SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Relationship Between Human Values and Acceptability of Corruption in Russia and Greece

Alexander N. Tatarko[a], Anna A. Mironova[a]*,
Aikaterini Gari[b], Fons J. R. van de Vijver[c]

[a] *National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow, Russia*
[b] *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece*
[c] *Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands*

* Corresponding author. E-mail: nusa13@rambler.ru

Background. In both Russia and Greece, corruption is a serious problem. In Greece, the level of corruption is one of the highest in the EU, and in Russia it is one of the highest in the world.

Objective. Three questions were addressed: (1) Are basic human values related to the acceptability of corruption for individuals in both countries? (2) Are these relationships the same in Russia and Greece? (3) Are levels of acceptance of corruption the same in Russia and Greece?

Design. Following S.H. Schwartz's model, four higher-order values were assessed: Conservation versus Openness to Change, and Self-Transcendence versus Self-Enhancement. The studies were conducted in Russia ($N = 256$) and Greece ($N = 469$). To analyze the associations of individual values with the acceptability of corruption, we constructed a multigroup regression model using structural equation modelling software.

Results. Identical relationships were found in the two countries. Conservation values and Self-Transcendence were negatively related to the acceptability of corruption, whereas Self-Enhancement was positively related to the acceptability of corruption. Russians scored higher on acceptance of corruption. Implications are discussed.

Conclusion. The acceptability of corruption seems to be interrelated with basic human values across different cultural conditions. Our study shows that the relationships between higher-order values on the one hand, measured in the framework of Schwartz's values model, and the acceptability of corruption on the other, are identical in Russia and Greece, suggesting that the acceptability of corruption is related to personal values.

Keywords:
acceptability of corruption; basic human values; Russia; Greece

Introduction

Corruption is broadly defined as the abuse of official power or authority for personal gain (Lambsdorff, 2006); it is a complex social phenomenon with a long history. The prevalence of corruption is not limited to specific countries; the problem of corruption remains relevant for economically developed as well as low- and middle-income countries. Although corruption is sometimes seen as "grease for the wheels of the economy", it is widely viewed as having a negative impact on society. Corruption has been studied from many perspectives (for example, political, sociological, and economic), but not often from a psychological perspective; we focus on individual psychological factors in corruption by examining the role of individual values in accepting corrupt behavior.

Corruption is associated with a number of structural characteristics of society, such as its political, economic, institutional, and sociocultural factors; among the latter, the literature focuses mainly on cultural values. Cultural values "justify" the ways that social institutions function. Cultural norms and values are related to individual behavior through their impact on the ethical perception of situations, and therefore seem to be important factors for the interpretation of corrupt behaviors (Davis & Ruhe, 2003). Individual characteristics have been studied only recently in the context of corruption analysis (Dong, Dulleck, & Torgler, 2012). Sociodemographic characteristics such as educational background, income, and gender have also been addressed. Yet, the role of these characteristics and of psychological variables associated with corruption has not yet been systematically studied. Some authors claim that personality traits such as arrogance and narcissism can be sources of corrupt behavior (Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009), whereas honesty restricts it. Remarkably, existing studies do not take into account the associations of personal values with attitudes towards corruption, despite the broadly known motivational role of values with respect to attitudes and behavior (Schwartz, 1992). Studies of individual and psychological characteristics tend to pay more attention to the individual correlates of corrupt behavior of the bribe taker. These aspects are important, yet it is also important to analyze the psychological characteristics of people who are willing to pay bribes, because these people support the culture of corruption and help maintain an environment that fosters corruption.

Acceptability of corrupt relations is expressed by a set of positive individual attitudes towards corruption as a means to achieve goals by bribing public officials. Identification of attitudes towards corruption may be an effective indicator of the corruption of a society. Attitudes towards corruption can be divided into two broad groups: attitudes of the (potential) bribe taker and attitudes of the (potential) bribe payer. The focus of this study is on the attitudes of the latter and also the general tolerance towards bribery of both takers and payers. The acceptance of corrupt relations by the individual, or simply "acceptability of corruption" in general, is employed as the dependent variable of this study. The concept has to do with the cognitive component of positive attitudes towards corruption, taking into consideration the "classic" three-component view of the structure of attitudes, consisting of cognitive and affective components, along with predispositions to action (behavioral elements). It is also associated with Katz's functional theory of attitudes, which conceptualizes the role of attitude as a value-expressive function occurring when

a certain acceptance allows an individual to express an important value; to paraphrase Katz (1960, p. 170), individuals derive satisfaction from expressing attitudes appropriate to their personal values and to their self-concept. Thus, values and attitudes are intertwined in such a way that attitudes express the relevant values and often contribute to self-development or Self-Transcendence in general beliefs. Thus, both values and attitudes often seem to refer to an internally consistent system of beliefs that tend to express evaluative preferences oriented in the same direction.

