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Everyday opinions on  
grand and petty corruption:  
A Portuguese study



Gabrielle Poeschl; Raquel Ribeiro



OBEGEF  
Observatório de Economia  
e Gestão de Fraude

**>> FICHA TÉCNICA****EVERYDAY OPINIONS ON GRAND AND PETTY CORRUPTION:  
A PORTUGUESE STUDY**

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## &gt;&gt; RESUMO

Neste trabalho, apresentamos um estudo relativo às opiniões das pessoas leigas sobre a grande e a pequena corrupção. O estudo foi conduzido junto de adultos jovens e mais velhos, através de um questionário constituído por questões abertas e fechadas. Os resultados indicam que, para os respondentes, a grande corrupção está relacionada com o contexto organizacional que possibilita práticas específicas e que gera julgamentos negativos. A pequena corrupção está associada a factores estruturais, sobretudo à pobreza, que também origina práticas específicas. Em geral, a corrupção está relacionada com especificidades culturais (por exemplo, o facilitismo), com traços de personalidade associados a valores individualistas, e com personalidades criminosas. Os respondentes exprimem opiniões negativas acerca das instituições que, aparentemente, não têm a capacidade para, nem a vontade de, agir sobre a corrupção, uma opinião particularmente partilhada pelos adultos mais velhos. Os resultados sugerem que as pessoas têm ideias claras sobre os contextos, os actores e as práticas de corrupção, mas não contemplam as consequências do fenómeno, um aspecto que devia ser mais salientado pelos meios de comunicação social a fim de motivar as pessoas leigas a participarem na luta contra ele.

**Palavras-chave:** teorias implícitas, grande corrupção, pequena corrupção, Portugal, capacidade e vontade das instituições

## &gt;&gt; ABSTRACT

*In this paper, we present a study of lay people's opinions on grand and petty corruption. The study was conducted with young and older adults by means of a questionnaire made up of open and closed items. Results show that, for our respondents, grand corruption is associated with the organizational context, which enables specific practices and which elicits negative judgments. Petty corruption is associated with structural factors, above all, poverty, which also triggers specific practices. Generally, corruption is associated with cultural specificities (i.e. complacency), personality traits related to individualistic values, and criminal personalities. Respondents have negative opinions of institutions that do not seem to have the capability or the will to address corruption, an opinion shared, particularly, by older adults. Results suggest that people have quite clear opinions about contexts, actors and practices of corruption, but that they do not contemplate the consequences of the phenomenon, an aspect of corruption that should be more emphasized by the media in order to make lay people willing to participate in the fight against it.*

**Keywords:** lay theories; grand corruption; petty corruption; Portugal; institutions' capability and will

## >> 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, Plato and Aristotle used the concept, which they applied to whole societies, to characterize political regimes that benefitted the interests of particular groups or sectors instead of applying laws and seeking the well-being of the citizens (Friedrich, 2002). Much later, a well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese writer, Eça de Queiroz<sup>1</sup>, maintained that the fate of Portugal was left to randomness, nepotism, and opportunism, and asked whether a country governed by chance, vanity and interests, speculation and corruption, privileges and influence of cronies would be able to conserve its independence. Without providing an answer to this question, we may note that there seems to be no country that is not, to a greater or lesser extent, affected by some form of corruption (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001). This explains why corruption is a source of concern for governments, nongovernmental organizations and individuals, and why it is presently at the center of attention of authors from various disciplines. The academic debate over corruption focuses on its definition, its measurement, its extent, its causes and consequences, as well as on the role of globalization in its evolution (Blundo, 2000).

Corruption is not only an object of debate among specialists, but has also invaded the media, which recurrently reveal cases – or suspected cases – of corruption. This stimulates the interest of lay people in the phenomenon that animates their daily conversations (Tumber and Waisbord, 2004). Although more absent from the media, petty corruption constitutes another facet of the phenomenon that generates divergences in the scientific community with regard to its similarity with grand corruption, its importance, the seriousness of its consequences, the concept of morality that it implies (Harrison, 2007).

Accordingly, we conducted a study to understand whether lay people also have an opinion about petty corruption, whether they know how to identify its attributes, and whether, in terms of morality, they differentiate between the actors and the practices associated with grand and petty corruption. Before presenting the results of our study, we review different points of view on the definition of corruption and discuss some of the facets of corruption that have generated debate among scholars.

