

Media Freedom and Corruption in Different Countries of the World

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Abstract: This study aimed at examining the effect of media freedom on corruption reduction. Media serve as platforms for public supervision over the government and sovereignty of every country provided freedom of media. Regarding the comparison of corruption level and media freedom all around the world, the statistical population of extant paper comprised all countries of the world. Sampling was done based on the available information and data, and then 30 countries were chosen and assigned to three groups with high-level, moderate, and low-level corruption over the period 2012-2019. The required data were collected from databases of international institutions working on corruption and media freedom. Data analysis was done through a panel data model, as well as Chow and Hausman Test. Results indicated a significant and reverse effect of media freedom on corruption in different countries of the world. Moreover, media freedom had a higher effect on corruption in those countries with low-level corruption.

Keywords: Corruption, Media Freedom, Corruption Perception Index, Press Freedom Index

1. Introduction

Corruption is one of the most crucial economic-political issues in the countries, particularly in developing ones. Corruption is defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption usually emerges in different forms of bribes, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, and swindles (Transparency International, 2018: 23-26). Regarding the diversity of corruption in people's lives, corruption can be defined as a political, economic, cultural, and social phenomenon that is observed in many countries. It is not expected that countries become free of corruption, but it is possible to minimize their corruption level (de Graaf et al. 2015, Pp. 7-15). According to conducted studies, corruption is divided into several categories including administrative, political, legal, and financial corruptions in which governors and citizens make illegal financial and monetary interactions (Momeni, Fotros, 2010, Pp. 25-26). However, researchers have classified the causes for corruption in different countries into four main categories. The first category includes economic reasons such as vast monopolies, rentier state economy structure, the dominance of powerful institutions such as military and security institutions to obtain wealth, and the attempt of governors to gain personal wealth and rent-seeking. The second category consists of political causes, including lack of meritocracy, lack of freedom of parties, and restricted media and lack of free and independent press, weakness of occupational unions and syndicates, and absence of a powerful and effective civil community that can bring transparency and actualize social supervision over governmental activities. The third category includes cultural and social causes, including absent public adherence to law and presence of public tendency towards bribery to accelerate administrative affairs, presence of nepotism and ethnicity in all levels, and low social ugliness of bribe. The fourth category expresses some causes, including administrative and management structure of official organizations; for instance, poor quality of law and lack of transparency in decisions, and expansion of bureaucracy, as well as the complexity of the administrative system. Nevertheless, many researchers introduce the inefficiency of this system as an economic cause (Rose-Ackerman, 2006, Pp. 1-12). Furthermore, some social scholars believe that corruption weakens and destroys the whole social system, and disrupts functions of the social system. Corruption may spread over time influencing all sectors and decision-making levels. Corruption may become a serious hazard for society like what cancer does in the human body (Rafeepour, 2009, Pp. 13-18). Hence, the multidimensional and intertwined nature of corruption as a social, political, and economic issue has made researchers provide different definitions of this phenomenon. Accordingly, corruption studies cover a wide range of concepts and definitions associated with culture and religion. Therefore, some authors assume that there is not an inclusive and specific definition for corruption. Some others discuss that researchers and experts on corruption studies cannot find a similar and specific definition of corruption. So, there is not any consensus on this case

(Dadkhodae, 2011, Pp. 36-38). Therefore, there is not any inclusive definition of corruption due to interconnected causes for this social phenomenon, as well as its diverse consequences. Hence, it was decided on negotiations of UN in early 2003 not to define corruption. It was supposed to list the measures which may cause corruption (Longst, 1999, P. 15). As a corruption researcher, Heidenheimer considers that corruption covers various reasons and implications in different cultures and languages. Corruption carries a history of meanings, and people in different communities and cultures have different perceptions of corruption (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2005, Pp. 15-25). Despite the differences between corruption definitions, there is a substantial point in corruption studies that suggest identifying motivations for corruption and investigating the effect of corruption on the effectiveness of states' measures and actions of the private sector in interdisciplinary studies. If the main purpose of governments is the optimal allocation of resources to the public budget, corruption, especially great corruption should be controlled and inhibited by monitoring all activities, decisions, and policies at executive levels. However, any governmental supervision method requires civil society and media's supervision over administrative and state systems to encounter corruption. In this lieu, civil society should monitor the system precisely and effectively to achieve the best results. In general, civil society should perform supervision through media (Rose-Ackerman, 2015, Pp. 121-151). Accordingly, this study was conducted to freedom of media and their role in controlling and reducing corruption.