Values. Values include the basic principles and beliefs regarding what is desirable and important, which are shared by the majority of people in a society and guide behavior across situations. According to Schwartz's (1992) theory of values, they are defined as motivational, cross-situational goals, serving as guiding principles in people's lives. In its original version, the theory described 10 basic human values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. More recently, Schwartz developed a refined theory of fundamental individual values (Schwartz et al., 2012), which includes 19 values and provides wider heuristic and predictive opportunities than the original theory of 10 values, although it is compatible with the structure of the original theory. The refined theory describes a motivational continuum of 19 values, depicted in a circle, with potentially different motivational meanings.

Schwartz's (1992) original theory postulates a circular order of the values, primarily based on the opposition or compatibility between certain sets of values. The values can be represented in a two-dimensional structure of four higher-order values included in two bipolar value sets: The first set consists of the *Openness to Change* values, which include self-direction and stimulation, versus the *Conservation* values, which include security, conformity, and tradition, reflecting a conflict between values towards change, and voluntary self-restriction, as well as a preservation of traditional practices and defenses. The second set of values is *Self-Transcendence,* which includes benevolence and universalism, versus *Self-Enhancement,* which includes power and achievement. This higher-order set of values reveals a conflict between acceptance of other people as equals and concern for their welfare, on the one hand, and a focus on individual success and dominance on the other (Schwartz et al., 2012). There is no work that compares psychological factors related to corruption across cultures. Schwartz's value model has been extensively tested in cross-cultural studies and provides a good framework to examine differences in the acceptability of corruption. For reasons explained below, we conducted this study in Russia and Greece.

Corruption and Values in Russia and Greece

We analyzed the relationship between values and the acceptability of corruption in Russia and Greece. Why did we select these countries? In both of them, corruption is a serious challenge, though to different extents. According to Transparency International 2016, Russia ranked 131 out of 176 countries in terms of the Corruption Perceptions Index (indicating a high level of perceived corruption), whereas Greece ranked 69. At the same time, Greece is one the most corrupt countries in the European Union (Oltheten, Sougiannis, Travlos, & Zarkos, 2013). Greece (44)

has a lower Corruption Perceptions Index[1] than other countries in the region, such as Italy (47), Romania (48) and Hungary (48) (Transparency International, 2016). Preliminary discussions with experts about our methodology for evaluating the acceptability of corruption showed that many assumptions proposed in this methodology will be well understood in these two countries (Russia and Greece).

   If we look at the history of relations between Russia and Greece, it is clear that these countries have many strong *cultural ties* which, in the case of Russia, are weaker with other European countries (despite closer economic relations with them). The Christian Orthodox religion came to Russia from Greece.

   In the tenth century, during the reign of Vladimir I the Great, Kievan Rus went through what is called "the Baptism of Rus", an event of crucial importance that laid a solid foundation for Russian-Greek relations. Religion seems to affect the modes of living of both religious and non-religious people. More than 90% of Greeks consider themselves Orthodox Christians. Studies have found that in cultures with more hierarchical religious systems (such as Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam), corruption is more widespread than in cultures with more egalitarian and individualistic religions (such as Protestantism and Anglicanism) (Treisman, 2000).

   Also, at the invitation of Vladimir I the Great, the first Slavic literary language was developed by Cyril and Methodius from the Byzantine Empire's province of Thessalonica in the ninth century. Such relations suggest that the worldviews of Russians and Greeks have similar elements, which may ultimately be reflected in their attitudes towards corruption.

   Russia and Greece also have similarities in ecocultural contexts. The two countries have similar links between regional variability in pathogen prevalence and cultural variability along the individualism/collectivism dimension (Fincher, Thornhill, Murray, & Schaller, 2008).

   In addition, we compared higher-order values in Russia and Greece (ESS, 2010, since in that year both countries participated in the survey). The results of the comparison are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1

Means of Value Sets (Mean Centered) in Russia and Greece

Variable	M		SD		t	df	Cohen's d
	Russia	Greece	Russia	Greece			
Openness to Change	.37	.29	.71	.66	−4.36***	5212	−.12
Self-Enhancement	.16	.39	.67	.64	12.48***	5271	.34
Conservation	−.22	−.16	.60	.60	3.42**	5271	.09
Self-Transcendence	−.37	−.55	.53	.46	−12.85***	5106	−.36

*Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01*

   Table 1 shows differences between Russia and Greece in higher-order values. However, in all cases Cohen's *d* is low, which suggests that the significance of some

---

[1]   A higher Corruption Perceptions Index means less corrupt, a lower Corruption Perceptions Index means more corrupt.

differences is due to the large sample sizes (more than 2,000 respondents in each country) used in the ESS (2010). Therefore, these differences are weak, so we can say that Russia and Greece are close in values. The levels of individualism in Russia and Greece, based on G. Hofstede's findings[2], are equally low (35 and 39 points, respectively).

Four main factors form the cultural background of corrupt behavior in Greece: geography, historical legacy, and the nature of Greek politics and religion (Danopoulos, 2014). Greek geography has prevented people from having much contact or communication. In the 19th century, when the independent Greek state was established (after Ottoman occupation), it was formed by rather separated communities of people with their own cultural traditions and customs, characterized by strong in-group identities and particularism. Modern Greek society has inherited these cultural features, along with a broad political clientelism that often promotes corruption. Therefore, when it comes to finding a job, securing a loan, or gaining admission to a university, Greeks tend to use their strong in-group ties and/or strong ties with a particular political group (Kalyvas, 2015).