<sup>1</sup> O Distrito de Évora. Weekly magazine. 1867.

## >> 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To define corruption is a complex task. The most common definitions concern political corruption. Thus, corruption refers to acts in which the power of public office is used for personal gain (Jain, 2001), or to the misuse of public resources by officials for private gain (Treisman, 2000). Political scientists maintain that “a public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money’s worth for doing something that he is under a duty to do anyway, that he is under a duty not to do, or to exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons” (McMullan, 1961, p. 183-184). Other authors note that the private benefits of corruption may be economic, when an exchange of cash or material goods occurs, or social, in case of clientelism, nepotism or favoritism (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001), and define corruption as “behavior that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power, or status” (Khan, 1996, p. 12).

Corruption can be found at the international level, possibly fostered by globalization (Das and DiRienzo, 2009), and, at the national level, in the different branches of government, often because of overlapping and conflicting authority (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001).

Economists have questioned a definition of corruption restricted to the public sector. They maintain that there is considerable evidence that many acts of corruption occur in the private sector and that corruption is not only used for private benefit (Hodgson and Jiang, 2007). Indeed, corruption exists within and between private businesses, within non-governmental organizations, within trade unions and sport associations. Finally, corruption also exists as a moral and cultural problem and may also affect individuals’ interactions (Miller, 2005). Private sector corruption is detrimental to the development of a society, but public corruption is more important because “controlling public sector corruption is a prerequisite for controlling private sector corruption” (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001).

The literature on corruption covers various facets of the phenomenon, such as types of corrupt practices, forms of corruption, causes and consequences of corruption.

### *Corrupt practices*

The United Nations Global Program against Corruption, which aims at implementing measures to fight corruption both in the public and the private sectors, describes different expressions of corrupt practices, such as bribery (offering money or favors to influence a public official), embezzlement (stealing money or other government property), extortion (coercing a person to pay money or to provide favors in exchange for acting or failing to act), influence peddling (using one's influence or connections to obtain favors) or nepotism (showing favoritism to relatives or close friends). These different expressions of corrupt practices appear under both, grand and petty corruption (CICP, 2001).

However, these corrupt practices can be categorized into different levels of gravity, depending on the extent of what is morally approved of and accepted (Heidenheimer, 2002). Thus, some acts are almost universally condemned and people generally think that they should be punishable (so called "black corruption"). Others are frequently held to be corrupt, but opinions of the public and the decision makers are divided ("grey corruption"). Finally, there are acts that may be generally considered as mildly or "not really" corrupt, that are widely tolerated and found not to deserve punishment ("white corruption"). Even if they are not encouraged, these acts are accepted and are difficult to uproot (Gibbons, 2010).

Heidenheimer (2002) argues that these categories are flexible: Practices that are objectively similar come to be more severely condemned and possibly punished, as one moves from the traditional to the modern communities, and from the top to the bottom of the hierarchical scale.

As a consequence, citizens may view corruption differently in different societies. Moreover, in our modern societies, there is some consensus about white and black corruption, but there are changing attitudes toward grey corruption due to the influence of the media, which frequently shine the spotlight on corrupt practises (Lipovetsky, 1996).

### *Forms of corruption*

Another distinction is related to the forms of corruption. Political or grand corruption can be distinguished from bureaucratic or petty corruption. Grand corruption involves top officials and political decision-makers, is large in scale and often involves great amounts of money. In grand corruption, highly placed individuals exploit their positions to extract bribes, embezzle large sums of money, or tailor regulations to benefit their private interests (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001).

Petty corruption involves middle or low-level public officials, who may be underpaid and who interact directly with the public. Petty corruption involves small sums of money but generally harms the poorest members of a society in their interactions with public services (schools, hospitals, police, tax administration, etc.). Petty corruption is thus a “street level” form of corruption (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001). Although grand corruption is viewed as having a more negative impact on the economy, petty corruption, with its small sums of money, represents, when aggregate, a substantial amount of public resources (Shah and Schacter, 2004).

Petty corruption seems to be more frequent in less developed countries, where people must often pay a bribe to obtain the services that they should get for free (Riley, 1999). Nevertheless, levels of the different types of corruption can vary within a country. For example, grand corruption may take place in a country where there is little petty corruption and petty corruption may take place in a country where the government is clean. In spite of this, grand corruption and petty corruption tend to go hand in hand and to be mutually reinforcing (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001; Riley, 1999).

