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*Examining the relationship between government corruption and internet freedom in the
Republic of Turkey*

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
Criminal Justice and Criminology.

By
Savannah Warren

Under the mentorship of Dr. Laurie A. Gould

ABSTRACT

Government corruption is a problem found in varying degrees in almost every country around the world. Corruption can be defined as the misuse of public office for private gain and some examples include bribery, nepotism, graft, and tax evasion. These types of activities can cost nations trillions of dollars every year and stifle development in important areas. The media, and in particular, the internet can aid in the fight against corruption by shedding light on illicit or unethical government activities. However, in order to do this, citizens must have free access to the internet. Previous research reveals that access to the internet leads to increases in voice and accountability, as well as decreases in government corruption. The current study examines the relationship between government corruption and internet freedom in Turkey. Findings reveal that access to the internet has been steadily decreasing in Turkey, as the government has passed several pieces of legislation aimed at blocking access. During this same time, levels of governmental corruption have increased.

Thesis Mentor: *Dr. Laurie A. Gould*

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Introduction: Corruption Defined

Government corruption is a problem found in varying degrees in almost every country around the world. According to Transparency International, more than two thirds of the world's countries have a serious problem with government corruption. Corruption can be defined as the misuse of public office for private gain (Bland, 2014, p. 268), and it can manifest in various forms such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and graft. Since each form of corruption operates a little differently, an explanation of the various types is provided below.

Bribery typically takes the form of a monetary gift that is given to an official with the expectation of receiving something valued in return. For example, a defendant may give money to a judge in criminal court, with the expectation of receiving a favorable judgment.

Embezzlement is the mishandling of money and has been defined by the U.S. Supreme Court as “the fraudulent appropriation of property by a person to whom such property has been entrusted, or into whose hands it has lawfully come. It differs from larceny in that the original taking was lawful, or with the consent of the owner, while in larceny the felonious intent must have existed at the time of the taking” (*Moore v. United States*, 160 U.S. 268, 269, 1895).

Nepotism occurs when “someone in an official position exploits his or her power and authority to provide a job or favor to a family member or friend, even though he or she may not be qualified or deserving” (Transparency International, 2023). A classic example of nepotism would be finding a job for a relative even if they do not have the required competence.

Some examples of corrupt behavior include “a former public official selling confidential information gained while working in an official capacity” (Watt, 2015, p.5). Additionally, Watt (2015) notes corruption can cross legal boundaries with public officials who may seek payments or bribes to speed up or allow certain legal transactions to occur. This is a common occurrence

with mining licenses in some countries. For example, in New South Wales, the Independent Commission Against Corruption “exposed instances of corruption in which mining exploration licenses and favorable commercial leases were granted without due process. It also investigated the granting of development approvals to vested interests and illegal political donations to major political parties” (Watt, 2015, p.5).

In sum, corruption involves the abuse of power from a person or persons who maintain positions of power and authority in the government. While corruption can be found in almost any country, it tends to be more pronounced in developing countries. One reason for this could be the actions of street-level officers who possess power and discretion within the context of their job duties. Discretion is essential for the functioning of government administrations, enabling public service delivery in situations of high ambiguity and imperfect information (Addo, 2021). However, discretion also provides opportunities for street level officers to “look the other way” when crimes occur, often in exchange for a bribe. This can occur more frequently in developing countries because street level officers typically receive low pay and accepting bribes can be seen as a way to increase one's income. According to Transparency International (2022), “corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion, and other illicit financial flows cost developing countries \$1.26 trillion per year” (p 1). The goal of the current study is to explore the relationship between government corruption and the role of internet freedom, using Turkey as a case study.

The Consequences of Corruption

The effects of corruption are far-reaching and damaging to society. Corruption erodes the public trust in government institutions, alters economic development, distorts priorities, wastes resources, undermines the justice system, and increases inequality/poverty by diverting public resources from their intended purposes such as healthcare or education. Corruption can also

discourage foreign investment from corporations, which can have long lasting negative effects on the overall economic development of a given country.

In some cases, paying bribes to secure contracts in some countries is simply seen as the cost of doing business, however this too has negative consequences because it creates an uneven playing field that favors corporations who are willing to engage in corrupt practices.

Additionally, Mauro, Meda, and Fournier (2019) note that corrupt practices “drain public resources away from education, health care, and effective infrastructure—the kinds of investments that can improve economic performance and raise living standards for all” (p.27).

In functional democracies with a system of checks and balances, legislative bodies are typically supposed to provide oversight on the executive branch, thereby preventing corruption. For example, in the United States, the legislative branch works on drafting legislation and also has the power to reject executive appointments such as appointed leadership positions for federal agencies and federal judgeships. This power theoretically works to curb nepotism, by ensuring there is bipartisan support for executive appointments. Informational transparency in the form of free access to the internet is another critical tool in the fight against government corruption.

