

# Unveiling the Faces of Corruption in Education: A Systematic Literature Review of Various Forms of Corruption across Countries and Educational Levels

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**Abstracts.** In recent years, researchers have paid close attention to educational corruption. While numerous studies have investigated various forms of corruption in education, there has been a dearth of research that spans a wide range of countries and educational levels. Based on the findings of the previous decade, this study attempted to fill this research gap by undertaking a systematic review of various forms of corruption in education across countries and educational levels. Using a systematic literature review technique, this study assessed the prevalence of various forms of corruption in education, with a focus on bribery as the most commonly reported form across countries. Furthermore, it showed that higher education institutions gained greater research focus regarding corruption and exhibited a diverse variety of corrupt activities compared to primary and secondary education. This review emphasized the significance of future research on corruption in elementary and secondary education, particularly on types of corruption other than bribery and mutually beneficial connections. This study contributed to the existing literature by enhancing our understanding of the many types of corruption in education and their prevalence across countries and educational levels. It also provided policymakers and educators with insights into how to establish effective tactics for eliminating corruption in education systems.

**Keywords:** Corruption, education, bribery, systematic review

## Korupcijos švietime veidų atskleidimas: korupcijos formų įvairiose šalyse ir švietimo lygmenimis sisteminė literatūros apžvalga

**Santrauka.** Pastaraisiais metais mokslininkai skiria daug dėmesio korupcijai švietimo srityje. Nors ankstesniuose tyrimuose jau nagrinėtos galimos korupcijos formos švietime, iki šiol trūksta tyrimų, apimančių įvairias šalis ir

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švietimo lygius. Šių mokslinių tyrimų spragą padeda užpildyti pristatoma sisteminė korupcijos formų įvairiose šalyse ir švietimo lygmenimis apžvalga. Sisteminės literatūros apžvalgos metodu tyrime įvertintas įvairių korupcijos formų paplitimas švietime, daugiausia dėmesio skiriama kyšininkavimui, kuris yra dažniausiai pasitaikanti korupcijos forma visose šalyse. Tyrimas parodė, kad aukštojo mokslo institucijos sulaukė didesnio tyrimų dėmesio korupcijai ir pasižymėjo didesne korupcinių veiklų įvairove, palyginti su pradinio ir vidurinio ugdymo įstaigomis. Apžvalgoje pabrėžiama būsimų korupcijos pradiniam ir viduriniame ugdyme tyrimų svarba, o ypač kitų korupcijos rūšių, ne tik kyšininkavimo ir abipusiškai naudingų ryšių. Apibendrinant reikia pažymėti, kad šis tyrimas papildo esamą literatūrą išplėsdamas supratimą apie daugybę korupcijos rūšių švietime ir jų paplitimą įvairiose šalyse bei švietimo lygmenimis. Jis taip pat suteikia politikos formuotojams ir pedagogams išvalgų, kaip kurti veiksmingas korupcijos švietimo sistemoje prevencijos taktikas.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** korupcija, švietimas, kyšininkavimas, sisteminė apžvalga.

## Introduction

Because of the prevalence of significant challenges in other areas, corruption in education is frequently disregarded. However, the circumstances, which include diminishing government spending and a lack of regulatory frameworks, require attention to the issue. It is obvious that a lack of clear norms and laws increases the likelihood of corruption (Heyneman, 2004). Corruption in education can manifest in different forms, such as embezzlement, nepotism, bribery, and misappropriation of funds. This problem is not limited to developing countries; it also affects developed countries, where corruption can occur in the form of favoritism, selling admission, cheating, ghost writing and plagiarism (Chapman & Lindner, 2016).

Recently, there has been a surge in interest in educational corruption. Many studies have been conducted on educational corruption, but the majority of them have concentrated on a single country. However, there are still several studies that have discussed corruption in education using data from more than one country. The study conducted by Hallak and Poisson, based on data from various countries, explained that there are eight areas in education that have the potential to become corrupted: school infrastructure, equipment, teacher recruiting, teacher behavior, information systems, specific allowances, and funds. Corruption in these eight areas has a negative impact on educational access, quality, equity, ethics, and policy priorities (Hallak & Poisson, 2004). Then, another study conducted by Sahnoun and Abdennaher based on data from 75 countries explained that corruption also has a negative impact on the economy, especially in developing countries. Corruption can distort education spending, weaken institutions, limit foreign investment, and hamper growth and investment (Sahnoun & Abdennadher, 2020). Lastly, research conducted by Saengchai et al. based on data from eight Asian countries explained that corruption has a significant effect on the quality of education (Saengchai et al., 2020).

