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FACTORS AFFECTING CORRUPTION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM

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Abstract: *This research utilizes a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique to comprehensively examine the intricate interactions among various factors influencing corruption in Vietnam's public sector. The findings reveal that certain factors, including inadequate anti-corruption policies and enforcement, a lack of accountability and transparency in anti-corruption endeavors, and significant income disparities between public officials and anti-corruption measures, significantly and positively impact the cultural and social norms associated with anti-corruption. Additionally, insufficient cultural and social standards exert a notable and positive influence on the level of corruption in the public sector. The outcomes of this study provide valuable insights for developing effective policies and strategies that promote accountability, transparency, and good governance to combat corruption in Vietnam's public sector.*

Keywords: *Transparency; Accountableness; Institutionalization; Corruptness; Public Sector; Vietnam*

INTRODUCTION

The abuse of power by government officials or employees in exchange for personal gain is called corruption in the public sector (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016; Spector 2005). It can take many forms, such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism (Jain 2001; Sylwester 2019; Kohler and Bowra 2020). This type of corruption can have serious negative impacts on the functioning of the government and the delivery of public services, as it can divert resources and opportunities away from the public interest and towards private gain (Mauro 1998; Gelb 2000). Corruption in the public sector can also erode public trust and undermine the rule of law, leading to a loss of confidence in government institutions and damaging the social contract between the state and its citizens (Barometer 2017; Schneider and Buehn 2018). It is a major challenge in many countries, particularly in developing countries where weak institutional frameworks and low wages among public officials can create incentives for corrupt behavior (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016; Mauro 2006).

Corruption has been a persistent problem in Vietnam for many years, and it continues to pose significant challenges to the country's economic, social, and political development (Fritzen 2005; Tran and Nguyen 2020). The corruption problem in Vietnam is multi-faceted and affects different levels of government, from the central to the local (Nguyen 2019; Vo 2015). Nevertheless, Vietnam has made some progress in combating corruption in recent years,

including the introduction of various legal and institutional reforms, such as the Law on Anti-Corruption, the establishment of the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, and the creation of anti-corruption offices at different levels of government (Fritzen 2005; Nguyen 2019). The Law on Anti-Corruption, passed in 2005 and amended in 2018, is one of the leading legal instruments used to combat corruption in Vietnam (Tran and Nguyen 2020). This law establishes a comprehensive framework for preventing and detecting corruption and investigating and prosecuting corruption cases. It also includes provisions for protecting whistleblowers and imposing severe penalties on those who engage in corrupt activities. In addition to the laws, Vietnam has set up several institutions to investigate and punish corruption. These include the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, which coordinates anti-corruption efforts across different government agencies, and the Government Inspectorate, which inspects and investigates corruption cases (Vo 2015). However, some scholars have said that these institutions are not independent and can be influenced by politics (Nguyen 2019).

In order to effectively combat corruption in the public sector, it is crucial to understand its underlying causes and the factors contributing to it. In Vietnam, some of the factors that can lead to corruption include weak institutional frameworks (Bjørnskov 2011), inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement (Cao and Shi 2021), a lack of transparency and accountability (Jain 2001), low wages and high-income inequality among public officials (Doh, Rodriguez, Uhlenbruck, Collins, and Eden 2003), and cultural and social norms that tolerate or encourage corruption (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015). Identifying these factors and understanding how they interact is crucial to developing effective policies and measures to address public sector corruption.

This paper examines the factors that drive corruption in Vietnam's public sector. Employing a mixed-methods approach, we will systematically review the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on corruption in the public sector (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016). Furthermore, a survey will target public officials dismissed or reassigned to the private sector due to their engagement in corrupt activities (Mishra 2006). The objective of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to corruption in the public sector. Valuable insights can be derived from the findings of our study, which can aid in the design of more effective anti-corruption policies and measures aimed at enhancing the rule of law (Lambsdorff 2007), fostering economic development and social progress (Kaufmann 1997), and improve the welfare of the Vietnamese people. By understanding the underlying causes of corruption in the public sector, policymakers can develop targeted interventions to combat corruption and enhance the performance of the public sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Frameworks in Combating Corruption

Over the last few decades, the institutional frameworks for anti-corruption measures in Vietnam have experienced substantial modifications. In the early 1990s, the Vietnamese government recognized the need for anti-corruption measures and established various institutions to tackle the issue (Hien 2018; Kantabutra 2022). However, these institutions lacked

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the necessary powers, resources, and independence to combat corruption effectively (Hien 2018). In 2005, the Vietnamese government passed the Law on Anti-Corruption, establishing a more comprehensive legal framework for anti-corruption efforts (Hien 2018; Recanatini 2011). The law defined corruption and established the legal basis for anti-corruption agencies and policies. It also made rules about punishing corruption and protecting people who tell the truth (Malesky and London 2014).

Along with the Law against Corruption, the Vietnamese government has set up many institutions to fight corruption. These include the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, which coordinates anti-corruption efforts across different government agencies, and the Government Inspectorate, which inspects and investigates corruption cases (Dang 2016). Despite these institutional reforms, corruption remains a significant challenge in Vietnam. According to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, Vietnam scored 37 out of 100, ranking 104th out of 180 countries worldwide (Cao and Shi 2021; Peters 2015). The country's ranking has improved since 2012, but it still indicates significant corruption within the public sector (Hien 2018).

