The influence of demographic indicators on corruption perception in Slovenia

Matic Borošak, MBA, MD. PhD Candidate,
Ostria llc, Ljubljana , Slovenia
DCT-Qlin Life Clinic, Begunje, Slovenia

Štefan Šumah, PhD, M.Econ., B.Eng.
OMCO llc, Žalec, Slovenia

Abstract

The attitude to corruption and the perception of it (as well as the acceptance or rejection of corruption) depends largely on the customs and traditions in a particular country, with the causes of corruption deriving from the political, economic, social conditions of a particular country and from the historical development, customs and culture. However, the demographic indicators must not be ignored. The existing researches thus show that the perception of corruption, at least to some extent, depends on gender (women are supposedly less corrupt and perceive corruption more; age and education). For the purpose of this article, the influence of demographic indicators (gender, age) on the perception of corruption in Slovenia was researched. The results were compared with the already known researches and it was determined that there are no statistically significant differences in the perception of corruption with regard to gender and age, which shows that Slovenia, in view of the specifics of the corruption perception (although the corruption perception is high in Slovenia), differs from other countries in which researches took place.

Keywords: corruption; perception; gender; age; Slovenia.

Introduction

The attitude to corruption, i.e. the acceptance or denial of it, differs from country to country, which is why the perception of corruption also differs. The two diametrically opposed extremes of corruption acceptance can be traced back to Europe, from the North, which is completely intolerant of corruption (in all its forms), to the warm South, where corruption (at least in some forms) is an almost normal, socially acceptable phenomenon. There is also a very large difference between the countries with a democratic past, which traditionally prosecute corruption, and the former socialist countries where corruption in the state apparatus was part of the tradition, almost a kind of folklore.

Habits, traditions and customs also play a major role in relation to corruption. In some countries, a simple thanks in the form of a gift for the service provided (after the service provider has already been paid in money) is considered a mere gesture

of politeness, whereas other countries consider it corruption. It all comes down to ethics and morale, which vary greatly in different regions and countries and if one is to understand corruption, its causes need to be known. There is always more than one cause for it and the causes interact in combinations, enabling corruption (Horvat, 2008: 6).

Some forms of corruption also relate to the informal form of social security, where the family or the narrower community takes care of its members. Such forms of social security prevail in less developed countries with absence of formal social security regulation and in the countries of Southern Europe, such as Italy, Greece, Albania, Bosnia, etc. where the influence of the broader family (patriarchy, the influence of a family elder or father as an informal leader) is still extraordinarily strong. These countries exhibit extremely widespread nepotism, chronysm and clientelism; the family, as well as the broader community are considered types of social security insurance, since they take care of their members; however, the members must, naturally, be loyal and repay the benefits that they receive. Religion also has a similar influence; while the Southern, predominantly Catholic part of Europe, with its highly hierarchically organization, cultivates the cult of the family (as well as the cult of a broader solidarity community, as some kind of social security; belonging to a narrower or broader community) and solidary responsibility, the Northern, mainly Protestant part emphasizes individualism and individual responsibility (which results in fewer abovementioned forms of corruption). Corruption prospers also in the countries where Islam and Orthodoxy are the main religions.

The influence of Protestantism where it is predominant has been tested several times and has proved to be an important factor for a low level of corruption in the country. Today, there are many nominally Protestant countries that are de facto secular, while many non-Protestant countries also fight corruption very effectively. It thus seems that the influence of Protestantism originates from its egalitarian ethos, which could indirectly support the general direction towards ethical universalism and the promotion of individualism. Its role is therefore important at certain stages of development, which explains why the first countries that were well governed were predominantly Protestant. This, however, does not mean that other religious traditions are incompatible with good governance, but simply that they failed to construct this special complex of factors at the right moment (Mungiu - Pippidi in Šumah and Mahić, 2017).