Recently, authors have noted some types of practices in more advanced countries that can be viewed as corrupt even if they differ from the behaviors that are usually taken into consideration. These are legal acts that benefit private interests and that belong to a third form of corruption: state capture (Hellman and Kaufmann, 2001). Thus, state capture represents a form of corruption in which “firms make private payments to public officials to influence the choice and design of laws, rules and regulations” (Hellman and Kaufmann, 2001, p. 1). This implies the collusion by private actors with public officials or politicians for their mutual, private benefit, a kind of “capture” of the state apparatus (Shah and Schacter, 2004). State capture may coexist with political corruption, in which public officials exploit the private sector for their own private ends.

### *Causes of corruption*

The literature points to three types of causes for corruption, highlighting individual, structural and contextual factors. Individual factors include a predisposition for crime, lack of ethics and greed, or rational choices made by actors of corruption (Miller, 2005). Contextual factors refer to the opportunity to engage in corrupt actions, created by important governmental projects or credit incentives, or due to the lack of measures likely to prevent corruption (Argandoña, 2001).

Structural factors underline, first of all, the nations' absence of democracy, underdevelopment and poverty (Seyf, 2001). In highly corrupt coun-

tries there is little notion that the state must defend the public interest or that the law must protect the public rather than private interest, there is no institutional control of abuse of power, and no will or capability to address corruption (Shah and Schacter, 2004).

Thus, there is more corruption in less developed countries that have a less democratic tradition and a weaker judicial system and where poverty is rife (Seyf, 2001). However, the relationship between the level of development and the level of corruption is not linear (Transparency International, 2009). In addition, structural factors include culture and ethics, societal norms and values (Graaf, 2007).

In this respect, it may be noted that there is no consensus about the relationship between globalization and corruption (Das and DiRienzo, 2009). According to some authors, the intensification of the relationships between nations contributes to revealing corruption, leads to the adoption of anti-corruption regulations and reduces corruption (Williams and Beare, 1999). For other authors, on the contrary, corruption increases because the international institutions fail to promote a fair development of nations, produce poverty and create favourable conditions for corruption, or because the reduced autonomy of the states gives them less power to fight corruption (CMI, 2009). A third position maintains that when nations begin to be globalized their levels of corruption increase, but these levels decrease as they progress in the global economy. Thus, the highest levels of corruption may be observed in countries with moderate levels of globalization (Das and DiRienzo, 2009).

Finally, some specialists argue that corruption is widespread in countries where not only the public administration and the legal system are weak and undeveloped, but also where the media are under state control (Chinhamo and Shumba, 2007). The media are indeed crucial in making political wrongdoing public (Tumber and Waisbord, 2004): they can play the roles of watchdogs (checking on powerful sectors and leaders), agenda-setters (raising awareness of social problems) and gatekeepers (bringing together a plurality of viewpoints). When there are no restrictions on press freedom, no limited access to media, and when journalists do not lack professionalism, the media often have political and moral effects (Odugbemi and Norris, 2010). They may, namely, lead governments to discuss the problems raised, trigger sanctions, or change rules or policies even though public attention is more likely to be caught by scandals involving well-known figures (Coronel, 2010).

### *Consequences of corruption*

The authors who focus on the economic and social consequences of corruption are reluctant to consider corruption merely as a question of morality.

They emphasize, on the contrary, that corruption produces victims. They also reject the opinion, once defended, that the benefits of corruption might exceed the costs (Leys, 2002) and argue that corruption entails numerous negative social consequences, namely the maintenance or even increase of poverty (Riley, 1999; Seyf, 2001).

For example, according to McMullan (1961) corruption triggers the following consequences: injustice, inefficiency of services, mistrust of the government, waste of public resources, discouragement of (foreign) enterprise, political instability, repressive measures (against accusations of corruption), and restrictions on government policy. These consequences are also taken into consideration by the United Nations Organization, which underlines the role of corruption in undermining democratic institutions, slowing economic development and contributing to government instability (UNODC, 2012) and by the World Bank (1997), which states that corruption is the greatest obstacle to economic and social development. In addition, in all countries, it is the poorest people who suffer most from corruption because the economic benefits and national resources revert to the rich, instead of being attributed to programs and services that should make it possible to fight poverty (CMI, 2009).

