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Journal homepage: www.publishing.globalcsrc.org/jbsee**Understanding Gendered Perspective to Corruption: Evidence from Pakistan**¹ Muhammad Ilyas, ² Rabia Rasheed, ³ Rafia Faiz¹ The Islamia University of Bahawalpur Pakistan. m.ilyas@iub.edu.pk² Iqra University Karachi Pakistan, rabia7862009@gmail.com³ Assistant Professor, School of Economics, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History Revised format: April 2020 Available Online: May 2020	This study focuses on the debate that whether women are as corrupt as men, or their propensity to corruption is less than their male counterparts on account of their soft gender? It also encompasses the dynamics of networking, with particular emphasis on sifarish (use of influence for undue benefits) and networking in gender perspective. Are women less corrupt than men? Do the sifarish and networking have gender biasness, how women become part of these networks and what role they play therein? These are the questions addressed in this study. An interpretive approach of qualitative research has been adopted keeping in view the subjective nature of networking and corruption. Semi-structured interviews from seventeen General / Senior Managers of public sector organizations were conducted to get their input on the research questions, middle management of public sector has been selected with a view that they have immediate exposure to corruption occurrences in the society. In addition to it, in depth review of the relevant available literature has been made. It has been concluded that apparent image of women being less susceptible to corruption is not related with their sex or gender, rather it is due to their less exposure to business and economic world which, even as of today, is dominated by men This study will add to the literature on role of gender in corruption, sifarish, networking and favoritism in the Pakistani context. This will also help management practitioners in working out their strategies in defining the role of women in the anti-corruption campaigns in business and political sectors.
Keywords Corruption, Nepotism, Networking, Gender	
JEL Classification:	



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1. Introduction

Corruption erodes every fabric of the society and worst hit is on its economy. Pakistan is one of the

unfortunate countries of the developing world where every sector, ranging from public administration to politics and religion are fraught with corruption (Javaid, 2010). In global ranking of corruption, southeast Asia has been ranked high with Pakistan and Bangladesh being on the top while their neighboring countries like Srilanka and India coming lower on the list (Kochanek, 2010). Lack of good governance is directly related with the spread of corruption in the society which, in turn, shatters the trust of the people at large (Marvi & Howard, 2013). Corruption in politics is not specific to Pakistan only, rather it is prevalent in all the developing and emerging economies in one way or the other. Aidt (2003) posited in his study that the developed countries, United Kingdom and United States, also had bad practices of purchase of votes and even seats in their elections before these democracies evolved and framed appropriate laws to bar such practices. Countries have to pay heavy costs for corruption in terms of low economic growth and have to carry out structural changes in all sectors to have an effective fight against corruption (Tanzi, 1998). Corruption results in inequalities in the people causing the feeling of deprivation in the society giving rise to crimes and financial embezzlements (Gupta, Davoodi, & Alonso-Terme, 2002). Moreover, bureaucrats join hands with politicians to make illegitimate earnings through corruption which makes the whole governing system inefficient and non-conducive for economic growth (Khan, 2001). Foreign investors tend to avoid corruption in their Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) ventures as it results in degradation of their functional efficiency and widespread corruption in the economy discourages FDI. Generally people are reluctant to point out the corruption in the institutions due to inherent fear of retaliation which are deeply embedded in the organization culture (Kochanek, 2010). Women can play a key role in this emerging campaign against corruption in developing economies like Pakistan. One of the major developments of the current century is the concept of using the induction of women in politics and public institutions as an anticorruption tool because of women's higher averseness to corruption and their higher fear of accountability (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018). Bureaucratic and administrative setups of the institutions play a mediating role in the relationship of women and corruption, strong institutional cultures are negatively related with anticorruption effectiveness of the women (Stensöta, Wängnerud, & Svensson, 2015). This study finds that sifarish and networking are closely related with corruption as these result in inequalities of resource allocation violating merit and justice. Collectivism and uncertainty avoidance lead to the culture of sifarish and nepotism in Pakistani culture which is further colored with gender discrimination due to masculine dominance in the society (Islam, 2004). Drawing on the main lines of the Theory of Differential Association (Sutherland, Cressey, & Luckenbill, 1995) and the Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2011), this research establishes that women are less prone to corruption because they are less exposure to corrupt practices of business world and have to live up to the role of "fairer sex" attributed to them by the society.