Statement of Problem

Some important measures have been taken to identify corruption causes in different countries and international organizations over the decades after World War II. For example, as a non-governmental institution, Transparency International was established in 1993 to mitigate corruption. This institution has introduced a corruption perception index (CPI) to specify the transparency rank of countries. This institution publishes the conducted measures regarding improved or worsen corruption levels of countries by ranking them annually. This international index not only reports the annual corruption level of countries but also compares the corruption rank of these countries. In other words, different countries of the world are ranked based on the CPI. Researchers have used CPI since 1996 to compare and investigate the corruption level and performance of different countries over two past decades (Transparency International, 2018). The corruption perception index is a composite index, which indicates corruption demand. Underlying data of this index are collected from 12 international references. CPI is measured based on various polls and documentary calculations based upon the perception and attitude of traders, economic analysts, politicians, and public managers (Azizkhani, 2006, Pp. 4-7). According to the mean score of Iran's CPI over the past 16 years (2003-2018), corruption has experienced an ascending trend (worsen the corruption situation) then continued the descending trend (improved corruption rank). As an important point, despite the declining corruption trend in Iran during 2009 and 2011 but this descending trend did not remain and there was again an ascending trend in the CPI curve of Iran. In this case, Iran could not return to its rank in the years before 2007. The corruption level of Iran can be compared with neighboring countries during 2003-2018 to understand this trend over the past two decades. Reported by Transparency International and based on the CPI, Figure 2 depicts the corruption rank of Iran, Middle-East, and North African countries (known as MENA Region¹) in 2019. According to data of neighboring countries in 2019, the corruption status of Iran is at an improper level in the MENA region. As seen in Figure 2, among 18 neighboring MENA countries with similar economic and geographical situations to Iran that their CPIs are available, only four countries (Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Syria) had higher corruption (lower CPI) compared to Iran. Iran was ranked 146 among 180 countries in the world, which was a highly low rank (Transparency International, 2018).

¹ The Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

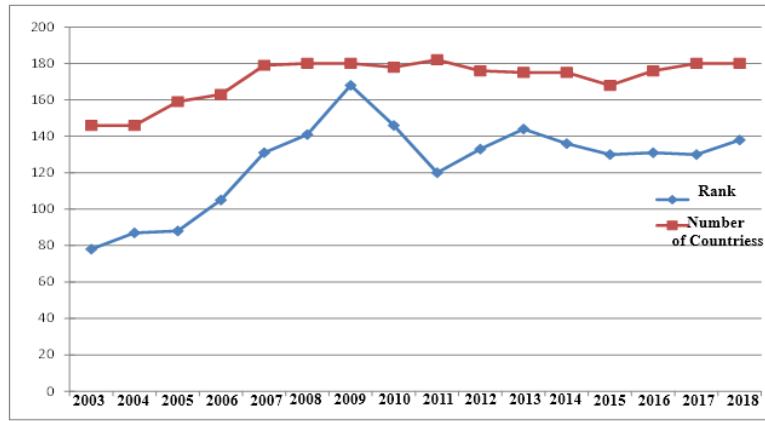


Figure 1. the rank of iran's cpi during 2003-2018 (transparency international, 2018)

