

# The factors related to administrative corruption in youth and sports ministry

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to specify the factors relevant to administrative corruption in youth and sports ministry of Iran. This is a qualitative research and has used the heuristic method. The statistical population consists of experts in sport management and sport managers familiar with corruption, 12 people of whom were selected as the sample, using snowball sampling method, and interviews were done. To this end, the semi-structured heuristic interview was done with expert statistical samples in the field of corruption. The data analysis was done using content analysis. According to the results, relevant factors of corruption were classified into three groups of individual, organizational, and environmental dimensions. The organizational dimension contains 14 factors: structure and process, management and leadership, human resource management, job satisfaction and job design, organizational justice, information technology, transparency and responsiveness, organizational and job commitment, organizational relations, control system, organizational culture and atmosphere, finance and contracts, legal affairs, and quality of working life. The environmental dimension includes five factors: economic, social, cultural, political, and informing factors. Besides, the individual dimension includes 4 factors: psychological factors, personality, subjective, and educational factors. In addition, each factor has been analyzed partially based on the identified concepts in terms of affecting administrative corruption.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Corruption factors, Youth and Sports Ministry

## Introduction

Corruption is not a new phenomenon, and its evolution and development are as old as the history of human societies, and the history of organizations and institutions. All societies have had levels and layers of corruption and it could be claimed that no period of human life can be found without corruption. Hence, it could be mentioned that corruption is an epidemic phenomenon [1]. Corruption is a phenomenon, which exists

everywhere in the world more and less, although the type, form, and expansion of that are different in each country [2]. However, corruption is irrelevant to the culture of a country, and even a country with a high level of culture may be involved in corruption [3]. Corruption is one of the most underlying social problems, which enters a society slowly and with high desirability, influences all levels and collapse a social system. Consequently, it can disrupt the political, information, administrative systems, and other departments of a state [4]. Among these items, the administrative system is the most important fundamental system of each country [5], and administrative corruption is a major and explicit example of administrative system damages [6]. Since administrative corruption has influenced all aspects of human life as a public and global phenomenon and is being imposed on human life every day in various types [7], it should not be neglected. This is because, this type of corruption is not only an indecent issue but also it can be regarded as a barrier to the development of the

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societies in macro dimensions [1]. The concept of corruption emerged in 1960 in its academic concept [8].

In different societies, various definitions are presented for corruption due to attitudes and perceptions. The root of corruption is the Latin word "Rumpere" which means "breaking". Therefore, something is broken or violated in corruption. The thing may be a behavior or legal way or administrative regulation. Besides, corruption can be generalized in all various forms of deviation or personal power applying, or illegal use of job position [2].

The World Bank and International Organization believes that transparency of corruption is an abuse of governmental powers or public power to gain personal or private interests [9]. In the Webster's Dictionary, corruption is defined as improper or illegal behavior on behalf of powerful people [3]. Besides, Oxford Advanced Dictionary has defined corruption in two forms: corruption is dishonest or illegal behavior of individuals, especially those at the top of power. Corruption refers to actions and behaviors causing individuals to be misdirected from moral to immoral standards.

Vito Tansy has provided a different definition of corruption and has discriminated against it in the framework of decision-making of employees and policymakers. He believes that a public official or broker commits corruption when he/she is impressed by personal interest or family relations and interest and social attachments to make administrative decisions. If the definition of corruption is accepted, it should be mentioned that this type of corruption in the developing countries is more applicable than the industrial countries. This is because, family social relations in developing countries are very important and everyone believes that it is a duty to help the relatives and family as much as possible. Besides, every person relies on the supports of relatives and family first of all to achieve personal destinations and to solve the problems [1].

It should be mentioned that organizations have become more complicated today compared to past times, and it is challenging to manage them. One of the consequences of complexity is the corruption phenomenon. Corruption is a complicated, hidden, and various issue, and fighting against it, needs continuous, long-term, and fundamental effort [10].