Among the most likely cultural factors behind corruption in Russia are the highly hierarchical religious system, high level of collectivism, and high-context culture. Orthodoxy as a highly hierarchical religion is associated with a high level of corruption, because Orthodoxy externalizes responsibility and defers this to authorities (in contrast to religions like Protestantism that emphasize individual responsibility for all behaviors). In high-context cultures (such as those of Russia and Greece), a significant part of communication takes place on the informal level, and success of negotiations can depend more on friendly relations than on formal aspects. In collectivistic cultures, people often may not approve of whistle-blowing, even in case of dishonest behavior within the community (Zhuravlev & Sosnin, 2013).

Research Hypotheses

In the present study we tested whether the acceptability of corruption was different between Russia and Greece and examined whether the association between values and the acceptability of corruption was the same in the two countries. Below we argue in more detail that the four higher-order values in Schwartz's (2012) theory can be taken to predict corruption acceptability (rather than the full set of related lower-order values). We also suggest that the study hypotheses about the relationships between values and acceptability of corruption are the same for Russia and Greece, due to the two countries' cultural similarities.

Hypothesis 1:
Self-Enhancement is positively related to the acceptability of corruption.

Values of Self-Enhancement are related to individuals' intentions to satisfy their own interests (Table 1); these underline the importance of personal social status, position in society, aspiration to leadership, and possession of resources. The achievement value is among the Self-Enhancement values and is related to the suc-

---

2   https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/greece,russia/

cess associated with social standards and, as a result, social acceptance (Schwartz et al., 2012). The value of achievement, which could presuppose social acceptance, is probably negatively correlated with the acceptability of corruption. Studies show that wielding power increases the risks of corrupt behavior (Bendahan, Zehnder, Pralong & Antonakis, 2015). In cultures where inequality, subordination to power, and intentional display of force are widespread, corruption is common (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Karstedt, 2007). Dissatisfaction with one's family finances weakens the influence of achievement on the acceptability of corruption and increases this acceptability (Pande & Jain, 2014). Moreover, in the calculation of the higher-order value of Self-Enhancement, power values are very important; therefore, we expect that individuals who value Self-Enhancement would accept corrupt behavior in their pursuit of power and achievement.

Hypothesis 2:
Self-Transcendence is negatively related to the acceptability of corruption.

Values of Self-Transcendence reflect humanistic intentions focusing on the equality, justice, tolerance, and well-being of one´s group members (*Table 1*). This higher-order value includes the values of universalism and benevolence. People who appreciate the values of Self-Transcendence feel part of the moral community; they try to be reliable and trustworthy members of society, and care for the welfare of members of the society (Schwartz et al., 2012). Accordingly, they will endorse the view that, if its members avoid corruption and behave honestly, everyone will profit (Carson & Prado, 2016). Seleim and Bontis (2009) found that higher levels of human orientation practices in society are associated with lower levels of corruption. Societies with a strong human orientation emphasize caring, compassion, and personal relations; all these practices are based on the preference of Self-Transcendence values (Benevolence–Caring, Universalism–Concern, Universalism–Tolerance) in the society. Therefore, if values of Self-Transcendence are important for an individual, then corrupt behavior is likely to be disapproved.

For Openness to Change values, we do not formulate a specific hypothesis, as there is evidence for both a positive and a negative association. These values imply an individual's readiness to engage in new things and a desire for change based on freedom of action (Schwartz et al., 2012). We suggest that a strong endorsement of these values is associated with stronger feelings of freedom to think and act. On the one hand, such freedom may be associated with legal violations, including corruption; on the other, openness is positively associated with human and economic development (Welzel & Inglehart, 2010) and other activities that help societies to change and become more attractive for their members, which can be expected to be negatively associated with corruption, as the latter is characterized by secrecy and individual gain.

Hypothesis 3:
Conservation is negatively associated with the acceptability of corruption.

Conservation presupposes self-restraint, order, and avoidance of change. The higher-order value of Conservation includes the motivational values of security at the personal and societal level, tradition, conformity–rules, and conformity–interper-

sonal value. Values of security at the personal and societal level are associated with the desire for safety in an individual's immediate environment and safety and stability in the wider society (Schwartz et al., 2012). In this context, corruption is a risky behavior, because if it is exposed, corrupt persons will face sanctions and may be publicly humiliated as people who violated life's harmony and personal security. In addition, conservative people want a stable and predictable social environment, and corruption challenges this predictability. Accordingly, values of security may be negatively associated with the acceptability of corruption.

The values of "conformity–rules" and "conformity–interpersonal" refer to an individual's intention to comply with rules, laws, and formal obligations, as well as avoidance of upsetting or harming other people. Studies show that the desire to follow the rules is negatively correlated with the acceptability of corruption (e.g., Sundstrom, 2016). The value of tradition could have an ambiguous link with the acceptability of corruption. For example, bribery might be grounded in the past and constitute a crucial part of tradition. In general, it may be assumed that if Conservation is important for an individual, then he/she is inclined to follow rules and laws and would find corrupt behavior unacceptable.