Study of the dynamics of corruption has been of interest for the scholars, and so is the question of gender biasness in corruption. Sifarish and networking lead to favoritism, which is letting the members of a group have jobs and contracts in preference to people outside the groups (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016). Networking and favoritism are closely related to corruption as these result in in-equal distribution of resources in the society. In pre-industrialization era, women were restricted to back seat in the society, mainly assuming the role of housewives and were not involved in business or financial matters and therefore role of gender in corruption did not warrant any probe at the time. But after the dawn of industrialization, women emerged as key members of the workforce. With this progression, the debate has come up whether women are as corrupt as men or their propensity to corruption is lesser than their male counterparts on account of soft gender? This question is explored in detail in this study.

This study is significant in the sense that it will add to literature on gendered perspective of corruption in the context of Pakistani society. Although, there is a good quantum of literature on the networking and corruption at global level but such literature in Pakistan's context is very scarce. In addition to it, there has been a new trend in the world today to add women in political and other sectors of the society to fight corruption on the plea that women are less likely to get into corrupt practices as compared to men on account of their relatively purer nature (Goetz, 2007). Transparency International has also reported global

trend to induct women in political and organizational setups as part of anticorruption strategy across many countries (Transparency, 2000). This study will also help the organizations working in private and public sector in Pakistan in devising an effective strategy to counter corruption in their setups. The study looks into following four questions;

- **Are women less corrupt than men?**
- **What is the role of gender in sifarish networks?**
- **What role do women play in sifarish in organization or society?**
- **How are women included in or excluded from sifarish networks?**

Literature Review

Propensity to Corruption

Corruption is the advantage that two persons get with their connivance at the cost of other person(s) (Swamy, Knack, Lee, & Azfar, 2001). Corruption leads to a vicious cycle in which the rich privileged class exploits the resources in their favor and keeps on piling up their wealth, widening the gap between rich and the poor (Seleim & Bontis, 2009). Sifarish and corruption are closely related, an administrative and bureaucratic setup based on sifarish i.e. devoid of merit will lead to spread of corruption in the society. To have a corruption free society, it is imperative that the bureaucrats selection process be transparent and be based on strict merit so that they run the administration of the country on merit and justice (Dahlström, Lapuente, & Teorell, 2012).

Women have high ethical norms and are less likely to get into corruption, their representation in politics and bureaucracy leads to decrease in corruption (Transparency, 2000). Females are considered less likely to get into corrupt practices and not likely to become part of the bribe network, an explanation for such behaviors is their less exposure to business and labor practices (Swamy et al., 2001). B. Sim et al. (2017) establish that incorruptibility of female gender is not related to the biological sex segregation, rather it is due to socially constructed roles assigned to females as contrasted to roles assigned to males in the society. Men form both formal and informal networks to achieve their business as well as political objectives, these networks may be instrumental as well as express networks (Ibarra, 1993). Women are normally more averse to corruption as compared with men and their induction in political set ups is positively associated with efforts to reduce corruption in the society but it does not necessarily mean that women are intrinsically less corrupt, rather these are the social and contextual factors that make them less prone to corruption (Esareyy & Chirilloz, 2013). It has also been established in experimental study that women are less corrupt than women (Rivas, 2013).

In a cross country study, it has been observed that significant differences appear in the attitude of females towards corruption from country to country and it was observed that females from Australia were found less prone to corruption than the ones from Indonesia, Singapore and India (Alatas, Cameron, Chaudhuri, Erkal, & Gangadharan, 2009). It has been studied that induction of women in political and other institutions of the society is negatively correlated with corruption and therefore women induction can be used as an anticorruption tool (Lambsdorff, 1999). This view has been promoted by Transparency International widely and is being seriously considered by social scientists.

Theoretical Perspective of Corruption

Alhassan-Alolo (2007) used Differential Association Opportunity (DAO) and Social Role theories to explain the relatively less susceptibility of women towards corruption as compared with men.

Theory of Differential Association Opportunity (DAO)

As per this theory opportunities and networks play very crucial role in determining the behaviors of individuals, as criminal behaviors are developed by the engagement of an individual in criminal networks and strengthened by the opportunities he gets in such networks. So it is the exposure to opportunities of corruption that determine the propensity to corruption and it is not gender specific (Sutherland et al., 1995).