Although corruption is one of the explicit examples of administrative system damage, it should be mentioned that corruption is one of the interwoven social, political, cultural, economic, legal, administrative, and international factors [6]. Corruption (in administrative and other dimensions) is like an infection, which can disrupt the members of a society and body one after another, and the spread of the infection can corrupt the whole configuration of society [11]. Widespread corruption in society causes inefficiency and weakness of the administrative system of that country and increases public dissatisfaction [12]. Although the consequences of corruption differ based on the type of the organization and the development level, it can cause collapse, can cause the government policies to be in contradiction to the public interest, can waste the national resources, and lead to reduced effectiveness of the states to conduct the affairs. By this, the trust of people in the

governmental and nongovernmental systems is decreased, and indifference and incompetence are increased. Corruption disrupts the ethical values and beliefs of the society, increases the cost of affairs, and makes the growth of compatibility difficult. Besides, it causes failure of poverty eradication efforts, creates pessimism, and paves the way to weaken the spirits of honest people. Corruption prevents investment (particularly investment in the private sector) and disrupts the way of economic growth and boom [13]. Through undesirable conduction of the talents and potential and actual human resources toward improper activities, it paves the way for stagnation in all dimensions [2]. Hence, the issue of pathology and deviations in general, and the issue of corruption in the organizational and administrative domain in particular, can be the most underlying concerns of human societies [14].

Corruption is a phenomenon, the manifestations of which are evident unfortunately in both public and private sectors in Iran [15]. According to international studies, the administrative system of Iran suffers from corruption. According to the reports of Transparency International (2019) on the corruption status of different countries, Iran has been improved in terms of corruption measurement; although it is still a corrupted country by gaining the point 26 and rank 146 among the 180 countries, and this is not good. As the sports organizations and the sports domain in Iran cannot be separated from other administrative and social domains, the sports organizations should not be an exception in the field of analyzing administrative corruption.

This is because sport and sports organizations are not safe against corruption as inseparable members of the societies. In this field, Brooks *et al.* (2013) have shown in a study that corruption in sport exists all around the world [14], and corruption in sport is not a new issue. The first record of corruption in sport (corruption in sport management and holding sports matches) dates back to the first Olympic courses [16]. However, sports organizations have to be along with moral values, principles of chivalry, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice. Besides, all managers of sports organizations, athletes, viewers, and coaches have to observe ethical criteria and principles. However, they act despite this, and the behavioral abnormalities, collusion, law-breaking, aggression, and cheating are being increased every day in sports organizations [17].

By the review of corruption recorded in the field of sport, the increasing process of corruption (especially over the recent years) is evident in sport organizations and federations [18]. This can negatively affect the effectiveness of the organizations as a big obstacle [3], and prevent the organizations to achieve their goals.

If the spread of corruption in sport organizations is not prevented, it can leave undesirable consequences. The consequences include capitalism dominance in sport, violation of the philosophy of sports, meaning healthy and fair competition; damaging the reputation of sports organizations, sports fields, and those involved in this field; violation of meritocracy and reduction of incentives of the sports organization personnel and young athletes; loss of fans, spectators, and consequently, loss of the sponsors [16]. On the

other hand, wherever corruption enters, it is increased as time goes and it becomes difficult to fight against that, and the roots of that influence the heart of society deeply. Hence, fighting against corruption is a fundamental and unavoidable necessity in all organizations such as sports organizations [2]. The necessity shows that people have to have an organized effort to control corruption and promote administrative health. Hence, studying this field is before any action [15].

It should be mentioned that a few studies are done in the field of corruption in sport organizations. Besides, no one of the studies has investigated the factors affecting corruption comprehensively. Besides, the reported findings are contradictory. For example, Safari Jafarlou *et al.* (2009) and Goudarzi *et al.* (2011) have introduced economic factors as the main factors causing corruption in the Ministry of Sports [19, 20]. Elsewhere, Zare *et al.* (2016) have called organizational factors the main factor in the advent of corruption [3]. Besides, Najafi Koluri *et al.* (2012) have claimed that cultural factors play a key role in the advent of corruption [21].

Among the Iranian sports organizations, based on the position of the Ministry of Sports and Youth as the highest authority on sports (public and championship) and youth issues in Iran, whether in hardware or software dimension, and its undeniable effect on other sports organizations (federations, National Olympic Committee, and gyms), it is vital to eliminate the corruption and to provide administrative health to prevent undesirable consequences of corruption, and to be successful in completing the mission and achieve organizational goals. However, due to the variety of the duties, the widespread and large number of applicants for services (of any age and gender), lack of resources, and mutual effectiveness of other social domains (health, culture, economics, politics), it could be mentioned that the work of Ministry of Sports and Youths is complicated. As it was mentioned before, one of the consequences of the complexity is corruption and the managers have to pay attention to fighting against it.