The Relationship between Government Corruption and Internet freedom

A recurring theme in the literature is the need for more transparency to aid in the fight against corruption. The internet is uniquely positioned to aid in this fight in two ways, first by exposing corruption and second by promoting transparency and accountability within the government. However, in order to accomplish these goals, there must be internet freedom.

Internet freedom is a broad term that includes having Internet access, digital rights, net neutrality, and freedom of information. In 2012, The United Nations Human Rights Council declared that internet freedom was a human right. In their statement, they outline the following:

- “1. *Affirms* that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression, which is applicable regardless of frontiers and through any media of one’s choice, in accordance with articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
2. *Recognizes* the global and open nature of the Internet as a driving force in accelerating progress towards development in its various forms;
3. *Calls upon* all States to promote and facilitate access to the Internet and international cooperation aimed at the development of media and information and communications facilities in all countries;
4. *Encourages* special procedures to take these issues into account within their existing mandates, as applicable;
5. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, on the Internet and in other technologies, as well as of how the Internet can be an important tool for development and for exercising human rights, in accordance with its programme of work” (p. 164).

This was signed by seventy-two countries including the United States of America, Germany, United Kingdom, Poland, and The Ukraine, to name a few.

The media can aid in the fight against corruption by shedding light on illicit or unethical government activities. While traditionally the media has been composed of television and newspaper reports, increasingly social media and the internet more generally have become primary sources of information for people about government corruption. Hipólito (2019, p.1014) explains that this has become the case because social media can, “1) provide the public with an anonymous channel of reporting abuse and corrupt activities 2) report and keep files of corruption cases 3) provide accurate information on government programs, standards, and services, potentially reducing the discretionary power of bureaucrats.” Looking at it from a positive perspective, the ability to seek and collect information can give people a sense of control and promote effectiveness in the search for new information (Hipólito, 2019 p. 1014).

Hashtag activism provides an example of how the internet can be used to address corruption or illicit activity among the powerful, as well as hold the government accountable. One of the first Hashtag movements to take place on Twitter was the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign. In 2014, the terrorist group Boko Haram abducted over two hundred schoolgirls from a government run school in Chibok Nigeria. Initially, the response from the Nigerian government was virtually non-existent as the president at the time, Goodluck Jonathan, dismissed media accounts of the kidnapping as “fake news” designed to hurt his re-election campaign. The #BringBackOurGirls Campaign was designed to pressure the Nigerian government into rescuing the kidnapped girls. The hashtag spread throughout the world and was even retweeted by First Lady Michelle Obama. While interest in the news story waned over time, the hashtag movement was useful in bringing attention to the kidnapped girls, as well as shining a light on the Nigerian government’s failure to act.

In 2016, the #MetooMovement in the United States brought awareness to survivors of sexual abuse and in 2017 it helped lead to the conviction of Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein, for sex crimes and third-degree rape. This movement served to raise global consciousness about sexual harassment and assault. Movements such as these can bring awareness to issues that might otherwise be hidden, and they can help foster change. In addition to raising awareness about social issues and changing how we participate in democracy; the internet has also changed the ways in which governments can be held accountable for corruption.

Literature Review

The following literature review will focus on the relationship between governmental corruption and public awareness, voice and accountability, and internet freedom.

Coxson (2009) sought to understand corruption in local government activities in Armenia, as well as to develop an original assessment tool measuring corruption potential. Regarding knowledge of corruption, Coxson found limited awareness among citizens about reporting suspected corruption, with only two out of twenty-six cities having reported such cases. Coxson also noted that many procurement practices lacked transparency, with many cities not publicizing bids and potentially limiting competition. Additionally, Coxson found issues in the sale and rental of government assets, where collusion between central and local governments could lead to selling land below market value. While internal control systems were found to be present in the majority of Armenia cities, the fact that they report directly to the mayor does call into question their level of effectiveness.

Coxson concludes by recommending several potential reforms designed to reduce the potential for corruption at the local level, as well as to improve transparency in local government operations. These recommendations include, increasing public awareness of reporting channels,

amending laws to require transparency in procurement and property transactions, and strengthening internal control systems with independent reporting to local councils. These changes aim to reduce the potential for corruption at the local level and improve transparency in local government operations.