Theory of Social Roles

As per Social Role Theory, behaviors of public office holders are determined by the widely held roles attached with their positions and the expectations that the people they interact with have from them in performance of these roles (Eagly & Wood, 2011). The fear of sanctions if they fail to come up to these expectations also determine their behaviors. The application of both these theories posits that corrupt behaviors are determined by the factors that are gender neutral. Goetz (2007) argues that it is a myth that the women are less corrupt than men and are a panacea for control of corruption, and that it is the reverse of the myth held in old times about the women that they were not suitable for public and business matters because of their soft and caring nature. As per You and Khagram (2005), corruption is the misuse of public power for personal gains and it is fostered by the inequalities in the society. Due to their soft and clean image, women when run as candidates for an election, mitigate the sense of fraud and therefore women are being inducted by political parties to improve their credibility against corruption (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014).

Networking / Sifarish

Business networks are affected by the environment in which the businesses work, the institutional setups and cultural values determine the size and density of the networks (Batjargal, 2007). Networking and favoritism are closely related in that members of networks and their related groups may have lesser qualifications and experience as compared to candidates from other groups but they are preferred in award of jobs and other opportunities (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016). Women, owing to their numerical scarceness, have limited access to organizational networks and resultantly have poor knowledge of what is happening in the inner circles of the organizations (Ibarra, 1993). However, women cannot have active roles in express networking outside their immediate organizational set up as they cannot socialize as frequently and easily as men do to seek their career development (Ibarra, 1993). Moreover, women being few and new in the top positions of the business and political worlds are not familiar with the illegal and unfair practices and do not participate in the networking as actively as their male counterparts do (B. Branisa & Ziegler, 2010). Benschop (2009) suggests that networking does not emphasize the gender inequality always, rather it opens up the options for different combinations of networking and gendering depending on the purpose and type of networking. Ming-Yen and Siang-Choy (2007) observed, while studying Malaysian women entrepreneurs, that women could not enter the men's world of networking despite the establishment of many forums to train them to do so mainly because they are overloaded with family as well as business commitments.

Research Methodology

This study will adopt qualitative research to gather the input from General Managers / Senior Managers of public sector organizations. The reason for conducting this research in public sector is the relatively higher rate of corruption in there. General Manager / Senior Managers are the ones who implement the policies and manage operation of organization and, in this capacity, they can have a very close watch on the occurrences of corruption.

Research Approach

Weighing corruption propensities on gender basis is more of subjective nature and requires a flexible and inductive approach for exploration of the subject, therefore an interpretive approach of qualitative research has been adopted in this dissertation. Qualitative research offers flexibility of design and employs inductive techniques to study in contrast to experimental approach of scientific research (Maxwell, 2012).

Research Strategy

Most of the available research has been conducted outside Pakistan and cannot be straightaway applied to Pakistani society without taking into consideration the contextual factors. To align this research with local settings, the interviewing technique has been adopted in which semi-structured interviews were conducted

to get the input from target participants on the research questions.

Research Design

Qualitative research design was adopted to conduct the study with convenient sampling was used to select the participants. Management employees of diversified private and public organizations were included in the sample.

Research Instrument

Interviewing is widely used instrument in qualitative research and researches may use structured or semi-structured interviews based on the requirement of their research (Brinkmann, 2014). This study adopted semi-structured interviewing technique and open ended questions were put to the participants to record their responses in the interviews. Participants were encouraged to share their candid views on the research questions with short prompts.

Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of responses to the questions put up to the respondents in in-depth informal interviews. The responses were unstructured and therefore the same have been discussed subjectively.

All the 17 participants (Table-1) were selected from public sector organizations and were of middle management level who were directly responsible for forming / implementing business level policies. This choice was made keeping in view that they must be having close exposure to occurrence of corruption. Corruption rate is higher in public sector organizations as compared with private sector organizations, one indication of which is the relatively lower average wages as public sector employees but the living standard are almost the same of the employees of the two sectors (Gorodnichenko & Peter, 2007). Demographic descriptive of age, sex and income are expaliated in the table.

Anonymity of participants has been maintained and they have been assigned pseudo names, like P-1, P-2 etc.

