

**Research Article**

**Political, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Corruption: A Case of Developed and Developing Countries**

*Yolsuzluğun Siyasal, Ekonomik ve Kültürel Boyutları: Gelişmiş ve Gelişmekte Olan Ülkeler Örneği*

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***Abstract***

*Corruption continues to be one of humanity's biggest threat to security, prosperity and justice. It remains one of the most common social evils yet the most difficult to stop. Many scholars from different fields have sought to investigate the economic impact of corruption, the moral and ethical violations, legal consequences that corrupt people should face and the perception on corruption. Further studies have sought to rank countries from the most corrupt to the least corrupt countries in the world. Such comparative studies have given valuable information on the patterns of corruption but rarely provide explanation for the causes. This paper therefore seeks to examine whether there is a trend between corruption and social, political, cultural and religious spheres of selected countries from the developed and developing worlds. By relying on literature from government and non-governmental organisations, academic publications, media articles and publications from investigative agencies, this article finds that there is no consistent relationship between the socio -political, cultural and religious environment and corruption though strong political institutions are key agents in addressing corruption problem.*

**Keywords:** corruption, developed countries, developing countries

**INTRODUCTON**

In the last decades the challenge of corruption has grown in significance both as topic of public and academic debate and there has been a frantic search for the best strategies to mitigate if not to eradicate its deleterious consequences. Undeniably, the public debate has been fierce and sometimes intense a reflection of an increased attention on corruption which comes on the backdrop of an awaken consciousness by development and policy experts as well as ordinary

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citizens that corruption is irrefutably a devastating vice (Lumumba, 2014:2) and that real development cannot be achieved in an environment of outright plunder (Ilias, 2006:3). Efforts have therefore been placed to corroborate these assertions and are innumerable pointers to mirror the effects of corruption on general development and consolidation of states with some facing a predicament of near collapse as witnessed in Zimbabwe and other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Acemoglu, 2012: 13).

In Africa, the complexity of African societies compounded by ethnic heterogeneity exacerbates the challenge of corruption making it almost insurmountable and without doubt a number of African states continue to remain behind in the fight against corruption as captured by Rwekaza et al (2006) through their observation that ‘even though the other regions had increased literacy rates, per capita income and improved health outcomes, Africa’s situation remained almost the same as it was in early 1960s’. Others have also tried to justify the situation in Africa by arguing that corruption is an outcome of inherited colonial legacy and conceptualized corruption as an imported vice (Lumumba, 2014) but its pervasiveness still points to institutional and structural weakness (Acemoglu et al, 1998).

But any literature that limits corruption to Africa or developing world would be simplistic and superfluous as corruption is a global malady which has been described variously with different terms. Corruption scandals have been exposed in different other developed countries including United States, European countries and even in Japan (Acemoglu et al, 1998: 4). The persistence of these scandals in developed countries not only smashes the common myth that corruption is only a disease of developing countries but also engenders scholars to research on the varieties of corrupt behaviours in developed countries. Excitingly, scholars and other key actors have had a clear and almost unanimous perspective on corruption as a threat to the existence of human race and there have even been suggestions to declare it a crime against humanity (Ilias, 2006 cited in Nduku & Tenamwenye eds 2014). But corruption has also been a catalyst of other unexpected events that took the world by surprise. Regime change in Brazil, India, and Ecuador as well as the 2006 coup de tat in Thailand were all aftermaths of corruption. However, these can never be used to justify the significance of corruption (Lumumba 2014).

Still though, there is a wide consensus that corruption in all its forms is a phenomenon that has been present in all corners of the world and this pervasiveness would therefore preclude an assertion that associates corruption solely with culture and geography (Ilias, 2006). It is present in both poor and rich countries and its debilitating consequences are shouldered by citizens around the globe. It has tremendous negative effects on the operation of governments, it tramples on the proper functioning of political, social and economic institutions, impedes transparency and accountability and its all pervasiveness is a revelation of structural transgression. On the global arena, it has in the past been underscored as a hindrance to achieving the former millennium development goals (Transparency International, 2005) and presently it is still an obstacle in achieving sustainable development goals (Transparency International, 2017).

Despite its presence throughout the world, its corrosive effects have been more severe in some countries than in others if rankings by Transparency international are anything to go by and the most affected countries are in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia. In short, corruption has become a way of life in some countries while in other countries it is simply a fact. In other words, corruption could exist in a country like Canada but Canada is not a corrupt country. This would not mean that Canada is utterly free from corruption. In Africa and other developing countries, rampant corruption as a result of its systemic nature has invited the attention of external actors particularly those who have facilitated annual colossal amounts in terms of aid and loans (TI, 2017). Embezzlement of funds for personal gains remains a major concern both in Africa and other parts of the world and the corollary has been low economic performances in several countries which in turn raise concern on the nature of institutions, especially political and economic institutions (Acemoglu, 2012:14).

The aforementioned is a testament that corruption is still a stumbling block to the realization of meaningful social, political and economic development (Ajowobi, 2014: 4) and countries have

continued to adopt different strategies to dismantle the annual cycle socio-economic maladies. Around the world, where several countries are endowed with enormous amounts of natural resources, there have been little gains from the proceeds of these resources following gross mismanagement by political leaders and their protégés (Burgis, 2014). In countries such as Angola, South Sudan and Nigeria the elite-mass divide is troublesome: While the elite can afford to live in opulence the masses are deprived of the basic commodities and essentials of life like quality education and healthcare. In other parts of the world, especially in Venezuela, Afghanistan and North Korea the situation remains the same and is bolstered by weak political and economic institutions (Acemoglu, 2012).

The most noticeable question that needs to be asked then is? Why do countries have varying levels of corruption? In short, why are some countries plagued by corruption than others? This article argues that the varying levels of corruption between countries depend largely on two factors: the first is pegged on the nature of the causes and the second is the scale of effectiveness of available measure established to fight corruption. We conclude that for a country to successfully control the levels of corruption, causes of corruption must be accurately identified so that politicians, civil society and institutions tasked with fighting corruption can undertake necessary actions to mitigate if not to completely uproot identified causes. It is on this back drop that this paper seeks to examine the determining factors that could cause varied levels of corruption in different countries. We examine the political, economic, socio-cultural aspects of countries that perform well on the rankings as well as those that are poorly ranked and comparatively seek to determine if these factors have a bearing on the level of corruption. But first we endeavour to put the concept of corruption into perspective.

This paper will endeavour to answer the following questions: How do political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics of selected countries cause or mitigate corruption? What is the effect of these characteristics in enabling the effectiveness of the measures established to fight corruption?

## **THEORITICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The concept of corruption has remained elusive. Even though a number of observers and scholars continue to use the term freely, they have differed considerably in the interpretation of its characteristics as well as its manifestation. Transparency International which has been a citadel in the fight against corruption simply defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private benefits (Transparency International, 2006). In this sense, interpretation still remains debatable since power is another nebulous concept and the question of who abuses the power is also left unanswered. It is this sort of elusiveness that has given rise to a number of approaches in a bid to bring the concept of corruption to clarity.

One of the most popular and the oldest approaches is the realist's approach whose definitions are best described as moral behaviour classifying definitions. According to them, there are certain behaviours which deviate from the already established norms and regulations and those kinds of behaviours which are against the norms are regarded as corrupt behaviours. This perspective asserts a common belief amongst the realist that a shared understanding of norms and regulations is a prerequisite of establishing social order and any kind of deviation thus acts to destabilize the social order (Williams 2000:127). For example, Plato, who is a pioneer realist, distinguishes between corrupt and non-corrupt rulers by examining how rulers adhere to the constitutions. To him corrupt rulers use the constitutions to serve their personal interests instead of those of the masses (Friedrich 1972:17). This perspective grew in salience and found its way into western literature of later years through Machiavelli who conceptualized corruption as “the process by which the virtue of citizens is undermined and eventually destroyed” (Friedrich 1972:18).