Inadequate Anti-Corruption Measures and Enforcement

Inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement refer to the actions taken by governments, organizations, and individuals that are insufficient or ineffective in preventing and combating corruption. It also includes laws and regulations that are not adequately enforced. Such inadequacy can contribute to the widespread and pervasive nature of corrupt practices, significantly harming society and the economy (Johnston 2005; Mauro 2004; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016). Inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement can take various forms, such as weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, low public awareness, and a lack of political will to address corruption (Gupta, Davoodi, and Tiongson 2001; Lambsdorff 2002; Kohler and Bowra 2020). These factors can undermine efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance and hinder economic and social development (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2011; Lambsdorff 2006; World Bank 2019).

Several studies have highlighted the issue of inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement in Vietnam. For example, a report by Transparency International (2019) found that corruption remained pervasive in Vietnam, despite the country's efforts to combat the issue. The report identifies weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and low public awareness as contributing factors to the problem of corruption. Similarly, a study conducted by Tan-Mullins et al. (2014) highlights the lack of political will and enforcement capacity as key challenges to anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam. Inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement can have significant consequences for Vietnam's development. For instance, a study by Gyimah-Brempong (2002) reveals that corruption in Vietnam negatively impacts economic growth, foreign direct investment, and income inequality. The authors emphasize the necessity for stronger anti-corruption measures and enforcement as a crucial policy recommendation to address these issues.

Transparency and Accountability

Inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement refer to actions taken by governments, organizations, and individuals that are insufficient or ineffective in combating corruption, as well as laws and regulations that are not adequately enforced. This can result in the proliferation of corrupt practices, significantly harming society and the economy (Johnston 2005; Mauro 2004; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016). Inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement manifest in various forms, including weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, low public awareness, and a lack of political will to address corruption (Gupta, Davoodi, and Tiongson 2001; Lambsdorff 2002; Kohler and Bowra 2020). These factors undermine efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, impeding economic and social development (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2011; Lambsdorff 2006; World Bank 2019).

Several studies have shed light on the issue of inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement in Vietnam. A report by Transparency International (2019) revealed that corruption remained pervasive in Vietnam, despite the country's endeavors to combat it. The report pointed out weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and low public awareness as contributing factors to the problem. Similarly, Tan-Mullins et al. (2014) identified a lack of political will and enforcement capacity as key challenges in Vietnam's anti-corruption efforts. Insufficient anti-corruption measures and enforcement can have significant implications for Vietnam's development. For instance, Gyimah-Brempong's study (2002) demonstrated the negative impacts of corruption on economic growth, foreign direct investment, and income inequality in Vietnam. The authors emphasized the necessity for stronger anti-corruption measures and enforcement as a crucial policy recommendation to address these issues.

Wages and High-Income Inequality among Public Officials and Anti-Corruption

Public sector salary in Vietnam refers to the compensation paid to government employees, including civil servants, military personnel, and elected officials (Heydari, Lai, and Xiaohu 2021). In Vietnam, the public sector is a big employer. More than 5 million people work in government agencies and organizations (World Bank 2020). According to Anh Vu, Plimmer, Berman, and Ha (2022), the government in Vietnam determines the salary structure for public sector employees based on various factors, including job duties, experience, and education level. Despite recent efforts to increase public sector salaries in Vietnam, they remain relatively low compared to those in the private sector, and income disparities within the public sector continue to be challenging (Sakellariou and Fang 2014). This can make public officials more likely to take bribes and do other forms of corruption to make more money (Fjelde and Hegre 2014).

Moreover, the low salaries in the public sector can also lead to reduced motivation and productivity among government employees, affecting the quality of public services (Tuan 2017). Income disparities within the public sector can exacerbate this problem, creating resentment and dissatisfaction among lower-level officials (McCarty 2001). Studies have shown that the salary levels of public officials can significantly impact the prevalence of corruption in a country (Bracci, Tallaki, Ievoli, and Diplotti 2022; Abbink 2000). So, improving the public sector salary

structure in Vietnam is important to reduce the incentives for public officials to be corrupt and to promote good governance (DeFronzo 2021).

Addressing wages and high-income inequality among public officials is crucial for the success of anti-corruption efforts. Research has shown that higher wages for public officials can reduce corruption by decreasing their incentive to engage in corrupt practices (Dunn-Cavelty and Suter 2009). Similarly, studies have found a negative correlation between income inequality and corruption, suggesting that reducing income disparities can help curb corrupt behavior (Gupta, Davoodi, and Tiongson 2001). Also, giving public officials enough money can get more qualified and skilled people to work for the government, which can improve the quality of government and make corruption less likely (Mauro 1995).

