



Viewing the Power of Corruption through a Cultural Lens

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What is Corruption?

The Oxford English dictionary defines corruption as ‘a dishonest or fraudulent behaviour by those in power’. Economists often define corruption as ‘the misuse of public office for private gain’ (Svensson, 2005) or the ‘misuse of entrusted power for private benefit’ (Pope, 2000). In simple terms, corruption is best understood as a behaviour that corrupts: it undermines the cultural system in which it occurs. (Hooker, 2008).



Rules vs Relationship-Based Cultures

Rules-based: Trust in systems

Transparent

Use contracts and agreements

Motivating factors: self reliance, independence, fairness

Relationship-based: Trust in friends and family

Based on tribal structures

Use long-term mutual obligation

Motivating factors: personal honour, filial duty, friendship



Types of Perceived Corruption

Bribery

Cronyism

Nepotism

Litigation

Guanxi/Wasta



Activity

Divide into groups and discuss the following scenarios

Discussion questions:

Based on your own culture, do you view these activities corrupt?

What cultural reasons might cause them to occur?

How would you choose to handle each of these situations, if you were involved?



Scenarios

1. A sales rep takes a potential client out to dinner.
2. A business owner hires his nephew for a high profile position within the company, ignoring more qualified candidates.
3. A purchaser is given an envelope full of money by a potential supplier.
4. A company sues a long-time supplier for not meeting a deadline set in a contract.
5. A civil engineering firm donates re-election funds to a politician representing an area where a future bridge is to be built.



Debrief

Did everyone in your group agree?

What disagreements occurred?

How would you choose to handle each of these situations, if you were involved?

Do you have any experiences that you would like to share?



Thank You!

For further information, please read my paper:
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