Particulars of Interviewees

Participant	Designation	Age Bracket (Years)	Experience (Years)	Income Bracket (Rs)	Gender	Marital Status
P-1	General Manager Coordination	56-60	28	100,000 -150,000	Male	Married
P-2	General Manager Quality Assurance	56-60	27	100,000 -150,000	Male	Married
P-3	Director Coordination	51-55	25	75,000 - 100,000	Male	Married
P-4	General Manager Finance	51-55	26	350,000 - 400,000	Male	Married
P-5	General Manager	51-55	25	300,000 - 350,000	Male	Married
P-6	General Manager Technical	51-55	25	100,000 -150,000	Male	Married
P-7	Chief Operating Officer	51-55	26	350,000 - 400,000	Male	Married
P-8	Director Labor	55-60	28	150,000 - 200,000	Male	Married
P-9	General Manager Admin	51-55	25	200,000 - 250,000	Male	Married
P-10	Area Sale Manager	45-50	20	100,000 -150,000	Male	Married
P-11	GM HR Lahore	45-50	21	200,000 - 250,000	Male	Married
P-12	Executive Vice President Corporate	51-55	24	300,000 - 350,000	Male	Married
P-13	GM Sales Lahore	45-50	20	200,000 - 250,000	Male	Married
P-14	Senior Manager Development	51-55	25	100,000 -150,000	Male	Single
P-15	Senoir Manager Corporate	51-55	23	150,000 - 200,000	Female	Married
P-16	Manager Wireless Operations	41-45	12	75,000 - 100,000	Female	Married
P-17	Manager HRBP	41-45	13	75,000 - 100,000	Female	Married

Table : 1

The interviews were conducted in pleasant manner and all the participants gave their candid input to all the questions.

Findings and Discussion

Gender and Corruption

Just like criminal behavior, corrupt practices are adopted by exposure to corrupt environment and are reinforced by norms of the society as advocated by DAO theory (Alolo, 2006). This is one of the explanations for women being considered less corrupt as compared to men, because they have less exposure to corrupt environment of business as well as other sectors of the society. Women are believed to have high standards of ethics and they generally resist corruption, keeping this in view they have been inducted in Mexico police to reduce corruption in the police force (Transparency, 2000). This view has also been endorsed by Lambsdorff (1999) who has found in his empirical studies that the induction of women in government institutions is negatively related with degree of corruption in the society. In line with this findings, Transparency International has also recommended more representation of women in political setups and business organizations as an anticorruption measure (Transparency, 2000). Cultures with high human values and individual collectivism tend to be supportive for corruption as individual go for their personal gains over the organizational interests and society is tolerant and lenient towards corruption (Seleim & Bontis, 2009). Induction of women in state institutions to thwart corruption can not necessarily be attributed to their gender superiority in averseness to corruption, rather it is the demand for accountability in corruption against women that rise with the rise of representation of women in the key positions that serves as an anticorruption tool as most of the incidents of corruption and crime against women normally go unreported in poor societies (Hossain, Musembi, Hughes, & Stern, 2010). This is another aspect of gendered perspective to corruption, gender inequalities in themselves lead to development of corruption in the society (Boris Branisa, Klasen, & Ziegler, 2013). Such inequalities make women more sensitive and less tolerant to corruption. Bérengère SIM et al. (2017) establish that incorruptibility of female gender is not related to the biological sex segregation, rather it is due to socially constructed roles assigned to females as contrasted to roles assigned to males in the society as posited by Theory of Social Roles. Rivas (2013) posited the same stance in his experimental studies that women are observed to be less corrupt than men.

In this study this has also been endorsed by P-1 that women are less inclined to corruption, mainly because they are less in number and because of their fear of facing the consequences. Another participant, P-4 stats that;

“Men are more in corruption as compared to women in Pakistan as well as at the word level, mainly due to their willingness to take the risks and face the consequences. While women are not that daring and are afraid of losing their face in the public in case they are held up in any scam.”

Gender and Sifarish Networking

Women cannot have active roles in express networking outside their immediate organizational set up as they cannot socialize as frequently and easily as men do to seek their career development (Ibarra, 1993). This view has been endorsed by most of the participants in one way or the other. Organizations do have gender inequalities which are challenged by as well as mitigated by the incorporation of more women at corporate levels in boards and at establishment level in key managerial posts which lead to less discrimination in women workforce at lower levels (Stainback, Kleiner, & Skaggs, 2016).

Networking is fast acquiring a new dimension in modern corporate world, it is no more considered a negative approach to develop oneself rather it is being institutionalized now and even in some organizations it is being made part of PMS as a KPI (McPherson, Lovin, & Cook, 2001). But still networking, despite of this newly acquired positive dimension, has negative aspects also leading to sifarish and favoritism which are used to gain unfair advantages in professional as well as social networking. This results in compromise on merit and fairness in personal development of people who are

connected with the influential personalities (Ponzo & Scoppa, 2010). At mass level also, if merit is not observed in selection of administrative set up of the government then it is not possible to have corruption free economy (Dahlström et al., 2012). Let it be positive or negative networking, it does have maintenance cost which its members have to bear. This cost is in the form of financial expense as well as investment of personal time which sometimes become very hard to live with (Methot, Lepine, Podsakkof, & Christian, 2016). There exist informal networks also, primarily dominated by low educated workers engaged in low productivity job in small organizations (Ponzo & Scoppa, 2010). Cultural context determines the nature of networking its people have and it also sets the tone of cohesiveness within the networks (Batjargal, 2007). Cultures with strong and established institutions plug in the loopholes of corruption in the society which leads to formation of business and personal networking on principles of fairness and justice.