The realists' paradigm has continued to gain prominence in recent times following some modifications to the already existing definitions. In this regard, Nye's definition which is robust and touches on specific forms of corruption has become one of the widely used definitions in recent academic literature. According to Nye,

*“Corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private (close family, private, and personal) gains or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private. This includes such behaviour as nepotism; bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private regarding)” (Nye, 1967:12-13).*

Rivalling the realists approach are the nominalists. Unlike the realists who largely look at corruption in moral terms, the nominalists are keen to identify the macro and meso structures that produce and sustain corrupt behaviour. Precisely, they are not concerned with separating certain behaviours from others but rather focus on the systems and mechanisms that enable corrupt behaviours. Klaveren (1989) provides an elaborate stance of the nominalists' captured in his description of corruption. According to him,

“Corruption means that a civil servant abuses his authority in order to obtain an extra income from the public, therefore, corruption is conceived in terms of a civil servant who considers the office as a business venture for income purposes which he/she endeavours to maximize in the long run. The office then becomes an ‘exploiting unit’. The size of his income continuously depends upon the market situation and his talents for finding the point of optimum gain on the public demand curve.”

From the definition, it's clear that nominalists concern is to elucidate on how corruption transpires with blithe disregard on its definition. In this case, the institutions (the offices) become favourable avenues for facilitating corruption as an enterprise. The two approaches differ considerably in theoretical premises. As it has been mentioned above, the theoretical premise of the realist is anchored on the premise that corruption is a deviation from the acceptable norms and regulations while the realists premise is anchored on the idea that corruption is produced and sustained by certain structures. This paper, therefore, borrows from both realists' and the nominalists' conceptualization of corruption and underscores the fact that corruption is a vice that is perpetrated for private gains and that corruption occurs within certain institutions which produce and sustain it. Having recognized the role of institutions (Economic, political and social) in promoting corruption, then identifying factors that propagate corruption becomes inevitable.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Rudimentary Factors of Corruption: A General Perspective*

In the recent past there seem to a calcified consensus on certain factors which contribute to systemic corruption in several states around the world. Significantly, weak political institutions (political and economic), reliance on natural resources for economic prosperity and cultural norms have been identified as major factors that have propagated corruption. According to Burgis (2014) in most instances, these factors do not operate in isolation but are rather intertwined and operate in collaboration as incubators of corruption in countries perceived to be most corrupt.

In Africa, the influence of these factors comes with insidious effects especially when people in authority derive no distinction between the private and public sphere. Cheesman (2015) traces this tendency to colonial legacy and the neo-patrimonial system that followed the end of colonial rule in which a huge number of African leaders resorted to obtaining authority from particular communities leading to the emergence of patronage networks that derived their bases from ethnic groups and other categories of communal identities (Cheeseman, 2015: 5). This phenomenon propelled leaders to divert huge shares of national resources to their own ethnic groups and supporters thus undermining the interest of the masses. Collectively, these actions lead to states with weak institutions and a political environment in which the winner takes it all thus not only exacerbating simmering ethnic rivalry but also provides necessary conditions for corruption (Abed & Gupta, 2002).

Agbiboa (2012) argues that the weak institutions that have characterized African states are a product of colonial enterprise and to him; post independence Africa's social economic and political formations are a corollary of an economic integration and state-building process that

emerged from colonial rule. Colonial rule being an extractive and exploitative regime created and bastioned extractive institutions that African leaders used for personal interests leading to the emergence of weak economic and political institutions (Agbiboa, 2012: 113).

Interestingly, it has been also argued that the sort of corrupt activities occurring in Africa such as embezzlement and manifest bribery differs considerably with those in European democracies (Boateng, 2012: 28). Guest (2004) corroborates this assertion by arguing that European countries are more involved in ‘legal’ corruption which is characterized by peddling that involves kickbacks and lobbying within existing institutions and corridors of power. But still this is not to say that embezzlement for self-aggrandizement is only unique to Africa (Boateng, 2012). For example, in Russia which is categorized as European and is considered to have strong economic and political institutions, there is still rampant corruption to the level of several African countries. In 2013, out of the 177 countries that were ranked by Transparency International, Russia ranked at 127 and in 2017 it ranks at 145 out of 184 countries (TI, 2017). Russia’s case augers well with the argument that natural resources provide avenues for corrupt activities and stymie the establishment of institutions of accountability just like in Congo, Angola, Nigeria and Venezuela (Burgis, 2014: 56).

The situation in Russia and other corrupt countries is further compounded by cultural norms that propagate and sustain corruption as countries with a long standing history of corruption engender the citizens to accept corruption as a functioning component within their societies (Gorenburg, 2013:3). Going by Russia’s case, citizens identified corruption as a detrimental act but are conscious of the fact that it is essential component of the society which often goes unpunished. In this sense, entrenched cultural norms that favour corrupt behaviours bring a new challenge to the fight against corruption and raises the question as to whether strong institutions can foster accountability in countries where corruption is accepted as a component of the society (*Ibid*: 4).

### ***Categories of Corruption***

The difficulty of conceptualizing corruption has had a knock-on effect on identifying its causes and forms. This has further led to formulation of different categories. Legal scholars and political scholars alike classify corruption into various categories. Accordingly, there are four broad categories that are commonly known and widely used in different countries. Below we discuss the established categories.

#### ***Demand versus Supply***

This category divides the act of corruption into the supply side and the demand side. The supply side describes the act of submitting or offering an undue advantage or unlawful payment while the demand side describes the solicitation or the acceptance of such payments or advantages. In the past, “active and passive” were the words used instead of supply and demand but are less used in the contemporary literature due to their erroneous judgmental tendencies. Regarding a corrupt behaviour as “passive” erroneously implies a lesser criminal intent or participation (UNODC, 2004).

In a number of countries, anti-corruption measures have criminalized supply side. This is also the case in the field of international law, multilateral agreements and treaties like Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Convention against Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (OECD Anti-Bribery Convention)* (OECD, 1997). Other countries such as Canada and organizations such as *United Nations Convention against Corruption* (UNCAC) have criminalized both the supply and demand side (Deloitte et al, 2014).

#### ***Petty versus Grand***

Petty corruption has for a long time used synonymously with “bureaucratic corruption”. In this sense, it mostly implicates public administration officials (Amundsen, 1999). Its major forms include: bribes paid to health service providers, customs personnel, law enforcement officers and other government officials. On the other hand, grand corruption involves highly ranked

government officials as well as elected officials who take advantage of the opportunities available through their positions in government to pursue self interests. Grand corruption manifests itself in the form of bribes paid to government officials in connection with mega government projects such as construction: issuance of contracts by government officials to private enterprises for inflated prices and organizing for kickbacks to benefit both public and private officials (Yingling, 2012).

Political corruption has also been lately regarded as a form of grand corruption since it involves highly ranked public officials and due to its prevalence and seriousness. It often occurs at the top most level of the government where the officials assigned to enforce laws are corrupt (Amundsen, 1999:3). Another type of grand corruption that has come to the limelight in the recent past is “State capture”. State capture refers to an organization or a company that influences government policies and legislations in a particular sector like taxation and mining (Hellman et al, 2000).

#### *Conventional versus Unconventional*

More often, Grand and petty corruption are regarded as sub-categories of conventional corruption. When a government official, regardless of their rank, unlawfully accumulates or receives undue advantage for the purposes of furthering self interests then conventional corruption occurs. It manifests itself in the form of grand and petty corruption as well as supply and demand corruption since there is an element of a quid pro quo in the act (Deloitte et al, 2014).