The research by North, Orman and Gwyn (2013) showed that the least corrupt countries and the countries where the rule of law is the strongest, respectively, are those countries that were mostly Protestant in 1900, while the most corrupt are those who were mostly Orthodox that same year. The results of the research proved that there is a link between religion and corruption on one hand, and respect for the rule of law on the other, however, it was also evident that the link is not causative. The following questions therefore arose: How come some religions have more respect for the rule of

law than others, yet control corruption? Do the characteristics of a particular religion in themselves lead to the results obtained? Are there differences in religious doctrines, practices, or cultures that lead to such results? Are there other connections that are not rooted in a religious culture, yet related to religious affiliation?

All of these factors, naturally, affect the corruption perception in each country, with Slovenia not being an exception.

The study titled "Perception of corruption" (Melgar, Rossi and Smith, 2010) determined which groups of people are more likely to pay corruption. It found that those who often think that corruption is widespread also perceive it as such, and are therefore more willing to pay it (they think and expect, respectively, that that is how the society functions). By using a very broad and very heterogeneous set of data, as well as econometrics, it has also been shown that social status and personal characteristics play an important role in the shaping of the corruption perception at the micro level; while divorced women, unemployed persons, persons working in the private sector or those that are self-employed are considered to be in a positive correlation with the perception of corruption (they perceive corruption more and are also willing to pay bribes), the contrary applies to married persons, full-time employees, persons who frequently attend religious rites, persons with at least secondary education (they perceive less corruption and are also not willing to pay).

According to the classification of countries, it can be proven that all African and Asian countries are in the upper half of the table and the same applies to the former socialist countries and most of the East Asian countries: people living in these countries perceive more corruption than others. On the contrary, most European countries and some of the former English colonies show lower perception than average (with exceptions) and rank in the bottom half, together with most of the rich countries. It has also been determined that the geographical classification of countries has a strong correlation with the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which shows that specific characteristics and social conditions are specific factors that influence the perception of corruption. At the same time, it has been established that better economic results reduce the corruption perception, whereas macroeconomic instability and income inequalities have exactly the opposite effect.

Influence of demographic factors on corruption perception

A very important factor that affects corruption is demographics. Several studies show that a patriarchal society is more prone to corruption, which is supported also by a number of studies that actually explore how corrupt are men and how women. Several early, mostly econometric contributions to the debate on who is more corrupt, men or women, argued that there is a link between a higher representation of women in the government and lower levels of corruption. An influential study in 150 countries in

Europe, Africa and Asia carried out by the World Bank (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti, 2001) confirmed the abovementioned and concluded that women were more reliable and less prone to corruption. These findings were later corroborated with additional studies, and were confirmed also by Rivas (2008), who in his study notes that, according to the results of the study, it could be concluded that women are less corrupt than men and that an increase in the number of women in the labour market and in politics would help fight corruption. In their study *Engaging in Corruption: The Influence of Cultural Values and Contagion Effects at the Micro Level*, the authors Lee and Guven (2013) also raised the question of whether men are more corrupt than women. The findings of the study support the thesis that women are less susceptible to corruption than men, especially in cultures that require men to be ambitious, competitive and financially successful, since these factors significantly contribute to unethical behaviour.

The abovementioned was surprisingly well demonstrated also in practice (Karim, 2011), when, a decade ago, the Peruvian government decided to involve more women in the police units due to gender equality. Once the traffic male police officers were joined by 2,500 female police officers, the unexpected happened: bribery was drastically reduced and people welcomed the female police officers on the streets.

In her research, Olinova (2013) also found that people perceive women who are in politics as less corrupt than men. Her research at the same time also showed that women perceive less corruption than men, which she explains by the fact that it is mainly men who engage in businesses with high levels of corruption in Latin American countries (where the survey was conducted).

However, it is one thing to be predisposed to corruption, and another to perceive it. As Melgar, Rossi and Smith (2010) showed in their research, women are more vulnerable to corruption and perceive it more than men. The same research also includes the educational level as an important determinant of perceiving the degree of corruption. It has been established that people who have completed at least a secondary school are more prone to perceiving a lower degree of corruption (which does not mean that they are less prone to corruption). The latter is explained by a better access to information and the capacity of processing this information. This fact also shapes the perception of corruption at the micro level. However, Melgar, Rossi and Smith performed their research on the sample of thirty-three countries (Europe, North and South America, South Asia), while this research deals exclusively with Slovenia.