There are also additional studies based on data from more than one country, but they focus on specific level of education. At the higher education level, study conducted by Heyneman et al. discussed about a cost of corruption, which explained that high levels of educational corruption have a major detrimental influence on the economic benefits of higher education, resulting in lower income outcomes for highly educated people in

various regions (Heyneman et al., 2008). Osipian conducted research on how the media in Russia and the USA report on corruption in higher education. The range of issues covered is broad, however some serious kinds of corruption are either underreported or ignored (Osipian, 2020). Another study was conducted by Chapman and Lindner about the corruption risk in higher education. According to them, the impact of unethical practices in higher education might have a broader harmful impact since it weakens the relationship between personal work and expectations of return. The risk is that employees and students will come to feel that personal success is achieved by shortcuts rather than merit and hard work (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). Another study was conducted by Duerrenberger and Warning, which discussed the effect of corruption on education in developing countries. In developing countries, empirical data suggests a substantial and consistent negative association between corruption and predicted years of schooling. Furthermore, the influence of public higher education enrollment on expected years of schooling is dependent on the extent of corruption, with low levels of corruption positively impacting expected years of schooling and high levels of corruption negatively influencing it (Duerrenberger & Warning, 2018).

Based on the numerous studies stated above, we discovered a small number of studies that address the forms of corruption in education based on data from various countries and various educational levels. As a result, we are interested in enriching the literature on that topic. We conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify relevant studies that could answer the following study questions:

1. What are the forms of corruption in education in various countries?
2. At which educational levels does corruption occur?

The Scopus database will be used for this systematic literature review, which will include publications published between 2013 and 2023.

## **Theoretical Background**

The definition of corruption is actually subject to controversy. There is rarely a clear consensus on the definition of corruption, which can make its meaning either too broad to be effectively used or too narrow, rendering it inapplicable except for specific cases (Waite & Allen, 2003). While many agree that behaviors such as bribery and fraud are part of corruption and clearly violate the law, there are still many other issues related to corruption that lead to different opinions among people (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). It can be said that researchers have not yet been able to reach a consensus on the nature, scope, and scale of corruption (Trubnikova & Trubnikov, 2018). This is further complicated by the challenges faced by researchers when conducting studies on corruption. Exposing corruption cases can jeopardize the social, economic, and political positions of all parties involved (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016).

If we looked at the meaning of the word, the term corruption is derived from the Latin word “*corruptio*,” which meant “moral decay,” “wicked behavior,” “putridity,” or “rotteness” in Medieval Latin. Therefore, corruption can be defined as a lack of cleanliness and

purpose or as a social decomposition (Osipian, 2009). Corruption can also be defined as not adhering to accepted standards of behavior, displaying moral impairment, and engaging in improper conduct (Serfontein & de Waal, 2015). The popular meaning of corruption is the misuse of public office, the violation of legal boundaries between public positions and personal interests, and dishonest or criminal activity committed by important individuals for personal benefit (Abdullahi & Kadir, 2018; Eiamnate, 2023; Rummyantseva, 2005; Sarmini et al., 2018; Welch, 2020). Corruption and its perception can also be considered cultural phenomena since corruption is intertwined with social dynamics, personal values, and moral perspectives in society (Eiamnate, 2023). For the sake of an easier focus on the discussion in this article, we used the popular meaning of corruption.

When it comes to education, corruption has become a global issue (Abdullahi & Kadir, 2018). Corruption in education is defined by the more general set of corruption issues, which includes the abuse of authority for material gain. However, because education is a vital public good, its professional standards cover more than just material goods; thus, the definition of education corruption includes the misuse of authority for both personal and material gain (Heyneman, 2004). This means that corruption in education is more than just an economic issue; it may also be an insidious force weakening the moral authority and transparency of governments and political systems (Weidman & Enkhjargal, 2008). When it comes to higher education, corruption in education can be defined as a network of informal relationships built to control unauthorized access to material and nonmaterial assets through abuse of public or corporate trust (Osipian, 2014). Corruption in higher education becomes more complex compared to other levels, as the negative impact of corruption not only affects access, quality, and equity in education but also extends to other crucial areas such as research and auxiliary enterprises (Osipian, 2020).