Conventional corruption occurs when government officials, whether higher or lower ranking, illegitimately receive or accumulate an undue advantage for their own personal use, disregarding public interest. It exists in the forms of grand and petty corruption. There is also an element of reciprocity or *quid pro quo* within conventional corruption: both the solicitation and the acceptance of bribes (supply and demand bribery) are therefore considered forms of conventional corruption (*Ibid*: 36).

On the other hand, unconventional corruption by its very definition is not considered an illegal act. It occurs where government or public officials act to disregard public interests with an aim of obtaining personal gains. In this sense it is argued that the element of reciprocity lacks in unconventional corruption as there is no definite transaction occurring between two different parties (Yingling, 2012:6). Its major forms include embezzlement, lobbying, theft, breach of trust and misappropriation: acts which are considered to be illegal in most countries.

#### *Private versus Public*

The difference between private and public corruption is in the sector in which the unlawful act occurs. Public corruption is committed by public officials whether domestically or abroad while private corruption is committed by individuals operating in the private sector. Corruption in the public sector is however perceived to be much more serious and poses a greater threat than private corruption. This is due to the monopoly that the public sector enjoys in terms of production and service delivery (Sandgren, 2005).

### **POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES OF SELECTED CASES**

This section will zoom into the political, economic and cultural components of the selected countries. Within the political components, we will look at mode of governance and electoral politics, the economic component will focus on the countries’ economic performances in terms of Gross Domestic Product and the cultural component will highlight the religious formations of the selected countries. The first part looks at countries that are developed and highly ranked countries in the corruption perception index and the second part will focus on developing countries.

### **CANADA**

#### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

Canada is the second largest country, a landmass that covers 9.98 million kilometres square. It is located in North America extending from the Atlantic Ocean deep into the Pacific Ocean. Canadian political organization is centred within the frameworks of parliamentary democracy and

federal system of government which has significantly strong democratic traditions. The country is headed by a constitutional monarch who is the head of state and a prime minister who is the head of government (Bickerton, 2009).

Canada has hugely borrowed its government structure from Britain and being a colony of Britain until 1931, the British participated in the formation of the current governmental organization which came to force in 1867 through the British North America Act of 1867. However, the criterion for division of power and the federal system was crafted by the Canadian political class and since then Canada's democracy has continued to grow in strength through the establishment of stable institutions (Newman, 2012). One of the main features that has characterized Canada's political organization is its egalitarian approach to politics and institutional formations (Fierlbeck, 2006). Significantly though, the success of this approach is largely attributed to a wide political and public support, inclusive policies and a mosaic of nationalities (Westhues & Wharf, 2014).

Even though the Canada's history is littered with secessionist attempts and conflict between the French speakers in Quebec and English speakers from other regions, it has managed to establish strong democratic institutions. This is manifest in its performance in democracy index rankings: In 2006, it was the third most democratic country according to The Economist and in 2008, it ranked eleventh globally and first in the Americas ahead of United States, Uruguay and Costa Rica (The Economist, 2008).

Canada stands as one of the world's economically strong countries. With Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$47,658 (nominal), it ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the world. It's economic system which is a combination of both public and private enterprises, economy is largely anchored on the service industry which contributes to about 27% of its GDP. But significantly, international trade in natural resource is as well another important component of the economy (World Bank, 2018). Canada has developed strong institutions demystifying the myth of the resource curse and Dutch Disease that is always associated with countries rich in natural resource (OECD, 2018).

Generally, Canadian government has endeavoured to emphasize on property rights, export promotion, diversification of trade and support for domestic industries. Additionally, these efforts are consolidated by unyielding institutional underpinning of an open market and a tightly knit regulatory system.

Canada has over the last decades however, an influx of immigrants has altered Canada's cultural contours as new cultures are incorporated into the already existing cultural system to form the Canadian cultural montage (Wiseman, 2011). Its diversity is also palpable in religious configuration. According to 2011 Canadian census 67% of the population were Christians and of these, 38% were Catholics and 29% Protestants. Still there are also non-Christians of which Muslims represent 3.2%, Hindus 1.5%, Buddhists 1.1% Judaism 1% and Sikhism 1.4%. Importantly, about 23.9% of Canadians had no religious affiliations as per the census and the number is considered to have increased (Marger, 2011).

### *Corruption in Canada*

Even though Canada is largely considered as one of the least corrupt countries in the world going by the available indexes, corruption, especially petty corruption, is still a challenge in Canada along with violent and organized crimes. According to Transparency International rankings on corruption perception index, Canada ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> least corrupt country in the world and the 1<sup>st</sup> in America (TI Report, 2017). Despite this confluence of success, Canada still grapples with the vice at home and abroad. At home, bribery is one of the major issues as it occurs in almost every sector of the economy and abroad bribery cases have been witnessed in the most thriving sectors like energy, defence and security, as well as in the construction sector as Canadian corporations strive to win lucrative tenders in foreign lands (Rotberg, 2017).

Going by the prevalence of corruption cases, Canada has opted to institutionalize the fight on corruption by creating a number of institutions and laws to curb the vice. With regards to foreign bribery cases, Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act (CFPOA) which aims at prosecuting public officials who engage in corrupt activities is operational under Royal Canadian Mounted

Police (RCMP). Domestically, corrupt cases are prosecuted under *Criminal Code* of Canada (Rotberg, 2017). However, in the recent past Canada has not experienced in grand corruption scandals. This in part is attributed to Canada's efficient institutions like judiciary and the police. Pessimistically though, it is also attributed to flawed perception of corruption which is captured by Garcia (2013) who argues that Canadians only consider bribes as the major form of corruption with blithe disregard of other corrupt behaviours like extortion and kick-backs (Garcia, 2013).

## SINGAPORE

### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles obtained the island of Singapore for the British East India Company from the Malay Ruler. At that particular time, Singapore had a few hundreds of inhabitants occupying the 622 square miles. However, with time it became a busy trading port for the British East India Company and quickly expanded to become a commercial centre. Today, Singapore, which lies in Southeast Asia, is a sovereign country and a city-state. It has since increased its size through land reclamation by over 23% and has gone through tremendous economic recovery since its independence (Turnbull, 1989). Singapore attained its independence from the British on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1959 and adopted a Westminster model consisting of unicameral parliament (Turnbull, 1989). Even though the country's constitution underpins representative democracy and Singapore has held successful elections in the recent past, The Economist considers Singapore as a flawed democracy due to its dictatorial tendencies (The Economist, 2016). In Singapore, the president has sweeping powers over key institutions of like the judiciary where he appoints the judges and presides over key executive decisions. Aside from the sweeping powers, the ruling party, People's Action Party, has had landslide victories in every election since 1959 (Turnbull, 1989:56) a trend that has continued to worry observers and policy actors alike.

At independence, Singapore was grappling with several challenges that characterise developing world today. However, with the shrewd leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, who gave prominence to rapid economic development and support for local enterprises, Singapore transformed from a developing country to a developed country becoming one of the Asian tigers (Huff, 1994). Today Singapore boasts of a GDP per capita of 57,714.30 USD ahead of United States, Britain and Germany (World Bank, 2017). Besides, the port, which has been ranked as the busiest ports in the world on several occasions, contributes significantly to the country's GDP (Milne & Mauzy 1990).

Singapore stands as one of the multicultural Asian countries (Turnbull, 1989). With a population of about five million people, at least 10% are foreign born or naturalised, 74% are of Chinese descent, 13% Malay, and 9% Indian. Just as cultural diversity, there is also religious diversity but Buddhism is the most practiced religion with a representation of about 33% followed by Christianity and Islam at 18.8 and 14% respectively. Taoism and Hinduism are also practiced with representation of 10 and 5% respectively. Significantly though a huge segment of the population, approximately 18% are considered to have no religious affiliation.