This is supported by studies that have found a positive correlation between the quality of governance and public officials' compensation level (Campos, Lien, and Pradhan 1999; Kaufmann and Kraay 2002). Moreover, addressing wages and high-income inequality among public officials can increase public trust and confidence in the government, enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures (Barón and Cobb-Clark 2010). A study by Mrazek (2002) found that public perceptions of corruption were lower in countries where public officials were better paid. Therefore, implementing policies that address wages and income inequality among public officials is crucial for the success of anti-corruption efforts. This can involve implementing measures such as salary increases, performance-based pay, and reducing income disparities among officials at different levels. However, it is crucial to remember that to combat corruption effectively; these policies must also be accompanied by robust enforcement and accountability mechanisms (Dollar and Svensson, 2000; Fisman and Svensson 2007).

Cultural and Social Norms in Anti-Corruption

Cultural and social norms in anti-corruption refer to the role that cultural and social factors play in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to corruption, as well as the strategies and policies aimed at changing these attitudes and behaviors (Alatas et al. 2020; Banuri and Eckel 2012; Yudhi 2022; Fisman and Miguel 2007; Köbis et al. 2022; Klitgaard 1988; Nunn 2020; Torgler 2004). Cultural and social norms can include beliefs about the acceptability of corruption, the importance of loyalty and reciprocity, and the state's role in society (Alatas et al. 2020; Yudhi 2022; Klitgaard 1988; Nunn 2020). These norms can be deeply ingrained and vary significantly across different societies, making developing effective anti-corruption policies sensitive to local cultural and social contexts challenging.

Addressing cultural and social norms is important for the success of anti-corruption efforts because it can help change attitudes and behaviors toward corruption and lead to more open and accountable practices (Banuri and Eckel 2012; Fisman and Miguel 2007; Köbis et al. 2022; Torgler 2004). Strategies for addressing cultural and social norms in anti-corruption can include public awareness campaigns, education and training programs, and the promotion of values such as honesty, integrity, and accountability (Alatas et al. 2020; Yudhi 2022; Klitgaard 1988; Nunn 2020). It is essential to tailor these strategies to the specific cultural and social context in which they are being implemented, as a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective in all situations (Banuri and Eckel 2012; Fisman and Miguel 2007; Köbis, Troost, Brandt,

and Soraperra 2022; Klitgaard 1988). Cultural and social norms in anti-corruption in Vietnam refer to the attitudes and behaviors toward corruption shaped by the country's cultural and social context. In Vietnam, traditional values such as filial piety, loyalty, and respect for authority have historically been highly regarded, and these values continue to influence attitudes toward corruption (Truong 2018). For example, gift-giving and favors, perceived as bribery in other contexts, are often considered acceptable in Vietnamese culture to show gratitude and build relationships (Pham, Shi, Fogel, Li, and Pham 2021).

In Vietnam, strategies and policies have been made to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in public and private institutions to deal with the country's cultural and social norms. These include public awareness campaigns, education and training programs, and promoting values like honesty and accountability (Vietnam Government 2020). However, it can be hard to change deeply ingrained cultural and social norms, so anti-corruption strategies must consider the local context and be made to fit it (Tromme 2016). In recent years, there have been efforts to integrate anti-corruption education into the Vietnamese school curriculum to promote anti-corruption values and ethics from a young age (Doig and Riley 1998). Additionally, there have been calls for promoting a culture of transparency and accountability in the public sector, including implementing measures to protect whistleblowers and establishing an independent anti-corruption agency (Painter 2014). The media and civil society have also played an important role in promoting anti-corruption values and ethics in Vietnam. For example, investigative journalism has exposed corruption scandals and contributed to public pressure for accountability and transparency (Frary 2017). Non-governmental organizations have also actively promoted transparency and accountability and advocated for legal and institutional reforms (Truong 2016).

The following is a proposed research model based on a literature review (Figure 1).

