Personal – Social Relationship: Key for Creating Debatable Corruption "Examples from Arab Countries"

Raed Atef[*]

Independent Researcher on Governance and Public Policy, Dubai, UAE

Abstract

Personal- social relationship has serious impact over public organizations in Arab culture. Relations are gates for success or failure in people life and career; it can be consider the most needed factor for accomplishment and keep growing. Managers have intention to classify employees with or against them based on their personal relationship; staff whom are classified with their managers usually receive rewards and facilities in away or another. Some people have two faces; they judge corruption from their own benefits; when it goes with their interests then it does not consider corruption. The article focal around one main question: to what extend does relationship affect and cause corruption among public organizations in Arab culture? As a result, separation needed between social and professional life; relatives, friends, personal relationship does involved and has affect on public organizations business. Creating culture based on soul of law and ethics is important to eliminate corruption and building system of governance that allows public and organizations staff to address freely all negative actions.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Corruption is "public enemy no.1" [1], its damage states, societies and individuals. People have common rejection and hate of corruption. However, it might be a diversity and disagreement on forms of corruption. To facilitate the understanding on what is corruption, United Nations (UN) tried to list several forms after held discussion [2]. Corruption can be defined as "the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain" [3], so its illicit behavior with many forms. Disagreement on forms of corruption caused by social context especially the affect of social relationship on individuals' beliefs and behavior.

This article pays attention to cultural impact over individuals and communities that let them accept and practice some forms of corruption. The main question; to what extent does relationship affect and cause corruption among public organizations? Answering this question, analyzing and understanding why people accept some forms of corruption needs adopting qualitative methodology supported by example and short cases. The article presents quick letriture review on social relations and corruption. Next section presents the findings on forms of debatable corruption, examples – shorts case study with analysis. Last two sections shows discussion, results and conclusion.

2. Methodology

Theoretical methodology is adopted here to show examples-short case studies supported by qualitative data that comes from secondary and primary sources i.e. interviews.

* Corresponding author

E-mail address: raed.atef@yahoo.com

Qualitative approach does not require several or too many sources. Participants are chosen because of their expertise and their ability to provide data and help in clarifying the research problem. Participants are from different background living in one country, their names and organizations are kept private as wanted. The article does not present or analyze public organizations laws that existing in Arab countries; it could be considered as a limitation.

3. Social Relations and Corruption

Corruption exists among social relations [4]; it lives and grows in social context, and needs level of trust - connecting - networking. Level of corruption goes with level of social relations; in-depth corruption need in-depth social relations [5]. Relations are important in all aspects of people life; solving problems, accomplishing business when dealing with organizations and individuals. However, there is a boundary in which social relations can facilitate the acceptance of some forms of corruption. In other words draw the gray area between right and wrong; this depends on social context reflected by societies cultures [6].

Researchers study social relationship and express how important is sharing identities, building many forms of friendships and colleagueship, bridging gaps and strengthen their linkages. Social relationship, bonds, such as friends and families can help in verity of ways - emotionally, socially and economically. Relationships can open a door for crossing the line between areas of what can consider support and corruption [7]. Relations have many forms or names; among organizations using terminology such as: networking, communication, supporters, and among individuals it could be relative, friends, fans, and colleagues.

Degree of relationship can determined by level and in-depth of individuals communications; people do not know each other cannot discuss their financial problems. Same to staff whom does not have strong relations; they cannot talk about hot topics like corruption inside their organizations. Level of relationship determines how staff to talk openly with their managers or keep silent. [8]. In some countries, public organizations staff ask or signal to people to give them money in exchange of any form of services. This can be found for example in Syria when crossing borders and checkpoints, airports- costumes and police officer. It was a habit that Syrian officers received money in visitor passports.[1] Similar, in Egypt public organizations staff are asking for money to facilitate people businesses; this amount

in Egypt known as hospitality– public servant tea [9]. Thinking about such actions cannot be separated from economic and social structure. Economically, for public servant it means another source of economic for low salary staff in countries such as Syria, Egypt and Morocco.[2] Socially, its a habit from heritage in which people provide gifts, inviting on launch staff and responsible people who help facilitating their business [10]. The most interesting points that habits and social norms can be more stronger than laws in most of eastern cultures. For example, in Philippines, government prohibited public officials to receive gift, however, this habits are still practiced from both people and officials [11].

