

## Perception of corruption across gender, religion, and socioeconomic status

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### ABSTRACT

Corruption is a critical issue for Bangladesh, including corruption in higher education. The present study explored the perception of corruption based on gender, religion, and socioeconomic status with factorial survey research design. One hundred twenty participants were selected by purposive sampling technique from male and female university students aged 20-26 years. All the participants were studying in public and private universities. Personal Information Form (PIF) and Perception of Corruption Scale (PCS) were used for this study. The PCS measured the respondents' level of perception about corruption, consisting of 18 items. One-way analysis of variance and t-test were applied to analyze the data. The result indicates no significant difference in perception of corruption based on gender. In contrast, there is a significant difference in the perception of corruption based on religion, with the Hindus having the lowest perception of corruption. Moreover, there is a significant difference in perception of corruption based on socioeconomic status. Therefore, university students' perceptions of different corrupt practices need to be addressed.

### Introduction

Corruption is a multidisciplinary topic in the government and private offices, banks, transport systems, railway offices, businesses, industry, and even in the education system. A study on corruption found that in several Eastern European countries, more minor incidences of corruption have been reported, but other countries had more significant corruption problems (Anderson & Gray, 2006). Moreover, corruption is one factor hindering the success of decentralization in developing countries (Baltaci & Yilmaz, 2006). This condition has made several countries make a breakthrough; for example, in Cameroon, some programs have been experimented with in reforming customs administration to reduce corruption (Cantens et al., 2010). A study in Tanzania found that corruption may continue even with high wages and good work conditions (Fjeldstad, 2003). Meanwhile, collective experience impacts perceived corruption more than personal experience (Canache et al., 2019).

Perception of corruption has several impacts on individual psychological condition. A previous study finding shows individuals with a greater perception of corruption tend to be less satisfied with their life (Ciziceno & Travaglino, 2019; Tay et al., 2014). Also, the perception of official corruption significantly negatively impacts subjective well-being (Ma et al., 2022). While another study found the more corruption perception, the more depression

will be, and vice versa (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, a previous systematic review found the perception that people around behave dishonestly will increase corruption behavior (Julián & Bonavia, 2020). Especially among university students, the perception of corruption in the workplace influences their intrinsic motivation (Lullaku & Bërxulli, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to know how people perceive corruption based on gender, religion, and societal status.

Women are considered less corrupt because of their integrity and morality (Goetz, 2007). Ingrained power practice between women and men produces gender as a biological and social role that indicates abuse of power tendency. Even though both women and men are affected by corruption, the unequal gender relations in society's perspective cause women to be more exposed to corruption and its consequences (Swamy et al., 2001). Women's lower status and position in society make them vulnerable to corruption. This condition may lead to different perceptions of corruption across gender.

Religion may influence human behavior and activity (North et al., 2013). A study found the relationship between religion and corruption may be influenced by ecological inference, the heterogeneity between countries, and religious commitment among individuals (Ko & Moon, 2014). Another study in 174 countries shows that Islam and Christianity have no significant effect on corruption (Shadabi, 2013). The variety of the results from previous studies may indicate the differences in perception of corruption based on religion.

Socioeconomic status (SES) includes household income, occupation, and profession as well as combined income or an individual's SES, only their attributes in their family. Socioeconomic status is typically broken into three levels: higher, middle, and lower. Higher levels of corruption perception are found among individuals of lower economic status and uneducated than the higher class of socioeconomic status (Maeda & Ziegfeld, 2015). As perceptions motivate behavior, it is crucial to understand the relation of socioeconomic status to the perception of corruption (Treisman, 2000).

Corruption is a constant phenomenon worldwide, especially in developing countries, and is one of the key issues for public policies. It negatively impacts society and creates a hamper on our social life. Day to day, the rate of corruption rises. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the perception of corruption based on gender, religion, and socioeconomic status, which harms our everyday life because it creates disturbance. Moreover, this study helps to create awareness among the people to play a vital role in handling the problem of corruption. We can know what and how people think about corruption and how they perceive it. The main objective of the present study was to investigate the perception of corruption based on gender, religion, and socioeconomic status. Based on findings of previous studies, theoretical perspective, and the above objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated: (1) Significant differences will be found in the perception of corruption based on gender. (2) Significant differences will be found in the perception of corruption based on religion, and (3) Significant differences will be found in the perception of corruption based on socioeconomic status.