As scholars believe in preventive approaches to fight against corruption in the organizations [19], relevant factors in this field should be identified. By this, the examples of corruption and the way of fighting against that can be found in addition to structural identification of organizational corruption [22]. Hence, with the analysis and identification of relevant factors of corruption within the organization, and by controlling these factors, effective measures can be taken to reduce corruption and fight against it.

As a result, due to the importance of organizational health promotion in the Ministry of Sports and Youths of Iran, the issue of fighting against corruption and controlling has been changed into an essential and undeniable necessity. Hence, this study has analyzed the relevant factors of corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youths of Iran. It is hoped that the findings of this study can be helpful for the managers of the said organization to reduce corruption and to promote organizational health. The findings of the study may help the organization be safe against the undesirable consequences of corruption and take effective steps for the development of

sports in Iran, whether in terms of championship or public dimensions.

## Materials and Methods

This is a qualitative research and uses a heuristic method. The statistical population consists of the experts of sport management and sport managers familiar with the corruption in sport organizations. According to the qualitative nature of the study, snowball sampling was used for purpose of sampling in this study. The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview. The reason for selecting the mentioned interview was that the subject of the study can be conducted toward the achievement of the research goals in addition to paving the way to have interlocution with the samples. Besides, during the interview, it is possible to observe the feelings and to become familiar with the beliefs of the interviewee on the subject. At the first, the interview was done with one expert on corruption in sport organizations. At the end of the interview, the expert was asked to introduce another expert in this field to help in the field of data collection. This was continued until the time that all introduced experts were interviewed. 12 experts with useful information in the field of corruption were interviewed.

Data analysis was done due to the qualitative nature of the data obtained from the interviews and derivation of similar concepts by coding qualitative data and during the data review, codification of coding guide, data organization, data classification, open coding, axial coding, final report preparation, and qualitative data analysis. After checking the interviews, the sections considered as initial codes based on the research objectives were specified as the initial concept. Then, the common initial concepts were classified in a higher class in the frame of categories. In the end, the categories were placed in more comprehensive classes.

According to the criteria presented by Creswell and Miller (2000), the following measures were taken to make sure of research validity [23]:

First, adaptation by the members: to this end, two experts of corruption, who were active in the Ministry of Sports and Youth with the organizational position, reviewed the final report of the first step of the analysis process and obtained categories. Their suggestions were applied in the coding paradigm. Second, peer review: in this step, two professors of sport management analyzed the findings and left comments on them in a common session. Besides, the participants helped the data analysis and interpretation. To this end, the opinions, experiences, and potentials of samples were used in the analysis of various sections of the study.

## Results and Discussion

According to the research objectives and nature, and analysis of the obtained data from the interviews to determine the relevant factors of corruption and realization of research objective; the data coding was done in two steps. Using the research

literature, the data were classified and presented in the frame of three major organizational, environmental, and individual dimensions. The organizational dimension included 14 factors, the environmental dimension included 5 items, and the

individual dimension included 4 factors. Besides, each factor was analyzed based on the relevant concepts partially in the field of affecting corruption. The findings are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Dimensions, Factors, and Concepts Identified for each Factor**