Two types of corruptions: spontaneous and institutionalized; first type exists in culture that enjoy strong governance and values. The second type found in societies where corruption has become a way of life, and public organizations become template of cake in which individuals want to have as possible piece [12]. Corruption in Palestinian Authority (PA) is an example on the second type. PA corruption is contentious to the Palestinian Liberation Organizations corruption that exists in the Political system. It has formed and practiced by leaders aiming to buy groups- community and individual loyalties. "PA should not be seen purely administrative - financial abuses committed by irresponsible individuals motivated by greed and personal interests." However, misuse of resources and nepotism are a renewed system. Thus corruption is a political tool to control grassroots, families, active - educated individuals by buying their loyalty based on social – personal relations within the Patron-clientelism or Patron-Client System [13].

In addition, certain types of corruption may not necessarily involve money; it may involve gift- giving or influence-peddling. It can also come in forms of present and future benefits. With many types of corruption, the boundary between a corrupt and a non-corrupt behavior becomes quite thin. Take for instance gifts given to public officers; is it a note of appreciation for services done or corrupted action. Thus, there is a need to create a culture based on law or adjust social norms in cultures.

Corruption can be defined as "the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain" [14], so its illicit behavior. Here some forms of corruptions; "bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, graft, speed money, pilferage, theft, embezzlement, falsification of records, kickbacks, influence peddling, and campaign contributions" [15], and favourism, changing facts, providing personal info to others. In this article corruption agrees with the misuse definition; means any action against

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1 Few years ago, visitors crossing borders from Jordan to Syria should insert money in their passports to keep going otherwise they will stuck for hours in the borders.

2 Morocco officers working in airports usually choose non-Westerns visitor to push them pay money. This behavior is reported in media and social networks and commonly known among visitors.

the soul of law – including profession ethics, code of conduct, international standards[3] - in which been taken while dealing with individuals, organizations inside or outside the country. In other words, its the misuse/ abuse of public office for personal gain (financial or others) in short or long-run. Organization governance pays attention to valuable principles when dealing with policy and plans; transparency, farness, participations, and protecting human resources/ people right…etc. It required to declare any conflict of interest, consider same questions, give same time and opportunity,...etc. The contradiction between understanding and defining corruption lead to this question; does all forms of corruption are unacceptable from public or society?

4. Forms of Debatable Corruption

This section presents few examples on debatable forms of corruption that existing in public organizations. Some of these forms look acceptable in people eyes and /or common in practice. Debatable forms of corruption such as *wasta*, faviorism, nepotism, discrimination are mostly classified under types of administrative corruption in which social relationship can play a core role in decision-making and outcome of public organizations activities. Also, it is debatable due to the tendency of public officers to justify their actions and escape from punishment using gray between corruption and lack of leadership and mismanagement area [16]. Administrative corruption is appears in many forms of misuses of public authority, broken or manipulate rules – policies – work standards intentionally to achieve personal interests [17]. This can occurs when broken directly the law, manipulating rules and policies, interpreting and justifying their actions from personal interest. The following are examples on debatable forms of corruptions:

1) Dealing with Employees

Staff in Public organizations has reported many forms of managerial corruptions from their supervisors and managers; decisions related to organizations staff are taken on base of personal relations and connections. These corrupted actions among organizations touch the following managerial topics: performance appraisal, rewards and promotion; manipulating laws and its articles: using their wide authorities provided by laws; informal committees versa formal organization committees and meeting; and recruiting and hiring new staff based on personal calculation

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3 Several countries including Arab governments have development code of conducts. Transparency International Organization has called for forming and enforcing code of conducts among public sector organizations. http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/calling_out_public_officials_on_corruption_codes_of_conduct

An HR consultant working in a central department has listed more than twenty cases of managerial corruptions from director general (D.G.); all are ties to D.G. interest and personal relations. According to this consultant, D.G has used his authority to manipulate employees, making them followers, hitting disagreed or competitors staff and forced them to leave, and reward weakness- followers staff. This D.G classified employees into two sets - with or against, the first set receives reward and promotion while the second done all works but receives nothing [18].

A.A. is a director working with a local government stating when my personal relationship with the general manager (G.M.) was good, the G.M. was accepting any thing from my side including initiatives, suggestion, opinions, and my work was appreciated. However, when our personal relation went down, I become the major enemy. This G.M launched war against me, isolated me and talking behind my back, ordered his subordinators to attack me leading to several problems inside organizations [19].