### *Corruption in Singapore*

Singapore is also among the countries that are considered to be less corrupt globally. According to Transparency International's corruption perception index of 2017, Singapore is ranks at the 9<sup>th</sup> position after Switzerland (Transparency International Report, 2017). Besides, Singapore has in the last decades been ranked as the world's safest city despite being the most expensive city to live (World Economic Forum, 2017).

Even though no grand corruption scandals have been witnessed in the recent past, Singapore is considered a tax haven and it is assumed that it provides a safe haven for proceeds of corruption originating from other countries due to its monetary policy that allows for low taxes on personal income and tax exemption on foreign income.

Its success in eradicating corruption stems from its elaborate strategies that have created leverage over the corrosive vice. First there is political will to fight corruption which empathizes on

eradicating both the need and opportunities of corruption. The government largely depends on the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) and Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) to lead its anti-corruption policy by reducing the opportunities and maximizing the price for corrupt acts (World Economic Forum, 2017).

The need and opportunities for corruption in government are largely reduced by improving the working conditions and the salaries of civil servants continuously based on the market demands. The supposition is that corruption thrives in countries where civil servants are not adequately paid and where distribution of wealth is not equal.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

Located in the South-western of the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand is a former British colony which gained independence in 1947 and consists of two major landmasses: The South Island and the North Island plus approximately 600 other smaller Islands. The country is a constitutional monarch which is regarded as a parliamentary democracy with Queen Elizabeth II as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of government. There is also a Governor General-a representative of the Queen-who can implement Queen's prerogative powers like appointing ambassadors, ministers and other key government officials (Bruce, 2009).

The country conducts regular general elections in which members of the parliament are elected after every three years and they subsequently elect the Prime Minister. Since independence, New Zealand's elections have been dominated by two main parties: Labour Party and the National Party. Interestingly, the country has managed to establish strong democratic institutions to be among the world's well governed country and in 2017; it was ranked fourth in the strength of democratic institutions rankings (Democracy Index, 2017).

One peculiar characteristics of New Zealand is that it operates with no codified constitution and derives its laws from a plethora of documents such as legislation, the treaty of Waitangi, common Law, letters patent, constitutional conventions and historic laws. Their laws are flexible, as a result there is always ease of amendments (Brian, 2010).

The country boasts of one of the strongest and advanced market economy in the world and ION 2018 it ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the human development index and 3<sup>rd</sup> in economic freedom index an indication that it is a high income economy with a per capita GDP per capita of US\$36,254 (World Economic Outlook, 2018). Its economy is mainly anchored on extractive and agriculture industry. It's an exporter of gold and timber as well as agricultural products such as wool and dairy products. New Zealand majorly inhabited by people of European descent who represent 74% of the population. Others are the Maori at 14% and Asians at 11%. Unlike Canada, New Zealand has more restrictive migration policy which largely favours people from Britain. Christianity is the dominant religion, practiced by about 49% of the population and another 41% are considered do not have religious affiliation (Jeffrey, 2017).

### *Corruption in New Zealand*

New Zealand is the least corrupt country in the world according to Transparency International's corruption perception indexing. This outstanding performance is attributed to the government's commitment to eradicate the vice by putting in place necessary strategies and processes. Key among its strategies are enacting a new Bribery Offences Act, enabling anti money laundering reforms and extradition laws as well as ratifying the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Davison, 2017). Despite its success in fighting corruption, especially in the public sector, New Zealand was variously mentioned in the Panama Papers which poked holes on the country's foreign trust system that the paper claims had provided avenues for money laundering.

## **DENMARK**

### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

The kingdom of Denmark is one of successful Scandinavian countries which lies south of Sweden and North of Germany. It also consists of two islands in the Atlantic Ocean- Greenland and Faroe Islands- which are autonomous but are regarded as part of Denmark. The politics of demarks is guided by the constitution of Denmark which was written in 1849 to establish the kingdom as a sovereign state. It is a constitutional monarch with a parliamentary system in which the Queen is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government. In principle, the functions of the Queen are stringently ceremonial and representative in nature and they majorly include appointments of government officials. There is high respect of human rights, rule of law and property rights (Philippa, 2005).

World Bank has classified Denmark as high income economy and it has been well ranked in the economic freedom index in which it is considered to be the freest country. With a GPD of US\$49,900 the country has a free market economy which is largely anchored on the service sector. Today, service sector contributes to 75% of the country's GDP, followed by Industry at 15% and agriculture at a meagre 2% (Short, 2018). Historically, Denmark was a homogeneous nation that was solely inhabited by the Danes. But with the influx of migration, it has transformed to a nation of immigration with immigrants from Europe as well as asylum seekers from the Middle East and Asia (Manchin, 2004). The predominant religion is Christianity and specifically protestant Lutherans which is followed by 75% of its 5 million people. Following the Lutherans is Islam at 5% (Crabtree, 2015).

#### *Corruption in Denmark*

Denmark stands out as one of the least corrupt country after New Zealand according to Transparency International's corruption perception indexing (Transparency International Report, 2017). Its success in curbing corruption can be traced from as early as 17<sup>th</sup> century when the state operationalised laws which stipulated the functions of civil servants and criminalized forgery, bribes, embezzlement and fraud. In the same century, Denmark had developed a system which alerted the crown on maladministration (Jensen, 2014).

Another step to fight corruption in 19<sup>th</sup> century was prompted by civil servants who engaged on embezzlement at a time of grave economic crisis. New legal framework, which proposed harsh punishments for the corrupt, was introduced and this demonstrated the willingness of the political class to fight corruption. Additionally, the Lutheran state church also played a role in mitigating corruption as it became an influence of law and order as well as a moral backbone for the civil servants and the society as a whole (Jensen, 2014: 19).

The countries presented in the above section have registered considerably low levels of corruption as a result of availability of efficient strategies as well as political leadership's commitment to tackle the vice particularly its causes. As for the case of Denmark, religion provided the moral background not only for enforcing law and order but also for restricting the conducts of public servants and the citizens at large. The following section looks at the characteristics of characteristics of less developed countries as well as their levels of corruption.

## **SOMALIA**

#### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

Located in the horn of Africa, Somalia is considered to be a homogeneous country in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion and linguistic but the major form of identity is derived from the clans and Islam as the main form of religion. The country has gone through decades of political and economic instability since 1991 after the collapse of Mohamed Siad Barre's government and it is regarded to lack democratic institutions. Its situation has further been worsened by terrorism with Al Shabaab terror group controlling some of the major cities (O'Brien, 2011). The country's economy is anchored on livestock trade and telecommunications which contribute significantly to the national income.

#### *Corruption in Somalia*

Somalia is ranked amongst the most corrupt countries in the Transparency International's corruption perception indexing. According to the report of 2017, out of the 183 countries surveyed Somalia ranked at position 183 with a score of 9 out of the possible 100 (Transparency International, 2017).

The situation in Somalia is exacerbated by a number of factors some of which are historical in nature. In Somalia the salience of clans have pervaded every aspect of the society with clans are major forms of identity and clannism as form of political ideology is a key determinant of almost everything in the country including distribution of resources, power and even recruitment to lucrative positions (Dirshe, 2013). At best the clans have worked towards providing the much needed social security and worst the clans have led to bloodletting episodes and acted as a conduit for usurping power and resources for particular individuals (Elmi, 2011).