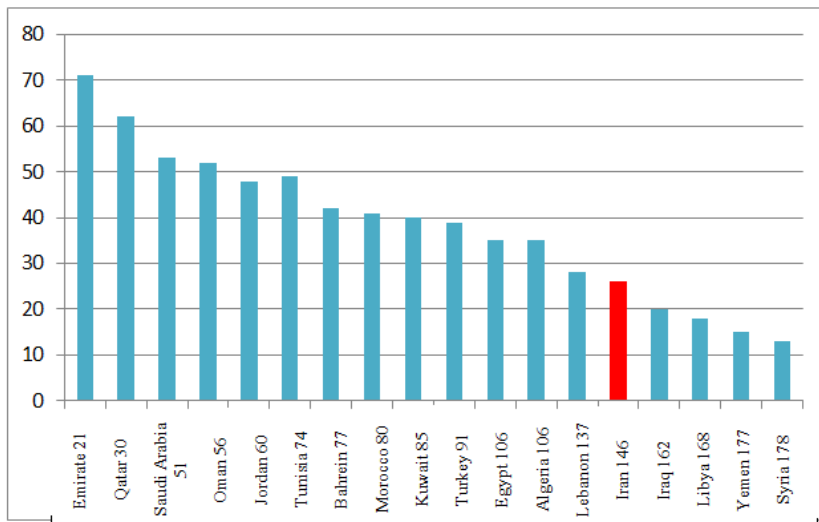


Figure 2. the rank of mena countries regarding their cpi in 2019 (transparency international, 2018)

It can be explained that investigation of corruption level of countries based upon the CPI indicates that all countries in the world face an amount of corruption rate. There are different corruption rates in different countries. Unfortunately, Iran's CPI indicates high-level corruption compared to other countries. In other words, Iran has faced a higher level of corruption problems over the past two decades. Hence, it is essential to examine the causes of corruption and to find solutions for these problems in Iran. Therefore, the causes of this economic, political, cultural, and social issue should be identified in Iran. Of the most crucial causes affecting corruption, the absent supervisory role of media has been considered as the main research case.

According to scholars of corruption studies, the absence of social monitoring is one of the causes that expand corruption. They believe that social monitoring is actualized through civil society and relevant institutions. Institutions of civil society require social-political freedom and rule of law to play an effective role. Furthermore, empirical examinations have focused on this truth arguing that lack of media freedom and absence of their supervision over the society are factors causing the emergence and continuity of corruption. However, this supervisory role highly depends on the media's freedom of action. If media are not free, there will be a minimum supervisory role of media in society. Accordingly, the political freedom of civil institutions is one of the substantial

factors, which mitigate corruption. Civil institutions, including unions, parties, guild, occupational, academic, and cultural groups, as well as media perform beyond the state power. Since there is a lack of effective and powerful parties and the private sector, as well as the absence of influence power of unions and guild groups in Iran, media play a more vital role as foundations of civil institutions (Khaniki, 2018, P. 32). It worth noting that several international indices have been designed to assess media freedom in different countries of the world; the international press freedom index is one of these indices that has been published by Reporters without Borders (Reporters sans frontiers) (RSF). This index is used to evaluate the freedom status of media in countries, and rank them based on this index (Reporters without Borders, 2019). Therefore, these two international indices can be used and compared to find the association between media freedom and the corruption level of different countries. Press Freedom Index (PFI) and CPI provide solutions to control and reduce corruption by using surveillance measures. Media freedom is an underlying factor for the supervisory role of the press. Accordingly, the extant study has been conducted to provide empirical and objective evidence of media freedom and corruption by analyzing media freedom and comparing it with corruption status in different countries. Corruption has always existed in the world. This issue will remain if human society is not developed and moral perfection is not achieved. According to historical experiences, corruption has converted to different forms. According to the significant impacts of this social phenomenon, corruption is one of the most critical issues in the world (Caiden, 2014, 3-26). Nevertheless, the real case of the world economy and success stories of comprehensive development point to the controlled corruption in countries. Empirical evidence indicates that corruption prevents the development process, and development requires freedom. According to Amartya Sen (1998), the winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, the development process is inherently related to increasing freedom. The freedom should receive great attention to overcome the numerous economic problems and non-development and to fulfill development programs. Therefore, development and progress depend on transparency in economic and political activities. Transparency, in turn, depends on the freedom and independence of media and the press. Hence, freedom is the most efficient measure for development. Freedom is indeed the purpose of development. Media freedom is the most prominent symbol of freedom (Amartya Sen, 1998, Pp. 17-25).