There are two sorts of educational corruption: nonpecuniary and pecuniary corruption. A bribe is a sort of monetary corruption in which an individual or group chooses to abuse his or her official status to monetarily benefit by accepting a bribe from another individual or group who expects to receive a favor or benefit in exchange. Nonmonetary forms of corruption do not include the payment of a bribe. Instead, favors are exchanged, and no money is exchanged (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016).

Widespread corruption discourages investment, stifles growth, undermines fiscal stability, promotes inequality, decreases the efficacy of public administration, distorts public expenditure decisions, and undermines the rule of law (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). Corruption disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable, increasing costs and limiting access to services such as health care, education, and justice (Eiamnate, 2023). Corruption consumes valuable resources, making it more difficult to provide essential services (Welch, 2020). Corruption also causes the appointment of unqualified people as a result of favoritism, which creates economic stagnation that is detrimental to the country's progress and development (Abdullahi & Kadir, 2018).

Corruption in education breaches the norms of social justice and equality for all educational participants (Frolova, 2014). Corruption reduces school access and performance

while diminishing the amount and efficacy of public education spending (Dridi, 2014). Corruption in education may also operate as an additional tax, disadvantageously affecting impoverished students and limiting equal access to human capital (Borcan et al., 2017). Misallocation of talent is increased in countries with educational corruption because the most capable people may not be assigned to jobs that require their skills (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013).

Corruption in education can have a direct impact on the value systems of entire generations as well as the future culture of an entire region or country. In the long run, they can result in a significant drop in academic achievement and economic competitiveness (Andrei et al., 2009). One of the serious consequences of educational corruption is a loss of confidence. If students believe that admission and grades can be bought, the country's economic and political destiny is jeopardized (du Plessis, 2014). Corruption also wreaks havoc on infrastructure, denying many people access to decent education and so systemically creating immorality, as well as resorting to high-profile criminality such as militancy and insurgency (Abdullahi & Kadir, 2018).

Corruption in education takes many forms. Some of the forms mentioned by Hallak were: fraud in public tendering, embezzlement, school mapping, bypass of criteria, favoritism, nepotism, bribes, ghost teachers, selling of information, academic fraud, manipulating data, selecting/suppressing information, transgressing rules/procedures, inflation of costs and activities, opacity of flow, and leakage of funds (Hallak & Poisson, 2004). Chapman and Lindner mentioned several forms of corruption that are more relevant to higher education, such as: changing students' grades for money or favors, running sham journals, special treatment in university accreditation reviews, selling admissions, misleading students about employment prospects, falsification of data in research, plagiarism, ghost authoring, bias in conducting or interpreting research, paying for nonmerit based publications, and cheating (Chapman & Lindner, 2016).

## **Methods**

The research method employed in this study was a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). A systematic literature review is a research approach that entails locating, evaluating, and analyzing relevant research in order to answer a specific research issue. Its purpose is to find and include all relevant empirical evidence that fits certain criteria. Bias can be reduced by using explicit and methodical approaches, resulting in accurate findings for drawing conclusions and making informed decisions (Snyder, 2019). This study utilized PRISMA 2020 as a guideline in conducting the SLR. (Page et al., 2021).

### *Search Strategy*

The papers considered for review were carefully picked based on particular criteria. 14 papers were accumulated after a thorough screening of the identified papers, including a comprehensive examination of each paper's title, abstract, and content, as well as the exclusion of those papers that were not relevant to the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for the papers that will be included in the review are listed below. The academic papers had to:

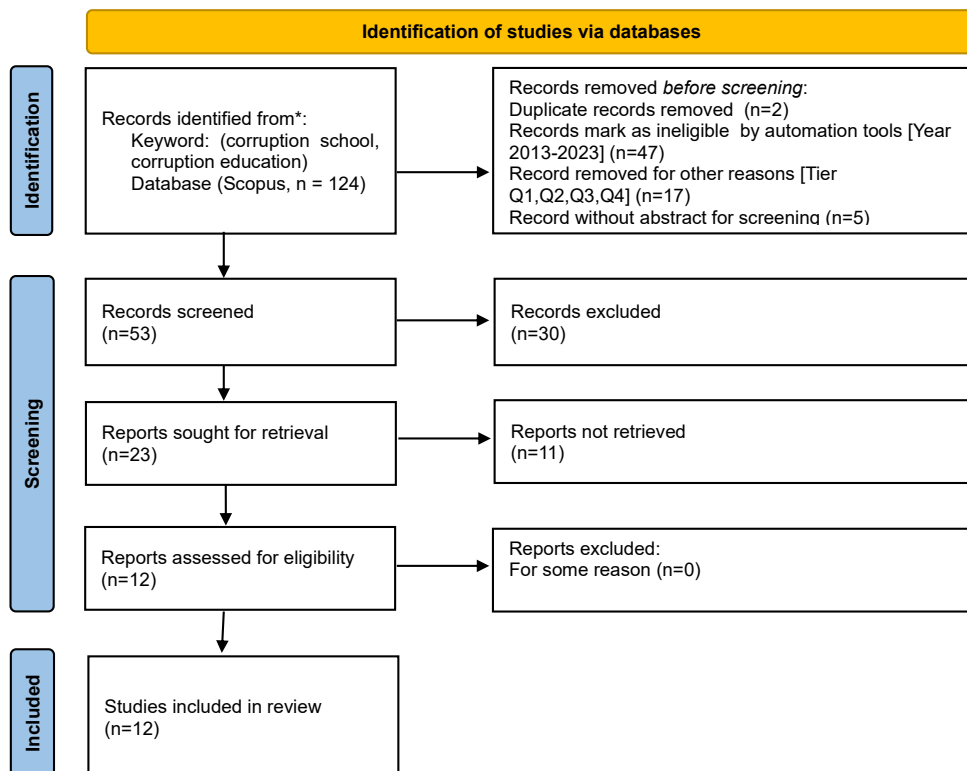
1. Be indexed in the Scopus database.
2. Include the keywords.
  - a. “Corruption” and “education” in the *title* or *keywords*
  - b. “Corruption” and “school” in the *title* or *keywords*
3. Be published between 2013 and 2023.
4. Be published in article format.
5. Discuss the forms of corruption in education.

Figure 1 shows the number of papers discovered for each keyword as well as the number of papers that eventually made up the body of this review after their inclusion.

| Keywords                     | Number of papers identified in search | Number of included papers |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| “Corruption” and “education” | 103                                   | 11                        |
| “Corruption” and “school”    | 21                                    | 1                         |
| Total                        | 124                                   | 12                        |

**Figure 1.** The numbers of papers discovered for each keywords and the numbers of included papers in the review

The PRISMA 2020 flowchart depicting the process of selecting the papers used in this study can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Flowchart SLR PRISMA 2020

## Data Analysis

The suitable articles were then categorized into several sections to address the research questions. Therefore, two categories were determined to facilitate data analysis. These categories were:

1. Forms of corruption: The forms of corruption described in the articles
2. Educational levels where corruption occurs: The educational levels included in this paper were primary education, secondary education, and higher education.

## Results

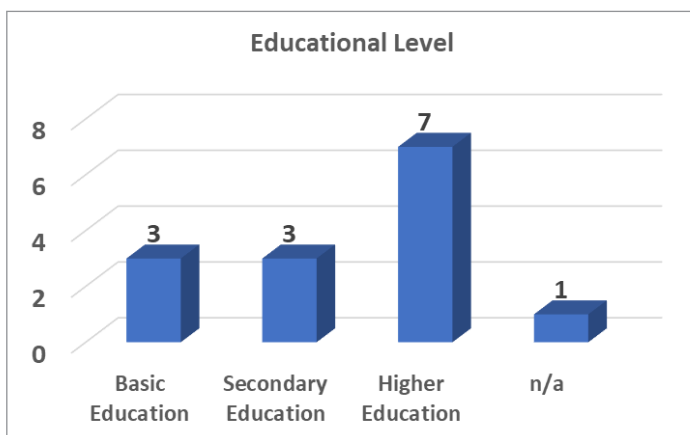
### Forms of Corruption

Based on the collected papers, the most prevalent form of corruption in education was bribery. Bribery in education was used to gain advantages in terms of college admissions, obtaining illegal facilitation in exams, achieving high grades, and acquiring rights withheld by corrupt parties. Besides bribery, another common form of corruption is the utilization of social networks to obtain favors. At the level of higher education, misappropriation of funds and fraud in research or publications were also frequent forms of corruption. Regarding countries, papers from Eastern European countries contributed the most to this research, followed by countries in South Asia such as India and Bangladesh.