Impact of demographic factors on corruption perception in Slovenia

Purpose and aim of the research

The researches of cultural patterns of Slovenian society show that, while the Slovenes are individualists, when it comes to the question of personal well-being on one

hand, they on the other show a considerable measure of collectivism when it comes to decision-making issues. In such a case they tend to avoid personal responsibility, transferring it (at least partially) to collectivity, which is suggested by the fact that corporatism, in various forms, is responsible for the formation of a specific set of values with a very blurry boundary between the private and public (community) property. Although all of the above does not mean that the corruption in Slovenia is already endemic or systemic, nevertheless, the presented incentives in combination with the previously described elite network threats represent a serious risk that the corruption in Slovenia becomes precisely such (Krašovec et al., 2014). Also, the perception of corruption is likewise quite high on the Transparency International scale.

Quite a few corruption researches that narrowly targeted either the public (Škrbec, 2013; Domačnik et al., 2014; Haček et al., 2013...) or general sector were carried out in Slovenia (KPK, 2013, p. GFK Gral Iteo, 2001, 2004, Dobovšek and Škrbec, 2012).

Nevertheless, the influence of the demographic factors on the corruption perception in Slovenia is more or less unknown. The aim of the research was therefore to determine whether the demographic factors (age, gender) influence the corruption perception, since with the exception of the research by Šumah (2018) in his doctoral thesis and the research by Grivčeva (2015), such researches in Slovenia have not been carried out. Both researches have shown that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of corruption between men and women, and Šumah also notes that there is no statistically significant difference between the corruption perception in relation to age.

Nevertheless, Šumah did find, similar to Melgar, Rossi and Smith (2010) that people with a lower level of education are more prone to perceiving corruption. However, he only researched the perception of corruption in public companies, i.e. only a part of the public sector, and not broadly (public administration, health, education, judiciary). Therefore, the authors of this paper have, with their research, determined the influence of demographic factors (gender and age) on corruption perception in Slovenia and, of course, the connection between demographic factors, and broader and more general perception.

Methods

The data collection technique was surveying. A structured questionnaire was used as a research instrument. The online survey was carried out via the portal www.1ka.si. Closed type questions were used.

In the survey that took place in the second half of April and the first half of May, we tried to include as wide a circle of respondents as possible. The surveying was conducted in two directions, via social networks and via e-mail. Social networks are

very widespread, used by people of different education, different ages, and both sexes, covering the whole of Slovenia. Also, by sharing the survey among the members of the network of those who perform the survey (the surveyors), people who are not in the network of the surveyors are also reached via the network of those who share the survey. This ensures the widest possible circle of respondents.

Surveying via e-mail also provides a good geographical coverage by sending appropriately distributed surveys (the desired geographical areas can be covered), while at the same equally covering the genders.

Research limitations

Naturally, every research has its limitations. As the first limitation of the research, I would like to stress that there is a significant difference between the officially established corruption (according to publicly available data) and its measured perception among the citizens. However, unfortunately, due to the nature of its operation (both participants benefit from this act, there is usually no plaintiff, and consequently no judge), corruption is primarily measured through perception, and perception is not something that could set a solid research foundation and consequently its conclusions, as it depends on various factors[1] and, depending on the change of these, also changes, therefore not giving the true or precise image due to its subjectivity.

Another restriction is that corruption is a synonym for bribery in Slovenia and is linked mainly to irregularities or illegal acts in the public sector. However, corruption is a much broader concept, which includes not only criminal acts, but also morally disputable or perverted acts (which, although not criminal, are still worth condemnation), the violation of moral and ethical norms both in the public and private sector. The introduction of the survey, therefore, tried to explain to the respondents the scope of corruption in the wider sense.