On the other hand, researchers of corruption studies believe that public oversight can remove corruption. Public oversight is achieved through independent and free media. Formal and governmental oversight methods are not adequate due to complicated administrative and political systems. Such governmental oversights lose their efficiency and effectiveness in absence of media oversight. Hence, the more free and independent the media in monitoring social affairs, the lower the corruption level will be (Hasan Pour & Razavi, 2018, Pp. 73-81). Accordingly, communication experts introduce the fourth function of the surveillance role of media in supervising activities of private and public sectors besides the other three functions of media, including information, education, and entertainment. They emphasize the surveillance of media to support national interest and actualize development plans (Sadati, 2010, Pp. 185-217). Moreover, empirical evidence confirms that restrictions on media freedom are imposed based on the political priorities of governors. Therefore, ruling powers see such restrictions as beneficial actions, while they leave many economic consequences, which may bring threats against governors that are more serious than political issues caused by media freedom. Therefore, developed countries not only do not limit media freedom (although this may be challenging for them) but also promote such freedom. They do this because of the high public interest in media freedom. The developed countries highly concentrate on media freedom so that governments cannot impose restrictions on media freedom (de Graaf et al. 2015, Pp. 17-25). Accordingly, media freedom is a substantial factor affecting corruption since this freedom facilitates the supervisory role of media. Therefore, media freedom and their surveillance functions are significant issues (Sadati, 2010, Pp. 185-217). Hence, it is essential to find how media can play their supervisory roles and how political structures can affect this role. To this end, the relevant literature should be reviewed to understand the background of media forms and their interaction with political power systems regarding the supervisory role of media.

Literature Review

It worth noting that although media are the most important agents in the expansion of civil society and play an effective role in the social life of humans, this role can be investigated with the framework of the political system in which they perform. Accordingly, the media system is defined. In other words, the media system of each country

is highly influenced by the political system, freedom level, democracy, as well as economic, social, and cultural position of the country (Wells, 1974). Studies indicate that experts in communications and media research have considered the relationship between government and media in the categorization of media systems. Hence, the media system and the ruling systems of every country can be identified based on the historical review of the political structure of that country. Governors and the government system of every country determine the borders and frameworks of media activities. Hence, freedom of action, as well as economic-political security of media highly depends on the beliefs and opinions of governors. Moreover, empirical evidence and historical developments imply that media face challenges and problematic issues if they do not serve the ruling power or if they do not admit the governing power (Motamednezhad, 1977, Pp. 265-274). Hence, the effectiveness of media in a political system is based on the media system of the society, use of media, freedom of action, media freedom status, and financial-economic independence of media while leading to social changes (Wells, 1974). Therefore, experts in communications and media studies pay attention to the historical development of media to find their supervisory role. These researchers have used the concept of media system to find this supervisory role accurately. Although media system is a complicated concept and a composite of hardware, manpower, and procedure of media in a country, this notion depicts how authorities treat the media and what mechanisms exist for media. However, communication experts have proposed different classifications of media, such as Normative Theories on media. Normative theories describe do's and don'ts ruling the mass media. These theories indeed express how media should be controlled and managed. Evidence indicates that media control and ownership of media affect the content of the press, which also specifies the impact of media. The media control norms and systems have been subject to thoughts related to political-legal philosophies, human duties, and economic systems within periods and spatial situations. It means that the structure of political power, the legal system of law, human duties, economic mechanisms, and market regulations affect the activity of media, as well as media control and management. In this regard, an authoritarian political system accepts an authoritarian media system in which media obey the governments and serve as power measures (Mahdizadeh, 2010, Pp. 29-47). The most popular classification of media systems, particularly press systems was presented by Sibert and Scheramm (1956) who divided the media system into four categories, including authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and soviet communist systems. Denis McQuail (1981) then wrote a book entitled "Mass Communications Theory" in which, normative theory covered six theories, including "Authoritarian Theory", "Free Press Theories", "Social Responsibility Theories", "Soviet Media Theories", "Developmental Media Theories", and "Democratic-Participant Theories." He evaluated four theories proposed by Sibert et al. and added two new theories that, in his opinion, were matched with current conditions of the world (Mohsenianrad, 2006). There are other classifications of these theories so that these models were gradually developed in the late decades of the 20th century. For example, Raymond Williams, Fernand Terrou, and Denis Mc Quail are some researchers that developed these theories. However, it was mentioned that media systems are in fact limited to fundamental authoritarian and libertarian models and other theories are in the range between these two models. Therefore, the most important point of media system includes authoritarian media system of press freedom and communication experts and media researchers pay more attention to these two media systems. However, communication experts emphasize that the attributes and characteristics of media systems indicate their nature. Therefore, the title of the media system (democratic or authoritarian) is not the clue. According to empirical evidence and studies, some governments claim that are democratic while are authoritarians in practice and severely limit the freedom of media (Motamednezhad & Motamednezhad, 2007, Pp. 260-266).