Finally, it should be noted that the problems caused by political and bureaucratic corruption seem much more severe than the problems caused by state capture (Bauhr et al., 2010). However, some authors see “legal corruption” as a major problem and, according to Kaufmann (2008), a former Director of the World Bank Institute, the current financial crisis has its roots in legal corruption.

#### *Lay people's opinions about corruption*

Because of the social relevance of the phenomenon, numerous studies have attempted to capture the opinions of lay people about corruption. In addition to the surveys regularly conducted by Transparency International, the PEW Global Attitudes Project (2002) has shown, for example, in a survey conducted with 38 000 respondents from the five continents, that corruption, together with crime, is considered to be the biggest national problem in many countries (Pew Research Center, 2002).

With regard to Portugal, the extensive media coverage of political scandals has made grand corruption highly visible in recent years. As, on average, the Portuguese watch television for three and a half hours per day<sup>2</sup>, and as a quar-

<sup>2</sup> Marktest. <http://www.aqui.com.pt/tvnews/2012/01/13/portugueses-em-media-viram-3h38m-dias-de-televisao-em-2011/>

<sup>3</sup> Marktest. <http://www.marktest.com/wap/a/n/id~18ff.aspx>

ter of the time dedicated to the national channels is used to view information programs<sup>3</sup>, we may conclude that the Portuguese have some opinions about corruption. These opinions are revealed in the perceived level of corruption rated by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, which has seen a constant rise. In 2010 it reached a level of 6.0 on a 10-point scale, where 10 represents the lowest level of corruption (Transparency International, 2010), while 84% of the Portuguese respondents to the 2010/11 Global Corruption Barometer declared that corruption had increased in the country in the last three years (Transparency International, 2010/11).

Furthermore, data from the European Social Survey (Round 2) of the International Social Survey Programme and results of the survey "Corruption and ethics in democracy: the case of Portugal" (Sousa and Triães, 2008) suggest that corruption in Portugal is structural: on the one hand, there is a culture centered on individual success where the interests of relevant others (members of in-groups) are more important than the interests of the community at large. On the other hand, the political power lacks transparency, is blind to the problems of the citizens, and permeable to private interests. Consequently, in spite of symbolically condemning corruption, the Portuguese are likely to adopt some of the condemned behaviors when they think that they are justified (Sousa and Triães, 2008).

Quantitative surveys give valuable information on opinions about corruption, but they measure people's positioning on selected aspects of the phenomenon, failing to capture the way people's thought systems are organized and vary according to the situation at stake. Nevertheless, and even if Portuguese media coverage of the scandals generally fails to present an in-depth analysis of corruption, lay people, like the specialists, have probably constructed theories about the causes, consequences, costs and benefits of corruption. Thus, a recent study using a free association task has shown, for example, that different elements of corruption become salient when people think about corruption in general, at the global level and at the national (Portuguese) level (Poeschl and Ribeiro, 2010). It has also revealed that, when people think about corruption, they are likely to evoke actors, roles and sectors, but overlook the consequences of corruption.

As the media coverage of corruption scandals was thought to have had an impact on immediate responses about corruption obtained in this study, we decided to proceed with our research by focusing on grand corruption and petty corruption. The objective was to obtain more information about lay people's opinions on corruption and identify possible theories about the phenomenon, in particular about the importance given to individual, organizational (contextual) and societal (structural) factors (Graaf, 2007). We

believe that it is important to uncover these theories, because they explain lay people's attitudes toward corrupt actors and practices, and account for their behaviors, which may range from following the example to getting ready to act against corrupt practices.

## >> 3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Respondents

Two hundred respondents filled out our questionnaire but eighteen had to be removed because they did not understand the term petty corruption. Thus, our sample is made up of 182 respondents, distributed by sex: 87 men and 95 women, and by age group: 88 under 35 years of age (minimum: 16 years, average: 23.74) and 94 over 35 years of age (maximum: 62 years, mean: 47.27 years). Almost all respondents (except four) were of Portuguese nationality. Among the respondents 88 were single, and 92 were or had been married (2 did not answer this question). With regard to professional activity, 55 were independent workers, senior or junior executives, 65 employees or factory workers, 61 were not employed (among whom there were 47 students) (one person did not answer this question). In relation to educational level, 47 respondents had completed compulsory education, 41 had completed high school and 90 were following or had completed a university degree (4 did not answer this question). Most of the respondents said they were Catholics (109), moderately practicing (4.66 on a 7-point scale where 1 = not at all practicing), 58 declared they had no religion and 20 did not answer this question.