As the third important limitation, I would like to stress the method of sampling and obtaining the respondents for the survey, respectively, which arises from the combination of collecting the respondents by e-mail and through social networks. Although such a manner can give solid results in terms of the number of respondents, it cannot ensure the complete representativeness of the sample (age, gender and other

---

[1] The problem of perception research is that it is subjective. The corruption perception is thus, during the periods of economic growth and, consequently, the higher standard of population, that is, the users of public utility services, lower than during a recession and a decline in the standard. The results of corruption-related research must thus always be viewed through the current economic situation in the country. There exist several researches into the connection between the corruption perception and the economic situation; however, it should be added that the results of the corruption perception (depending on the current economic situation in the country) vary from country to country and depend on the level and the tradition of democracy in each country. Thus, the perception of corruption in economically developed countries, with a long tradition of democracy, changes little with the change of the standard of living (the corruption of perception increases only slightly) or not at all; however, in the countries in transition or in countries in development, when the standard of living decreases, the corruption of perception increases greatly.

parameters that ensure representativeness). It is therefore necessary to emphasize that this is an ad hoc sampling method which does not enable the determination of the accuracy of sample assessments and the related procedures for testing the suppositions about the characteristics of the population and the determination of the confidence of sample assessments (Bregar, Ograjenšek and Bavdaž, 2005).

Course of research and data processing

The ad hoc sampling, which is one of the forms of nonprobability sampling, was chosen for the research mainly due to the faster course of research and lower costs. The fact is that this kind of sampling does not allow the determination of the accuracy of the sample assessments and related procedures for testing the assumptions about the characteristics of the population and determining the confidence of sample estimates, which has already been mentioned above (section 3.3).

The survey via social networks and e-mail was carried out between May 4 and June 26, and 1649 respondents clicked on the introduction; 903 through social networks 903 and 746 via e-mail. 360 surveys were filled out adequately for the analysis with the SPSS program.

The survey and the questions

The survey was short, since people do not like long surveys and our purpose was to get as many answers as possible. It consisted of three questions on corruption:

1. Please rate the level of corruption in Slovenia. Score 0 means that there is no corruption in Slovenia or it is negligible, while score 10 indicates that the degree of corruption in Slovenia is epidemic, and we can already talk about state abduction by the corrupt elites, respectively.
2. Do you have personal experience with corruption? (answer YES / NO)
3. In your personal opinion, in which branch of authority is corruption most widespread?

   (The legislative branch, the judicial branch, the executive branch.)

   And of two questions from the field of demographics:

4. Gender (M / F)
5. Age (up to 20 years; 21 to 40 years; 41 to 60 years; over 60 years)

Result of the survey

278 respondents answered question no. 1. The average score was 7.4, which indicates a high corruption perception in Slovenia.

A surprisingly high percentage of respondents also have personal experience with corruption (as much as 43%).

The executive branch was chosen as the most corrupt branch of power.

Furthermore, as the most important part of the research, the answer to the research question: How do the demographic factors influence the perception of corruption in Slovenia?

An analysis was made with the SPSS statistical tool of how gender and age influence the perception of corruption in Slovenia.

The influence of gender on corruption perception

In the abovementioned researches (Šumah, 2018 and Grivec, 2015), the authors found that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of corruption between the genders, which is exactly what this research confirmed (the T-test was used for the analysis): that there is no statistically significant difference in the corruption perception between the genders.

Group Statistics					
Frequency of corruption in Slovenia	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Female	133	7.3985	1.94212	.16840
	Male	144	7.4444	2.00272	.16689

T-test of Independent Samples										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Frequency of corruption in Slovenia	Equal variances assumed	.692	.406	-.194	275	.847	-.04595	.23738	-.51327	.42137
	Equal variances not assumed			-.194	274.340	.846	-.04595	.23709	-.51270	.42080

