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A probe into the relationship between religiosity and work conscience with a tendency to financial and administrative corruption among employees in Jahrom

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***Abstract*---**The present study explored the relationship between religiosity and work conscience with a tendency to administrative and financial corruption. A sample of 400 participants was selected through the systematic sampling method. The data was collected by questionnaire, the validity of which was determined by face validity, and the reliability was checked by internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha method. The analytical results also showed that work conscience and religiosity have a positive and significant impact on the tendency to administrative and financial corruption. Moreover, the demographic variables of occupation, social class, and income are significantly associated with the tendency to corruption. Explaining the dependent variable by the sum of independent variables indicated that work conscience (reliability), income, social class, and ethnicity, respectively, are the strongest predictors of the tendency to corruption, which can explain 13.6% of the corruption tendency variance. The findings were compared with similar results, and suggestions were provided to prevent the spread of corruption.

Keywords*---administrative and financial corruption, work conscience, religiosity, employees, Jahrom.*

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Introduction

Administrative and financial corruption is assumed as a chronic malady and the oldest trauma of the administrative system as it is a phenomenon coupled with governments. This means as human activities began to be organized, administrative corruption emerged out of organizational ventricles due to the internal interactions and the interactions with the environment (Khodadad Hosseini and Farhadinejad 2001, 37). A system will perform the duties and responsibilities well if it is blessed with a sound administrative system. Healthy organizations are more successful in achieving the goals and make better decisions to achieve them by providing effective and efficient services. Administrative health refers to a state whereby all factors of an organization are able to meet the goals, identify deviations from administrative and legal norms, notice the obstacles ahead of the organizational goals and adopt the necessary and timely measures to eliminate them (Agricultural Jihad of Razavi Khorasan Province 1996, 1).

Administrative corruption is defined as the abuse of public power for personal gain. In this sense, corruption means the abuse of government-public positions for personal benefits (Bardan 1999, 17). Such corruption involves financial abuse and harms the public interest. It is mostly in the form of rent and comes from permanent or temporary employees of government institutions and enterprises (Abtahi 1995). Transparency International has defined corruption briefly as "the abuse of power for personal gain."

As a developing country, Iran consistently struggles with the challenge of administrative and financial corruption. In the reports published by Transparency International on the perception of corruption in different countries, Iran occupies a low position; the rank of 146 among 180 countries with a score of 26 out of 100. As the score closes to zero, the corruption is more.

Some scholars emphasize religiosity in explaining corruption. Religion has a profound impact on the reform of the individual and society. It develops the vision and thought of human beings and leads to the emergence of beautiful moral qualities and human privileges. Therefore, the influence of religiosity on the new civil deviations needs to be examined in a community with the closest and the highest appropriateness with organizational employees. This is because the employees, due to the feeling of risk and sensitivity of corruption questions, are reluctant to express their main attitude, and thus their responses bear a value bias. Hence, the present study has to be implemented in the target community that is primarily closest to the community of organizational employees, and secondly, the actors of the target community have no fear of expressing their true views. That is why the impact of religiosity on attitudes toward corruption - as a new example of social deviations - is to be explored among employees with a crime deterrence approach before committing a crime.

However, some thinkers explain corruption on the basis of work conscience. It refers to the internal tendency of employees to perform their organizational tasks completely in terms of quantity and quality and without wasting resources, even if there is no outside supervision. Cultural and ideological roots that strengthen work conscience are considered as the most critical provocative of administrative violations (Hadavi Nejad and Javid 2015, 67).

The Aim of the Study

This study seeks to explain the relationship between religiosity and work conscience and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption among government employees in Jahrom. The sub-objectives of the research are as follows:

- Assessing the tendency to administrative and financial corruption among the government employees
- Assessing the relationship between work conscience and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption among the government employees
- Assessing the relationship between religiosity and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption among the government employees

Theoretical Framework and Background of the Study

Religious beliefs may affect all aspects of a person's life, such as health, organizational performance, etc. Glock and Start believe that despite the differences in religious details, there are common domains through which religiosity is manifested (Schabracq 2007). Durkheim believes that religion is a way of expressing the moral values and collective beliefs of any society, bestowing cohesion, the spirit of life, and social health to the society. He states that a change in religious practice would lead to a change in structure and morphology. Accordingly, the present study is to measure the influence of religious beliefs on the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Work conscience includes emotional, normative, continuous, and behavioral dimensions. The emotional dimension refers to a positive feeling towards the organization and a sense of belonging to it. People with a high work conscience consider the goals and values of the organization as their own goals and values and strive to achieve them (Sharpin 1985). They are reliable and responsible and make efforts beyond their duty and responsibility, though within the legal norms of the organization, in order to achieve the organizational goals. Continuous dimension reflects the attachment to the organization and avoiding the expected costs of leaving it. Employees with a work conscience are ideal employees because they are blessed with the qualities of responsibility, reliability, resilience, and success (Fathi et al. 2012, 223; Schabracq 2007, 11). They do not think of their own interests alone. They protect the company's assets as well as their own property in difficult circumstances. Further, they resist pressure because they feel attached to the organization and its members. They do not disclaim their duties and do not harm or ignore the organization's interests. The behavioral dimension involves the practical commitment of a person to duties and activities. Conscience is positively related to performance; that is, those with a higher work conscience make more effort and spend much time doing tasks (Alatas et al. 2009). Through their actions, they demonstrate acquaintance with the assigned tasks and perform them without being supervised.