Iran's position in geopolitics and economy should be described to analyze the situation of media and their surveillance role in Iran. Of various cultural, political, and economic scopes in which media play a role, two fields of international economic geography and regional political geography are similar in terms of linking media surveillance. The **First** geographical area in which media are analyzed is developing countries or third world that is the political title of developing countries. Iran does not have a modern and stable political and economic structure over three centuries due to historical backwardness over the past 300 years, civil war in the 18th century after the fall of the Safavid government, the war between Iran and Russia that caused the separation of fertile lands in early decades of 19th century, and continuation of nomadic governments in 19th century and two early decades of 20th century. The mentioned incidents have caused many economic losses and instability of the political structure of Iran during the 20th century where two revolutions occurred during this century and changed political-economic structures (Homayoon Katouzian, 2000, Pp. 351-378). Moreover, there was an 8-year war between Iran and Iraq after Revolution in 1978. After the war, many international sanctions were imposed on the country due to Iran's

attempts against the politics of the USA and Israel in the region. Iran has been ranked as a third-world country due to some factors, such as the ideological structure of government and the absence of meritocracy (Saei, 2013, Vol. 3, P. 71). Unfortunately, dysfunction of political structure is a shared characteristic of third world countries that treat media differently. According to Geoffrey Reeves, communications and media in the third world face a wrong strategy that tries to control media and their surveillance process to achieve political stability. In other words, governors in the third world own power in a non-democratic or quasi-democratic form. They do not tolerate any critique or evaluation of their governance procedures. They expect that citizens obey the political system and all decisions without criticizing them; hence, they do not allow media to perform freely (Reeves, 2017, Pp. 26-37). Therefore, the supervisory role of media should be discussed based on the development geography in which media face different surveillance mechanisms. Some authors that have studied issues in the third world believe that lack of supervisory role of media and positive outcomes of media freedom stems from the misunderstanding of national security in these countries. Third-world countries assume that political stability is achieved by forming powerful states and military forces. They restrict civil society, media, and critics of the government. However, this is not a correct understanding of political security and stability in the modern world conditions and development of communications and globalization of media. Accordingly, lack of media freedom does not bring security for non-democratic states (Buzan, 1983, Pp. 74-93). Therefore, Iran is located in the political geography of the third world, so the political structure in the country does not allow media to play their supervisory roles and functions. Hence, media in Iran face many political and legal restrictions (Eftekhari, 2000, Pp. 97-115). The **second** area is regional geography where (Middle-East) Iran is located. There are specific cultural and ideological specifications in the political geography of this region where states prevent free action and supervisory role of media. In this region, states do not believe in the positive relationship between media oversight and political stability. Schwedler analyzed these problems in the Middle East in the project entitled "civil society in the Middle East" and finally concluded that the states in the region prevent media from showing critical and supervisory behaviors treating them as anti-security agents. Furthermore, the majority of states existing in the Middle East deal with serious problems regarding active participation of media and freedom of media, as well as their surveillance function. The civil society of the Middle East has been discussed in terms of ideological principles and political stability accepted by states in the region (Schwedler, 1995, Pp. 34-46). Although media play a vital role in the expansion of civil society and the social life of people, it is possible to study this role only under the framework of political systems in which media perform (Eftekhari, 2000, Pp. 97-115). Hence, it is essential to review the history of the political system of the country to identify the dimensions and effects of media to understand how the state treats media and their surveillance roles. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the surveillance role of media while studying media systems (Motamednezhad, 1977, Pp. 265-274).