## Method

### *Research Design*

The study involved a factorial design consisting of two levels of gender (male and female), three levels of religion (Muslim, Hindu, and Others), and three levels of socioeconomic status (higher class, middle class, and lower class). At the same time, the dependent variable is the perception of corruption. The perception of corruption among university students across gender, religion, and socioeconomic status was observed in this study.

Before collecting data from the participant, permission was first taken from the concerned authority, and necessary rapport was established with the participant. Participants were informed about the purposes and necessities of the present research in the context of

Bangladesh, both verbally and in written form. The participants were then briefed about the questionnaires and how to fill them up. Participants were assured that their information would be used only for research purposes and would be confidential. After collecting data, respondents were thanked and rewarded for their cooperation.

### ***Participants***

The students of different universities in Dhaka city were selected as the target population for the study. Participants were selected by purposive sampling method studying in public and private universities. The sample consisted of participants who completed each questionnaire, and its dimensions comprised 120 university students, male (64 and 53.33%) and female (56 and 46.67%). The age ranges were 20 years to 26 years, and participants were Muslim (89), Hindu (24), and other religions (7). The socioeconomic status participant as a higher class (28), middle class (61), and lower class (31) found this collecting data.

### ***Instruments***

Data was collected through questionnaires. The following questionnaires and assessment instruments measured each participant's perception of corruption. A personal information form (PIF), a personal information questionnaire, was used to collect personal and demographic information such as age, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status. The perception of corruption scale (PCS) is a Likert-type scale that measures the characteristics and behavior of individuals regarding the perception of corruption, containing 18 items calculated as Totally True=5, Partially True=4, Neither True or False=3, partially True=2, and Totally False=1 (Singh, 2005). Therefore, the highest score can be 90, and the lowest score can be 18 with a score close to 90 means people have a negative perception of corruption, and a score close to 18 means people have a positive perception of corruption. The Bangla version scale's reliability is Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ . Even though scholars have a different minimum level of reliability, some accepted values of .6 - .7 as an acceptable level of reliability (Ursachi et al., 2015). A difference score (D score) was calculated by subtracting the score from each item for each subject separately to determine participant orientation. Mean of D scores were thus obtained separately for all 120 participants.

### ***Data Analysis***

First, obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Hypotheses were then tested with a one-way analysis of variance and a t-test.

### **Results**

The findings are shown through the perception of corruption across gender, religion, and socioeconomic status. The result from a one-way analysis of variance of the perception of corruption based on gender shows no significant difference in corruption perception among male and female university students ( $F = 1.191$ ;  $p > .05$ ). On the contrary, the result from a one-way analysis of variance shows a significant difference in perception of corruption based on religion ( $F = 5.416$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Therefore t-test was conducted to determine the difference in perception of corruption across religions.

Table 1 indicates the mean score and standard deviation obtained for Muslims ( $M = 65.79$ ;  $SD = 15.288$ ), Hindus ( $M = 54.96$ ;  $SD = 13.681$ ), and Other religions ( $M = 68.00$ ;  $SD = 9.292$ ). The table also shows that mean differences in perception of corruption between Muslim and Hindu respondents were significant. Moreover, the mean differences in perception of corruption between Others and Hindu respondents were also significant. Therefore, the hypothesis of the difference in perception of corruption based on religion was

found in this study, especially between Muslims and Hindus, and Hindus with participants with Other religions. The Hindu participants have the lowest mean perception of corruption.

**Table 1**

*Mean SD and t-value of Perception of Corruption Based on Religion*

Variable	Religion	N	Mean	SD	t	p
PCS	Muslim	89	65.79	15.288	3.145	.001***
	Hindu	24	54.96	13.681		
PCS	Hindu	24	54.96	13.681	-2.907	.011*
	Others	7	68.00	9.292		

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

The result from a one-way analysis of variance shows a significant difference in perception of corruption based on socioeconomic status ( $F = 4.910$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, a t-test was conducted to determine the difference in perception of corruption across socioeconomic status.