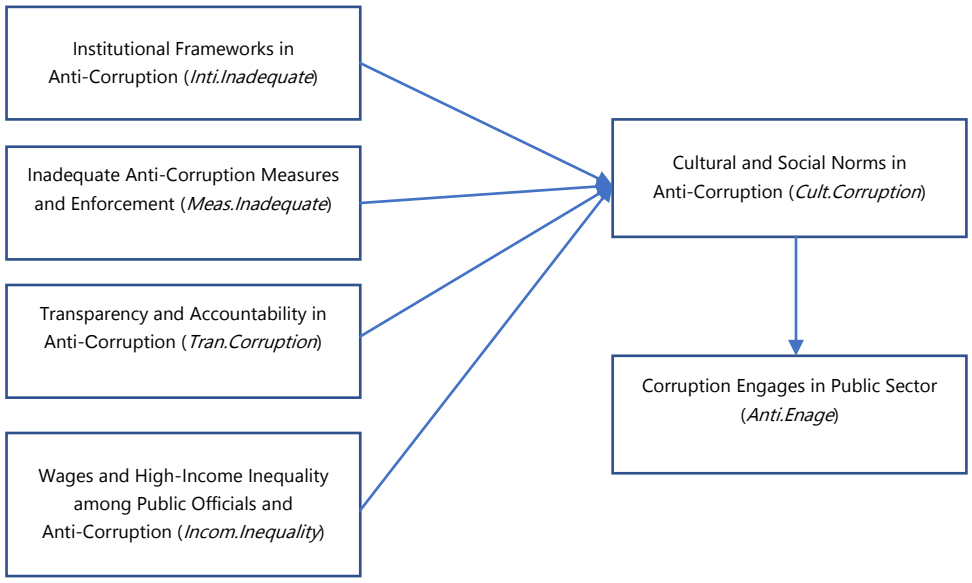


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

The present study is guided by a proposed research model (Figure 1), which leads to the development of the following research hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposes that institutional frameworks in anti-corruption positively and significantly impact cultural and social norms in anti-corruption.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggests that inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement positively and significantly impact cultural and social norms regarding corruption.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3) proposes that transparency and accountability in anti-corruption positively and significantly impact cultural and social norms in anti-corruption.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4) postulates that wages and high-income inequality among public officials and anti-corruption positively and significantly impact cultural and social norms in anti-corruption.
- Hypothesis 5 (H5) suggests that Cultural and social norms in anti-corruption positively and significantly impact corruption engagement in the public sector.

METHODOLOGY

Instrument and Participant

The study was conducted in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in September 2022, with the former being the capital of Vietnam and the latter being the country's largest economic and cultural center (Heydari, Lai, and Xiaohu 2021). Five experts in psychology, sociology, and law enforcement were consulted to develop the study questionnaire, and after much discussion, a questionnaire with two parts was created (Fernando and Bandara 2020). Part 1 of the questionary collected demographic information, including age, gender, education level, and occupation, while Part 2 contained questions on five factors affecting corruption in the public sector: inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement, transparency and accountability, wages and income inequality, cultural and social norms, and corruption engagement (Dao and Ngo 2022). Two linguists edited the questionnaire to ensure cultural appropriateness (Heydari, Lai, and Xiaohu 2021). After pre-testing the questionnaire with a representative sample of 40 participants, minor edits were made to improve clarity (Fernando and Bandara 2020). The final version was administered to 200 individuals who had been found guilty of corruption or involvement in corrupt activities in the public sector and had subsequently left for the private sector. These participants were purposively selected (Dao and Ngo 2022). The survey was sent directly to the participants, and after they completed the questionnaire by circling the answers with a pencil, a response rate of 100% was achieved (Heydari, Lai, and Xiaohu 2021; Huynh 2016). The demographic information of the study participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (Source: Authors' survey dataset)

		Education			
		Bachelor's Degree		Postgraduate Diploma	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Gender	Female	57	83.8%	11	16.2%
	Male	111	84.1%	21	15.9%
Age	20-25 years	24	92.3%	2	7.7%
	31-35 years	34	87.2%	5	12.8%
	36-40 years	37	82.2%	8	17.8%
	Over 40 Years Old	73	81.1%	17	18.9%
Education	Bachelor's Degree	168	100.0%	0	0.0%
	Postgraduate Diploma	0	0.0%	32	100.0%

Reliability Analysis

Using Cronbach's alpha, we determine the extent to which the questions in our survey questionnaire are positively correlated, indicating that they are measuring the same underlying construct. A high alpha score indicates that the questionnaire is reliable, while a low score may indicate that the questionnaire needs to be revised or refined. The interpretation of the results of Cronbach's alpha analysis can be subjective and depend on various factors, such as the purpose of the research, the type of data being collected, and the target population for the survey (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Generally, a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable for most surveys, indicating high internal consistency and reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). However, a score between 0.6 and 0.7 may still be considered acceptable for some surveys. Still, it may indicate that some questions in the questionnaire are not contributing to the measurement of the underlying construct and need to be revised or removed (Hair et al. 2006). Conversely, a score below 0.6 is generally considered low. It may indicate that the questions in the questionnaire are not measuring the same construct and may need to be revised or refined (Cortina 1993).

Table 2: Summary of Reliability (Source: Authors' survey dataset)

Scales	Number of Variables Observed	Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach Alpha)	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Anti.Enage	5	0.799	0.799	0.443
Cult.Corruption	5	0.735	0.797	0.441
Inti.Inadequate	5	0.787	0.801	0.447
Meas.Inadequate	5	0.799	0.789	0.427
Tran.Corruption	5	0.777	0.780	0.415
Incom.Inequality	5	0.796	0.738	0.363

Composite reliability (CR) is widely used to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items on a scale or questionnaire (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Hair et al. 2006; Henson and Roberts 2006; Raykov 1997; Reise et al. 2013; Schmitt 1996; Sijtsma 2009; Zinbarg et al. 2005). It determines whether a group of items intended to measure a single construct or latent variable

consistently measures that construct (Zucoloto et al. 2014; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). CR is calculated as the ratio of the total variance of the observed scores to the total variance of the actual scores of the items (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Raykov 1997; Sijtsma 2009). It estimates the proportion of the total variance in the observed scores due to the actual conflict in the measured construct rather than to measurement error or other sources of variability (Hair et al. 2010). A CR value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for research purposes, indicating that the items are measuring the intended construct with a reasonable level of internal consistency (Zucoloto et al. 2014; Henson and Roberts 2006; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994; Reise et al. 2013; Schmitt 1996; Zinbarg et al. 2005). However, the acceptable threshold may vary depending on the specific research context and the intended use of the scale (Henson and Roberts 2006).