Politically, the respondents were distributed between the extreme-left (11 respondents) and the extreme-right (3 respondents), and 40 declared they had no political orientation. On average, respondents were situated to the center-left (3.69 on a 7-point scale where 1 = extreme-left). They stated they did not have much interest in politics (at the national level: 4.35; at the international level: 3.87, on a 7-point scale where 7 = very much interested).

#### *Questionnaire and procedure*

The study was conducted by means of a questionnaire made up of open and closed items. First, respondents were asked to write ten words or expressions that come to their mind when they think about grand corruption (i.e. corruption practiced by persons in important positions) and petty corruption (i.e. corruption practiced by common citizens). The order of presentation of the stimuli was counterbalanced. Then respondents had to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much), the extent to which, in their opinion, at the national and at the international level, corruption affects politics, justice, economy and finance, and society in general, and the extent to which natio-

nal and international institutions demonstrate the capability and the will to address grand and petty corruption.

Respondents were also asked to rate national and international institutions (1 = very negative; 7 = very positive). Finally, socio-demographic data were gathered (sex, age, nationality, marital status, profession, level of education, religion, political orientation, and interest in politics at the national and international level).

The questionnaire was randomly administered by the students who participated in the study in April of 2010. The distribution by age group and sex was controlled and respondents answered the questions individually.

#### *Experimental design*

The design of the study was a 2 (sex: male respondents vs. female respondents) x 2 (age group: young adults vs. older adults).

#### *Data analysis*

We began by analyzing the extensiveness and the nature of the information gathered from the open items. To that end, we introduced all the words into a data file, applying only the reduction rules generally used in the free association tasks (Rosenberg and Jones, 1972). Then, we grouped some obvious synonyms, but we did not perform a content analysis. To describe the information, we calculated the following statistics (cf. Poeschl and Ribeiro, 2010): fluidity (the total number of words); amplitude (the number of different words); richness (the ratio between amplitude and fluidity).

Secondly, we analyzed the content of the information gathered, registering the most frequent words and comparing, by means of the chi-square statistic, the frequency of their association with grand and petty corruption. According to some authors (e.g. Hampton, 1979), frequency may be taken as a measure of the importance of the words for the definition of a concept.

Then, we used the *Alceste* program of textual data analysis to uncover the structure of the information about corruption, i.e. to extract its different dimensions and identify whether they were more representative of some groups of respondents. *Alceste* executes a descending cluster analysis based on the co-occurrence of the words that constitute the corpus, using the chi-square distance (e.g. Reinert, 1993).

Finally, we analyzed the extent to which respondents perceive that national and international institutions have the capability and the will to address grand and petty corruption and looked for distinct types of opinions. We attempted to relate these opinions to the rating of national and international institutions as well as to the dimensions of grand and petty corruption.

## >> 4. RESULTS

### Information about corruption

Globally, 1993 responses were registered, among which 244 different words with a frequency of occurrence varying from 1 (62 words) to 63 (politics). Table 1 presents the measures of amplitude, fluidity and richness, globally and separately for grand and petty corruption. As expected, information about grand corruption was more structured than information about petty corruption.

*Table 1. Information about grand corruption and petty corruption.*

	Grand corruption	Petty corruption	Total
Amplitude	187	204	244
Fluidity	1068	925	1993
Richness	.18	.22	.12

Note. Richness varies between 0 and 1, i.e., from total consensus to total divergence.

Table 2 registers the words mentioned by more than 10% of the respondents. As may be seen, the most frequent words, after politics, are money (56), power (55), greed (52) and football (51), evoked by more than one quarter of the respondents. The frequency of occurrence of money and greed did not differ when applying to grand or petty corruption and they may constitute the very core of the definition of corruption.

The words registered in Table 2 suggest that grand corruption is associated with the sectors in which scandals occurred that were given wide coverage by the Portuguese media (see also Poeschl and Ribeiro, 2010). They also evoke the positions of power of the actors of corruption. On the other hand, petty corruption is more specifically associated with needs or ambition, and evokes the common practice of pulling strings, which seems particularly well tolerated in Portugal (Sousa, 2008).