Hypothesis 4:
The level of acceptability of corruption is higher in Russia than in Greece.

We expect to find differences in the acceptability of corruption between Russia and Greece. According to the Transparency International (2016), Russia and Greece have different scores on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). We expect that this perception is relevant for acceptability; therefore, we expect that acceptability of corruption is higher in Russia than in Greece (Transparency International, 2016).

Method

Instruments. We used a number of existing or specially developed scales to analyze (1) the basic individual values in these two countries; and (2) the degree of acceptance of corrupt behavior.

Values. We used the new version of the PVQ-RR questionnaire that includes 57 questions to assess the 19 individual values (Schwartz et al., 2012). Participants responded to each item on a six-point scale, ranging from "*not at all like me*" to "*very much like me*". Then we calculated the average level for each of the four higher-order values. Cronbach's α for the four higher-order values were (Russia/Greece): Self-Enhancement (.87/.84), Self-Transcendence (.81/.83), Openness to Change (.76/.79), and Conservation (.86/.88).

Acceptability of corruption. We adapted the scale developed by Kubiak (2001) for measuring the acceptability of different types of everyday corruption by individuals. The Acceptability of Corruption Scale items, developed for the specific purpose of this study on the basis of the Kubiak method, assess the degree of approval of corrupt behavior (see Appendix). Situations were described in such a way that the forms of corrupt behavior were relevant for Russia and Greece. Respondents were asked to evaluate eight situations describing different types of corrupt behavior using a five-point scale (from "*not acceptable*" to "*acceptable*").

Then, the overall average was calculated for the scale. Cronbach's α values for the acceptability of corruption were adequate: Russia: .84, Greece: .75. A demographic section was added at the end of the questionnaire addressing gender, age, educational background, occupation, nationality, religious identity, and level of religiosity.

Participants. The study was conducted in 2015–2016. Snowball sampling was used. In total, 725 respondents filled out the questionnaire, 256 were ethnic Russians, and 469 were ethnic Greeks. Initially, our samples were larger; however, after the data collection, we used only data of ethnic Russians and ethnic Greeks. This gave us the opportunity to exclude additional effects that could be introduced into the results by representatives of other ethnic groups (*Table 2*).

Table 2

Characteristics of the survey sample

Country	N	%		Age
		Male	Female	(*M/SD*)
Russia	256	34.0	66.0	35.1/9.8
Greece	469	40.0	60.0	30.3/13.7
Total	725	37.8	62.2	32.0/12.7

Education in the group of Russian respondents was: secondary and secondary vocational education, 11%; higher, 71.1%; PhD, 12.5%; no answer, 5.5%. Education in the group of Greek respondents was: secondary and secondary vocational education, 27.7%; higher, 71.2%; PhD, 1.1%.

Russian respondents' employment status was as follows: employee, 53.1%; self-employed/entrepreneur, 30.5%; education (student), 1.6%; housework/looking after children, 4.7%; military service, 2.7%; retired, 2.0%; unemployed, 1.6%; other, 3.9%. Greek respondents' employment status was as follows: employee, 32.0%; self-employed/entrepreneur, 7.9%; education (student), 46.1%; housework/looking after children, 1.7%; military service, 2.1% retired, 3.2%; unemployed, 4.7%; other, 2.3%.

All respondents were Orthodox Christians. In addition, we measured the level of religiosity in two samples, using an 11-point scale (from 0 to 10) to measure the level of religiosity of our respondents. The mean level of religiosity in the Russian sample was 4.58 (SD = 2.64) and the mean level of religiosity in the Greek sample was 4.14 (SD = 2.77). This difference was statistically significant ($t(545.6) = 2.07$, $p < .05$).

Procedure. The questionnaire was back-translated by native speakers in both groups. Sample details are found in *Table 2*. The Greek sample was collected in Athens. The Greek data were selected via an electronic version of the questionnaire in a Google Form format, created for the purpose of this study. Each participant was required by the format to answer all questions; it was also possible to stop answering before all the items were completed, save the answers, and continue later. The total sample was selected through the snowball method; an initial group of

87 university students in the field of Psychology filled out the questionnaire, then recruited their friends, neighbors, parents, and other family members. They asked them, either face-to-face or by a phone call, to participate in the research study, and to those who agreed they sent the research link via their e-mail accounts, with a reminder after approximately a week.

The Russian sample was collected in Moscow through an electronic version of the questionnaire (we used the OneClickSurvey platform – https://www.1ka.si/d/en). The strategy of data collection was the same as in Greece, and the sample was also selected through snowballing. We asked students to fill out the questionnaire and then distribute the link among their relatives and friends and ask them to distribute the link.

Results

Invariance of the Acceptability of Corruption Scale. In the first phase of analysis, the Acceptability of Corruption Scale was examined (*Table 3*).