A.D a person who has started his career heading a police station then moved to work on human rights organization, semi-government organizations, later a lecturer at university, and finally heading a human right – semi government organization. He attributes his success for two reasons; professionalism and avoiding clashes or what he likes to say "playing politics within organizations." "I am expert in dealing with organizations politics." [20]. Looking closer to these organizations where he has served telling what is going on; all these organizations are linked to one-two people whom always supporting him i.e. personal relations. Without strong personal relationship A.D will not get any of these positions.

An HR manager at government organization express her deep frustrating from the way things is going inside the organization. She said, directors do not announce posts in the free or paid media, they are using recruitments agencies (some called it head hunting) for any vacancies regardless the scarcity of such positions. When asking top management why such approach, the response was, the organization should approaching applicants not allowing applicants to approach us. The HR manager continues: the most frustrated thing is that directors try to manipulate policies and rules in announced jobs too. So at the end directors choose what they have planned or wanted to choose from candidates. M.H. believes the human factor is the most important element in governance or corruptions, having laws or rules alone will not stop corruption, we need believers on these rules, and need people who does not allow their feeling /personal relations to lead their decisions over organizations [21].

People look to official actions as a systematic corruption in which personal connection and relationship facilitate

business. In this system, announcing jobs, formulating committees, calls for interviews will not change the fact that the final winner is the one who was chosen before. Official succeed in turning policies and laws to cliché, decoration instead of running real competition to have best candidates.

2) Dealing with suppliers

Supplies take initiatives to become closer to their clients including public organizations; they try to offer gifts, business launch or dinners, engaging with officers in many ways to win business deals or contracts. A market manager in a regional training center stated that "to ensure wining beds and contracts we need to do more than soft talking. Training centers do offer to clients many kinds of free services: tend to do some of their jobs, translate free some of their reports, inviting them to dinners and launches, allowing them attend workshops for free. We do not say it's an exchange for contracts but its common understating. Services providers depend on their personal relations but not totally on their professional practice. Professionalism does not bring work, personal relations does." [22].

Social relations are a key to reach and connect, and building personal relations in away fulfilling managers interests. Many questions can be raised but the main one is why these suppliers win contracts. Many answers can be listed: bribery, commission, but the general answer in which can summarized in title is – interests exchange. Relationship between suppliers and responsible people among public organizations is very important to sign agreement or contract. Personal relations facilitate the entrance, the ongoing and the accomplishments of business deals [23].

3) Dealing with clients

Thousand of people whom living abroad want to visit their families in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The current mechanism is to apply through the PA- Civil Affair Department (CAD) that's play the coordination side with Israel Authority. People have expressed publicly stories on the past about bribery to facilitate issuing of some entry permissions [24]. However, these days, there are stories on favoritism, nobtasim, *Wasta* and *Muhaba* that's caused to personal relations and connections.

Z.A., a Palestinian male telling that CAD directors works on personal relations (political – relatives and friends connections) stating that you need to have a link to push your case and make it priority on the list. Thousand of people are applying and only solution is to come with *Wasta*, visiting directors at home, take personal gift and show up with some of director relatives / political ties/ or friends [25].

Paying money for government employees is called from Palestinian people corruption although you may hear that this

type has been practiced. However, giving priority to an individual or playing with names, shifting or deleting names from the list and allow others to visit their families might not agreed from people as a corruption. [26] People might called it other names; add to this mostly believes in destiny, if God want them to receive things, they will receive. Destiny or *naseeb* works on aspects of people life- getting a job, promotion, permission to visit, travel, enter Jerusalem, get married…etc. Searching the matter tells that personal relationship and connection behind such action from the responsible person in public organizations.

People experienced hundreds of examples in public organizations every day; they are waiting in lines, spend hours to finish their papers and business. However, one or few person/s come and walk towards back offices, drink coffee and maybe smoke cigarettes, finish thier paper and leave. How this happened; its because of personal relations in which encourage people to follow such manner.

4) Security Officers

The most corrupted government organizations are security forces agencies because they have wide – deep power, and can interfere easily in all aspect of public life and organizations [27]. People tends to asks top security officers for help solving their problems; they might goes with cases related to police and security agencies- business, or asking helps in different mater such as jobs, processing documents and papers, receiving social assistants, and health aid…etc.