Researchers and theorists have addressed factors affecting corruption. Some have concluded that corruption mainly results from the culture and beliefs of individuals so that the dominance of material values over spirituality provokes corruption. Robertson Smith has pointed to the role of religion as a cultural layer influencing corruption (Kurer 2005). This is in line with the findings of Jafari Keshtiban (2017) and Khedri et al. (2015).

Factors within the administrative structure of society have also drawn attention. Reasons for explaining corruption include lack of meritocracy, the inefficient administrative system with bulky tasks and disproportionate to the goals, the complexity of laws, regulations and the multiplicity of directives and instructions, inadequacies of the payroll system, reward and punishment system, and especially the monitoring and evaluation system, the preference of group goals to the organizational ones, etc. (Heydari et al. 2014). Haghighatian et al. (2016), Azimi et al. (2010) have also studied the role of bureaucracy in the emergence of corruption.

The theoretical framework of the present study is taken from Durkheim's theory of religiosity and religious beliefs (Khedri et al. 2015) as well as Brick and Mount's theory of work conscience (1991), quoted by Fathi et al. (2012).

The theoretical model of the research provided in Figure 1.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a negative relationship between work conscience and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

2. There is a negative relationship between the degree of religiosity and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

3. There is a negative relationship between demographic variables and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Method

According to the title, logic, and purpose of the research, the data had to be collected via the quantitative method (questionnaire) and survey technique.

The statistical population included 6600 government employees of Jahrom. Each employee was considered as an analysis unit. Cochran's sampling formula was used to determine the sample size; the optimum reliable limit was calculated to be 0.95. Accuracy probability of 5%, sampling error probability of 5%, the confidence level of 95%, and the sample size of 400 subjects who were selected by systematic sampling was obtained based on Cochran's formula and standard deviation (t = 1.96). To select a sample, the population size is first divided by the sample size to obtain the sampling ratio. The sample is then selected by finding the starting point based on the obtained sampling ratio.

A questionnaire was used to collect data. First, as a pilot study, 30 members of the statistical population were pre-tested to particularly check the content of the questionnaire, which led to some revisions such as modification or removal of some items.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the best way to determine the reliability of measuring instruments. It is used to calculate the internal consistency of the instruments, especially questionnaires. The validity of the questionnaire was obtained through face-to-face validity. It was modified based on the opinions of experts before being distributed among the participants. Once the data was gathered, the questionnaires were coded, and the data was analyzed by SPSS in two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics. Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale. As seen, the internal consistency of each scale and indicator is acceptable.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Tendency to corruption	9	0.86
Work conscience	10	0.7
Religiosity	24	0.85

Results

Descriptive Findings

The descriptive results of demographic variables follow as the below:

The average age of the participants was 40.7 years; 126 (31.5%) of them were female and 274 (68.5%) were male; 69 (17.3%) respondents were municipal employees, 54 (13.5%) of them were electricity department employees, 50 (12.5%) participants were medical university employees, 31 (7.8%) of them were water and sewage department employees, 30 (7.5%) respondents worked for Agriculture Jihad, 24 (6%) were employees of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, 22 (5.5%) of them were teachers, 21 (5.3%) respondents were employees of Payame Noor University, 20 (5%) of them were employees of the governorate, 20 (5%) were employees of the medical clinic, 19 (4.8%) were employees of the state university, 10 (2.5%) participants came from the social security departments, 10 from bank and 10 from alcohol company, 3 (0.8%) from Azad University, 2(0.5) of them were university professor, and there was 1 (0.1) physician, one accountant and one financial manager; 395 (98.8%) were Persian, 1 (0.1%) Lor and Kurdish and 3 (0.3%) Arabic; 176 (44%) with bachelor's degree, 114 (28.5%) with master's degree, 49 (12.3%) with associate degree, 39 (9.8%) with a diploma, 14 (3.5%) with doctoral degree, and 8 (2%) with high school education level; 209 (52.3%) belonged to the middle class, 105 (26.3%) to the lower middle class, 45 (11.3%) to the lower class, and 41 (10.3%) to the upper middle class; and the average income was 4,388,000 tomans.