Table 3

Invariance of the Acceptability of Corruption Scale (Russia and Greece)

Model	CFI	ΔCFI	RMSEA	AIC	chi square	*df*	*p*
Unconstrained[a]	.997		.018	72.43	12.43	10	.257
Measurement weights[b]	.997	.000	.017	69.09	17.09	14	.251
Measurement intercepts[c]	.812	.185	.114	238.93	196.93	19	< .001

Note. CFI — comparative fit index; AIC — Akaike information criterion; RMSEA — root mean square error of approximation. [a] Configural invariance; [b]Metric invariance. [c] Scalar invariance.

We ran a Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis assuming one latent factor (acceptability of corruption), which included eight indicators. Then we tested the invariance of the loadings and intercepts in both samples. In a first analysis, we used MGCFA to test the invariance of the whole version of the scale (comprising 8 items). We obtained an unsatisfactory metric invariance. Then we analyzed the factor loadings of items in the Russian and Greek samples and found that three of the items had very different factor loadings. We removed these three items from the scale and tested the invariance again. The metric invariance was satisfactory in the 5-item version of the scale. Accordingly, we believe that it is necessary to use a 5-item version of the scale (as we did in our study), because only this version had a good metric invariance.

Looking through the situations that reduced the invariance of whole instrument, we found that all of these were related to the illegal obtaining of favors for relatives. We can assume that in Russia and Greece there may be a different attitude to such situations and in one of these two countries (most likely in Russia) illegal favors for relatives may not always be considered by ordinary people as corruption, but rather as useful and sometimes even necessary assistance to relatives. Thus,

these situations can be understood differently in Russia and Greece, as the analysis of invariance has demonstrated. Therefore, we deleted these items from our instrument in the study. As a result, five out of eight situations were retained for further analyses: 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 (see Appendix). *Table 2* presents fit statistics for the various levels of invariance and the final model showed metric invariance.

Mean Differences in Acceptability of Corruption and Values. Table 3 shows the results of the significance test of the differences between the mean scale scores. The results of the test should be interpreted with caution, as we did not find scalar invariance. To assess the significance of the mean differences, we used a *t*-test, as well as Cohen's *d* effect size. The acceptability of corruption was higher in Russia than in Greece. Mean differences of values scores reached significance only for Conservation and Self-Transcendence; the Greek sample scored higher on both values (*Table 4*).

Table 4

Means of scales and group differences

Variable	M		SD		*t*	*df*	Cohen's *d*
	Russia	**Greece**	**Russia**	**Greece**			
Acceptability of Corruption	2.28	1.46	1.00	.63	11.93***	370	1.24
Openness to Change	4.82	4.78	.60	.64	.86	557	.07
Self-Enhancement	3.53	3.62	.97	.89	−1.23	488	.11
Conservation	4.11	4.48	.77	.74	−6.33***	508	.56
Self-Transcendence	4.27	4.78	.72	.67	−9.17***	490	.83

Note. ***$p < .001$.

Relations of the Four Higher-Order Values and the Acceptability of Corruption. The correlations of all measured variables in both samples before control for background variables (age, gender, and education) are displayed in *Table 5*.

Table 5

Bivariate correlations among the measured variables (Russians above the diagonal/Greeks below the diagonal)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Acceptability of Corruption	1	−.32***	−.06	.24***	−.23***
2.Self-Transcendence	−.41***	1	.33***	−.03	.43***
3. Openness to Change	−.07	.38***	1	.36***	−.13*
4. Self-Enhancement	.28***	−.15**	.30***	1	.03
5. Conservation	−.20***	.35***	.05	.17***	1

Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

To analyze the associations of individual values with the acceptability of corruption, we constructed a multigroup regression model using structural equation modelling software (Figure 1); all variables in this model were controlled for background variables in previous regression analyses (age, gender, and education). As can be seen in Table 6, all fit indices pointed to the adequacy of the structural weights model.
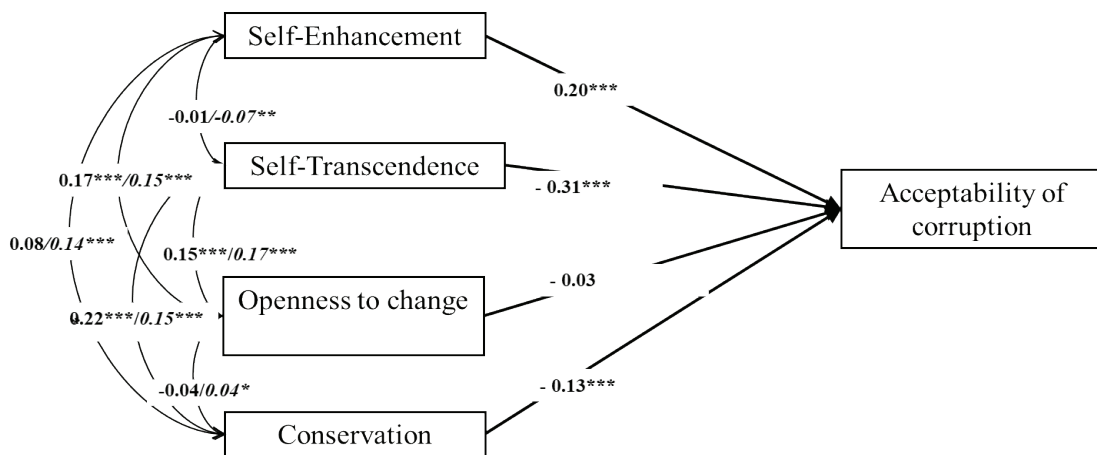
Table 6