**Table 2**

*Results from t-test on Perception of Corruption Based on Socioeconomic Status*

Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Higher class and middle class	28	43.29	13.018	87	-9.834	.001***
	61	65.93	8.446			
Higher class and lower class	28	43.29	13.018	57	-13.907	.001***
	31	77.94	4.582			
Middle class and lower class	61	65.93	8.446	90	-7.367	.001***
	31	77.94	4.582			

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

Results in [Table 2](#) indicate that there is a significant difference in perception of corruption between higher ( $M = 43.29$ ) and middle ( $M = 65.93$ ) class groups ( $t = -9.834$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results also show that there is a significant difference in perception of corruption between higher ( $M = 43.29$ ) and lower ( $M = 77.94$ ) class groups ( $t = -13.907$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Moreover, the results show that there is a significant difference in perception of corruption between middle ( $M = 65.93$ ) and lower ( $M = 77.94$ ) class groups ( $t = -7.367$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Participants from the higher class have the lowest perception of corruption. In contrast, participants from the lower class have the highest perception of corruption.

## Discussion

This study's results show no differences in the perception of corruption among male and female university students. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this study was rejected. This result aligns with a previous study in Slovenia that found no differences in the perception of corruption based on gender ([Borošak & Šumah, 2019](#)). Although women participated less in bribery ([Swamy et al., 2001](#)), a previous study's findings found women perceive more need corruption, while men perceive more greed corruption ([Bauhr & Charron, 2020](#)). The impact of corruption on gender equally affected men's and women's tendency ([Goetz, 2007](#)). Moreover, another study found differences in the tolerance of corruption between men and women in Australia but not in Indonesia, India, and Singapore ([Alatas et al., 2009](#)). The varying results indicate that other variables than gender may play a role in the perception of corruption. The first hypothesis of this study is not supported and may be caused by several conditions. The respondents of this study are male and female university students, and education affects their perception. Also, in modern times, males and females are all aware of the perception of corruption.

The respondents of this study were classified among three groups based on their religion: the Muslim, Hindu, and Others. The findings show a significant difference in the perception of corruption based on religion. Moreover, the perception of corruption among Muslim and Hindu university students is significant. Also, the perception of corruption significantly differs between The Hindu and the Others. The hypothesis of the perception of corruption concerning religion is supported in this research. These findings align with a previous study's result on religion's impact on corruption (Shadabi, 2013). However, findings from a previous study show the impact of religion on corruption is mediated by cultural channels (Zelekha & Avnimelech, 2023). A study in China found the role of religious culture in preventing official corruption (Xu et al., 2017).

In this study, the respondents were classified among three groups based on their socioeconomic status score: higher class, middle class, and lower class group. The findings show a significant difference in the perception of corruption based on socioeconomic status. The perception of corruption among university students from higher classes is lower than two other groups. In comparison, university students from the lower class socioeconomic have higher than the other two groups. These results align with findings from a previous study in Croatia that the corruption perception of individuals is influenced by selected socioeconomic factors (Zakaria, 2016).

The current study will help many organizations to increase their honesty, transparency, and integrity to reach their goal. This study's findings will also help the government and private service organizations rely on betterment against corruption. However, this study has limitations. The first limitation relates to the demographic variables that are thought to be associated with the perception of corruption. Future research needs to co-operate more variables associated with the social aspect, as social identity and family background impact the perception of corruption. The second limitation is the number of participants involved in this study. Further research needs to be conducted on a large sample size and collected data above the country.

## Conclusion

Even though there are no differences in perception of corruption between male and female university students, in this study, the perception of corruption significantly differs based on religion and socioeconomic status. The Hindus have the lowest perception of corruption. On the other hand, university students from the higher class have the lowest perception of corruption, while the lower class has the highest perception of corruption. These differences need to be addressed in any intervention in corruption, focusing on designing ethical training programs to raise awareness of the negative consequences of non-monetary activities.

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## Declarations

**Author contribution.** AKS: Finalization of the research proposal and supervised the whole study. AKD: Coordinator of the study and contributed to data analysis. AB: Contributed to introduction and discussion. VPS: Contributed to scale development. Md.AH: Data collection and report writing. SAP: Reviewed the paper with data analysis

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