nature, was carried out in Swat district. The study units included District Police, Excise & Taxation, Revenue & Estate, and Forest Departments whereby employees from lower to higher cadre were interviewed on the issue.

### **Sampling**

Results obtained from sample are reliably generalizable to whole population, if properly drawn (Sekaran, 2003). In this study proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used for sampling purpose. The study population was divided into four strata on the basis of administrative departments namely,

District Police, Excise & Taxation, Revenue & Estate and Forest Departments. Respondents from all cadres were then randomly chosen for data collection.

### Sample Size

The sample size of the current study was drawn while adopting the analogy of Sekaran (2003). As per that analogy, the sample size of 384 was selected. It was further sub divided into 04 strata as per breakup given in the Table1, wherein samples are shown proportionally distributed. This distribution was made through proportionate stratified sampling. In each stratum samples were taken randomly. For allocation method, the following formula was used;

$$ni = \frac{n.Ni}{N} \quad (\text{Chaudry and Kamal, 1996})$$

Where;

ni = Proportion of sample allocated to ith stratum

Ni = Population of ith stratum

n = Total sample size

N = Total Population

**Table 1: Breakup of Sample Size as per Proportionate Stratified Sampling**

S.No	Categories of Respondents (Departments)	Sample Size
1	Excise and Taxation	51
2	District Police	74
3	Revenue and Estate	185
4	Forest	74
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>384</b>

### Data Collection

Conceptual frame work for the current article is comprised of an independent and one dependent variable. For primary data collection on stated variables, a well thought-out and comprehensive questionnaire was prepared that encompassed all the aspects of the study variables.

### Conceptual Framework

Keeping in view the study dimensions based on observation on everyday practice and derivations from the related literature, the following conceptual frame work was designed.

**Table 2: Dependent and Independent Variables**

<b>Independent Variables</b>		<b>Dependent Variable</b>
	<b>Cultural Contexts</b>	Corruption
1.	Cultural Norms.	

### **Tool of Data Collection**

In present study, the questionnaire was constructed on the basis of study objectives, conceptual framework and research questions. Likert scale questionnaire was design with three option (agree, disagree, don't know).

### **Indexation**

The responses on attitudinal statements (items) of dependent variable were indexed. The items were indexed to measure a single variable, "corruption perception" in analogy with Nachmias (1992). The indexed dependent variable was cross tabulated with independent variable for testing their significance of association.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was entered and analyzed through SPSS (20) software for drawing the inferences from Uni-variate and Bi-variate analysis.

### **Uni-variate Analysis**

All study variables including background, independent and dependent variables were analyzed through uni-variate technique by using frequencies and Percentagewise.

### Bi-Variate Analysis

For ascertaining the strength of association between independent and dependent variables, the statistical technique of Bi-variate analysis was used. The tests used for this purpose included Chi-square test and Fisher Exact test respectively.

#### Chi-Square Test

For calculation of Chi-square value ( $\chi^2$ ) the procedure outlined by Tai (1978) was adopted.

$$(\chi^2) = \chi^2 = \sum_{j=1}^j \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}} \quad (\text{Tai, 1978})$$

Where

$(\chi^2)$  = Chi-square for two categorical variables

$o_{ij}$  = the observed frequencies in the cross-classified category at  $i$ th row and  $j$ th column

$e_{ij}$  = the expected frequency for the same category, assuming no association between variables under investigation

The degree of freedom is calculated as follows;

Df =  $(r-1)(c-1)$  where

Df = Degree of freedom

r = the number of rows

c = the number of columns

One of the assumptions of Chi-square test i.e. no expected frequency is lesser than 5 was violated for several times in the data. Therefore, Fisher Exact Test was employed instead of Chi-square test to rectify the effects of assumption violation (Baily, 1982).

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

Where a, b, c and d were the observed numbers in four cells of contingency table and "N" the total number of observations.

## **Results & Discussions**

Rational thinking based on personal and group experiences is the characteristic feature of human beings. This cognitive ability of human beings provides foundation for cultural norms. The cultural norms work as standard of behavior. It mold human behavior to desirable traits and influence their emotions. The strong ideas of right and wrong are based on these norms which are mutually shared by society. In most cases the cultural norms are stable and resist changes, however, the changing human needs have both positive and negative influences in reshaping these cultural norms.

For precision, cultural values in this study were limited to few statements as given in Table 3. The results portray that majority of respondents i.e 97.1% agreed that people were obliged to follow cultural norms, whereas 2.9% respondents negated this view. Similarly, a high majority of 97.4% respondents' were of the view that cultural norms enjoyed the required strength to mould human behavior whereas 2.6% negated this idea. Not different were the respondents' views about believing cultural norms as guide to right and wrong as 79.7% respondents held this view, however, 14.3% respondents were uncertain in this regard and 6% negated the idea. It is evident from the above results that cultural norms had high level influence on behavior of the people in the form of formation and moulding of their behavior. These also work as providing bench marks for right and wrong in the society. The basic reason for such high influence is the rational basis of these cultural norms and people's emotional attachment to it. These findings are in line with Moss and Susman (1980) that cognitive beliefs developed from logical and rational thinking and experiences, which provide basis for cultural norms. These norms direct the members of society to distinguish between truth and falsehood as desired by the cultural norms.