Kock and Gaskins (2014) examined how voice and accountability can relate to internet diffusion and government corruption in Latin America as well as Sub-Saharan Africa. Kock and Gaskins predicted they would find an overall negative relationship between internet diffusion and government corruption in both Latin America and Sub-Saharan African countries with the relationship being indirect and mediated by voice and accountability. Specifically, they hypothesized that more internet diffusion would lead to less government corruption. Secondly, they hypothesized that greater levels of voice and accountability would be associated with lower levels of government corruption. A total of twenty-three countries in sub-Saharan Africa and twenty-four in Latin America were chosen for inclusion in the study (Kock and Gaskins, 2014).

The results of the studies supported both hypotheses. They note, “that for each additional fifteen Internet users per one hundred inhabitants in a country there is approximately a 57% increase in voice and accountability, considering the average level of voice and accountability in the sample as the baseline” (Kock and Gaskins, 2014, p. 32). Countries that had high levels of internet diffusion were likely to present higher levels of voice and accountability which was 278% higher than countries where internet diffusion was found to be very low. Results from Kock and Gaskins (2014) lend support for the idea that internet diffusion can decrease the amount of government corruption. The results of their study showed that “for each additional fifteen Internet users per one hundred inhabitants in a country there is a 34.7% decrease in government corruption” (Kock and Gaskins, 2014, p. 32).

Hipolito, de Silva Macedo, de Siqueira and Neto (2019 p. 1012) examined the relationship between internet access and government corruption using data from the World Bank Development Indicators dataset, which covers one-hundred and eight countries. The researchers sought to answer the following research question, “What are the relationships among Internet diffusion, voice and accountability, culture, corruption, and government effectiveness?” (p. 1013). Findings revealed “a direct relationship between Internet diffusion and lower levels of government corruption,” meaning that as internet access increases, government corruption decreases. The findings also revealed that increases in internet access are strongly related to increases in voice and accountability. This study illustrates the importance of access to the internet, as it can lead to increases in voice and accountability and decreases in government corruption.

Hunaday (2019) examined the relationship between internet usage and experiences with government corruption, using data from Eurobarometer. Findings revealed that “those who use the Internet daily have, in general, significantly more knowledge about corruption reporting” (p. 86). In addition to greater knowledge about corruption, those who used the internet more frequently were more likely to report experiences with corruption. Additionally, more frequent internet usage was associated with more accurate perceptions of government corruption. These findings support the idea that internet openness can aid in the fight against government corruption by increasing levels of both knowledge and reporting.

Using data from the third wave of the Life in Transition Surveys, which covers thirty-four former Soviet Bloc countries, Moldogaziev (2021) examined the relationship between public sector corruption and perceived government performance in post-Communist countries. Moldogaziev sought to understand how corruption affects evaluations of both local and central

government performance and whether these associations vary at different levels of government. Findings revealed that higher levels of corruption are linked to lower evaluations of government performance, and this is particularly true at the local government level. This study also suggests that countries in transition can provide valuable insights for developing and developed countries alike.

Given that the internet can be used to shed light on social issues, as well as government corruption, it should come as no surprise that some governments are limiting citizens' access to the internet. Some countries such as China, Russia, and Iran have largely centralized their internet infrastructure, which makes blocking access to certain sites or the internet entirely a relatively easy endeavor (Newman, 2019). Elsewhere, “in countries like Ethiopia, Venezuela, and Iraq, along with disputed regions like Kashmir, government-led social media blocking and more extensive outages have become the norm” (Newman, 2019, para. 2). In some cases, governments like Saudi Arabia have severely punished those who speak out against the government online. For example, several of the activists who were scheduled to participate in the Women20Summit, were arrested after they posted on Twitter about discrimination against women in Saudi Arabia. While in detention they suffered electric shock, whippings, and sexual harassment by the Saudia Arabian authorities.

The goal of the current study is to examine the relationship between government corruption and internet freedom. While several countries could serve as illuminating case studies, the country of Turkey has been selected because they have a history of political issues involving power struggles, the government has engaged in a variety of efforts to limit internet access as of late, and it has a range of media available to citizens in a range of traditional and online formats.

All of these factors, coupled with Turkey's candidate status in the European Union, justify an examination of the relationship between corruption and internet freedom in Turkey.

Human Rights in Turkey

In 1999, Turkey was initially granted candidate status by the European Union (EU). However, it wasn't until 2004 that formal negotiations with Turkey were agreed upon by EU representatives. Since that time, the EU has had significant influence over the Turkish government, especially with regard to financial aid for specific projects (e.g., human rights reforms, economic and social development, etc.). Regarding human rights reforms, EU funding has primarily focused on improving various aspects of the criminal justice system, such as enhancing the quality of police training and improving procedures for identifying evidence of torture. Unfortunately, the majority of funding has been directed toward economic programs, leaving limited resources for enhancing human rights in the country.