Method

This was applied research in terms of objective, a quantitative study in terms of data type, and descriptive-library research in terms of data collecting method. This was also classified as an experimental study. Since the collected data were extracted from the information of different countries in past years and the data collecting procedure did not interfere with control of and change in variables' size, this was an ex-post study based on the information of countries. Moreover, the research methodology was based on deductive inductive reasoning. The statistical population comprised CPIs of 187 countries for 8 years during 2012-2019. The selected sample included 10 countries with high-level corruption, 10 countries with moderate-level corruption, and 10 countries with low-level corruption. In the next step, media freedom in these countries was analyzed based on the international press freedom index that is annually published by Reporters without Borders. Time-series and pane data were extracted from available databases of international institutions, including Transparency International and Reporters without Borders.

The collected data were analyzed by using Panel Data Model. Panel data method was used due to the presence of cross-sectional (countries) and time-series data (period of 2012-2019). Since different countries were studied, there was high-level heterogeneity in collected data. Hence, more advanced estimators of the panel model were used to solve the heterogeneity. A significance test (F-value) of selected countries was used to choose pool or panel data. If the effects of the group are accepted, various intercepts should be considered in the estimations

process. It means panel data must be applied. It is possible to identify and measure the effects in combined data (sectional and time-series), including a set of panel data, while it is not possible to find these effects when using these data separately. It is argued that cross-sectional data indicate long-term behaviors, while time-series data emphasize short-term effects. Since these two specifications are combined in panel data, this model can specify and estimate a more general and dynamic structure. Panel data minimize biases by providing numerous data (Ashrafzadegan & Mehregan, 2008). There are two Fixed Effect and Random Effect Models in the panel data method, in which the Hausman test is used to select the most appropriate model. Hausman test is measured based on the comparison between Chi-square and Table values to choose the best model.

Model and Variables: according to the objective of this study (effect of media freedom on the corruption of countries), 30 countries were chosen and assigned to three groups for the period 2012-2019. The selected countries were classified based on the availability and quality of published data:

Countries with low-level corruption: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, France, United Kingdom, USA, Germany, and Japan.

Countries with moderate corruption: South Korea, India, Russia, Brazil, Turkey, Argentina, Indonesia, Chile, and Malaysia.

Countries with high-level corruption: Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, White Russia, Vietnam, and North Korea.

According to the selected sample, the effect of media freedom on corruption was assessed for each group based on the following model:

$$CPI_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 PFI_{it} + \alpha_2 GDP_{it} + \alpha_3 Poverty_{it} + \alpha_4 ID_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:

CPI_{it} : Corruption perception index

PFI_{it} : Press freedom index

GDP_{it} : Gross Domestic Production

$Poverty_{it}$: Poverty index, which is measured by using average income logarithm of low-income decile of the country. This index was extracted from the database of the World Bank.

ID_{it} : Income distribution, which is measured by using Gini Coefficient. Gini Coefficient is an economic index that measures wealth distribution across a population. The higher the Gini coefficient in a country, the higher the income inequality among people will be. Gini Index is used to show income distribution over a certain time in a country to find income inequality shifts.