Invariance for the model of relationships of the four higher-order values and the acceptability of corruption (controlled for age, gender, and education)

Model	CFI	ΔCFI	RMSEA	AIC	chi square	*df*
Unconstrained[a]	.992		.05	62.42	6.41*	2
Structural weights	.990	.002	.04	59.41	11.04	6
Structural covariances	.958	.032	.05	67.86	37.86***	15

*Note. CFI — comparative fit index; AIC — Akaike information criterion; RMSEA — root mean square error of approximation. [a] — Configural invariance. * — p < .05; *** — p < .001.*

So, *identical* links between values and acceptability of corruption were found for both countries. Our findings suggest that the links between individual values and the acceptability of corruption are the same for Russia and Greece (*Figure 1*).

$R^2 = .12. \; \chi^2/df = 1.90. \; CFI = .992. \; PCLOSE = .710. \; RMSEA = .04$

Figure 1. Model of relationships of the four higher-order values and the acceptability of corruption (universal both for Russia and Greece, unstandardized weights)

Notes. a) controlled for age, gender and education; b) covariations among values for Russia are shown in regular type and for Greece in italics (Russia/Greece).

As expected, corruption was more acceptable in Russia than in Greece. Studies have shown that people living in countries with a lower level of corruption have a higher level of corruption perception (Nezlek et al., 2019) or view corruption as less acceptable in the terms of the present study. At the same time, according to

the obtained model, there was no difference in the relationships between the four higher-order values and the acceptability of corruption between Russia and Greece. Higher-order values that seem incompatible with corruption are Conservation and Self-Transcendence. The higher-order value contributing most to the acceptability of corruption is Self-Enhancement (comprising the lower-order values of power–resources and power–dominance). The relationship between Openness to Change and acceptability of corruption was not statistically significant (*Figure 1*). Thus, hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were confirmed. No significant associations were found for Openness to Change. According to the obtained model, individual values explain 12% of the total variance for the acceptability of corruption. Thus, the relation between individual values and the acceptability of corruption is significant, but values do not seem to be the main determining factor.

Discussion

The main questions of our study were: (1) Are basic human values related to the acceptability of corruption at the individual level? (2) Are these relationships the same in Russia and Greece? (3) Are levels of acceptance of corruption the same in Russia and Greece? The results of our cross-cultural study showed that acceptance of corruption is higher in Russia than in Greece. These results correspond to data of Transparency International (2016) about actual corruption. We also evaluated which basic values were associated with levels of acceptance of corruption in Russia and Greece. We found mean differences in scores only for Conservation and Self-Transcendence; the Greek sample scored higher on both values. Using Multigroup Structural Equation Modelling, we found that the higher-order values that presumably prevent the acceptability of corruption are Conservation and Self-Transcendence. The higher-order value that statistically contributes most to the acceptability of corruption is Self-Enhancement, while Openness to Change was not statistically correlated. All these associations were identical for Russia and Greece, suggesting that the same values are drivers of the acceptability of corruption in both countries.

The finding that among the four higher-order values only Self-Enhancement values are positively associated with the acceptability of corruption may suggest that endorsement of corrupt behavior is associated mostly with the individual's desire to achieve success and to influence others. Previous studies have underlined that people in powerful situations tend to estimate their own importance as much higher than the importance of other people. They often believe that norms of morality adopted "by everybody" and meant "for everybody" are not necessarily applicable to them. Possession of power seems to be associated with lowering one's moral standards, possibly due to an increased likelihood that the individual will attempt to manipulate others (Kipnis, 2006).

High acceptance of Conservation values seems to go along with low acceptance of corruption. People who value their own safety, safety in their immediate environment, and their stability in the wider society try to maintain and preserve cultural, family, or religious traditions and to comply with rules and laws that prohibit corrupt behavior. They probably feel that participating in corrupt activities is associated with the risk of self-exposure and sanctions, thereby reducing their sense

of security. Trying to follow the socially accepted rules and norms is incompatible with the endorsement of and engagement in corrupt activities, since corruption is against the law. Corruption is considered to be an immoral set of behaviors that prevent justice in society and contradict the religious canons. Specifically, some studies indicate a negative relationship between the level of corruption and the proportion of religious people (Chang & Golden 2007). So, both the values of conformity–interpersonal, and of tradition, as basic components of the higher-order Conservation values, are associated with low acceptability of corruption.

In modern Greek culture, during 30 years of developing social welfare (1974–2004) and before the current economic crisis starting in 2009, many powerful groups have managed to directly influence the socio-political affairs of the country. They have also managed, through specific political strategies, to manipulate the benefits that great parts of the Greek population acquired, which produced more and more corruption and also a growing indifference to corrupt activities. It is not surprising that in 2013, Greece ranked 80th in the world on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International (Konstantinidis & Xezonakis, 2013).