| No | Researchers                 | Year | Country               | Forms of Corruption   |
|----|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------|---|
| 1  | Choe et al.                 | 2013 | Bangladesh            | Bribery<br>Favor Reciprocation  |
| 2  | Sabic-El-Rayees             | 2013 | Bosnia<br>Herzegovina | Bribery<br>Intimidation<br>Plagiarisme  |
| 3  | Borisova                    | 2014 | Rusia                 | Favor Reciprocation   |
| 4  | Sabic-El-Rayees &<br>Mansur | 2016 | Bosnia<br>Herzegovina | Favor Reciprocation   |
| 5  | Borcan et al.               | 2017 | Rumania               | Bribery   |
| 6  | Osipian                     | 2017 | Ukraina               | Bribery<br>Intimidation   |
| 7  | Schwartz                    | 2017 | USA                   | Favor Reciprocation<br>Data Manipulation  |
| 8  | Tierney &<br>Sabharwal      | 2017 | India                 | Bribery<br>Favor Reciprocation<br>Data Manipulation                               |
| 9  | Sofie Höckel et al.         | 2018 | Moldova               | Bribery   |
| 10 | Zhllima et al.              | 2018 | Albania               | Bribery<br>Favoritism   |
| 11 | Emran et al.                | 2020 | Bangladesh            | Bribery   |
| 12 | Mandel                      | 2020 | Rusia                 | Bribery<br>Predator Publication<br>Fake Dissertation<br>Misappropriation of Funds |

## *Educational Level*

There were 3 articles that discussed corruption at the primary and secondary education levels, namely, Choe et al., Sofie Höckel et al., and Emran et al. There was 1 article that addressed corruption at the secondary education level, authored by Borcan et al. One article did not clearly specify the educational level. As for the remaining 7 articles, all of them focused on corruption occurring at the higher education level. Over the past decade, higher education has remained the primary focus of research on corruption in education.



## **Discussion**

### *Forms of Corruption*

Bribery was the most prevalent form of corruption in education, based on the articles included in this research. Bribery occurred in nearly every country mentioned in the articles. The most common type of bribery was related to grades and school admissions. In Bangladesh, families offered bribes to secure school admissions for their children (Choe et al., 2013; Emran et al., 2020). Russian university students considered bribery for grades to be a common practice, although not many teachers were involved (Mandel, 2020). In Ukraine, students resorted to bribery, believing it to be easier than mastering the subject matter (Osipian, 2017). In Bosnia, students perceived exams to have a “price,” and some professors intentionally failed students multiple times to signal that passing required additional payments, especially for students without access to influential individuals (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). In Moldova, direct bribery practices aimed to gain teachers’ attention towards a student or improve their grades. Additionally, some teachers helped students by providing answers during exams, motivated by bribery (Sofie Höckel et al., 2018). In Albania, monetary bribes have increasingly become a key instrument of corruption in education. Teachers or professors at universities directly requested that students submit money or valuable items in exchange for passing grades or good performance (Zhlhlima et al., 2018). In Romania, where the Bacalaureate exam had a signifi-



cant impact on high school students, cheating was rampant. Bribery during the exam took two forms: collective bribery and individual bribery. Collective bribery involved pooling funds from students to influence the exam committee or supervisors to facilitate cheating during the exam. Individual bribery, on the other hand, consisted of substantial sums of money personally sent by students to members of the exam evaluation committee to boost their grades or replace answer sheets with correct versions, often with the help of teachers or school principals as intermediaries. Individual bribes were typically given by wealthy students (Borcan et al., 2017).

In addition to direct involvement in grades and school admissions, bribery was sometimes conducted covertly through private tutoring activities. This covert bribery occurred through informal payments to teachers in exchange for personal tutoring, which was seen as an investment to enhance students' abilities (Sofie Höckel et al., 2018). In Bangladesh, private tutoring has become an illegal additional source of income for teachers. During school hours, teachers would only cover a portion of the curriculum, and students could obtain the rest by paying for private tutoring with teachers after school (Choe et al., 2013).