*Table 2. Most frequent words about corruption. Significant differences between petty and grand corruption, as shown by the chi-square statistic.*

Word	Total frequency	Petty	Grand	Chi-square
Politics	63	12	51	24.14***
Money	56	25	31	.64
Power	55	11	44	19.80***
Greed	52	22	30	1.23
Football	51	10	41	18.84***
Lack of principles	49	17	32	4.59*
Cheat	48	29	19	2.08
Thieves	45	20	25	.56
Robbery	44	27	17	2.27
Lies	43	22	21	.02
Dishonest	41	22	19	.22
Bribery	36	20	16	.44
Favors	32	21	11	3.13
Injustice	31	15	16	.03
Ambition	26	18	8	3.85*
Selfishness	26	13	13	.00
Lack of respect	24	12	12	.00
Opportunism	23	13	10	.39
False	23	11	12	.04
Scandal	22	1	21	18.18***
Need	22	21	1	18.18***
Lack of personality	22	8	14	1.64
String-pulling	21	16	5	5.76*
Embezzlement	21	8	13	1.19
Abuse of power	20	2	18	12.80***

Note: \*\*\*:  $p < .001$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; \*:  $p < .05$ .

### *Structure of the information about corruption*

The *Alceste* software for textual data used to uncover specific ways of thinking about corruption included all words with a frequency of at least 3 occurrences and classified 88% of the responses. Eight classes of words were extracted: three classes are more representative of grand corruption, two more representative of petty corruption, and the other three are common to both types of corruption.

Grand corruption is situated in the organizational context. The first class (16.30% of the corpus) mentions the institutions most likely to favor corruption, e.g. politics, football ( $\chi^2 > 90$ ), local authorities ( $\chi^2 > 80$ ), public sector, banks ( $\chi^2 > 50$ ), government, police ( $\chi^2 > 40$ ). The second class (10.03% of the corpus) points to specific unethical practices likely to take place in these institutions. It is organized around money ( $\chi^2 > 40$ ), and includes money laundering, embezzlement ( $\chi^2 > 30$ ), taxes, drugs, arms ( $\chi^2 > 25$ ). The third most representative class of grand corruption (12.54% of the corpus) is made up of moral judgments about these institutions and practices. It comprises interests ( $\chi^2 > 30$ ), mistrust, schemes, deterioration ( $\chi^2 > 20$ ), lies, opportunism, abuse of power, revolt ( $\chi^2 > 15$ ).

There is only one class that is slightly more representative of a group of respondents: younger adults are more likely to mention the practices that are typical of grand corruption ( $\chi^2 = 2.39$ ).

The first class that appears most often associated with petty corruption (13.17% of the corpus) situates the phenomenon in a societal context that promotes instrumental practices involving money, e.g. bribe ( $\chi^2 > 80$ ), money ( $\chi^2 > 20$ ), blackmail, kickback, opportunities ( $\chi^2 > 15$ ). The second most representative class of petty corruption (5.96%) focuses on the importance of general economic conditions, and is organized around poverty ( $\chi^2 > 166$ ). It also includes needs ( $\chi^2 > 70$ ), scoundrel ( $\chi^2 > 40$ ), wise guy ( $\chi^2 > 20$ ). The groups of respondents do not differ with regard to the dimensions of petty corruption.

The two classes of words associated with petty corruption are related to the three common classes. The first class (7.21% of the corpus) stresses Portuguese cultural specificities, namely complacency ( $\chi^2 > 70$ ), economy ( $\chi^2 > 60$ ), social status, mentality ( $\chi^2 > 50$ ), ethics ( $\chi^2 > 30$ ), influence peddling, social norms ( $\chi^2 > 20$ ). The second class (21.32%) points to different traits related to individualist values, such as selfishness ( $\chi^2 > 60$ ), nastiness ( $\chi^2 > 50$ ), greed ( $\chi^2 > 40$ ), lack of respect, ambition ( $\chi^2 > 30$ ), disloyalty, hypocrisy ( $\chi^2 > 20$ ). Finally, the remaining class of common responses (13.48%) situates corruption at the individual level and depicts the actors of corrupt practices as "criminals" ( $\chi^2 > 120$ ), or also bastards ( $\chi^2 > 80$ ), shameless ( $\chi^2 > 50$ ), thieves ( $\chi^2 > 40$ ), spineless, parasites, nonsense ( $\chi^2 > 30$ ).