The scope of grand corruption in Russia is massive. The General Prosecutor of Russia in a public interview (Chaika, 2016) assessed the economic damage inflicted by corrupt actions as reaching 43.8 billion rubles (approximately 625 million euros). According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, the number of persons sentenced for corruption in Russia increases annually on average by 1,500. In 2012, some 6,000 people were convicted for corruption crimes in Russia and in 2015 the figure was 11,500. Many of these persons were condemned for giving bribes (2,000 in 2012 and 5,200 in 2015).

Our results show that, despite the differences in values and corruption between the Greek and Russian samples, the correlation between values and the acceptability of corruption is the same for both samples. These associations might apply to various other countries, but they could also be interpreted as a consequence of the cultural similarities between Russia and Greece described above. Religion is an important source of cultural similarities between Russia and Greece; religious affiliation and language are the "cultural background" of corruption (Houston & Graham, 2000) and religion can be used as an instrument of social control (Adenugba & Omolawal, 2014). Acceptance of corruption by individuals may be influenced, directly or indirectly, by a common religious faith and customs. For example, in contrast to Protestantism, which has not incorporated a system of donations in exchange for God's mercy (Houston & Graham, 2000), Catholicism adopted the custom of offering donations to the church which, from the perspective of an outsider, can be regarded as a kind of "bribe" to God in exchange for his blessing. Orthodox Christianity also has a long tradition of such donations.

The Greek Orthodox Church, the institution behind the dominant and national religion in Greece, retains its institutional and symbolic position of power in all social, educational, and economic affairs of the country, and this is an important indicator of the acceptance of its power, somewhat similar to the role of the Catholic Church in Ireland or Poland, which may influence acceptance of corruption (Kalyvas, 2015).

Direct or indirect exposure to corruption could be an important factor in internalizing positive attitudes towards corruption. The association between values and the acceptability of corruption was similar in Russia and Greece, although the level of corruption and the degree of higher-order values acceptance appear to be different. In general, individuals who are socialized in societies with high levels of corruption seem to have a greater likelihood of being exposed to and engaging in corrupt behavior than those who grow up in a society with a low level of corruption (Barr & Serra, 2010).

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is related to its sampling frame. We employed convenience samples. Therefore, we do not claim applicability of our results to all Greeks and Russians. Yet, it is telling that our findings largely complied with theoretical expectations, which suggests a rather broad applicability of our findings across groups in both countries. Moreover, we studied (only) two European countries, which have the same religion and share historical bonds. Therefore, we do not claim that the results can be generalized to other countries. Further research that will employ clusters of countries with high scores versus low scores of acceptability of corruption could help to further clarify the relationship between individual higher-order values and positive attitudes towards corruption.

Another limitation is that this study focuses on the perceptions of corruption, but not behaviors per se, whereas cross-cultural differences between perception and behavior can be significant (Kafetsios & Nezlek, 2012).

Conclusion

The acceptability of corruption seems to be interrelated with basic human values across different cultural conditions. Our research results underline that the relationships between higher-order values, measured in the framework of Schwartz's values model, and the acceptability of corruption are similar in Russia and Greece, suggesting that the acceptability of corruption is related to personal values. Power and dominance, both linked to self-development and Self-Enhancement, are more associated with acceptance of corruption, whereas values of Conservation and Self-Transcendence, which are linked to maintaining cohesion and unity in society, are more associated with rejection of corruption. Thus, acceptance of corruption seems to be associated more with a focus on individual freedom to act independently and less on rules and self-restrictions, whereas rejection of corruption is more associated with a focus on positive group relations and respect for others.

Higher-order values of Openness to Change do not seem to be good predictors of the acceptability of corruption in Russia and Greece. This finding is in line with what was mentioned in the introduction, that openness has a certain ambiguity vis-à-vis corruption. It could be conjectured that Openness to Change would be more predictive if a distinction were made between transparency (negatively associated with acceptability of corruption) and tolerance for activities that serve individual interests, even if these are detrimental for society as a whole (positively correlated with acceptance of corruption).

Acknowledgments

References

Adenugba, A.A., & Omolawal, S.A. (2014). Religious values and corruption in Nigeria—a dislocated relationship. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4, 522–528.

Barr, A., & Serra, D. (2010). Corruption and culture: An experimental analysis. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(11–12), 862–869. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2010.07.006

Basabe, N., & Ros, M. (2005). Cultural dimensions and social behavior correlates: Individualism–collectivism and power distance. *International Review of Social Psychology*, 18(1), 189–225.

Bendahan, S., Zehnder, C., Pralong, F.P., & Antonakis, J. (2015). Leader corruption depends on power and testosterone. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(2), 101–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2014.07.010

Carson, L.D., & Prado, M.M. (2016). Using institutional multiplicity to address corruption as a collective action problem: Lessons from the Brazilian case. *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, 62, 56–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2016.07.009

Chaika, Y. (2016). [Public interview, December 8, 2016]. *Interfax*. http://www.interfax.ru/russia/540410. Accessed 9 January 2019.