Approaching high rank officers needs tight relations or/ and valuable items. A man from a rural area went with his relative to top rank official, he does not allow them to get inside home although asking visitor to enter home is the custom at villages before knowing their issues. This man' mistake is he went with a simple worker relative and did not take with me any gift or accompany one of the security officer close relative/ or friends [28]. Another man, H.H. decided to go through official channel to stop corruptive action and abuse against him from security forces; he failed and accomplish nothing. In fact, he understood how security officers are interfering in all people life aspect. He came to conclusion that officers use their strongest personal relations (political parties affiliation, power to exchange benefits, their authorizes to put pressure and fear on people) [29].

5. Analysis and Discussion Section

Governance is a system aims to ensure effeciency and effectiveness including protecting society interest and individuals. This system requires formulating (ex: administrative – political- HR, financial policies – rules) to

set discipline, protect people rights, and eliminate forms of corruptions. Also, governance aims prevent managers and bosses from abusing their power and authorities [30]. Thinking about bosses- managers corruption towards their staff lead to ask this question- what is the reason behind corrupted actions? The answer is bosses- managers want to protect their positions and benefits and stop any current or potential competition as it might lead to lose their jobs and weakness their potions in the organizations. Managers enhance in away or another negative forms of loyalty based on personal interests and dependency, i.e. following bosses regardless their qualifications and professionalism; the important prevail point is strengthening bosses- managers positions. In this context, several examples and current management practice can be explained; in appraisals and performance, rewarding and promotion, shifting decision making from formal to informal committees, recruiting and hiring disqualified employees.

In addition, loyalty is a major issue, participants and members in political parties - social groups and family care more for loyalty and less for corruption. Public officers have overlapped roles and identities, they are: members and supporters of political parties, public servants, members in local community, have friends and verity of connections. Also, they have interests need to be fulfilled, they need to enhance their social relations and network, have many personal goals. So they need others as others need them in fulfilling their interests. Needing each other is a rule; it can explain why individuals show double faces and different positions towards corruption. Some Individuals are hypocrites as they judge corruption from their benefits and interest scale. So exchange benefits in short and long-term is the key. An Arabic expression makes the picture clear - life is an exchange of actions, its occur in pure business transactions, universities at academic level, clients-providers- public in all aspects of life. It's a communion implicit understanding. The tendency is to stand against corruption that involved pure money in short-term such as bribery, stealing, however, others view this kind of corruption is acceptable or in gray area so people practice it. In previous organization staff examples, two reasons behind staff corruption; strengthen their position at current organizations and open new doors for future opportunities. Thus strengthen relationship and networking as well as gaining personal benefits from this kind of corruption [31].

Trust explains level of cooperation and collective actions [32], and it can explain why trust can lead to corruption, this known as negative side of social capital. The interesting point that trust which is part of social capital could explain people position towards public organizations, and also explain level of corruption. Trust work on both ways, negative and positive over organizations and community, and parties interest can judge or determine the meaning of negative and positive [33]. Social relationship has a role in creating and expanding corruption; this because of people has tie relations to many groups including family, association and political parties [34]. A clear example is the PA in which social relations and conncetion to responsible public officers and groups practice have deepen courrption [35].

Effect of Culture

In Arab culture, its hard to maintain friendship in and out of workplace; employees does mix professional relationship with social relationship. In fact, its not only staff but also people regardless their jobs and roles, they are building relationship, strengthening them in order to gain different kinds of benefits. In most cases, culture at workforces and people relationship is dominated and manipulated. Bosses manipulation sounds like second George Bush position who had classified countries in their relationship towards the USA with or against [36]. Many examples can be listed on different forms of corruption from organizations staff. However, people thinking about their benefits; staff is not welling to stand against corruption unless it become against their direct interests. There are many forms of corruption employees do practice it in which social relations affected negatively professionalism. In developing countries including Palestinian society, friends and relative from big family known as clan/ tribe/ family - *hamollah* or *asheirah* community their buddies seeking many kind of services, faceting, shorten the time of services, speak with their colleagues or bosses to facilitate and secure if could jobs, receive discount, list their names in advantages. In gulf countries, *hamollah* or *asheirah* is more important than society, it's the place where the individuals receive support, care more about each other [37]. In Kuwait, official – civil service department and media reports has expressed several kind of corruption including *wasta*, faviorism of public officers relatives and friends. This kind of misuse of power is common in practice among gulf arabic countries [38].