Weak institutions have also been a major factor in enhancing the pervasiveness of corruption in Somalia. Since 1991, after the fall of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, the country has gone through decades of political and economic instability as well as droughts and displacements. Lack of administrative institutions gave prominence to the clans as the basic administrative units and also provided a pirate friendly environment along the coastal region of Somalia (O'Brien, 2011).

These factors have created necessary conditions for corruption as well as leaders who preside over a corruption syndicates to thrive. These leaders have acted with impunity and their corrupt activities extend beyond the borders to the neighbouring countries like Kenya and Uganda (International Crisis Group, 2011). Within the borders both petty and grand corruption are manifest. For example, based on Public Finance Management Unit report, between 2009 and 2010 alone, over 72 million US Dollar of aid was missing and another 250 million US Dollars was unaccounted for (Freedom House, 2012). The most affected sectors, where corruption thrives include: security, immigration, customs, aid and private sector (Freedom House, 2012). Somalia has however endeavoured to curb the scourge by enacting laws like Somali's Criminal Code which criminalises bribery, extortion and money laundering. It has also established institutions like Anticorruption Commission in 2012 which is mandated to investigate all corruption cases and to monitor affairs of public officers. But lack of political will and weak institutions have made corruption acceptable in Somalia.

## VENEZUELA

### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

A former Spain colony, Venezuela sits on the northern part of South America. Over the decades, Venezuela has faced a series of political and economic challenges including coup attempts and economic crisis that crippled the nation's fortunes despite of the vast oil reserves that generate national income. Even though the country has attempted to hold regular elections, the outcomes of these elections have been disputed and this has been the major causes of the coup attempts (Strønen, 2017).

Its economy is largely supported with oil proceeds which contributes to about 53% of the national income. Other sectors like manufacturing and agriculture are other contributors to national income. Ethnically, the country is multiethnic and culturally diverse and most of the nationals, about 88% are Christians with a few belonging to Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

### *Corruption in Venezuela*

Corruption has been Venezuela's bane for a long period of time spanning from late 1950s. Being the largest oil producer outside the Middle East, Venezuela's levels of corruption have been largely attributed to overreliance on oil which prevents the establishment of independent institutions and enhances the likelihood of corruption as well as state capture. Between 1950 and 1970 corruption was regarded as a necessary evil which had a latent function of resource distribution as every regime worked towards channelling resources to their regions thus corruption did not attract wide attention (Colier and Colier, 1991).

This perception changed in 1980s and corruption was perceived as the biggest challenge in Venezuela a situation that engendered politicians to embark on anticorruption reforms. In this era, anticorruption campaigns paid off as they led to a regime change in 1993 (Palma, 2004). But after the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, corruption gained prominence again as citizens became accustomed to corruption and until today Venezuela is amongst the most corrupt countries in the world. Transparency International's indexing, Venezuela is ranked at position 173 out of 183 countries that were surveyed with a score of 18 out of the possible 100 (Transparency International, 2017).

Fraud, extortion and bribery are prevalent in Venezuela. Particularly, extortion is more prevalent in the security sector as well as the judiciary since these sectors are occupied by individuals who wield the ability and authority to threaten citizens with untold punishment upon failure to comply. (Wilkinson 2004). There have also been grand corruption cases in which Billions of dollars are said to have gone to individuals' pockets. Between 2002 and 2016 it is reported that the country has lost over 700 billion US dollar largely from oil proceeds.

The country has put in place mechanisms of fighting corruption which date back to 1980s. There are federal anti corruption laws as well as agencies that are mandated to investigate corruption cases. These have been coupled by judiciary reforms in attempts to prosecute corruption cases but in most cases the independence of the judiciary has often been trampled by the presidency and politicians ("Venezuela Country Report" 2006). Just as in many developing countries political leadership's commitment to fighting corruption is still wanting.

## **UZBEKISTAN**

### *Political, economic and Social Characteristics*

Uzbekistan has gone through decades of dictatorship since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The elections which have not been regular are more often considered as flawed and this is further aggravated with incidences of human rights violation and voter bribery.

The country is rich in minerals and other natural resources like natural gas. Based on gold deposits, it is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> country in the world, 7<sup>th</sup> with regards to copper and 12<sup>th</sup> with regards to uranium deposits (Nodir, 1998). Its main revenue is derived from agriculture and natural resources but despite the abundance, the country is still facing serious economic challenges. The main religion is Islam with 93% of the population considered to be Muslims and 7% Orthodox Christians.

### *Corruption in Uzbekistan*

Uzbekistan is ranked as one of the most corrupt country in the world at position 162 out of the 183 countries surveyed in 2017 (Transparency International, 2017). The country is characterised by weak political institutions which have fostered corruption. The country has experienced a number of grand corruption scandals inform of state capture most of which involves the president's inner circle including his daughter (Zasada, 2015). Tea, telecommunication and mining are the main sectors that have incubated corruption scandals with country losing over 2 trillion US dollars between 2002 and 2009 in corruption syndicates engineered by powerful people in the government. Other forms of corruption like extortion and bribery are rampant as well: these are perpetrated by security, public administrators and customs officials (Zasada, 2015).

## **ANGOLA**

### *Political, Economic and Social Characteristics*

A former Portuguese colony, Angola attained its independence in 1975 and from early 1990s; the country witnessed a decade of civil war that came to an end in 2002. Upto that there were no political and economical structures for administering the country as rival groups had taken control of different regions depriving the country of a unitary government (Birmingham, 2018). Angola is rich in mineral reserves and oil; these have propelled the country's economy which is now considered to be one of the fastest growing in Africa although poverty level is still high. Aside

from the natural resource, agriculture is also a significant contributor to the country's national income (Birmingham, 2018:12). Angola is a multi-ethnic country with over 35 ethnic groups residing in the country. Besides, the country has more than 1000 religious communities of which majority being Catholic, Muslims and other belonging to traditional religions.

### *Corruption in Angola*

In Angola grand corruption has been a haven for corruption in the last decades. The grand scandals have involved well coordinated racketeering networks that work from both within and outside the country. These networks have worked to capture the state driving the state's policy agenda. Oil, judiciary, security, and mining sectors have been the sources of corruption with the country losing trillions of dollars which are stored in offshore accounts. The construction industry has also been another source of corruption; companies associated with the political leadership have obtained billions of dollars through overpricing and extortion. In the last decades, an estimated 1.2 trillion US dollars have been stolen from the country (Burgis, 2014). Despite anti-corruption laws, the political leadership has continued to act with impunity a situation that is compounded by weak institutions and dictatorship. Transparency International ranked Angola at position 170 out of 183 surveyed countries (Transparency International, 2017).

## **DISCUSSION**

Corruption remains one of the biggest obstacles to development, and while that is the case, it remains interesting to note that less developed and/or developing countries have higher cases of corruption than developed countries. This may not necessarily be in terms of the amount of money that is lost through corruption, it also includes the extent to which corruption is deeply rooted in the society. For many years, corruption surveys have been used to measure the level of perception people have on corruption and this has often given a good coverage. These surveys help us to not only quantify corruption in terms of figures, they allow respondents to mention sectors or departments that they consider to be corrupt, the frequency by which they encounter corruption in their daily lives and so forth. As such, works such as the Annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and the Control of Corruption Index conducted by organisations Transparency International and the World Bank respectively have become important sources of comparative study of corruption across countries.

The findings of this paper demonstrate a unique trend with regard to the relationship between corruption and development. First, it is evident that corruption is more persistent and deeply rooted among less developed and developing countries. One of them is that while corruption is higher among developing countries when compared to developed countries, cases of corruption are equally more predominant among developing countries that are experiencing faster or higher growth rate. This does not mean that there is no corruption among developed countries. Interestingly, countries such as Singapore and Canada despite ranking higher in the corruption ranking still have cases of serious corruption. The table below shows that majority of the case samples selected among developing countries are experiencing rapid economic growth.