Leppert (2022) explains that “any European country that agrees to promote the EU’s common values – respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law – and meets certain conditions, referred to as the Copenhagen criteria, is eligible to apply for membership (para. 8). Part of the Copenhagen criteria stipulate that countries must have political stability, which is defined as “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities” (European Commission, 2022, para 1). However, when Turkey was initially granted candidate status, the Commission's report highlighted a host of human rights issues that needed to be addressed prior to EU membership. These issues included improving women's rights, depoliticizing the military, ensuring freedom of the press, allowing freedom of assembly, abolishing the death penalty, safeguarding freedom of expression, ending the torture of political prisoners, ensuring an

independent judiciary, and providing access to fair trials (Gates, 2009). Importantly, many of these concerns were aligned with the concerns of the Turkish citizenry.

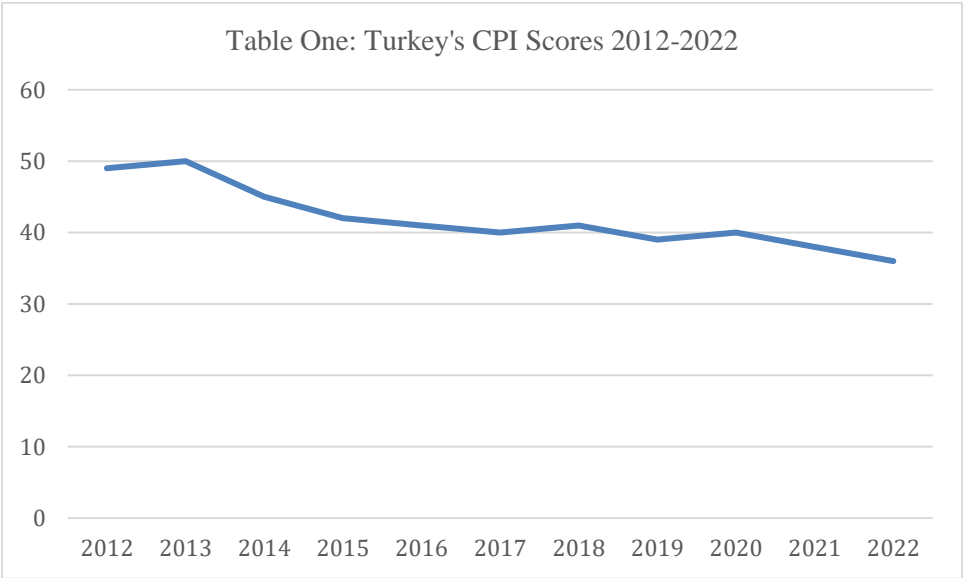
In the early 2000's, the Turkish parliament had taken steps to improve Turkey's human rights issues. Laws were passed to strengthen freedom of the press and to improve women's rights as well as abolish the death penalty (Gates, 2009, p. 410). However, since that time the Turkish government's proposals have not been implemented effectively and "officials have not necessarily followed up on initiatives by effectively enforcing new laws and constitutional amendments" (Gates, 2009, p. 410). Furthermore, the government has enacted a variety of new laws or amended existing law such that any potential advancements made in the earlier legislation were largely lost. By 2018, the EU Council declared that negotiations for EU admission were at a standstill because Turkey still did not have a functioning democratic system, with respect for human rights and an independent judiciary (Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye, 2021). The Turkish government has taken very few steps to address the human rights issues within the country, and several recent laws appear to have made the situation worse..

Methods and Analysis

The current study examines both quantitative and qualitative measures of corruption and internet freedom in Turkey. A variety of quantitative corruption measures exist, but one of the most widely used is The Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI provides a measure of how countries are failing to put an end to corruption by ranking countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption. A variety of data sources are used to calculate a country's CPI score including, the Global Insight Country Risk Ratings, the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, and the World Economic Forum Executive

Opinion Survey. The CPI uses a scale from zero to 100 with zero being highly corrupt 100 being very clean.