Bribery, of course, is not only conducted to improve grades or facilitate school admissions. In Bangladesh, parents paid bribes to obtain various services such as free books, scholarship acceptance, and undocumented donations (Emran et al., 2020). In India, bribes are also given to obtain or maintain operating licenses for private colleges. Private colleges in India can operate after entering into agreements with the state, establishing working relationships with state universities, and maintaining credentials. Additionally, colleges must undergo visits from specific regulatory bodies. Bribes are given to expedite these processes. Moreover, payments can help colleges avoid negative assessments by accreditation and inspection teams (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017).

Aside from bribery, other corrupt practices in education that were widely explored in the papers included in this study were special treatment provided to certain parties, whether owing to favoritism, favor reciprocation, or even intimidation. In Bangladesh, high-status households were able to exploit informal contacts to limit or avoid paying bribes to corrupt teachers (Choe et al., 2013). In Albania, students believed that building personal connections with professors could help improve their grades (Zhllima et al., 2018).

In Russia, this special treatment is reflected in what is known as "*Blat*." This practice represents a form of corruption in education that is difficult to define legally (Borisova, 2014). *Blat* is a deeply ingrained term in Soviet culture, referring to the exchange of favors to gain access to goods and services in conditions of scarcity and state privileges. *Blat* serves personal consumption and alters the distribution of material welfare. It is often mediated through friendship or acquaintanceship, granting individuals access to public resources through personal connections. It facilitates access to limited resources through structural ties, providing information on who should be involved in the exchange and who should be avoided (Michailova & Worm, 2003).

In Bosnia, favor reciprocation was more beneficial for the elite compared to monetary bribes carried out by the poor. The elite could leverage their access, power, and influence

to obtain various advantages in higher education. The elites mutually understood that the exchange of benefits had a higher rate of return. A fragmented education system could lead to biased reciprocation processes as emerging elites sought to maintain power and alter the model of social mobility for their own gain. It is not surprising that there were cases where students could graduate due to their social connections (Sabir-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). Besides favoring reciprocation, higher education institutions in Bosnia were also vulnerable to political intimidation. Political actors without significant roles influenced the education system. This caused apprehension about corruption and intimidation among educators who wished to avoid it. Some professors were compelled to pass students due to fear of intimidation, while others chose retaliatory actions, albeit contrary to their moral and ethical principles. Political pressure and threats were also used when academics were perceived as acting disobediently (Sabir-El-Rayess, 2013). Political intimidation also occurred in Ukraine, where tolerated corruption in the education system could be used by the government as a tool to coerce universities into submission and loyalty to the regime. Authoritarian governments undermine the cherished values of freedom valued by universities through various forms of coercion, collusion, and control based on corruption and nepotism (Osipian, 2017).

In the USA, the case at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) provides an illustration of how connections play a crucial role in corruption. UMDNJ had an information handling system that faced numerous challenges due to the complexity of information, creating vulnerabilities for corruption by manipulating information, such as double-billing or up-billing Medicare and Medicaid. The centralized nature of power also allowed top administrators to access various financial resources beyond those provided by the government. These resources could be utilized to garner political support, such as by financing political campaigns and lobbying politicians. The university also engaged in the recruitment of politicians for fictitious jobs and provided preferential treatment to job applicants backed by specific political support. Strong relationships with politicians enabled the university to secure financial support from the government, evade regulations, influence and make operational and budgetary decisions, as well as gain access to and support in utilizing local facilities. Apart from politicians, the university also maintained mutually beneficial relationships with several suppliers of goods and services necessary for its operations. The procurement of goods and services, which should have undergone bidding or tender processes, was often disregarded by the university. As a result, vendors could impose higher costs on the university in exchange for gifts or personal services to university personnel (Schwartz, 2017).

Universities could also establish connections with agents or recruiters who would find students for them. In India, these agents and recruiters would seek out individuals with low-paying jobs or unemployed individuals and offer them the opportunity to obtain a higher education degree. These agents and recruiters would charge higher fees than the direct admission fees charged by the institutions. They would also approach universities for payments, with the amount depending on the number of successful students they brought to the institution. They had significant influence over student admissions,

guiding students through the application process, such as filling out forms and choosing institutions. They could even influence institutions to allow the students they recruited to be exempt from regular attendance requirements. Some private institutions agreed to this arrangement in order to meet student admission quotas and sell vacant seats (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017).