Finally, the average tendency to administrative and financial corruption was obtained as 18.25, the average work conscience was 19.01, and the average religiosity was 93.07.

Analytical Findings

Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between work conscience and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Table 2. Work conscience and the tendency to corruption.

	Mean		Standard deviation	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient	f value	Sig	t value	Sig
Work conscience (Total)	49.76		6.02	0.114	0.013	5.22	0.023	3.75	0.023
	Minimum score	Maximum score							
	1.72	4.17							
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	18.25		7.31						
Reliability	19.01		3.35	0.197	0.039	16.02	0.000	4.87	0.000
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	18.25		7.31						

Success orientated approach	30.75	4.04	0.006	0.000	0.017	0.898	6.361	0.898
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	18.25	7.31						

Since work conscience was measured by dimensions of reliability and success-orientated approach, the relationship of the work conscience and its dimensions with the tendency to corruption was calculated separately, presented by Table 2. According to the Table 2, there is a significant relationship between work conscience (the sum of dimensions) and the tendency to corruption. Hence, there is a meaningful relationship between reliability and the tendency to corruption, but the relationship between success orientated approach and the tendency is not significant.

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative relationship between the degree of religiosity and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Table 3. Religiosity and the tendency to corruption.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Mean</th><th>Standard deviation</th><th>Correlation coefficient</th><th>Determination coefficient</th><th>f value</th><th>Sig</th><th>t value</th><th>Sig</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Religiosity (total)</td><td colspan="2">93.07</td><td rowspan="3">7.31</td><td rowspan="4">0.135</td><td rowspan="4">0.018</td><td rowspan="4">7.38</td><td rowspan="4">0.007</td><td rowspan="4">2.718-</td><td rowspan="4">0.007</td></tr>
<tr><td>Minimum score</td><td>Maximum score</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.93</td><td>4.29</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tendency to administrative& financial corruption</td><td colspan="2">18.25</td><td>12.76</td></tr>
<tr><td>Beliefs</td><td colspan="2">18.25</td><td>7.31</td><td rowspan="2">0.131</td><td rowspan="2">0.017</td><td rowspan="2">6.93</td><td rowspan="2">0.009</td><td rowspan="2">2.63-</td><td rowspan="2">0.009</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tendency to administrative& financial</td><td colspan="2">26.14</td><td>5.36</td></tr>
</table>

corruption								
Emotional dimension	18.25	7.31	0.126	0.016	6.431	0.012	2.53-	0.012
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	23.80	4.91						
Consequential dimension	18.25	7.31	0.029	0.001	0.329	0.566	0.574-	0.556
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	19.87	3.72						
Ritual dimension	18.25	7.31	0.052	0.003	1.087	0.298	1.043-	0.298
Tendency to administrative& financial corruption	23.25	5.63						

Since religiosity was measured by belief, emotional, consequential, and ritual dimensions, the relationship of religiosity and its dimensions with corruption tendency was calculated separately, shown by Table 3. According to the table, there is a significant relationship between religiosity (sum of dimensions) and the tendency to corruption. Further, beliefs and emotions are meaningfully correlated with corruption tendency. However, the relationship of consequential and ritual dimensions with the tendency to corruption is not significant.

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between demographic variables and the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Tables 4 and 5 analyze the relationship of age, gender, ethnicity, education level, occupation, social class, and income with the tendency to corruption. According to Table 4, the average tendency to corruption is not significantly different among the ethnicities, education levels, and genders. However, the relationship of job positions and social classes with corruption tendency is significant. In other words, employees of different occupations and social classes have different attitudes towards corruption.

Table 4. Demographic variables and tendency to corruption.

Gender	Average tendency to corruption	f value	Df	Sig
Male	18.37	2,503	398	0.644
Female	18			

Ethnicity	Average tendency to corruption	f value	Df	Sig
Persian	18.17	2.185	396	0.089
Lor	31			
Arabic	25.66			
Kurdish	14			
Education level	Average tendency to corruption	f value	df	Sig
High school	17.37	1.44	394	0.208
Diploma	17.41			
Associate Degree	20.61			
Bachelor's Degree	18.38			
Master's Degree	17.48			
Doctoral degree	17.57			
Occupation	Average tendency to corruption	f value	df	Sig
Teacher and education employee	17.09	10.516	381	0.000
State University employee	22.73			
Azad University employee	15.33			
Financial manager	24			
Accountant	17			
University professor	21.66			
Municipal employee	19.59			
Social security employee	13.3			
Employee of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee	17.79			
Employee of the electricity department	19.68			
Employee of Water and Sewerage Department	19.93			
Employee of a medical clinic	19.1			
Employee of an alcohol company	15.90			
Employee of the Agricultural Jihad	14.06			
Bank employee	39.6			
Governor's employee	14.80			
Employee of Payame Noor University	16.42			
Medical University employee	17.80			
physician	23			

Social class	Average tendency to corruption	f value	df	Sig
low	16.57	5.164	396	0.002
Lower middle	17.58			
Middle	18.19			
Upper middle	22.17			

According to Table 5, age and income are meaningfully correlated with corruption tendency. It means employees of different ages and incomes have different attitudes towards corruption; i.e., higher or lower income may reduce or increase the tendency to administrative and financial corruption.