Dimensions	Factors	The Concepts Identified for each Factor
Organizational	Structure and Processes	structural complexity - Lack of transparency of work procedures - unnecessary administrative bureaucracy – power concentration, authorities, money, and credit in the organization - formality
	Management and Leadership	Lack of employing professional committed, and capable managers - inefficient way of choosing managers - lack of familiarity of managers with the anti-corruption principles - lack of employee participation in decision-making – styles of managers - support of managers for employees
	Human Resource Management	The weakness of recruitment, training and retention system of specialized manpower - overcrowding - inefficiency of performance appraisal system – job and employee mismatch - outsourcing services as one of the centers of corruption - inefficient reward and punishment system - instability and lack of job security
	Job Satisfaction and Job Design	Dissatisfaction with the type of job, environment, colleagues, manager, salary, and advantages - not paying attention to job rotation and job enrichment
	Organizational Justice	Intra-organizational discrimination and lack of observing distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice
	Information Communication Technology	Under development of software systems and information and communication technologies – inefficient use of office automation - lack of using integrated databases within the organization
	Transparency and Responsiveness	Lack of transparency - the inadequate classification system of administrative documents and information - lack of accountability
	Organizational and Job Commitment	Lack of emotional commitment, continuous and normative commitment - lack of commitment to work values and professional affiliation
	Organizational Relations	The informal communication network in the organization - network communication and chain relations - nepotism
	Control System	Weakness or lack of control and monitoring mechanisms - weak supervision of the proper implementation of laws - extending the scope of supervision
	Organizational Culture and Atmosphere	The organizational atmosphere and talented to corruption - fueling the problems and shortcomings with the organizational environment - ambiguity - everyday life - lack of acceptance of creativity and innovation, lack of attentiveness to the team and team building in the field of planning and organizational affairs - individualism versus collectivism - lack of considering organizational trust
	Finance and Contracts	Lack of familiarity of managers with documents and finance - lack of an efficient mechanism in organizational contracts (auctions and tenders) - lack of transparency in financial documents
	Legal Affairs	The weakness of preventive laws - inefficient laws and regulations - complexity of laws and regulations - abuse of application and interpretation of laws - the inadequacy of the punishment for corruption with a crime - lack of familiarity of employees with regulations - lack of enforcement of laws
	Environmental	Quality of Working Life
Economic		The inadequate economic situation of society and employees - economic injustice and unfair distribution of wealth in society - the inadequacy of inflation and growth rates of salaries - the existence of class distance - feeling economic inequality of employees about other social classes - the inadequacy of living standards of employees with social position
Social		Lack of commitment of employees to social norms - low level of social knowledge of employees - development of spirituality based on consumerism and welfare - lack of social sensitivity to corruption - normalization of lawlessness - the congregation - weakness of families in raising honest and anti-corruption children
Cultural		Cultural poverty - lack of adherence to moral standards - elimination of the ugliness of corruption - expansion of the culture imitation - the domination of material values over spiritual values - the transformation of the value of corruption - weakening of work culture and normalization of underemployment and lack of accountability – nepotism
Political		The politicization of the administrative system - corruption of high-level managers - the influence of power centers on organizational appointments - the pressure of influential groups inside and outside the organization - facilitation, and avoidance of corruption for political interests - consideration
	Informing Factors	Lack of freedom of mass media - low level of public awareness - lack of familiarity with regulations - lack of

Individual	Personality	appropriate public education in the field of familiarity with the dimensions and consequences of corruption Lack of work conscience and conscientiousness - having a spirit of individualism and introversion - greed and extravagance - lack of emotional stability - personality weakness – power-seeking and fame-seeking
	Subjective	Inadequate perception of organizational processes of corruption - negative attitude - corruption in the realization of rights - uncertainty about economic security in future - distrust of system health and efficiency of the monitoring unit
	Psychological	Inadequate personal motivations - mental instability - degree of risk-taking - irresponsibility - haste - preference for personal interests – lack of interest in work
	Educational	Weak family upbringing and education system - weak religious beliefs and education

The present study has been conducted to specify the relevant factors of corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The data analysis leads to the identification of three dimensions and 23 factors. Each factor was specified as a result of analyzing and coding the relevant concepts. According to the results, relevant factors of corruption were classified in individual, organizational, and environmental dimensions. The organizational dimension includes 14 factors, the environmental dimension includes 5 factors, and the individual dimension includes 4 factors.

- On the organizational dimension, the results show that if factors including structure and process, management and leadership, human resource management, job satisfaction and job design, organizational culture and atmosphere, finance and contracts, legal affairs, and quality of working life are in unfavorable status, they can affect the advent of corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youth. These results are consistent with the findings of Safari Jafarlou *et al.* (2009), Najafi Koluri *et al.* (2012), Goudarzi *et al.* (2011), Dadashi (2011), Razmara and Yektayar (2016), Mohammad Shafiei *et al.* (2016), Zarandi *et al.* (2017), Abbaszadeh Vafeghi *et al.* (2017), and Namvar (2018) [15, 19-21, 24-28]. To prevent corruption in this ministry, the managers should evaluate the situation of these factors constantly and try to make a favorable situation for them. Concerning the factor "structure and organizational processes", the formality, structural complexity, and lack of concentration based on organizational structure, elimination of inessential bureaucracies, and transparency of working procedures should be considered. To improve the factor "management and leadership" within the organization, one should consider designing an efficient pattern to appoint managers, use of specialized and committed managers, the familiarity of managers with the anti-corruption principles, support of managers for employees, employee participation in decision-making, and styles of managers adjusted with the situation and employees. Besides, by meeting weakness of recruitment, training and retention system of specialized manpower, designing performance appraisal system, optimal use of manpower, considering the job and employee matching, using efficient reward and punishment system and creating stability and job security, one can take effective measures to improve human resource management. To prevent corruption within the organization, one can pay attention