Table 1: Statistic T-test

The impact of age on corruption perception

As Šumah (2018) has already argued, this research also showed (using ANOVE) that age does not influence the perception of corruption or that there is no statistically significant difference between the age groups regarding the corruption perception.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Descriptives								
Frequency of corruption in Slovenia								
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
up to 20 years	5	7.2000	3.11448	1.39284	3.3329	11.0671	3.00	10.00
from 21 to 20 years	61	7.3934	1.90857	.24437	6.9046	7.8822	3.00	10.00
from 41 to 60 years	149	7.4228	1.93887	.15884	7.1089	7.7367	2.00	10.00
ower 60 years	43	7.8372	1.88894	.28806	7.2559	8.4185	3.00	10.00
Total	258	7.4806	1.94316	.12098	7.2424	7.7189	2.00	10.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Frequency of corruption in Slovenia			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.456	3	254	.227

Anova				
Frequency of corruption in Slovenia				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.823	3	2.274	.600	.616
Within Groups	963.580	254	3.794		
Total	970.403	257			

Table 2: Statistic ANOVA

Discussion

The research showed that in Slovenia there is no statistically significant influence of demographic factors on the corruption perception, at least according to age and gender (the level of education was not included in the research). However, it is alarming that as much as 43% of the survey respondents had had a personal experience with corruption.

It can certainly be argued that the fact that the introduction of the survey, which explained the concept of corruption very well, contributed to such a high percentage.

People thus actually got a sense of what the concept of corruption includes. Had this explanation not been given, the question of whether they had personal experience with corruption would be answered by significantly less respondents, as corruption in Slovenia is synonymous with bribery. All of the above indicates that Slovenias citizens are still either too tolerant of corruption or that we are poorly educated or informed regarding it (and its negative influences). General articles on corruption (daily newspapers, for example) also often use expressions that are too professional when describing corruptive actions, since an ordinary citizen probably does not know what "chronism" or "nepotism" are or what the words "state capture" or the "rotating door" mean. By a different, less academic approach to the explanation of corruption, similar to the explanations of the Holy Bible parables (everyone would understand precisely what corruption is and the damage that it causes - even to the individual himself), it would be easier to create the critical mass that would be needed for a successful fight against corruption.

The second fact that should be emphasized on the basis of the research, is the so-called Bradley effect[2], since it is otherwise not possible to interpret only 360 completed surveys, or only 21.8% of those who clicked on the Introduction. Obviously, the fear of quick labelling and the truth is still present in our society, or is the legal culture in Slovenia still at a level where people respect the law only when they personally benefit from it (Škrbec, 2013, p. 120). Those who strictly adhere to the law in Slovenia are exemptions rather than a rule, and are sometimes even stigmatized in public as "idiots, morons" or something similar. Grodeland (2005, p.17) in his study similarly finds that the majority of the respondents in Slovenia believe that the Slovenians do not respect the rule of law and that the search for holes in the law is a national sport. According to Grodeland, the Slovenians in general believe that it is necessary to be inventive, and they respect the laws only to the extent to which they benefit them. The non-observance of laws is, according to the respondents, mainly due to the communist past.

Precisely for the above reasons, two coordinated directions of action are needed in the fight against corruption: the first is providing a critical mass with zero levels of corruption, ensured through education and awareness of citizens, and the second the ensuring a political will for change.

---

[2] Bradley effect is the name that describes, in the broadest sense, the phenomenon that occurs during elections in modern western and other liberal democracies; the candidates that belong to racial, ethnic, sexual and other minorities, or to in a different way marginalized and oppressed groups, as a rule receive far less votes in the elections, than suggested by pre-election public opinion surveys. The effect is named after Tom Bradley, a Democratic black mayor of Los Angeles who in 1982 lost his election of the governor of California against the white Republican candidate George Deukmejian, although the pre-election surveys ensured him a reliable advantage. Such a gap between the surveys and the actual situation is most commonly explained by the fact that the respondents, mostly white voters, were afraid to tell the surveyors how they would vote (for the white candidate and not for the black one), fearing that they would be marked as racists. People similarly respond to questions about other issues or issues where they could get a label (e.g. being corrupt if the answer in this survey is that one has had personal experience with corruption) (Šumah, 2018, p.156).

References

1. Bregar, L., Ograjenšek, I. in Bavdaž, M. (2005). *Metode raziskovalnega dela za ekonomiste: izbrane teme*. Ljubljana: Ekonomska fakulteta.