Respondents agree about cultural specificities, but there are differences between groups with regard to the two other classes: The class of traits related to individualist values is more typical of young adults ( $\chi^2 = 9.58$ ) and of female respondents ( $\chi^2 = 6.85$ ), whereas the "criminals" class, which associates corruption with stable personality factors, is more representative of older adults ( $\chi^2 = 5.73$ ).

In short, the opinions about grand and petty corruption seem to have a relatively consensual organization. Only the young adults seem to be more aware of the types of practices that characterize grand corruption. Young adults, as well as female respondents, are also more likely to explain corruption in terms of personality traits acquired from current individualist values, whereas older adults, by contrast, seem to attribute corruption to individuals whose moral character is defined by their acts (cf. Miller, 2005).

#### *Affected institutions*

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they think that corruption affects politics, justice, economy and finance, and society as a whole. Data indicate that they perceive a high level of corruption in all sectors (see Table 3).

*Table 3. Levels of corruption perceived to affect different sectors, at national and international levels (1 = not at all; 7 = very much).*

	National	International	t (181)
Politics	6.24	5.69	7.33***
Justice	5.85	5.45	3.88***
Economy and finance	6.22	5.87	4.50***
Society	5.97	5.64	4.23***

\*\*\*:  $p < .001$ .

We performed an analysis of variance 4 (sector: politics vs. justice vs. economy and finance vs. society) x 2 (sex: male respondents vs. female respondents) x 2 (age group: young adults vs. older adults) with repeated measures on the first factor, on the ratings of corruption at national level. The analysis revealed a significant effect of sector,  $F(3, 534) = 7.13$ ,  $p < .001$ . As may be seen in Table 3, this effect indicates that respondents perceive more corruption in the sectors of politics and economy and finance than in the realm of justice or in society in general. It may be noted that, although respondents spontaneously associate corruption with the public sphere, they do not believe that the level of corruption is lower in the private sphere.

There are also differences due to sex belongingness,  $F(1, 178) = 14.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , showing that, generally, female respondents perceive more corruption than male respondents (male respondents: 5.83; female respondents: 6.28), as well as differences due to age group,  $F(1, 178) = 5.23$ ,  $p = .023$ , showing that young adults perceive less corruption than older adults (young adults: 5.92; older adults: 6.19). There are no effects of interaction between variables.

Finally, in the opinion of our respondents, all Portuguese sectors are more affected by corruption than the equivalent sectors at international level (Table 3, right column).

#### *Opinions about institutions' capability and will to address corruption*

We performed a cluster analysis (K-means cluster analysis of IBM SPSS) on respondents' ratings of the capability and will of national and international institutions to address corruption. The analysis extracted three types of position (see Table 4): The first cluster groups respondents who perceive that institutions have the capability and the will to act on corruption – with the exception of national institutions that do not seem to be likely to address grand corruption; the second cluster groups respondents who believe that institutions have the capability but not the will to address corruption and the last cluster groups respondents who think that institutions have neither the capability nor the will to act on corruption.

*Table 4. National and international institutions' capability and will to address corruption (1 = no, not at all; 7 = yes, very much).*

	Capability and will (n = 61)	Capability but no will (n = 59)	No capability and no will (n = 62)	F (2, 179)
National institutions have the capability to address grand corruption	3.74b	5.47a	2.47c	53.09***
National institutions have the capability to address petty corruption	5.41a	4.99a	3.10b	40.43***
International institutions have the capability to address grand corruption	5.04b	5.68a	2.66c	88.31***
International institutions have the capability to address petty corruption	5.33a	4.83a	2.85b	48.01***
National institutions have the will to address grand corruption	3.72a	3.00b	1.87c	22.97***
National institutions have the will to address petty corruption	5.34a	3.41b	2.31c	67.81***
International institutions have the will to address grand corruption	5.18a	3.93b	2.55c	47.46***
International institutions have the will to address petty corruption	5.51a	3.71b	2.55c	76.80***

\*\*\*,  $p < .001$ .

As may be seen in Table 4, respondents are equally divided into the three clusters. This is also the case of respondents of both sexes,  $\chi^2(2) = 2.77$ , ns.