In India, other forms of corruption were described in the articles included in the research. Students could negotiate the price they would have paid for their degrees. In fact, students could have “paid” for their degrees without attending classes. These students were referred to as nonattending students. Their reasons for not attending varied, such as work commitments, distance, or simply not wanting to attend. Universities often provide proxy attendance for these students to fill the required seats. Teachers would have planned lessons and sent them via email, and students could have attended classes for one or two sessions at their convenience. There was also corruption conducted by institutions to circumvent regulations related to the payment of part-time faculty and staff recruitment. Institutions provided salaries to part-time faculty members on the condition that the faculty members would return a portion of that salary to the institution’s management. This practice was intentionally carried out without written evidence to make it difficult to trace. If the faculty members protested, they would be threatened with termination. Another form of corruption was the practice of placing staff members “on paper.” These staff members were paid low wages merely to fulfill the required number of staff set by regulatory authorities. There was also another form of corruption involving the forgery of recruitment processes. Institutions pretended to conduct recruitment processes involving various official requirements. However, in practice, there was a secret agreement between the institution and the prospective candidates. The institution would open a new bank account in the candidate’s name. Salaries were deposited every month as per the regulations, but the institution would withdraw a portion of them. This practice prevented the prospective candidates from receiving the salaries they were entitled to (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017).

In Russia, corruption in higher education included practices such as fake publications, fake dissertations, and “*raspil*.” The publication of articles often became a necessary step for professors. Their bonuses and contract renewals depended on it, especially in internationally indexed journals. Therefore, they would pay certain companies to have their names listed as co-authors on ready-to-publish articles, even though they made no significant contribution to the content. Not only professors but also universities faced pressure regarding article publications. Some universities allocate significant funds to mimic scientific research and publish articles in predatory journals to meet publication quantity requirements. Strangely enough, these actions could lead universities to gain additional funding and higher ratings. In addition to publications, dissertations were also susceptible to forgery. There was a practice where individuals paid others to write dissertations that would be defended before university dissertation boards and research institutions. Even the data used in these dissertations was falsified and manipulated. Dissertation forgery also took the form of plagiarism. In some cases, government officials

were involved, either as perpetrators or protectors. Misuse of funds was also a problem in higher education in Russia. University administrators received extremely high salaries, tens to hundreds of times higher than their subordinates. There were also cases of misallocation of funds for purposes other than those intended. Unauthorized sales of university assets also took place. Furthermore, corruption was carried out by individuals overseeing universities, as evidenced by the conviction of the former Head of the Department of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Education and Science along with his subordinates (Mandel, 2020).

There were many reasons underlying the emergence of corrupt behavior in education. *Firstly*, corruption could occur due to the societal culture that tolerated corruption in education and considered it a norm practiced by many (Borisova, 2014; Sofie Höckel et al., 2018; Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017). *Secondly*, corruption was also related to the well-being of teachers. Many teachers received low salaries, and their payments were often delayed (Sofie Höckel et al., 2018). The money obtained from corruption enabled a better life for the perpetrators and their families (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017). *Thirdly*, the requirement of a bachelor's degree for employment could also be a trigger for corruption. This encouraged parents and students to pursue formal educational achievements by any means necessary. This attitude also increased students' tolerance towards corrupt educators, reducing their role in controlling corruption (Borisova, 2014). *Fourthly*, quality was dependent on the evaluator rather than being based on the appropriate criteria (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017).

From an institutional perspective, there are three factors that can contribute to the emergence of a corrupt environment: hierarchy, embeddedness, and resource dependence. Corruption tends to thrive in institutions with low organizational transparency and weak internal controls. Embeddedness fosters relationships that initially function in a market-like manner but become more sustainable and reciprocal over time. Uncertainty in resource provision can also drive institutions to resort to illegal and unethical means (Schwartz, 2017).

### ***Educational Level***

The majority of articles discuss corruption occurring at the university level. This is understandable, as corruption in universities is more widespread and diverse. In contrast to primary and secondary education, which predominantly face bribery and mutually beneficial connections, universities encounter various corruption issues such as fraud, forgery, plagiarism, and misappropriation of funds. Corruption in universities also often involves high-ranking officials or politicians directly, as seen in cases in Ukraine, Bosnia, Russia, and the USA. Additionally, universities have a significant impact on individuals' lives and careers. A degree from a university helps individuals secure better salaries, prestige, and status (Martin, 2016).