**Table 1: Comparison between corruption index and corruption index score for underdeveloped countries**

Country	Corruption Index Rank (2018)	Corruption Index Score (2018)
Uzbekistan	158 / 180	23%
Angola	165/180	19%
Venezuela	168/180	28%
Somalia	180/180	10%

Source: Author Compilation

**Table 2: Comparison between corruption index and corruption index score for developed countries**

Country	Corruption Rank (2018)	Index	Corruption Score (2018)	Index
Denmark	1/180		88%	
New Zealand	2/180		87%	
Singapore	3/180		85%	
Canada	9/180		81%	

Source: Author Compilation

However, despite the evidence of the evidence of relationship between developing countries where corruption is high and their GDP growth per annum, which is mostly backed by sophisticated econometric studies, they still do not explain the causes of corruption. We need to look at other socio-cultural and political factors that enable corruption to thrive in developing countries.

#### *Religion and Corruption*

The interaction between religion and economic growth has been highlighted broadly by Weber (2013) which he argues that ‘spiritual capitalism’ a product of the Calvinist sect of protestant Christians led to not only massive economic growth but also reduced corruption. He explains that the key pillars of Calvinist belief are that God is the one who granted them the occupation they have and therefore earning a legitimate living is equally part of God’s calling.

The debate on the impact of religion as a cultural factor on corruption has been debated widely (Shadabi, 2013: 102). Some scholars argue that religion is a positive driver on corruption with Lambsdorff (2005) adding that the heirarchical nature of religions such as Protestantism, Catholicism and Islam lead to corruption. On the other hand, Porta et al.’s (1999) investigation reveal that there is a weak relationship between corruption and religion while Treisman (2000), Sandholtz and Gray (2003), Gerring and Thacker (2005), found that there is a strong negative relationship between corruption and religion. Samanta (2011) in her research on OPEC noted that religion, in this case Islam had a strong influence in the world’s largest oil producing countries’ organisation to the extent that there is very low corruption there.

However, it is the work of North, et al., (2013) that further gives a more detailed and empirical explanation of the relationship between corruption and religion. Their study reveals that, in the years 1900s, among societies that were dominated by either Catholicism, Protestantism or Hinduism; corruption was lowest due to stronger rule of law. Fast forward to the mid -1900s their study reveals that societies that were dominated by Protestantism recorded lower rates of corruption and in the 2000s, Asian ethno-religion majority countries are least corrupt. The change in the level of corruption with regards to societies with different religions is associated with the level of association between the people, the rule of law and corruption. Evidently, today many countries practicing Asian religions and cultures such as Confucianism are less corrupt as compared to Christian, Islam and Hindu dominated societies. This is associated with the faithful adherence to the rule of law an aspect other societies today give very little emphasis on. In fact, even some of the most corrupt governments today are using religion as a means to retain power.

La Porta et al. (1999) and Al-Marhubi (2004) opine that under normal circumstances, religion and its teachings advocate for people to do ‘good.’ This is translated into the assumption that a highly religious country would have few cases of social evil practices such as corruption. But as Guiso, et al (2003) argue that religiously strong societies are also open to different interpretation of what is good or acceptable. Depending on the circumstances, a practice that can be seriously condemned would otherwise revive very little condemnation under different circumstances. This is what many consider as a possible gap through which practices which would otherwise be deemed as corrupt can be acceptable. For example, bribing public officers in order to avoid

punishment may slowly become a norm especially in societies where getting services is difficult. Therefore, it is possible to argue that there is a strong relationship between the rule of law and religion and in extension corruption which is a product of rule of law. The table below provides indices of the relationship between the rule of law and corruption.

DISTRIBUTION OF INDICES OF RULE OF LAW AND CONTROL OF CORRUPTION

Value of index	Number of countries by index	
	<i>Rule of Law</i>	<i>Control of Corruption</i>
Index < -2.0	1	0
-2.0 ≤ Index < -1.5	8	2
-1.5 ≤ Index < -1.0	25	24
-1.0 ≤ Index < -0.5	48	58
-0.5 ≤ Index < 0.0	31	33
0.0 ≤ Index < 0.5	19	28
0.5 ≤ Index < 1.0	41	25
1.0 ≤ Index < 1.5	17	12
1.5 ≤ Index < 2.0	16	8
Index ≥ 2.0	1	13
Mean	-0.005	-0.006
Standard deviation	1.000	0.999
Minimum value	-2.31	-1.65
Maximum value	2.01	2.53
<i>n</i>	207	203

Source: Kaufman, et al., (2005)

Investigations on the impact of religion on corruption has not provided consistent outcomes. For example, a study by Shabbir and Anwar (2007) indicate that there is no relationship between corruption and religion, the results of a study by Lambsdorff (2005) showed that in societies with highly hierarchic religions such as catholic and Islam corruption is highly predominant. On the other hand, Treisman (2000) conducting research among predominant protestant societies reveal a negative relationship. Gokcekus (2008) also shows that in the past, there was a robust relationship between corruption and Protestantism. According to Samanta (2011), the lower levels of corruption among OPEC countries can be associated with Islam. The lack of consensus on the role of religion on corruption shows how complex the issue

This paper reveals that the impact of religion on corruption is positive. The cross-country comparison indicates that corruption is persistent in these countries irrespective of whether they practice Islam, Christianity, Hinduism or a mixture of these same religions. Although, the doctrines of all major religions condemn any form of social evil and immorality there is continued corruption. That said, perhaps another research needs to investigate the extent to which the lives of people living in the societies that are considered to be predominantly religious (meaning few number of atheists). This way, they can be able to reveal why despite religious principles and doctrines being against corruption, it still persists. This leads us to the next theme of analysis, the political system.

#### *Political Culture and systems*

There are several political practices that are said to be tolerant to corruption. Recent trends in public administration reforms have been geared towards not only promoting efficiency and good governance but also curb practices such as corruption. The quality of government is an important attribute in determining where corruption is most persistent (La Porta et al. 1999: 210). Democracy and its features such as transparency is promoted as an ideal political system that countries should adopt in order to reduce loss of public resources and promote meritocracy. From our case study, we find a strong relationship between political culture, institutions and corruption. First, there is a clear relationship between the ranking of a country on the corruption index and its

ranking on the democracy and good governance index. The table below gives an idea of this comparison. However, the case of Singapore is unique since it is ranked highly on corruption index but ranks low on democracy index.

**Table 3: Comparison between Democracy and Corruption**

Country	Democracy Index ranking	Corruption Index ranking
New Zealand	4/180	2/180
Denmark	5/180	9/180
Canada	6/180	1/180
Singapore	66/180	3/180
Angola	123/180	165/180
Venezuela	134/180	168/180
Uzbekistan	156/180	158/180
Somalia	Unstable Government	180/180

Source: Author Compilation

In addition, political institutions play an important role in curbing corruption. For example, in this article, it is clear that Canada (and other developed countries) have stronger, independent and bipartisan political and legal institutions that in turn make it difficult for anyone to go free with corruption cases. On the other hand, the lack of independence or absence of key institutions such as the Ombudsman, Anti -corruption commission or police oversight authorities in countries such as Somalia, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Angola can be blamed for the rampant corruption. In many cases, over -centralisation of power and authority in the hands of the president or a few other people makes the government less accountable, less transparent and high chances of being corrupted.