Hutchings and Weir (2006) refer to *wasta* as favoritism or Nepotism; favoritism is a form of corruption. However, *wasta* in some people understanding has negative perception and it means use or have the "power of connections or who you know and employ it in gaining preferential treatment for a person who is ineligible for it." [39]. Adi agrees that *wasta* exist in life aspects, it visible in everything and everywhere from community to government and business. However, Adi sees *wasta* "doesn't involve any type of materialistic exchanges such as money or gifts; she rather it employs the power, influence or authority of a connection that might be a friend, relative or an important acquaintance to facilitate fulfilling a certain request which is governed by the social

commitments between both parties." [40].

Corruption, Friendship and Personal relations

Building social – personal relationship from public officers and people does not mean it for the public good; it can be used for personal and group interests. Social relationship has double-edged sword. It can help people to come together and end corruption or create and deep corruptive actions-practices . A study conducted by Harris (2007) shows that high level of social capital among groups lead for more corruption; as group share common interests- values and attitude, they stand against individuals whom disagree with them by contain or kick disagreed individuals out. Members benefits on the personal level from the group; they favour each other and paly corrupt exchange. Thus losing the group means losing several personal interests [41].

In many causes, especially among groups, public officer does not stand against corrupted actions because they do not want damaging their personal and social relations with others; they turn faces, close eyes, keep silent on their friends, social groups, relative, their political affiliation...etc [42]. In this sense, people beliefs and values have been shaped from the economic and society' culture which value the important of families, friends, bonds and linkages. In developing countries, where the family still has big impact on people actions, level or forms of corruption are still in common and can be justified. Same when individuals belong to same organizations overlapped by political and social- family relationship, this means public organizations can easy affected by staff beliefs and values. A need rises here to build culture of institutions i.e. institutionalized culture to dominate staff and official actions. This culture will limit self-ability to practice corruption and in long-term allow marginalized groups and low voice to speak out. Another motive lead officials to be involved in corruption; they like to be called or listed as an important figures, with influence. This official involvement like a competition games among political – relative- connection relations.

In previous examples, it shows failure in motivate government officers in helping simple people. How people approach top rank police officer; if they have a strong relationship or come with accompany with close friend or relative, the officer will accept the simple worker case. Trust and expected benefits are important in personal relationships so corruption (benefit does not mean direct financial benefits). People attend social occasion such as wedding ceremony, social parties, happy or sad occasion because they expect and intent to have various back in forms of benefits. This can be called courtesy- *Mojamallah*-, and people in all countries are practicing it. Its might an explanation of some expressions – a man cannot live alone, and a heaven without

people is a hard hill.

In addition, trust involves risk taking; that is, both parties know that the actions of one party can materially affect the other, but both share ideas, concerns or issues candidly notwithstanding. The sociological literature conceptualizes trust as either the property of individuals, social relationships, or the social system with disproportionate attention to behavior based on actions at the individual level. Many scholars contend that trust is rather difficult to produce intentionally. For example, Coleman suggests that as a rational account of human behavior, trust can only be produced in informal, small, closed and homogeneous communities [43]. It could be saying that in collective society they accept some kind of corruption (wasta for example) compare with individualist society, this because of social relations, social context and culture.

6. Results and Conclusion

Social and personal relations while its important to facilitate communication and accomplishing work, it has negative affect over public organizations when people using it to facilitate the creation of corruption. In this context, people judge things from their interests, and stand against positions and ideas that harm their interests. Thus, it can be conclude that not all forms of corruptions harm their interests and therefore not acceptable.

Wastash, faviorism, *mujamleh*, is a description of relations in which people using their linkages and ties to accomplish their interests. People can be blame in using these tools, however, the system should be blame. Decision makers, politicians, and public organizations officials should not accept any forms of corruption at the first place then enforce good practice over officers and their organizations. In order to reduce or end forms of corruption; many actions needs to be taken, legalization the actions, building institution and society culture based on values and laws, leading by examples. Later, people will follow their leaders. Political well and leadership attention is an important factor to stand against corruption, and finally the most important element is education and promoting the value of transparency, farness, anti-corruption, and culture of law and legalization.

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