to job satisfaction promotion and adequate design of jobs, adequate job rotation, and enrichment. Improvement of the status of organizational justice with components including distributive justice, procedural and interactive justice, and meeting discrimination in the organization can be effective factors. Considering information communication technology within the organization can be effective by using integrated databases within the organization, use of efficient office automation, and updated information communication technologies. Besides, using administrative information and document classification system increased transparency, and accountability is underlying. Proper organizational communications should be provided and despotism should be avoided. The domain of supervision should be regulated technically and the controlling mechanisms should be optimized. Attentiveness to organizational culture should be enforced and a healthy organizational atmosphere should be dominated by the organization. To this end, collectivism should be enhanced compared to individualism. Besides, the ambiguities in the organization should be eliminated and creativity, innovation, and team-making should be evaluated to advance the affairs. Concerning financial issues, the financial documents should be transparent, and managers should be familiar with financial affairs. The quality of working life should be considered, and the legal affairs should design transparent and efficient regulations with sanctions to prevent corruption and to fight against that.

- In the environmental dimension, economic, social, cultural, political factors, and awareness factors were identified, which can be effective in the field of corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youth. These results are consistent with the findings of Safari Jafarlou *et al.* (2009), Goudarzi *et al.* (2011), Dadashi (2011), Zare *et al.* 2016, Razmara and Yektayar (2016), Mohammad Shafiei *et al.* (2016), Abbaszadeh Vaghefi *et al.* (2017), and Namvar (2018) [3, 19, 20, 24-28]. Concerning these factors, it should be noted that the factors are not under the control of the management and organization. Under these conditions, the question is how an organization can be protected against the damage of these factors and the growth of corruption? Although the environmental factors cannot be changed, some solutions can be used to reduce the effects of these factors or control them. On the

economic factors, based on the economic situation of employees, increased salary due to the inflation, using facilities of the organization, the negative effects of the factor can be reduced. On social factor, it could be mentioned that holding the courses, educational workshops, and designing social challenges for social normalization in the organization, enhancing the level of social knowledge of the employees, making sensitivity to organizational corruption, promotion of legalism and commitment to the observance of social regulations can reduce the effects of this factor. Concerning cultural factors, same as the social factor, the public culture of the employees should be enhanced, and commitment to ethical considerations and spiritual values should be enforced. On the political factor, the organization should be depoliticized. Fighting against corruption should be the same for all people such as managers and employees and should be done far from political interest and without ignorance. In the field of informing factor, the freedom of mass media should be considered, by proper education and planning, effective measures can be taken to enhance public awareness, familiarity with regulations, and the dimensions and consequences of corruption.

- Concerning individual dimensions, psychological, personality, mental, and educational factors can be considered as factors affecting corruption. This result is consistent with findings of Safari Jafarlou *et al.* (2009), Dadashi (2011), Razmara and Yektayar (2016), Mohammad Shafiei *et al.* (2016), and Abbaszadeh Vaghefi *et al.* (2017) [20, 24-26, 28]. In this field, by using relevant domains such as management psychology and organizational behavior, effective measures can be taken to reduce the negative effects of these factors on corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youth by appropriate planning and affecting individuals.

## Conclusion

By specifying the factors relevant to corruption in the Ministry of Sports and Youth of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the frame of organizational, environmental, and individual dimensions and their relevant subsets, it is essential to identify relevant factors to fight against corruption, so that useful step can be taken by the improvement of these factors to fight against corruption. The managers of the Ministry of Sports and Youth can try to improve the status of these factors within the organization by continuous evaluation of specified factors so that organizational health can be promoted by this.

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