#### *Culture and corruption*

The relationship between culture and corruption can closely be associated with the concept of uncertainty avoidance (Husted, 2002). This concept seeks to examine the extent to which a community is willing to hold on to procedures and norms in their daily engagements. In most societies where bribery is predominant the main motivation has been that by paying a bribe one can almost be guaranteed of the service he or she is seeking. Most specifically in developing countries this argument becomes significantly relevant given the scarcity of resources as well as inefficiency in the provision of public goods. A bribe goes a long way in facilitating speedy service delivery something that without paying bribe might not be possible. Among developed countries such as New Zealand and Canada where service delivery in the public sector is efficient and therefore guarantees certain then one doesn't need to pay a bribe. In their works, Getz and Volkema (2001) opine that if people find themselves in highly uncertain situation, they seem to seek solace from norms, policies, rules, and procedures that in turn may lead to corruption. More so, if these institutions are characterised by highly rigid bureaucratic structures. Similarly, the case of Nigeria (and other underdeveloped countries) show that while there is high corruption in these societies, they are equally vulnerable to high levels of uncertainty caused by social, economic, political and personal constraints. Canada (and other developed countries) have fewer cases of uncertainty compared to many less and underdeveloped societies which can explain the low levels of corruption in the country.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This study has shown that corruption is a serious problem in developing and developed countries. However, developing countries face more severe effects as a result of corruption because of the low incomes and the broader depth in which corruption spreads in the society. Among the

developed the impact of corruption may not directly affect the individuals given the higher rates of incomes. With regard to the causes of corruption, it is not clear whether there is a consistent trend between socio-political and cultural is not clear, what is clear though is that institutions, strong and independent institutions can play a very important role in curbing corruption.

The cross-country study reveals a number of interesting relations. The first is that while there is corruption in both developed and less developed countries, there seems to be higher and wide spread corruption activities in less developing countries. The second relationship is that there seems to be more exposure and convictions in developed countries regarding corruption despite lower or fewer cases while in developing countries where there are higher rates of corruption there seems to be fewer convictions. This can be attributed to the independence and stability of institutions tasked with fighting corruption. The other relationship is that of religion and corruption, ironically, some of the most religious countries in our case studies such as Somalia, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Angola are also suffering from the highest cases of corruption. This is not to mean that there is no strong attachment in the other countries but rather societies that are more religious appear to distance themselves from questioning the authorities or involving themselves in ‘politics.’ This allows those in power to use their positions to embezzle resources. In conclusion corruption continues to be a huge obstacle to development, fighting it is equally difficult since political, cultural, institutional and religious factors become an obstacle.

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**Araştırma Makalesi**

**Political, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Corruption: A Case of Developed and Developing Countries.**

*Yolsuzluğun Siyasal, Ekonomik ve Kültürel Boyutları: Gelişmiş ve Gelişmekte Olan Ülkeler Örneği*

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**Genişletilmiş Özeti**

Yolsuzluk, insanların güvenlik, refah ve adalet ihtiyacı üzerindeki en büyük tehditlerden ve engellenmesi en zor sosyal kötülüklerden birisidir. Yolsuzluk bir ülkedeki toplumsal ve siyasal katmanların tümünü etkiler. Ekonomik sonuçları o ülkenin vatandaşları tarafından üstlenilir. Politik, sosyal ve ekonomik kurumların işleyişleri üzerinde zararlı etkileri vardır. Siyasal sistemin şeffaflığı önünde bir engeldir ve hesap verilebilirliği ortadan kaldırır. Sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerini sabote eder.

Bu nedenle dünyanın pek çok ülkesinde kamusal politikaların en önemlilerinden biri yolsuzlukla mücadele olmuştur. Bu ülkelerin dünya üzerindeki dağılımına bakıldığından; Afrika kıtasındaki ülkelerin yolsuzluk sorununu en fazla yaşayan ülkeler olduğu görülecektir. Afrika yanında, Doğu Avrupa ve Latin Amerika ülkeleri ile Asya kıtasındaki bazı ülkeler son yıllarda yolsuzluklardan etkilenmişlerdir. Buna karşın gelişmiş dünya olarak adlandırılan Amerika, Japonya ya da Avrupa ülkelerinin bu sorunun uzağında olduğunu düşünmek de mümkün değildir. Pek çok kez bu ülkeler de yolsuzluk skandallarıyla çalkalanmıştır. Bu yönyle yolsuzluk sorunu aslında küresel bir sorundur. Coğrafi dağılımin ötesinde dünya ülkeleri gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler olarak kategorize edildiğinde, yolsuzluk örneklerinin ağırlıklı olarak gelişmekte olan ülkelerde yoğunlaşlığı görülmektedir. Bu durum yolsuzluğun etkileri açısından da önemli sonuçlar üretmektedir. Gelişmiş ülkelerdeki kişi başına milli gelirin yüksek olması nedeniyle yolsuzlukların vatandaşlar üstündeki doğrudan etkisi sınırlı kalmaktadır. Buna karşın gelişmekte olan ülkelerde, düşük gelir düzeyleri altında yolsuzluk hem topluma daha fazla zarar vermektede hem de yolsuzluğun derinleşmesine ve yayılmasına sebep olmaktadır.

Yolsuzluk tartışmaları son yıllarda, akademik tartışmaların da önemli konularından biri olmuştur. Tartışmalar, ağırlıklı olarak yolsuzlukların önlenmesi ya da en azından azaltılması için uygulanması gereken stratejileri belirlemeye yönelmiştir. Daha ileri araştırmalarda ise dünyanın farklı ülkeleri bir skalaya konulmakta ve en yozlaşmıştan en az yozlaşmışa doğru bir sıralama yapılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Bu karşılaşmalı çalışmalar; yolsuzluk türleri ya da yöntemlerine ilişkin açıklayıcı bilgiler ortaya konmakla beraber, yozlaşma üzerindeki etkili olan faktörler nadiren incelenmiştir. Oysa sağlıklı bir analiz için yolsuzluk üreten iklimin öncelikle tespit edilmesi gereklidir. Sorulması gereken soru, ülkelerin neden farklı seviyelerde yolsuzluk

ürettiğleridir. Bu çalışma farklı ülkeler düzeyinde yolsuzluk nedenlerini ve örneklerini ortaya koymakla birlikte, esas sorunun yolsuzlukla mücadele olduğunu göstermek amacındadır. Çünkü yolsuzluk her toplumda ortaya çıkabilecek bir sorundur. Ancak mücadelenin gereği gibi yapıldığı, ya da yapıldığına inanıldığı toplumlarda yolsuzluk algısı düşük kalmaktadır.

Çalışma, gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler arasında, seçilmiş ülkeler üzerinden yolsuzluk üzerinde etkisi olan faktörleri incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Gelişmiş ülke kategorisinde dört, gelişmekte olan ülke kategorisinde dört olmak üzere toplam sekiz ülke seçilmiştir. Ülkelerin seçiminde belirleyici olan esas faktör Uluslararası Şeffaflık Örgütü (Transparency International) tarafından yapılan “Yolsuzluk Algı Endeksi” olmuştur. Gelişmiş ülke kategorisinde yer alan ülkelerden Danimarka, Yeni Zelanda ve Singapur 2018 yılına ait endeksde yolsuzluk algısının en az olduğu ülkeler olarak ilk üç sırayı oluşturmaktadır. Endeksde 9. Sırada yer alan Kanada, yine bu çalışmada gelişmiş ülkelerden dördüncüsü olarak seçilmiştir. 180 ülkeyi değerlendirmeye alan endekste son sırada yer alan ve yolsuzluk algısının en yüksek olduğu ülke Somali'dir. Bu çalışmada Somali yanında, endeksin 168. sırasında bulunan Venezuela, 165. sırasında bulunan Angola ve 158. sırasında bulunan Özbekistan gelişmekte olan ülkeler arasından seçilmiştir.