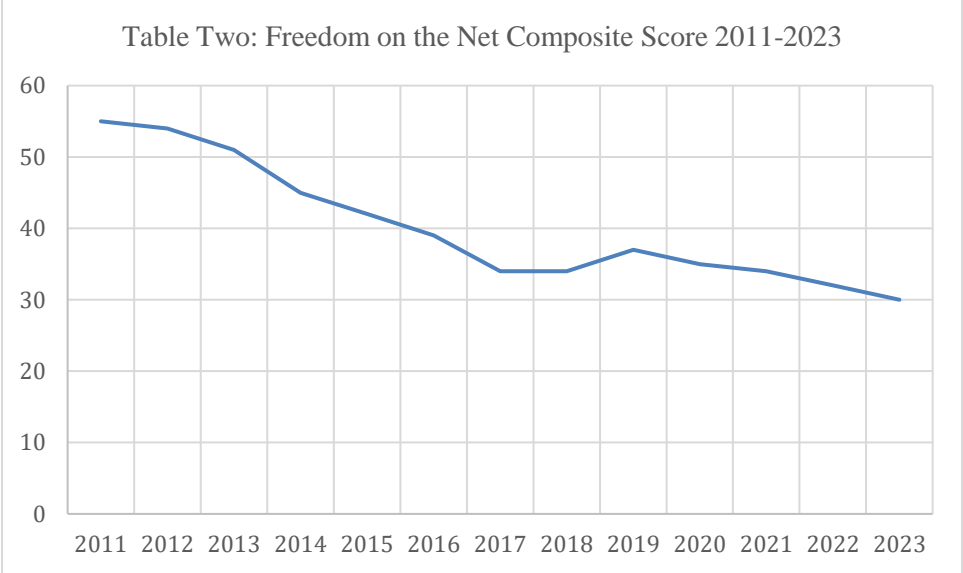
Overall, Turkey’s 2022 score was 36 out of 100 which placed it number 101 out of 180 countries. Importantly, Turkey’s score has been steadily declining since 2012 (See Table One). Looking at the entire region, this score places Turkey roughly in the middle, as the average score for countries located in Eastern Europe and Central Asia was 35 (Transparency International, 2022). The Republic of Georgia has the highest score in the region at 56, while Turkmenistan was at the bottom, with a score of 19 (Transparency International, 2022).



Freedom on the Net

Beginning in 2011, Freedom House began compiling their Freedom on the Net report which scores and ranks countries on their rights involving internet freedom. The scores are ranked from zero to 100 with zero being least free and 100 being most free. According to the most recent report, Turkey’s score was 34 out of 100, meaning that it is Not Free (Freedom House, 2022). Freedom House notes that, "thousands of online users, including members of the political opposition, faced criminal charges for their social media activities. Self-censorship, the

proliferation of pro-government outlets, and blocking of independent media websites has created a less diverse online space in Turkey” (Freedom House, 2022. p. 4). An examination of historical scores for Turkey reveals that their score has been consistently decreasing since 2011. Specifically, in 2011 Turkey’s overall score was a 55 out of 100, indicating that it was Partly Free. By 2016, Turkey was rated as Not Free, with a score of 39 out of 100. See table two for a summary of Turkey’s Freedom on the Net scores between 2011 and 2023.



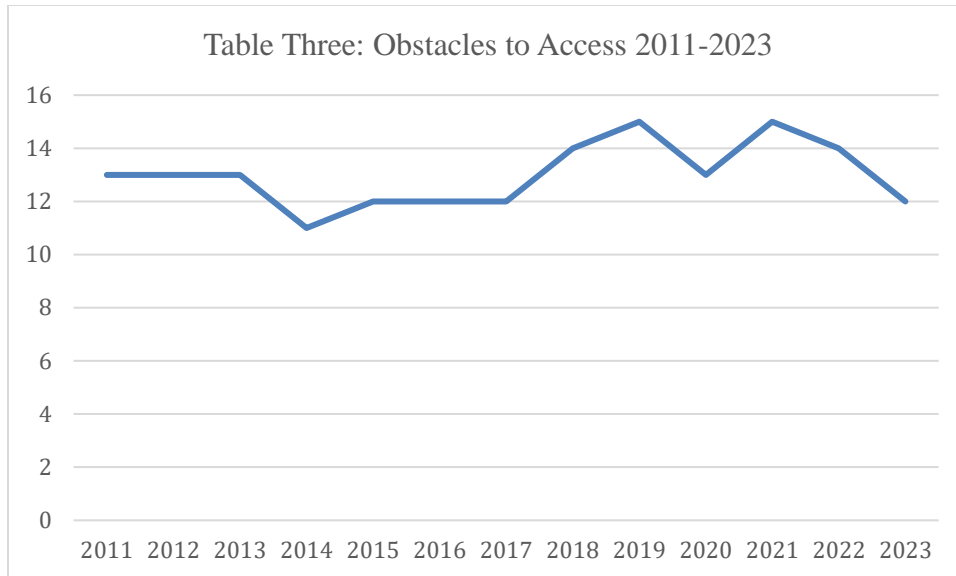
While the overall score reveals that internet freedom has steadily decreased over the past decade in Turkey, an examination of each category that comprises the overall score reveals which areas are most problematic in Turkey. The overall score comprises three broad areas: *Obstacles to Access*, *Limits on Content*, and *Violations of User Rights*. One question regarding *Obstacles to Access* was “Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?” Response options ranged from zero to six points, where zero equals low restrictions and six equals high restrictions. Turkey scored a four because much of the telecommunications infrastructure was either damaged or stolen during this coverage period. Many of the towns in Turkey have lost their internet access for months at a time before