In addition, a big number of 54.7% respondents did not accede that diversity in cultural norms made it easy to confuse right and wrong acts whereas 44.5% were in agreement to the said view. Similarly, majority of 59.5% respondents

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disagreed that cultural norms were equally observed by all social classes in society and 39.6% accepted these views. However, 81.3% respondents stated that cultural norms are still functional to act as antecedents for individual and group behavior. It could be deduced from these findings that cultural norms play a stimulant role in bringing societal consensus over the type of governance through internalizing cultural values by the individuals involved. Vittal (2005) identified three important factors in normal working of organizations in a society. These included the sense of cultural values owned by individuals, the cultural values liked by the society and the governance system. If these factors fail to function, the emergence of corruption becomes evident. Out of all the above three factors, the individual's sense of value is of significant importance to bring changes in the society.

Furthermore, a majority of 79.4% respondents agreed that corruption is a relative term that changes its meaning with changing circumstances. However, 51.6% disagreed that establishment of anti-corruption groups at community level could reduce corruption and 46.9% accepting this view. In addition, 65.1% respondents admitted that set of norms and values practiced by individuals are manifested in group and organizational behavior whereas, 21.6% negated manifestation in organizational behavior due to individual's norms. A majority of 57.3% respondents refuted legitimacy of paying bribe to speedup legitimate tasks however, 38.8% accepted such an act as legitimate and harmless. It could be inferred from these findings that deviance to cultural norms, a privilege in preservation of culture and smooth functioning of social system, usually emerges in malpractices like corruption. The findings are in line to Haralambos (1984) reported that cultural values provide guidance for conduct in all spheres of life with reference to different roles and norms. Abiding by mutually learnt and shared norms preserves society's order and stability just like integrated organs of a body. However, lack of value consensus may disintegrate the social order and make it unstable.

**Table 3: Frequencies and Percentagewise Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of their Perception of Cultural Norms**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
People are obliged to follow cultural norms as these are developed through thoughts, experiences and senses.	373(97.1)	11(2.9)	0 (0)
Cultural norms are still very strong to mould human behaviour because of their emotional bases.	374(97.4)	10(2.6)	0 (0)
Cultural norms are guides to right and wrong.	306(79.7)	23(6.0)	55(14.3)
Diversity in cultural norms makes it easy to interpret wrong acts as right.	171(44.5)	210(54.7)	3(0.8)
Cultural norms are equally observed by all classes of society.	152(39.6)	230(59.5)	2(0.5)
Cultural norms still work as referents for individual and group life.	312(81.3)	56(14.6)	16(4.2)
Corruption is becoming a relative term changing its meaning with situations.	305(79.4)	65(16.9)	15(3.6)
Establishment of anticorruption groups at community level can reduce corruption.	180(46.9)	98(51.6)	6(1.6)
Set of norms and values owned by individuals manifest themselves in organizational behaviour	250(65.1)	83(21.6)	51(13.3)
Giving bribe to speed up processing of a legitimate need without documentation has no harm	149(38.8)	220(57.3)	15(3.9)

### Bi- Variate Analysis

Association between independent variable (Cultural Norms) and dependent variable (Corruption) was worked out by cross tabulating the independent

variables with dependent variable. Interpretation of association between the variables with appropriate reasons is explained below.

**Table 4: Association Between Cultural Norms and Corruption**

Statements	Perception	Corruption		Total	Chi-Square (P=Value)
		Agree	Disagree		
Cultural norms still work as referents for individual and group life.	Agree	288(75.0)	24(6.2)	312(81.2)	$\chi^2= 30.601$ (0.000)
	Disagree	50(13.0)	6(1.6)	56(14.6)	
	Don't know	8(2.1)	8(2.1)	16(4.2)	
Establishment of anticorruption groups at community level can reduce corruption.	Agree	152(39.6)	28(7.3)	180(46.9)	$\chi^2= 12.339$ (0.020)
	Disagree	188(49.0)	10(2.6)	198(51.6)	
	Don't know	6(1.6)	0(0.0)	6(1.6)	
Peoples are obliged to follow cultural norms as these are developed through thoughts, experiences and senses.	Agree	335(87.2)	38(9.9)	373(97.1)	$\chi^2= 1.244$ (0.65)
	Disagree	11(2.9)	0	11(2.9)	
	Don't know	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Cultural norms are still very strong to mould human behaviour because of their emotional bases.	Agree	336(87.5)	38(9.9)	374(97.4)	$\chi^2=1.128$ (0.288)
	Disagree	10(2.6)	0(0.0)	10(2.6)	
	Don't know	0(0.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.0)	
Cultural norms are guides to right and wrong.	Agree	271(70.6)	35(9.1)	306(79.7)	$\chi^2=4.027$ (0.134)
	Disagree	22(5.7)	1(0.3)	23(6.0)	
	Don't know	53(13.8)	2(0.5)	55(14.3)	
Diversity in cultural norms makes it easy to	Agree	159(41.4)	12(3.1)	171(44.5)	