Findings

Most econometric tests are performed after testing the durability (reliability) of variables and data. To examine the durability of variables in this research, Levin and Lin-Chu tests were used. Table 1 reports the obtained results. As seen in this table, H_0 (no-durability of variables in all three groups at a probability level of 95%) of Levin and Lin-Chu tests was rejected. Hence, variables were durable at the level.

Table 1. unit root panel test of levin and lin-chu

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Variables	Levin, value	Lin-Chu	Prob.	Result
CPI of the first group	7.263		0.000	Durable
CPI of the second group	37.437		0.000	Durable
CPI of the third group	13.149		0.000	Durable
PFI of the first group	12.943		0.000	Durable
PFI of the second group	11.643		0.000	Durable
PFI of the third group	19.627		0.000	Durable
GDP of the first group	10.558		0.000	Durable
GDP of the second group	10.873		0.000	Durable
GDP of the third group	18.710		0.000	Durable
<i>The poverty</i> of the first group	9.594		0.000	Durable
<i>The poverty</i> of the second group	13.783		0.000	Durable
<i>The poverty</i> of the third group	17.281		0.000	Durable
<i>The ID</i> of the first group	13.675		0.000	Durable
<i>The ID</i> of the second group	10.517		0.000	Durable
<i>The ID</i> of the third group	13.209		0.000	Durable

Model Estimation: results of Chow (F Limer) and Hausman tests have been proposed herein.

The first step of hypothesis testing is taken by finding the best analysis method. Panel data has been selected as presumption. According to statistical methods, the panel data model begins by performing the F Limer test to find whether the panel data method can explain hypotheses or not. If H_1 is accepted, panel data will be used. Table 2 indicates the results of this test regarding the research hypothesis.

Table 2. results of limer test

Model	Value	Prob.
First model	8.627	0.000
Second model	6.338	0.000

Third model	10.511	0.000
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According to the obtained significance level of the F-Limer test that equaled zero (<0.05), the panel data model can be used. However, statistical standards of panel data model propose two methods of Fixed Effects and Random Effect of which one model is used based on the result of the Hausman test. Table 3 reports the results of the Hausman test for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. results of hausman test

Model	X ² Value	Prob.	Effect type
First	8.713	0.000	Fixed effect
Second	12.254	0.000	Fixed effect
Third	10.518	0.000	Fixed effect

According to Table 3, the result of the Hausman test rejected H₀ (random effects). Hence, the fixed effects model should be used to estimate the model.

Estimated results have been reported in Table 4.

Table 3. results of model estimation

Variable	First model				Second model				Third model			
	Coefficient	SD	t-value	Prob.	Coefficient	SD	t-value	Prob.	Coefficient	SD	t-value	Prob.
<i>PFI</i>	-0.451	0.739	4.384	0.000	-0.246	0.458	5.320	0.000	-0.381	0.362	4.107	0.008
<i>GDP</i>	0.517	0.235	4.873	0.000	0.215	0.612	3.724	0.017	0.456	0.512	4.127	0.000
<i>Poverty</i>	0.791	0.417	6.812	0.000	0.338	0.637	4.506	0.001	0.310	0.417	3.842	0.005
<i>ID</i>	0.567	0.745	5.404	0.000	0.127	0.589	3.867	0.020	0.524	0.440	4.986	0.000
R ₂	0.745				0.814				0.723			
F-value	114.934				96.445				103.248			
F Prob.	0.000				0.000				0.000			
D-W value	1.816				1.736				1.625			

1- Press freedom index (PFI): model estimates indicated a significant and indirect effect of PFI on the corruption of all three studied groups at a level of 95%. The important point is the higher impact of press freedom on the corruption of those countries where media are freer, and PFI is at a high level. In other words, the freer the media, the higher the impact of the press on corruption control and reduction.

2- GDP had a significant and direct effect on the corruption of all three groups of countries at a level of 95%. It means that an increase in GDP leads to an increase in corruption. The substantial point is that GDP highly affects the corruption of countries where media are freer.