The average variance extracted (AVE) is a statistic used to assess the amount of variance in a set of items explained by their underlying construct or latent variable. AVE is a measure of construct reliability, similar to composite reliability, but is calculated based on the shared variance between the items rather than the total variance. AVE is typically used in the context of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The AVE of a construct is calculated as the average of the squared correlations between the construct and each of its indicator items (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Specifically, the AVE is the sum of the squared loadings of the items on the construct divided by the sum of the variances of the items and measurement error (Hair et al. 2010). AVE values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating that the construct explains more of the variance in the items. AVE values of 0.5 or higher are generally considered acceptable for research purposes, meaning that the items measure the intended construct with a reasonable level of reliability (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2015). However, the acceptable threshold may vary depending on the specific research context and the intended use of the scale (Bagozzi and Yi 2012; Chin 1998; Schreiber et al. 2006).

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and validity tests for the research questionnaire (Hair et al. 2019; Henseler et al. 2015). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all items were greater than 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). Composite reliability, which is a measure of the reliability of a defined structure with five to eight items, met the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Table 3 shows that all items have a factor loading greater than 0.7, indicating good convergent validity (Hair et al. 2019; Henseler et al. 2015). The AVE of all items was approximately 0.50, which is an acceptable threshold for further analysis (Fornell and Larcker 1981). These results demonstrate that the questionnaire items have satisfactory reliability and validity for analyzing the proposed research model.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique used in the social sciences to identify underlying latent factors or dimensions in a set of variables (Fabrigar et al. 1999). EFA aims to reduce the number of variables in a dataset by identifying patterns of inter-correlation among them and grouping them into a smaller set of underlying factors. An EFA creates a correlation matrix of the variables, generating factor scores through a series of mathematical

operations (Costello and Osborne 2005). The number of factors to be extracted is often determined by examining scree plots and eigenvalues, which represent the magnitude of the factors and their relative importance (Kaiser 1960). The results of an EFA can help researchers identify the key factors that explain the relationships among the variables in a dataset (Brown 2006). This information can then guide the development of more refined and focused research questions, hypotheses, and models (Hair et al. 2006).

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix (Source: Authors' survey dataset)

Rotated Component Matrix[a]						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Anti.Enage 5	.710					
Anti.Enage 2	.646					
Anti.Enage 4	.634					
Anti.Enage 3	.631					
Anti.Enage 1	.612					
Cult.corruption 29		.708				
Cult.corruption 30		.667				
Cult.corruption 26		.666				
Cult.corruption 28		.579				
Cult.corruption 27		.575				
Inti.Inadequate 17			.731			
Inti.Inadequate 19			.668			
Inti.Inadequate 18			.632			
Inti.Inadequate 16			.586			
Inti.Inadequate 20			.549			
Meas.Inadequate 13				.717		
Meas.Inadequate 11				.659		
Meas.Inadequate 15				.643		
Meas.Inadequate 12				.624		
Meas.Inadequate 14				.548		
Tran.corruption 23					.724	
Tran.corruption 25					.699	
Tran.corruption 24					.653	
Tran.corruption 22					.545	
Tran.corruption 21					.539	
Incom.inequality 7						.654
Incom.inequality 6						.623
Incom.inequality 9						.597
Incom.inequality 10						.591
Incom.inequality 8						.541
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.						
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations. b. Initial Eigenvalues=1.217, Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings=56.184 c. KMO=0.909, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square=2302.976, df=435, Sig.=0.000)						

Table 3 presents the results of the factor analysis for the research questionnaire. The Bartlett test was statistically significant (Sig.=0.000), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient was 0.909 (>0.5), indicating that the observed variables are correlated with each other in the population and, thus, the variables are valid for factor analysis. The factor loading of all variables was greater than 0.5, which means that the factor analysis is valid. Factor loading serves as the criterion to ensure the practical significance of factor analysis. A factor loading greater than 0.3 is considered the minimum threshold, while a loading greater than 0.4 is deemed important, and a loading exceeding 0.5 is regarded as having practical significance. Table 3 shows that all variables have a factor loading greater than 0.5, indicating that the factor analysis is valid. The Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings of six factors were 56.184% (>50%), indicating that the factors extracted can explain a significant amount of the variance in the data. The initial eigenvalues of six factors were 1.217 (>1.00), indicating that the factors extracted have eigenvalues greater than one and thus are valid. Overall, these results demonstrate the validity and suitability of the factor analysis for the proposed research model.

Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a widely used statistical method in the social sciences to analyze the relationships between variables in a complex system (Byrne 2016). It is a type of multivariate analysis that combines parts of regression analysis, factor analysis, and causal modeling (Kline 2015). In SEM, a set of equations are made to show how the variables in a system relate to each other (Arbuckle 2013). These equations can be used to estimate the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables and the degree to which underlying latent factors influence the associations (Hair et al. 2006). The equations in SEM can also predict changes in one variable based on changes in other variables, which is one of the key advantages of the method (Fornell and Larcker 1981). SEM can be used to test theories about the relationships between concepts and variables (Bartholomew 2011). It can also be used to test complex hypotheses about the relationships between variables in a system. Joreskog and Sorbom (1993) found that the results of SEM can give important insights into the mechanisms that drive complex systems and can be used to guide the development of theories and models for these systems. SEM can also help researchers identify indirect and mediating effects between variables as well as direct effects (Kenny 2015).