interpret wrong acts as right.	<b>Disagree</b>	184(47.9)	26(6.8)	210(54.7)	$\chi^2= 3.373$ (0.185)
	<b>Don't know</b>	3(0.8)	0(0.0)	3(0.8)	
Cultural norms are equally observed by all classes of society.	<b>Agree</b>	144(37.5)	8(2.1)	152(39.9)	$\chi^2=6.434$ (0.400)
	<b>Disagree</b>	200(52.1)	30(7.8)	230(59.9)	
	<b>Don't know</b>	2(0.5)	0(0.0)	2(0.5)	
Corruption is becoming a relative term changing its meaning with situations.	<b>Agree</b>	276(71.9)	29(7.6)	305(79.4)	$\chi^2=5.882$ (0.530)
	<b>Disagree</b>	60(15.6)	5(1.3)	65(16.9)	
	<b>Don't know</b>	10(2.6)	4(1.0)	14(3.6)	
Set of norms and values owned by individuals manifest themselves in organizational behaviour.	<b>Agree</b>	219(57.0)	31(8.1)	250(65.1)	$\chi^2= 7.558$ (0.230)
	<b>Disagree</b>	76(19.8)	7(1.8)	83(21.6)	
	<b>Don't know</b>	51(13.3)	0(0.0)	51(13.3)	
Giving bribe to speed up processing of a legitimate need without documentation has no harm.	<b>Agree</b>	134(34.9)	15(3.9)	149(38.8)	$\chi^2=0.234$ (0.890)
	<b>Disagree</b>	199(51.8)	21(5.5)	220(57.3)	
	<b>Don't know</b>	13(3.4)	2(0.5)	15(3.9)	
	<b>Disagree</b>	50(13.0)	6(1.6)	56(14.6)	
	<b>Don't know</b>	8(2.1)	8(2.1)	16(4.2)	

### Association Between Perception of Cultural Norms Act as Referents and Corruption

A highly significant association ( $p=0.000$ ) was found between cultural norms still work as designatum for individual and group life and corruption. This result points to the fact that people had strong belief in prevalent cultural

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norms which restricted them to indulge in corruption. As the cultural values are based on the strong ideas of right and wrong developed through group experiences inside the society. These values guide human behavior for both material and spiritual wellbeing and are functional in keeping society integrated. All those who refer to these cultural values will find a ready made answer to all the queries and will be guided to appropriate behavior. In this scenario anti-social behavior finds it difficult to diffuse in society because of shielding from the cultural norms. Similar findings were been explored by Macionis (2005) who stated that culture define standard ways of behavior in form of social values. Goodness of behavior is assessed through these values which provide broad guidance for human living. Social values provide overall guide for behavior through clear and exact directives in term of roles and norms. These norms and values play important role in protection of society as order, consistency and collaboration mainly rest on them (Haralambos, 1984).

Perception of respondents relating to cultural values reflect that 97.1% respondents agreed that people were obliged to follow cultural norms as perceived rational, 97.4% perceived that cultural norms were considered important to strengthen for moulding human behavior, 79.7% thought that cultural norms as guides to right and wrong. In addition a big chunk of 54.7% respondents refused to accept that diversity in cultural norms made it easy to confuse right and wrong acts, 59.5% disagreed that cultural norms were equally observed by all social classes, 81.3% stated that cultural norms are still functional to act as referents for individual and group behavior. Furthermore, a majority of 79.4% respondents agreed that corruption is a relative term that changes its meaning with changing circumstances, 51.6% disagreed that establishment of anti-corruption groups at community level could reduce corruption, 65.1% accepted that set of norms and values owned by individuals are manifested in group and organizational behavior, 57.3% refuted legitimacy of paying bribe to speedup legitimate tasks.

Ascertaining the association between corruption perception and cultural norms, perception of corruption was significantly associated with cultural

norms still work as referents for individual and group life ( $p=0.000$ ) and establishment of anticorruption groups at community level to reduce corruption ( $p=0.020$ ). Conversely, the association of corruption was non-significant with people are obliged to follow cultural norms ( $p=0.65$ ), emotional basis of cultural norms ( $p=0.288$ ), cultural norms as guide to right and wrong ( $p=0.134$ ), ease in interpreting wrong act as right due to culture ( $p=0.185$ ), observance of culture by all the social classes equally ( $p=0.400$ ), flexibility in changing meanings of corruption according to varying situations ( $p=0.530$ ), manifestation of individual's norms and values in organizational behavior ( $p=0.230$ ), paying bribe for speeding up legitimate processes ( $p=0.890$ ).

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded, from above set of results that cultural norms were still working as terms and people believed in these norms to abstain from illegalities. These strong feelings have a role in keeping society intact, functional and shielded the interest of its members against emergence of undesirable behavior. However, personal interests of individuals and groups at both bureaucratic organizational levels and community level helped in devising such designs that compelled for following illegal behavior for personal gains. The concept of social values, although existing, becomes insignificant and weak against personal interests resulting in corruption diffusion. Establishment of anti-corruption groups at this stage could reinstate the writ of cultural values to control corruption.

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