There are four conditions that, in some cases, contribute to and accelerate corruption in universities. *Firstly*, inadequate public funding is a prevalent issue in many countries.

Combined with the increasing number of students, the per-student funding allocation decreases, resulting in lower salaries and working conditions for faculty members. This can lead to corrupt behaviors such as selling grades, plagiarizing, or accepting additional jobs that divert their focus from university responsibilities. *Secondly*, reduced government support and the demand for universities to seek their own funding create a situation where universities engage in various legitimate activities to secure funds. However, it is not uncommon for some faculty members to resort to illegal means to obtain funding. *Thirdly*, increased administrative autonomy allows universities to make decisions at the campus level. While autonomy provides flexibility, it can also lead to variations in practices, lax supervision, and increased risks of rule violations in order to enhance the university's reputation. *Lastly*, the pressure for publication and international rankings plays a significant role. Faculty members face pressure to conduct research and publish in prestigious journals to gain recognition and improve international rankings. They may receive bonuses when their articles are published in reputable journals. These pressures and incentives can drive faculty members to engage in plagiarism and borrow ideas from their subordinates or colleagues (Chapman & Lindner, 2016).

Although the focus is frequently on corruption in higher education, corruption at lower levels of education should not be overlooked. Corruption may become a quick alternative solution for administrators and teachers in primary and secondary education as the pressures of paying for living expenses and varied aspirations increase. Accepting bribes and developing mutually beneficial connections with others are not the only ways. Acts such as misappropriation of educational aid monies occur at lower levels of education as well, although there may be fewer scholarly studies that analyze them fully.

An example of this can be seen in Indonesia. The government has provided funding assistance to both public and private primary and secondary schools through the BOS (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah – School Operational Assistance) program. BOS, as defined by Government Regulation Number 48 of 2008, refers to the financing of education funds, personnel, and nonpersonnel financing for education units. It is based on regulations from the Minister of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Minister of Finance, ensuring proper management and allocation of funds for education programs (Putra et al., 2023). Unfortunately, despite claiming success in completing compulsory nine-year basic education, BOS has faced corruption and management weaknesses, such as not maximizing funds for school facility procurement and a lack of transparency (Hadiyanto et al., 2019). This corruption involves school officials such as principals, school treasurers, and others in similar positions. In addition to fund misappropriation, corruption takes place in the form of data manipulation in reports, inflating the number of students, and colluding among schools to engage in corruption collectively. Furthermore, the trend of corruption cases in this context continues to increase each year. In 2022, there were 93 cases, whereas in 2021, there were 44 cases (Machmudi, 2022). The increasing trend of corruption in primary and secondary education may not be unique to Indonesia.

## Conclusions

This study examines various forms of corruption occurring in different countries. Based on a review of literature from various countries, it is found that bribery and favoritism are the most prevalent forms of corruption in education. When it comes to the level of education, the majority of research focuses on higher education. Higher education institutions have more extensive, structured, and diverse corruption cases. This is due to the significant role that higher education plays in an individual's career and social status. However, this study has certain limitations. *First*, the database used is limited to Scopus. *Second*, there are potentially relevant articles that could not be included because the full texts were inaccessible. *Third*, there is a lack of research that examines specific forms of corruption in detail and depth. This can be understood, as exposing corruption cases carries significant risks for researchers and individuals involved.

In addition, there are several issues that can be explored in future research. Firstly, there is still a lack of research focusing on corruption at the primary and secondary education levels, particularly corruption in forms other than bribery and mutually beneficial connections. Secondly, corruption at the primary and secondary education levels occurring in developing countries such as Bangladesh and Moldova raises new questions about whether there is an influence of a country's development level on corruption in primary and secondary education. Lastly, it is important to investigate the direct and long-term impacts of corruption on students at the primary and secondary education levels. This study contributed to the existing literature by enhancing our understanding of the many types of corruption in education and their prevalence across countries and educational levels. Hopefully, it could provide policymakers and educators with insights into how to establish effective tactics for eliminating corruption in education systems.

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