Table 4: Regression Weights (Authors' survey dataset)

			Estimate	SE.	CR.	P	
Cult.corruption	<---	*Inti.Inadequate*	.189	.140	1.344	.179	Not Accept
Cult.corruption	<---	*Meas.Inadequate*	.357	.125	2.859	.004	Accept
Cult.corruption	<---	*Tran.corruption*	.156	.120	1.301	.193	Not Accept
Cult.corruption	<---	*Incom.inequality*	.289	.156	1.855	.064	Accept
Anti.Enage	<---	*Cult.corruption*	.818	.122	6.695	***	Accept

To evaluate the goodness of fit of the structural equation model (SEM), several fit indices were utilized, including the Chi-Square (χ2) test, Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), standardized-root-mean square residual (SRMR), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and

Comparative Fit Index (CFI). A well-fitted model should have CFI and TLI>=0.90 values and RMSEA and SRMR<=0.08. The analysis results, as shown in Figure 2, indicate that the SEM model satisfies the standard requirements. The Chi-square statistic= 494.613 with 394 degrees of freedom (P-value=0.000,<0.05), Chi-square/df ratio of 1.255, Goodness of Fit Index (GIF)=0.868 (approximately equal to 0.9), TLI=0.944, and RMSEA=0.036. The results of the SEM analysis are presented in Table 4, which shows the relationship between the variables Inti.Inadequate and Cult.corruption, as well as between the variables Tran.corruption and Cult.corruption (P-value>0.050). The remaining variables are statistically significant (P-value is approximately 0.060). Overall, the results suggest that the SEM model fits well with the data and provides a good representation of the proposed research model.

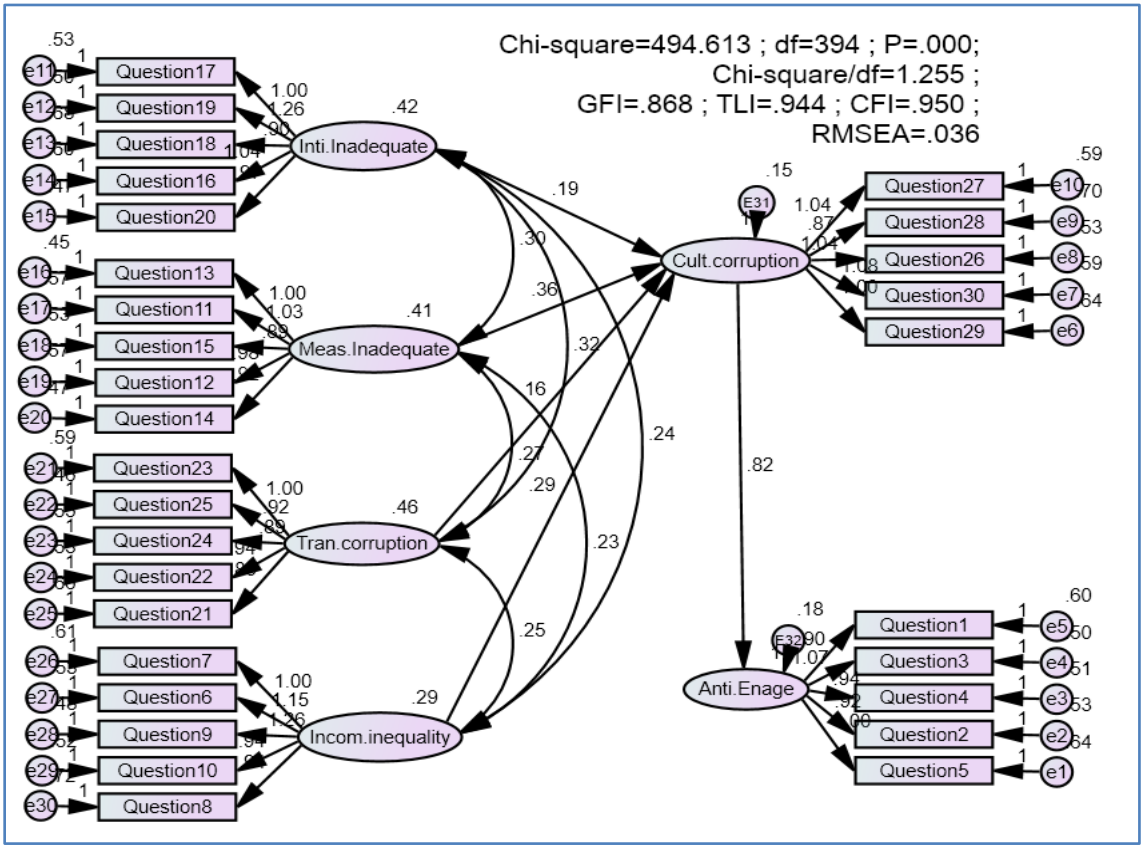


Figure 1: SEM Analysis Results (Authors' survey dataset)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Firstly, in the research results presented in Table 4, hypothesis H1 refers to the relationship between the variable Inti.Inadequate and the variable Cult.corruption (Brødsgaard 2017). This hypothesis suggests that if there are inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement, it should lead to a positive and significant impact on cultural and social norms in

anti-corruption (Clarke 2018). However, the results show that the p-value for this relationship is 0.179 (Barnett 2017), which is greater than the standard threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance (Ghasemi and Zahediasl 2012). This means there is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that Inti.Inadequate has a positive and significant relationship with Cult.corruption (Doig and Riley 1998). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted, and it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement and cultural and social norms in anti-corruption, based on the data analyzed (Chang et al. 2019).