However, there are significant differences with regard to the distribution by age group,  $\chi^2 (2) = 7.54, p = .023$ . These differences are due to the fact that there are more young adults than older adults who believe that institutions have the capability and the will to address corruption (respectively 37 vs 24), whereas there are more older adults than young adults who believe that institutions have more capability than will to fight corruption (respectively 38 vs 21). In the third cluster, grouping people who think that institutions do not have either the capability or the will to address corruption, young and older adults are equally represented (respectively 30 vs 32).

It thus seems that young adults, who in earlier questions indicated that they perceive less corruption in the different national sectors, are somewhat more optimistic in relation to the fight against corruption than older adults. An analysis of the remaining socio-demographic variables indicates that there are no differences in opinions due to religion, political orientation, level of education, or whether or not the respondents were employed.

#### *Correlates of opinions about institutions' capability and will to address corruption*

Different analyses of variance were performed in order to identify whether differences in opinions about institutions' capability and will to address corruption were associated with differences in opinions about the variables under scrutiny, and, in the first place, about the ratings of national and international institutions (see Table 5). Results show that respondents generally have a rather negative opinion about institutions, and an even more negative opinion in relation to national than to international institutions (national institutions: 3.27; international institutions: 3.84),  $F (1, 179) = 36.24, p < .001$ . Moreover, respondents who believe that institutions have no capability and no will to fight corruption express a significantly more negative opinion about the national and international institutions,  $F (2, 179) = 9.30, p < .001$ .

*Table 5. Opinions about national and international institutions (1= very negative; 7 = very positive).*

	National institutions	International institutions
Capability and will	3.51	4.21
Capability but no will	3.53	3.98
No capability and no will	2.79	3.32

On the other hand, differences in opinions about institutions' capability and will to address corruption are not associated with differences in the ratings

of corruption in the different sectors (politics, justice, economy and finance, society), neither at the national,  $F(2, 179) = 2.20$ , ns, nor at the international level,  $F(2, 179) = 1.54$ , ns.

Finally, differences in opinions about institutions' capability and will to address corruption are related to three dimensions of the structure of the information about corruption. Thus, respondents who think that institutions have the capability but not the will to fight corruption are more likely to list practices of petty corruption,  $\chi^2 = 3.89$ , and to mention the personality of corrupt actors,  $\chi^2 = 3.37$ . The lack of motivation of the institutions to address corruption appears, therefore, to be linked to the opinion that petty practices are known but tolerated by institutions and, for older adults more specifically, that it is a problem caused by a group of shameless criminals.

For their part, respondents who think that institutions have the will to fight corruption and the capability to deal with petty corruption are more likely to mention the Portuguese complacent culture,  $\chi^2 = 4.99$ . For these respondents, corruption appears as a type a mentality that is difficult to uproot and which is resistant to the efforts of the institutions.

## >> 5. CONCLUSIONS

The information gathered by the free association task suggests that, for our respondents, corruption is above all a question of money and greed. It is less associated with practices such as nepotism or influence-peddling, for example, which is in line with the findings of Sousa (2008). Nevertheless, corruption appears as a familiar concept to most respondents, although the concept of grand corruption seems more structured than that of petty corruption. In the opinion of our respondents, corruption is widespread. Grand corruption takes place in organizational contexts, with specific practices that originate negative judgments. Petty corruption also has its specific behaviors but they are associated with a societal context of poverty. This does not prevent people from viewing corruption as a phenomenon related to a criminal personality, to traits developed by the current individualistic values, or to a particular cultural context of complacency. Institutions are not viewed as very motivated to address corruption, especially grand corruption, and are not positively rated.

Thus, our results suggest that corruption and corrupt people are severely condemned by lay people, who focus on factors likely to favor corruption, such as socio-cultural and organizational contexts, or personality traits. However, as already observed in a more general perspective (cf. CICIP, 2001), lay people seem not to be very aware of the social consequences of corrupt practices. This fact might explain why Portuguese citizens disapprove of corrupt practices and reluctantly accept lenient verdicts in the cases of grand corruption, but do not manifest much motivation to participate in organized actions against corruption. Results thus highlight the need for better information about the social costs of corruption if we want the **fight against the phenomenon to become, in the words of the United Nations, “a shared responsibility”** (UNODC, 2008).

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