Role Women Play in Sifarish Networking

Women being few and new in the top positions of the business and political worlds are not familiar with the illegal and unfair practices and do not participate in the networking as actively as their male counterparts do (B. Branisa & Ziegler, 2010). This leads to the impression that women are less prone to sifarish and corruption compared with men.

This has also been endorsed by our respondents, as P-10 stated.

“No significant role is played by women in sifarish, hardly 5% of the women play any role in sifarish. It is mostly men, who indulge in sifarish. It is because no doubt men are more socially active and have way more contacts and relations with influential people than do women.”

How are Women Included in or Excluded from Sifarish Networks?

Women may become members of instrumental networks by virtue of their hierarchical position in the organization for their professional and personal development. However, women cannot have active roles in express networking outside their immediate organizational set up as they cannot socialize as frequently and easily as men do to seek their career development (Ibarra, 1993).

This has been stressed in particular by a respondent P-6 as under;

“The negative aspect of men’s sifarish networks is that some of them use women as sex commodity to be offered as a bribe for the gratification of concerned officers / executives. Women are not normally taken as trustworthy members of the social networks by men and therefore their direct roles in the networks are very limited. Mostly women are used to attract and lure the key executives by their looks and beauty for winning their favors. This soft side of women’s role in social networking makes them desirable for inclusion in sifarish networks.”

Women are evaluated by men on their masculine criterion before they are allowed to join a network in present time male dominated business and social organizations (Priola, 2007).

Moreover, most of the top slots in the management are occupied by men who prefer and help promote men to join their networks and get promoted (Brink & Benschop, 2013). Organizations have gender bias in their set up and all their figurative leaders are masculine heroes whose distinctive performance is considered very manly in business world (Acker, 1990). Moreover, women get occupied on two fronts i.e. they have to give time and attention to their family and at the same time they need to exert in their business and professional careers which make it hard for them to find time to socialize and indulge in networking (Ming-Yen & Siong-Choy, 2007).. Women consider their family and the upbringing of children as a major obstacles to their careers, and this makes it very hard for them to invest their time and energy in maintaining the networks (Priola, 2007). Esareyy and Chirilloz (2013) have related networking to political systems, the recruitment in autocratic governments is designed to induct the people who will support and promote the cause of the rulers thus becoming staunch members of their networks regardless of their gender. The concept of Inclusive Organizations has emerged to overcome the gender biasness and

work force conflicts by inculcating an inclusive environment in such organizations where all employees are treated equally for what they are, in contrast to the stereotype labelling that leads to prejudices and conflicts (Nishi, 2013). This will eliminate not only gender discrimination but will also minimize class conflicts in the workforce.

As per the theory of DAO and Social Role theory, gender is the collection of attributes ascribed to men and women as result of their social learning and these are not limited to physical sex differences. In view of these and the input by the participant of the survey, this study finds that women have low propensity to corruption due to fairer nature of their gender and also due to lesser access to sifarish networks.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Participants of this research were selected from among the General / Senior Managers of public sector companies. Future research should also include private companies to make the research more representative. The size of the sample was another limitation; it will be advisable to have more representation in future research with a bigger sample.

Conclusion

This study concludes that women are more averse to corruption than men, because they have lesser exposure to opportunities of corruption due to their limited role in the political and business world as a result of their socially learnt roles specific to their gender. Women are also less participative in the sifarish networks as they cannot afford the maintenance costs of networking due to their family commitments which also leads them to have even lesser propensity to corruption. There is extant literature on role of gender in corruption and networking at global level, but abundant literature could not be found in Pakistan on these subjects. Whereas, it is dire need of the time to enrich the research on corruption and its different antecedents so that anticorruption measures be addressed to its very roots. This study has given an insight in the dynamics of the corruption and it, in line with the discussed literature the findings that women are less corrupt than men and can be used as anticorruption tool. This study will add to literature in this context. This will also help management scientists in working out their strategies in promoting the role of women in the anticorruption campaigns in political and business sectors.

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