Secondly, the study found that hypothesis H2, which suggests a positive and significant relationship between inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement and cultural and social norms in corruption, is supported by the data analyzed (Table 4). The regression coefficient of β=0.357 with a p-value of 0.004 (<0.050) indicates that the relationship between these variables is statistically significant. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as Transparency International's (2019) report on corruption in Vietnam, which identifies weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and low public awareness as contributing factors to the problem. Similarly, Tan-Mullins et al. (2014) highlight the lack of political will and enforcement capacity as major challenges to anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam. The consequences of inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement can be significant, as Gyimah-Brempong (2002) demonstrates. They found that Vietnam's corruption negatively affected economic growth, foreign direct investment, and income inequality. Therefore, the study's findings highlight the need for more robust anti-corruption measures and enforcement in Vietnam to address the issue and promote sustainable development.

Thirdly, Hypothesis H3 suggested that higher levels of corruption in government transactions would positively and significantly impact cultural and social norms in anti-corruption. However, the results presented in Table 3 show no significant relationship between variable Tran.corruption and Cult.corruption (p-value=0.193>0.05). This indicates that the hypothesis H3 is not supported by the data analyzed. These findings are consistent with previous research on the topic, such as Aduda and Mukulu's (2016) study on corruption in Africa, which found no significant relationship between corruption and cultural norms.

Fourthly, the results presented in Table 4 indicate that hypothesis H4 is supported, which suggests a positive and significant relationship between the variables Incom.inequality and Cult.corruption. The regression coefficient β is 0.289, and the confidence p-value is 0.064, which is close to the standard threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. This finding suggests that high-income inequality among public officials can positively impact cultural and social norms in anti-corruption. This result is consistent with previous research, showing that low public sector salaries and income disparities can incentivize corrupt behavior among public officials (Sakellariou and Fang 2014; Fjelde and Hegre 2014). For instance, public officials may be more likely to engage in bribery and other forms of corruption to supplement their income. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that public officials' salary levels can significantly impact the prevalence of corruption in a country (Bracci et al. 2022; Abbink 2000). The findings of this study are also in line with previous research that has highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability in anti-corruption efforts (Bauhr and Grimes 2014; Svensson 2005).

Fifthly, the research findings in Table 4 demonstrate that hypothesis H5 is supported, indicating a positive and significant relationship between the variables Cult. Corruption and Anti.Enage. The regression coefficient β=0.818, and the confidence p-value=0.00 (< 0.05) for statistical significance. These results reveal that cultural and social norms in anti-corruption have a strong and positive impact on the engagement of corruption in the public sector. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that cultural and social norms play an important role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward corruption (Lambsdorff 2003; Morris and Klesner 2010). In societies where corruption is widely accepted or even expected, individuals may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices themselves (Peters 2015).

Conversely, in societies where corruption is viewed as morally and socially unacceptable, individuals may be less likely to engage in corrupt practices and may be more likely to report corruption when they witness it (Pal and Spence 2020). These findings suggest that efforts to combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability in public institutions must be complemented by efforts to change cultural and social attitudes towards corruption and to promote a culture of integrity and a social norm of zero tolerance for corruption (World Bank 2020). Such efforts can include anti-corruption awareness campaigns, education and training programs, and the creation of institutional frameworks that promote ethical behavior (Collins 2012). In addition, addressing income corruption and ensuring that public officials are adequately compensated may be essential in promoting cultural and social norms that support anti-corruption efforts (Bracci et al. 2022; Abbink 2000). By providing public officials with a living wage and reducing the incentive to engage in corrupt practices, governments can help to create a culture of integrity and promote a social norm of zero tolerance for corruption (Sakellariou and Fang 2014).

Discussion

The study's findings emphasize the crucial role of anti-corruption measures and enforcement in shaping cultural and social attitudes towards corruption in the public sector of Vietnam. Inadequate measures can contribute to normalizing and accepting corruption, which has significant negative consequences for the economy and society. Thus, the study underscores the need for more effective anti-corruption measures, institutional capacity, and public awareness to combat corruption in Vietnam. By addressing these challenges, policymakers can promote a culture of integrity and a social norm of zero-tolerance for corruption, leading to sustainable development and prosperity for all. Previous research on corruption in Vietnam supports the study's findings. Transparency International (2019) identifies weak legal frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and low public awareness as contributing factors to the problem. Tan-Mullins et al. (2014) highlight the lack of political will and enforcement capacity as major challenges to anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam. Gyimah-Brempong (2002) demonstrates that corruption in Vietnam negatively affects economic growth, foreign direct investment, and income inequality. Efforts to combat corruption must be multi-faceted and include legal and social measures.