Table 5. The relationship of age and income with corruption tendency.

	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient	f value	Sig	t value	Sig
Tendency to administrative & financial	0.019	0.000	0.140	0.709	0.374-0	0.709
Age						
Tendency to administrative & financial	0.182	0.033	0.702	0.000	3.70	0.000
Income						

Explanation of the Tendency to Corruption by the Sum of Independent Variables

Multivariate regression is used to analyze the relationship between the sum of independent variables and the tendency to corruption and to identify the strongest predictor (Table 6). The table shows the multiple correlation coefficient of 0.368 and the determination coefficient of 13.6; that is, the independent variables can explain 13.6% of the corruption tendency variance. Based on the standardized beta coefficients, reliability (Beta = 0.187), income (Beta = 0.181), social class (Beta = 0.165) and ethnicity (Beta = 0.075) have the largest share in the tendency to corruption, respectively.

Table 6. Multivariate regression.

Predictors (Independent variables)	B	Beta	t	sig	Multivariate regression coefficient	Determination coefficient	f value	sig
Constant	20.589		3.977	0.000	0.368	13.6	4.658	0.000
Work conscience (reliability)	0.408	0.187	3.572	0.000				

Income	4.089	0.181	3.540	0.000				
Social class	1.474	0.165	3.186	0.002				
Ethnicity	1.656	0.075	1.554	0.121				

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study explored the relationship of religiosity and work conscience with a tendency to administrative and financial corruption among government employees in Jahrom. The following were obtained as the main results:

- The average tendency to corruption is equal to 18.25%. Given that the scores vary between 9% (minimum) to 45% (maximum) and the real average is 27%, the average tendency to corruption among employees is low. This is consistent with the findings of Khedri et al. (2015), who demonstrated the low administrative corruption (22.30 %) among the same population.

- Work conscience affects the employees' tendency to financial and administrative corruption; as work conscience increases, the tendency to corruption decreases. This is not consistent with the results of Hadavi Nejad and Javid (2015), who revealed the insignificant role of work conscience as a moderator in the relationship between information technology and corruption. Therefore, work conscience was negatively and significantly related to corruption. However, our result is consistent with the findings of Khodadad Hosseini and Farhadinejad (2001), who stated work conscience as an effective factor in controlling corruption. This is also consistent with the theoretical framework of the current research since work conscience refers to conformity and identification with the organization and loyalty to its values, expectations, and goals. In the emotional dimension of work conscience, employees have a positive feeling and a sense of belonging to the organization. Individuals with high work conscience consider the goals and values of the organization as their own goals and values and strive to achieve them (Swat 1998).

Religiosity affects the employees' corruption tendency. This is in line with the results of Jafari Keshtiban (2017), who realized that non-adherence to values and religious principles play the main role in the occurrence of corruption. Marquette (2010) revealed that more loyal individuals to religion are less likely to engage in corruption. This is also in line with the theoretical framework of the research and confirms it. According to the theoretical framework of the present research, religious beliefs might affect all aspects of a person's life, such as health, organizational performance, and so on. Durkheim believes that religion is a way of expressing the moral values and collective beliefs of any society, providing the society with cohesion, the spirit of life, and social health. He states that a change in religious practice would lead to a change in structure and morphology.

Among the demographic variables, occupation affects the tendency to corruption; the highest tendency is seen among bank employees, and the lowest tendency to corruption is seen among social security employees.

Social class also influences the tendency to administrative and financial corruption; the highest tendency to corruption is seen among the upper-middle classes, and the lowest tendency is seen among the lower classes.

Employees' income is the other variable influencing the tendency to financial and administrative corruption. This is in line with the findings of Dimant and Tosato (2017), who found that employees with higher wages are less likely to commit corruption.

Overall, the four variables of work conscience, i.e., reliability, income, social class, and ethnicity, are the strongest predictors of the tendency to corruption and are able to explain 13.6% of the corruption tendency variance.

Based on the results and the role of work conscience and religiosity in corruption and as Durkheim believes, religion can contribute to social health, cohesion, and the spirit of life. Thus, more attention to religion is recommended. Furthermore, though the modern world has faded many moral and human qualities, work conscience is still decisive among the employees participated in the present study. It promotes order and a sense of duty, and encourages employees to assess their willingness to comply with the rules, regulations and standards of the organization. Finally, it should be noted that educational institutions play a critical role in preventing corruption, fostering an anti-corruption culture, and informing the public and employees.

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