3- The poverty Index had a significant and direct effect on the corruption of all three groups at the significance level of 95%. The significant point was the higher effect of the poverty index on the corruption of countries in the first group. The higher the poverty index, the more corruption will be. In developed countries with higher PFI, the poverty index highly affects corruption.

4- ID index had a positive and direct effect on the corruption of all studied countries at a level of 95%. In other words, an increase in income distribution index and inequality leads to high-level corruption. A substantial case is seen in countries with higher media freedom where the ID index highly affects corruption.

As seen in the last row of Table 3, the R^2 value was greater than 0.7. Therefore, the proposed model had high explanatory power. F-value of estimated coefficients of the model indicated model significance at level 99%. Hence, the goodness of fit of the model was confirmed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The absence of media freedom is a factor causing corruption. Results of this study indicated that media freedom in all three groups of studied countries could mitigate corruption significantly. In the first group (developed countries), this effect was higher so that corruption control was highly related to media freedom. On contrary, in underdeveloped countries, media are more restricted playing a minor role in reducing corruption. However, there was a negative association between two global FPI and CPI indices. Accordingly, the higher the PFI in a country, the lower the corruption level will be. Therefore, there is a significant and indirect (negative) relationship between PFI and CPI in different countries. In other words, increased and improved FPI leads to a lower corruption level. According to the abovementioned points, in countries with a free media system and lower constraints and controls over media, the corruption perception index is lower than those countries where media are not free. Results indicated a low effect of media freedom on the corruption of countries in the first group (with low-level corruption). These countries have taken advantage of the free media potential to achieve low-level corruption. Therefore, higher media freedom is effective in reducing corruption. Since media can provide the disclosed information rapidly to the public, they can effectively prevent deviant goals of groups, statesmen, and politicians. Therefore, media serve as an appropriate, reliable, and effective platform for those who do not remain silent on violations and corruption. These individuals are sure that their reports on violations and corruption will be ignored by officials and relevant organizations since senior managers may benefit from these violations and corruption. Hence, these reporters do not find any reliable organization or official. In some cases, reporters may be worried about the revenge of corrupt managers or criminal gangs associated with corrupt politicians, security forces, and police. These reporters try to hide their identity to prevent the fulfillment of objectives that are set by corrupt politicians. In the cases mentioned above, the media is the most reliable authority for corruption disclosure. Hence, media should be independent and free and have powerful legal supports to deal with corruption and prevent political strains of corrupt top managers. Therefore, media can affect public opinion by publicizing complaints of reporters and putting pressure on corrupt organizations and managers. The media can also keep the identity of the reporter secret.

Therefore, the results of the extant paper implied that media freedom plays a vital role in mitigating and controlling corruption in different countries of the world. Media can affect the political mainstream regarding corruption control. Media serve as preventive factors so that free media are barriers to corruption and political officials avoid any corruption due to fear of media revelation. The media should oppose statesmen, politicians, as well as overt and covert men in security, military, and religious institutions who take advantage of their positions for rentier actions, corruption, and destruction of national output. Media revelation prevents covert corruption of

politicians paving the way to dismiss and punish corrupt officials. The second surveillance effect of media can be seen in changing the ideological cohesion of a society, so that accepted values of a society can be improved or unbraced by media. However, media can establish a culture against corruption. Media can expand the correct culture of national output, promote the right business culture, and avoid historical deviations, including tax evasion, failure to pay tolls and other legal fees, as well as violation of the law. On the other hand, media can encourage adherence to ethical principles, rules, and regulations in transactions, as well as private treaties and covenants. Media can prepare the cultural space of society against corruption, to create investment security for all business practitioners, especially manufacturing sectors. Media must promote creativity and national technology-based production to control and reduce corruption. The media should spread information on economic stability regarding investment and national production. Above all, the surveillance and supervisory role of media is the most substantial effect of media on deviant policies, such as weakening national production, importing built products, exporting raw materials, and income redistribution. All the abovementioned roles and effects are actualized through activities performed by free and independent media.

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