Vietnam must legally develop a more robust and effective framework to address corruption, incorporating stronger penalties and more efficient enforcement mechanisms (Doig and Riley 1998). Socially, the government and civil society organizations must work together to raise awareness about the negative impact of corruption and promote a culture of transparency, accountability, and integrity in public institutions (Ninh 2019). In conclusion, the study's findings underscore the necessity for stronger anti-corruption measures and enforcement in Vietnam, along with heightened public awareness and a transformation of cultural and social perspectives regarding corruption. By undertaking these measures, policymakers can foster a fairer and more prosperous society for all Vietnamese citizens. Additionally, this finding emphasizes the need for policies that promote income equality and fair compensation for public officials to reduce the incentives for corrupt behavior (Sakellariou and Fang 2014; Fjelde and Hegre 2014). By addressing income inequality and improving transparency and accountability in the public sector, policymakers can promote a culture of integrity and anti-corruption, leading to sustainable development and economic growth in Vietnam (Bauhr and Grimes 2014; Svensson 2005). This result is consistent with previous research, showing that low public sector salaries and income disparities can incentivize corrupt behavior among public officials (Bracci et al. 2022; Abbink 2000). For instance, public officials may be more likely to engage in bribery and other forms of corruption to supplement their income.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that public officials' salary levels can significantly impact the prevalence of corruption in a country (Bracci et al. 2022; Abbink 2000). Previous research (Bauhr and Grimes 2014; Svensson 2005) has also shown how important transparency and accountability are in fighting corruption (Bauhr and Grimes 2014; Svensson 2005). So, the results of this study are also in line with those studies.

Based on this finding, it is possible to conclude that there is no significant relationship between inadequate anti-corruption measures and enforcement and anti-corruption cultural and social norms (Doig and Riley 1998; Chang et al. 2019). These results suggest that efforts to combat corruption must improve anti-corruption measures and enforcement and change cultural and social attitudes toward corruption (Peters 2015). This can include promoting a culture of integrity and a social norm of zero-tolerance corruption through education, awareness campaigns, and creating institutional frameworks that promote ethical behavior (Collins 2012; World Bank 2020).

As with any empirical study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research when interpreting its findings. Firstly, the survey method used in this study relied on subjective responses from the participants, which may introduce some inherent biases and limitations (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). Moreover, the data collection was limited to a single point in time, which could affect the analysis and interpretation of the results (Taylor-Powell 2003). Burns and Bush (2014) suggested that future studies could address this issue by incorporating cross-sectional and longitudinal methods to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, the purposeful sampling method used in this study has some limitations and may not fully reflect the population characteristics (Patton 2014). It is also important to note that the cultural context of Vietnam was taken into account, and caution should be exercised when applying the research findings to other countries and cultures (Hofstede 2011).

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In addition, this study did not investigate demographic variables such as age, gender, occupation, and income, which could have provided more comprehensive information about anti-corruption in the public sector in Vietnam (Lambsdorff 2006). Future research should consider including these variables to further advance our understanding of corruption in this context (Upadhyai et al. 2019).

CONCLUSION

Corruption in Vietnam is a major problem that stems from various causes. One major challenge is the inadequate enforcement of anti-corruption measures, which creates an environment where corrupt practices can take root (Park 2016). In addition, certain cultural and social attitudes may contribute to a greater likelihood of engaging in corrupt behavior (Hoang et al. 2022). However, reducing corruption in Vietnam requires more than just enforcement. Income inequality among public officials can also contribute to corruption, as it creates a situation where some people feel entitled to take advantage of their position (Hoang et al. 2022). It is essential to ensure public officials are held accountable and not exploiting their positions for personal gain (Raykov 1997). Promoting anti-corruption cultural and social norms can also make a big difference in reducing corruption. Educating the public and creating a cultural environment where corruption is seen as unacceptable makes people less likely to engage in corrupt practices as adults (Hoang et al. 2022). This approach is about more than just punishing bad behavior; it is also about encouraging good behavior.

Despite efforts to address corruption in Vietnam, research has found no significant relationship between anti-corruption measures and cultural and social norms (Huss et al. 2020). Merely enacting laws and policies to combat corruption is insufficient to transform societal attitudes toward corruption in Vietnam. Instead, a comprehensive approach is necessary, which delves into the underlying causes of corruption, including cultural and historical factors. Similarly, promoting greater transparency and accountability in the public sector is important, but studies have found no significant relationship between transparency and accountability and cultural and social norms in Vietnam (Paterson et al. 2019). This highlights the need for additional strategies, such as public education campaigns and cultural interventions, to promote a more ethical and transparent society. In summary, tackling corruption in Vietnam requires a holistic approach that addresses both structural and cultural factors. A real difference can be made, and a better future can be given to Vietnam if efforts are made to make incomes more equal, corruption is fought more effectively, and a culture of honesty and openness is encouraged.

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Statement of Human Rights:
This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any authors.

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