regaining its access. Freedom House (2022, p.4) reports, “around four thousand residents of the Sandıklı neighborhood in İncirliova were without internet access after planned power cuts,” leaving them five months without internet (Freedom House, 2022). Not only has internet access been shut down but it is also highly expensive despite Turkey’s low wages and high inflation. Additionally, there is a gender gap between men and women’s internet access, with twenty-two percent more men having access, compared to women. Other questions that were asked in this section were:

- “Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?”
- Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?
- Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?
- Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?”

(Freedom House, 2022.)

Table Three displays Turkey's Obstacles to Access scores from 2011 to 2023 and, as shown, scores have remained fairly consistent, meaning access to the internet continues to be problematic in Turkey.



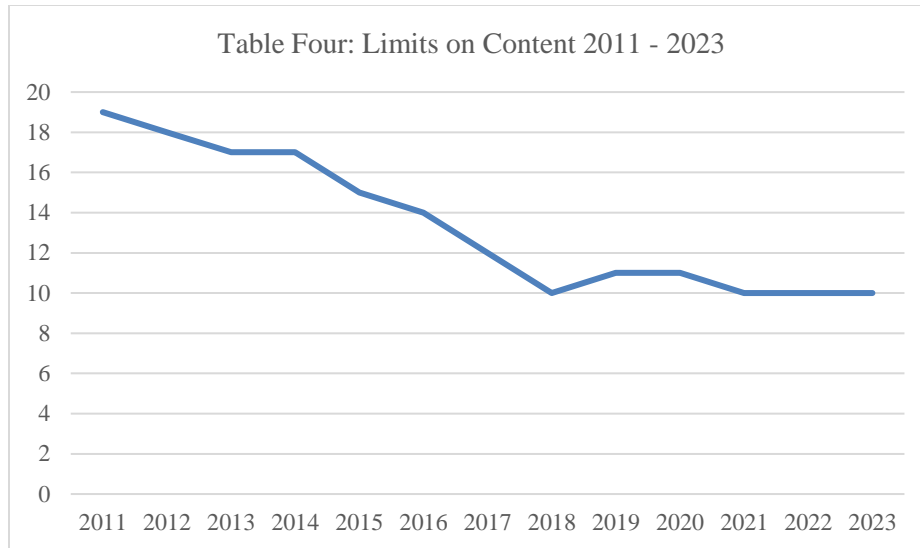
Turkey has also increased their *Limits On Content*. The question provided by Freedom on the Net “Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?” This question was scored one out of six, where one equals a high volume of blockage and six indicates low blockage. In this area, Turkey scored one out of six. Turkey’s main target was shutting down any websites or blogs that included information regarding “military operations, Kurdish news, and critiques of the government” (Freedom House, 2022). Turkey originally set regulations on the internet in 2007 with the stated goal of protecting children from accessing illegal content, sexual abuse, drug use, the provision of dangerous substances, prostitution, gambling, suicidal thought, and many others. The government appears to have expanded some restrictions to all age groups with their new social media laws. The new law gives authorities “the right to control and, if necessary, restrict online free speech” (Aydıntaşbaş, 2022, para. 2) . Additionally, the law also “makes disseminating false information a criminal offense with prison sentences of between one to three years. It establishes much tighter government control over online news websites” (*Turkey: Dangerous, Dystopian New Legal Amendments*, 2022, p. 4).

Other questions that fall under Limits to content section are:

- “Do state or non state actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?
- Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?
- Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?
- Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users’ ability to publish content online?
- Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?
- Do conditions impede users’ ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?”

(Freedom House, 2022)

Table Four shows Turkey’s score on Limits on Content from 2011 to 2023 and as shown, there has been a sharp decline in this area since 2011.



The last category measured by Freedom House is *Violation Of User Rights*. For the question, does the “constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?” (Freedom House, 2022.). Turkey’s score was a one out of a possible six indicating that Turkey does not protect free expression and press freedom online, despite having (at least on paper) broad protection for freedom of expression. The government has the ability to shut down any website they deem a threat, as well as prosecute citizens who are seen as a threat. Freedom House reported that in 2021 an opposition party leader, Cana Kaftancıoğlu, was investigated and sentenced to four years imprisonment for social media posts made nearly a decade earlier. In addition to her prison sentence, “She was also stripped of her political rights, her CHP membership was terminated, and she was removed from her position as CHP Istanbul chair” (Freedom House, 2022). Other questions that were scored within this section include:

- “Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?”

- Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?
- Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?
- Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users’ right to privacy?
- Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users’ right to privacy?
- Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?
- Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?”

(Freedom House, 2022, n.d.)

Table Five displays Turkey’s score on Violation of User Rights from 2011 to 2023 and, as shown, there have been steep declines in this area.

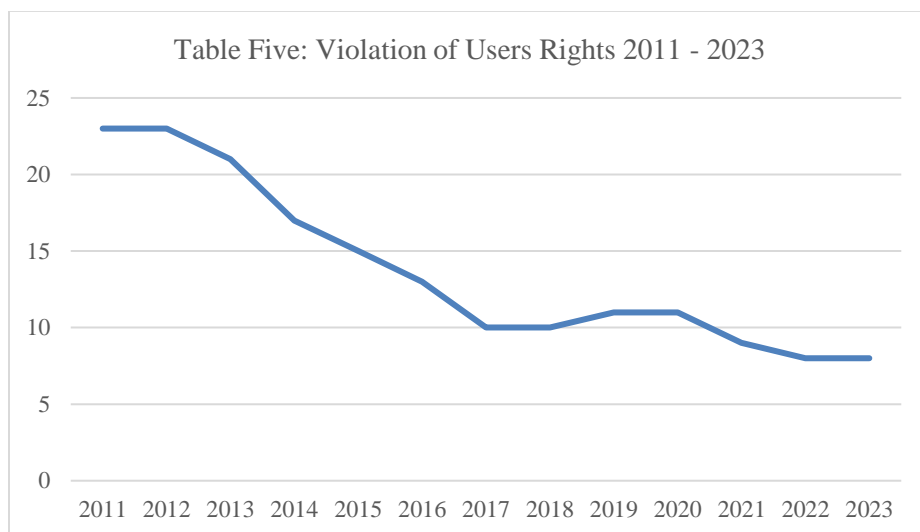
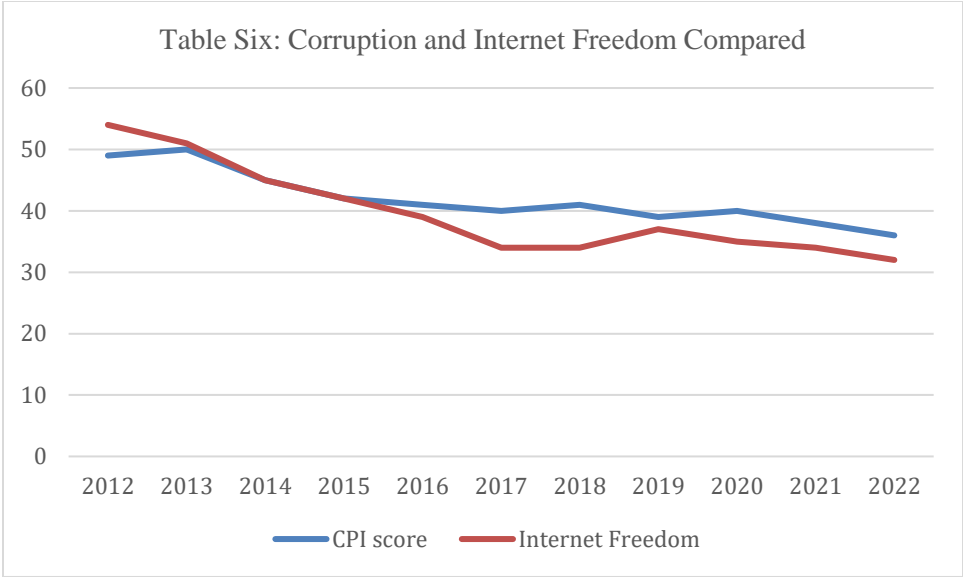


Table Six displays a comparison of Turkey’s overall corruption score and its level of internet freedom reveals that both have been declining at a similar rate. While caution should be noted in interpreting this trend as there are a variety of factors at play, there is clearly an association between corruption and internet freedom in Turkey.



News and NGO Reports

While respect for human rights has been problematic for quite some time, it gained widespread media attention in 2013 with the Gezi Park protest. The event happened in Istanbul when a small group of environmental protesters who were opposing the park’s destruction were met with unnecessary force and abusive actions by the Turkish police (Amnesty International, 2013). The level of force used by the police with the protesters sparked a nerve and “within days, tens of thousands of protesters had taken to the streets across the main cities of Turkey. By the middle of June hundreds of thousands had taken part in “Gezi Park protests” that spanned almost every one of Turkey’s eighty-one provinces” (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 6). The protests

were viewed as a direct challenge to Prime Minister Erdogan and there is evidence to suggest that the Erdogan government had issued a media blackout, as there was a lack of news coverage about the protests (The Guardian, 2013). The government response to the mass protests was swift and brutal. By the middle of July 2013, “there had been more than eight thousand injuries at the scene of demonstrations. ... [By the] end of August, five people had died during the course of the protests ... [and] there is strong evidence linking three of these deaths to the abusive use of force by police” (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 6).