2. Dobovšek, B. in Škrbec, J. (2012). Korupcija, grožnja slovenski (pravni) državi. Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo, 63(1), s.50-59.

3. Dollar, D., Fisman, R. in Gatti, R. (2001). Are women really the "fairer" sex? Corruption and women in government. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 46(4), 423-429.

4. Domadenik, P., Prašnikar, J. in Svejnar, J. (2014). Legal Corruption, Politically Connected Corporate Governance and Firm Performance. Pridobljeno 17. 12. 2015 s spletne strani: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2468497

5. GFK Gral Iteo, tržne raziskave, d.o.o. (2004). Korupcijska klima. Mednarodna raziskava v GFK mreži. Pridobljeno 7. 9. 2016 s spletne strani: http://www.dossierkorupcija.com/Datoteke/Gral_Iteo_korupcijska_klima_2004.pdf

6. Grivec, Malči (2015). Korupcija v slovenskem prostoru. Revija za ekonomske in poslovne vede, *letnik 2, številka 1, str. 44- 64*. URN:NBN:SI:doc-LHHOLXTW from http://www.dlib.si

7. Grodeland, A. B. (2005). Informal Networks and Corruption in the Judiciary: Elite Interview Findings from the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania. In World Bank conference "New Frontiers of Social Policy," (pp. 12-15).

8. Hacek, M., Kukovic, S. in Brezovsek, M. (2013). Problems of corruption and distrust in political and administrative institutions in Slovenia. Communist and Post-Communist Studies,, 46.2: 255-261. Preneseno 3.2.2015 s spletne strani: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967067X13000135

9. Horvat, S. (2008). Kje je meja med korupcijo in lobiranjem. Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Ekonomska Fakulteta.

10. Karim, S. (2011). Madame Officer. Pridobljeno 3. 12. 2015 s spletne strani: http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/2802

11. Komisija za preprečevanje korupcije. (2013). Letno poročilo 2012. Pridobljeno 6. 11. 2015 s spletne strani: https://www.kpk-rs.si/sl/komisija/letna-porocila

12. Krašovec, A., Johannsen, L., Pedersen, K. H., & Deželan, T. (2014). Nevarnost sistemske korupcije v Sloveniji: spodbude in ovire. Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo, 65(3), 207-20.

13. Lee, W. S. in Guven, C. (2013). Engaging in corruption: The influence of cultural values and contagion effects at the microlevel. Journal of Economic Psychology, 39, 287-300.

14. Melgar, N., Rossi, M. in Smith, T. W. (2010). The perception of corruption. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 22(1), 120-131.

15. Melgar, N., Rossi, M. in Smith, T. W. (2010). The perception of corruption. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 22(1), 120-131.

16. Musaraj, A., & Gerxhi, J. (2010). Communication and Ethical Behavior in the Public Service. *Academicus International Scientific Journal*, (1), 11-21.

17. Musaraj, A., & Malltezi, A. (2012). Communication Technologies and the public service: Is it the case of citizens inclusion in the public service standard in Albania?. *Academicus International Scientific Journal*, (5), 26-42.

18. North, C. M., Orman, W. H. in Gwin, C. R. (2013). Religion, corruption, and the rule of law. Journal of Money, Credit and Banking, 45(5), 757-779.

19. OLIN, M.E. (2013) *Corruption and gender perceptions in Latin America and the Caribbean*. PhD Thesis. Vanderbilt University. Pridobljeno 20.05.2018 s spletne strani: https://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu//available/etd-03262013-134426/unrestricted/OlinThesis.pdf

20. Rivas, M. F. (2013). An experiment on corruption and gender. Bulletin of Economic Research, 65(1), 10-42.

21. Škrbec, J. (2013). Vpliv korupcije na pravno državo v Republiki Sloveniji. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za varnostne vede.

22. Šumah, Š. (2018). Korupcija v javnih podjetjih. Celje: Fakulteta za komercialne in poslovne vede.

23. Šumah, Š. in Mahić, E. (2017). Dejavniki, ki vplivajo na stopnjo korupcije. Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo, 68(3), 248–257.