Ülkeler seçilirken yolsuzluk türü üzerinden bir ayrılmamıştır. Zaten bazı yolsuzluk türleri tüm ülkelerde geçerli bir sorun alanıdır. Örneğin bir yolsuzluk aracı olarak rüşvet, gelişmiş ülkelerden olan Kanada'da bir sorun olduğu gibi gelişmekte olan ülke kategorisindeki Venezuela ve Özbekistan'da da bir sorundur. Buna karşın, bazı yolsuzluk türleri yalnızca bazı ülkelere özgü olabilmektedir. Örneğin Singapur en az yolsuzluk algısının olduğu ülkelerden biri olmasına rağmen, “vergi cenneti” olarak tanımlanan ülke, başka ülkelerdeki yasal olmayan kazançların aksanmasını sağlayan mekanizmaları dolayısıyla yolsuzluk listesinde yer almamaktadır. Benzer şekilde Yeni Zelanda da yolsuzluğun adı “kara para aklama” olmaktadır.

Farklı yolsuzluk türleri ya da kategorileri geliştirebilmek mümkündür. Örneğin bazı çalışmalar yolsuzlukları kategorilere ayırarak incelemektedir. Bu çerçevede talep ve arz yönlü yolsuzluk, küçük ve büyük yolsuzluk, geleneksel ve geleneksel olmayan yolsuzluk, özel ve genel yolsuzluk ayrımları yapılabılır. Ancak çalışmanın esas vurgusu yolsuzluğun kendisinden çok, yolsuzluğu ortaya çıkarılan ortam ve önlenebilmesi için yapılması gerekenler olduğu için incelenen ülkelerdeki yolsuzluk örneklerinin hangi kategoriye girdiğine bakılmamıştır. Yolsuzluk kavramı türlerinden bağımsız bir olgu olarak tanımlanmaya çalışılmıştır.

En kaba haliyle yolsuzluk “emanet edilen gücün özel çıkarlar için kötüye kullanılması” olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Ancak bu tanım gerek içeriği belirsiz güç kavramıyla, gerekse aktörlere yönelik vurgusunun olmaması dolayısıyla yetersiz kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışmada yolsuzluk sorununu bir ahlak sorunu olarak gören ve önceden belirlenmiş norm ve düzenlemelerden sapan davranışları yolsuzluk olarak değerlendiren Realist yaklaşım ile yolsuzluğu üreten ve sürdürden yapısal faktörleri analizinin temeline koyan Nominalist yaklaşımın izinden gidilmiştir. Çalışmanın incelediği yolsuzluk, özel kazançlar için başvurulan tüm yöntemlerdir ve onu üreten ve sürdürten belirli yapılarda yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Çalışmanın örnek ülke incelemeleri ki yolsuzluk bir noktaya kadar ekonomik kalkınma ile yakından ilgilidir. Bu nedenle ekonomik anlamda gelişmiş ülkeler, yolsuzluk sıralamasında daha alt sıralarda yer almaktadır. Öte yandan yolsuzluğun daha kalıcı ve köklü olduğu ve sıralamasının üst basamaklarında yer alan ülkeler, ekonomik anlamda da az gelişmiş ülkelerden oluşmaktadır. Ancak az gelişmiş ülkeler arasında da bir ayrılmak gerekmektedir. Doğal kaynaklara sahip ve bu kaynakların ticareti üzerinden son yıllarda daha yüksek büyümeye oranları yakalayan ülkelerde yaşanan yolsuzluk, az gelişmiş kategorisindeki diğer ülkelerle karşılaşıldığında daha fazladır. Örneğin 180 ülke arasında 168. Sırada yer alan Venezuela, Ortadoğu'dan sonra dünyada en fazla petrol rezervlerine sahip ülkedir. Ancak sadece 2002 ve 2016 yılları arasında yolsuzluklara bağlı olarak ülkenin petrol gelirlerinden 700 milyar dolar kaybedilmiştir. Daha doğru bir ifadeyle bu miktar topluma döndürülmemiş sınırlı sayıdaki kişinin cebine girmiştir.

İkinci olarak din ve yozlaşma arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Her ne kadar bütün büyük dinlerin öğretileri, her türlü sosyal kötülüğün ve ahlaksızlığı kınıyor ve insanlara “iyi olmalarını” emrediyor

olsalar da, incelenen farklı ülkelerdeki farklı dinler, yolsuzlukları önleme noktasında önemli bir işlev görmemektedir. Literatürde kimi zaman Hristiyanlığın, kimi zaman İslam'ın, kimi zaman da Budizm ve Konfüçyanizm gibi Asya dinlerinin yolsuzlukları önlemede etkili birer araç olduğu iddia edilmişse de karşılaşmalı bir analizde bu etkinin sanıldığı kadar güçlü olmadığı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Örneğin çoğunluğu Hristiyan nüfusa sahip Venezuela, en fazla yolsuzluğun olduğu ülkeler kategorisinde yer alabilirken bir başka Hristiyan ülke Kanada'da en az yolsuzluk algısına sahip ülkeler içinde yer almaktadır. Benzer durum Müslüman halklara sahip ülkeler için de geçerlidir. Yolsuzluğun en fazla olduğu ülkeler olarak bu çalışma içinde incelenen Somali ve Özbekistan'ın Müslüman, Venezuela ve Angola'nın ise Hristiyan nüfus çoğunluklarına sahip olması bu durumun bir başka açık göstergesidir.

Çalışmada incelenen parametrelerin yolsuzlukla ilişkili olarak en belirleyici olanı, siyasal sistemler ve kültür olmuştur. Yolsuzluk endeksi sıralamasında en az yolsuzluğun bulunduğu ülkelerin demokrasi ve iyi yönetişim anlamında sıralamanın en üstünde olan ülkeler olduğu görülmüşür (Bu durumun tek istisnası incelenen ülkelerden Singapur'un yolsuzluk endeksinde son sıralarda yer alması gibi demokrasi endeksinde de düşük skorlara sahip olmasıdır). Bu ülkelerde siyasal sistemler güç ve otoritenin adem-i merkezileştirildiği, şeffaflığın temel kurallardan olduğu bir yapıya sahiptir. Ayrıca siyasi ve yönetsel örgütlenme anlamında yolsuzluğun az olduğu ülkelerin güçlü ve bağımsız yasal kurumlara sahip oldukları görülmüştür. Bunlar yolsuzluklarla mücadele komisyonları ve ombudsmanlıklar gibi kurumlardır. Yine bu ülkelerde çıkarılan kamu görevlileri yolsuzluk yasaları, rüşvetle mücadele yasaları gibi düzenlemeler ile hukuk yoluyla yolsuzlukların önlenmeye çalışılmaktadır. Buna karşın az gelişmiş ülkelerin en önemli sorunu, yolsuzlukla mücadele anlamında hukuki düzenlemelere sahip olmamaları ya da gerekli kurumsal yapıları oluşturamamalarıdır. Bunlara sahip ülkelerin bazlarında ise bu kurumların işletilmesinden kaynaklanan sorunlar bulunmaktadır. Bu durum yalnızca yolsuzluk algısını derinleştirmekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda otoriteyi de parçalayan sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Örneğin dünyanın en fazla yolsuzluk algısının olduğu ülke olan Somali'de, zayıf devlet kurumları ve hukuki boşlukların yeri zaman içinde kabileler tarafından doldurulmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ortaya koyduğu temel sonuç yolsuzlukla mücadelenin en önemli aracının güçlü, bağımsız ve istikrarlı kurumlar olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu durumun belki de en açık kanıtlarından biri, yolsuzluğun az olduğu ülkelerde, yargıya intikal eden vakaların sayısının çokluğuna karşın, yolsuzluğun yoğun olduğu ülkelerde bu sayının çok daha düşük olmasıdır.