In April 2022, eight people, including high profile philanthropist and civil rights leader Osman Kavala, were tried for organizing and financing the protests, and allegedly attempting to overthrow the government. All eight were found guilty and seven received eighteen-year prison sentences, however Kavala received a life sentence (The Guardian, 2022).

The laws governing human rights issues in Turkey, especially those pertaining to meetings and demonstrations, have raised concerns. Turkey began formally tightening restrictions over demonstrations beginning in 2015 with amendments to the Regulation on Implementation of the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations (Library of Congress, 2015). The new regulations stipulate that a “governor or district governor may delay the starting time of a meeting or demonstration by twenty-four hours without any advance notification given; the amended regulation newly authorizes the governor or district governor to postpone the holding of a demonstration for up to a month or to prohibit it if it poses a “clear and imminent danger” to public order” (Library of Congress, 2015, para. 3).

Since the law’s inception many activists in this country have been imprisoned or punished for participating in or monitoring demonstrations (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, n.d. p. 3). An estimated “125,000 civil servants, 90,000 citizens, and more than

1,500 NGOs have been prosecuted for terrorism, primarily for alleged ties to the movement of cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom the government accused of designating the leader of the Fethullah Terrorist Organization” (United States Department of State, 2020, p. 3). Turkey provided evidence to show that steps were taken when trying to investigate, prosecute, and punish members of the security and other officials who were accused of abusing human rights, however it remains a problem.

Elements of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) are also problematic. Article 301 of the TPC states that it “prosecutes the expression of opinions that are presumed to be a denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly” and can sentence someone from six months to three years in prison. Additionally, article 305 of the TPC, “criminalizes expression presumed to be harming the fundamental national interests, including independence of the state, its territorial integrity, national security and the fundamental characteristics of the Turkish Republic” (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, n.d., p.4). The punishment for participating in or disseminating propaganda ranges from four and a half to fifteen years in prison (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, n.d., p. 5).

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Turkish government to implement even more internet restrictions. According to Human Rights Watch (2021) there is evidence to suggest that the government could “double down on autocratic rule and stamp out criticism and opposition at the expense of uniting the country during a public health crisis” (p 5). Currently, many prominent figures are being held in detention for arbitrary reasons, as well as thousands of people who are also being punished for their alleged links to the Fethullah Gülen movement, which Turkey has deemed a terrorist organization. Some of the prominent figures are “Osman Kavala, a human rights defender; Ahmet Altan, a writer; Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen

Yüksekdağ, former co-chairs of the opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP); and many other members and mayors" (Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 6).

Conclusion

In summary, government corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. When corruption happens within the government it "weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis" (Transparency International. 2023, p.1). Behaviors of corruption can come in many different forms like "public servants demanding or taking money or favors in exchange for services, politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends and families, corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals" (Transparency International. 2023, p.1). Corruption can be seen in businesses, courts, media, and in civil society. People involved in corruption can be politicians, government officials, and members of the public. Internet freedom is connected with human rights because it allows citizens to exercise and enjoy their right to freedom of speech and expression. Furthermore, previous research reveals that access to the internet can reduce levels of corruption within a country. Many countries have limited access to the internet, thereby limiting their citizen's access to the internet and hampering freedom of speech and expression. Turkey is one of the many countries that has blocked off the communication and freedom that the internet provides. Examples of websites that are currently blocked in Turkey today are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Wikipedia. Often, the internet is the last resort for people to gain access to critical information and currently in Turkey citizens can no longer "express themselves with relative freedom after the broad crackdown on media in Turkey" (Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 6). Turkey has not

only blocked the internet but has forced tech companies to become the “apparatus of state censorship” (Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 6).

The crackdown on the internet has coincided with increases in the level of governmental corruption within the Turkish government. Freedom House (2021) reports that “Corruption—including money laundering, bribery, and collusion in the allocation of government contracts—remains a major problem, even at the highest levels of government. Enforcement of anti-corruption laws is inconsistent, and Turkey’s anti-corruption agencies are generally ineffective, contributing to a culture of impunity” (para 27). Given the critical role that the internet plays in increasing governmental voice and accountability, as well as reducing levels of corruption, it is clear that little will change in Turkey until citizens have free access to the internet.

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