Chang, E.C., & Golden, M.A. (2007). Electoral systems, district magnitude and corruption. *British Journal of Political Science*, 37, 115–137. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123407000063

Danopoulos, C.P. (2014). The cultural roots of corruption in Greece. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 25(2), 105–130. https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2685785

Davis, J.H., & Ruhe, J.A. (2003). Perceptions of country corruption: Antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43, 275–288. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023038901080

Dong, B., Dulleck, U., & Torgler, B. (2012). Conditional corruption. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 33, 609–627. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2011.12.001

Fincher, C. L., Thornhill, R., Murray, D. R., & Schaller, M. (2008). Pathogen prevalence predicts human cross-cultural variability in individualism/collectivism. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 275(1640), 1279–1285. https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2008.0094

Houston, H.R., & Graham, J.L. (2000). Culture and corruption in international markets: Implications for policy makers and managers. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 4, 315–345. https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2000.9670360

Judge, T.A., Piccolo, R.F., & Kosalka, T. (2009). The bright and dark sides of leader traits: A review and theoretical extension of the leader trait paradigm. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20, 855–875. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.09.004

Kafetsios, K., & Nezlek, J. B. (2012). Emotion and support perceptions in everyday social interaction: Testing the "less is more" hypothesis in two cultures. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships,* 29(2), 165–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407511420194

Kalyvas, S. (2015). *Modern Greece: What everyone needs to know.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Karstedt, S. (2007). *The strength of institutions: Corruption, cultural values, and institutional regimes.* Paper presented at the 2007 annual meeting of The American Society of Criminology. Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p201274_index.html.

Katz, D. (1960). The functional approach to the study of attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24, 163–204. https://doi.org/10.1086/266945

Kipnis, D. (2006). Does power corrupt? *Small groups: Key readings* (pp. 177–186). Psychology Press. (Reprint of Kipnis, D. (1972). Does power corrupt? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 24*(1), 33–41. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0033390

Konstantinidis, I., & Xezonakis, G. (2013). Sources of tolerance towards corrupted politicians in Greece: The role of trade offs and individual benefits. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *60*, 549–563. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-013-9478-2

Kubiak, A. (2001) *Corruption in everyday experience. Report on the survey*. www. batory.org.pl. Accessed 12 January 2019.

Lambsdorff, J.G. (2006). Causes and consequences of corruption: What do we know from a cross-section of countries? In S. Rose-Ackerman (Ed.), *International handbook on the economics of corruption* (pp. 3–51). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Nezlek, J.B., Newman, D.B., Schütz, A., Baumeister, R.F., Schug, J., Joshanloo, M., … Yokota, K. (2019). An international survey of perceptions of the 2014 FIFA World Cup: National levels of corruption as a context for perceptions of institutional corruption. *PLoS ONE, 14(9)*, e0222492. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222492

Oltheten, E., Sougiannis, T., Travlos, N., & Zarkos, S. (2013). Greece in the Eurozone: Lessons from a decade of experience. *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, *53*, 317–335. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2013.05.006

Pande, S., & Jain, N. (2014). Relation between personal values and corruption permissiveness of government servants in India and the moderating role of dissatisfaction with the financial condition of the family. *International Review of Public Administration*, *19*(2), 126–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/12294659.2014.915475

Schwartz, S.H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *25*, 1–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60281-6

Schwartz, S.H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, … Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*, 663 –688. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029393

Seleim, A., & Bontis, N. (2009). The relationship between culture and corruption: A cross-national study. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, *10*(1), 165–184. https://doi.org/10.1108/14691930910922978

Sundstrom, A. (2016). Corruption and violations of conservation rules: A survey experiment with resource users. *World Development*, *85*, 73–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.04.011

Transparency International (2016). Table of results: Corruption Perceptions Index 2016. http://www.transparency.org/cpi2016#results-table. Accessed 9 January 2019.

Treisman, D. (2000). The causes of corruption: A cross-national study. *Journal of Public Economics*, *76*, 399–457. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2727(99)00092-4

Welzel, C., & Inglehart, R. (2010). Values, agency, and well-being: A human development model. *Social Indicators Research*, *97*, 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-009-9557-z

Zhuravlev, A.L. & Sosnin, V.A. (2013). Fenomen korruptsii v Rossii kak sotsiopoliticheskaya i psikhologicheskaya problema [The phenomenon of corruption in Russia as a sociopolitical and psychological problem]. *Prikladnaya yuridicheskaya psikhologiya* [Applied Legal Psychology], *2,* 8–24.

Appendix

Acceptability of Corruption Scale

How acceptable to you are the types of behavior below?

		Not acceptable	Most likely not acceptable	Neither acceptable nor unacceptable	Most likely acceptable	Acceptable
1	A tate employee accepts for work in a public office someone from his/her family or friends, and not another candidate with higher qualifications. *(was removed)*	1	2	3	4	5
2	One member of a married couple offers money to the surgeon to operate on her husband (or his wife) ahead of those on the waiting list in a state hospital. *(was removed)*	1	2	3	4	5
3	It normally takes between 3 and 6 months to issue building permits. A businessman offers a public servant money to get a permit within 2 weeks.	1	2	3	4	5
4	A driver has committed a serious violation, and to avoid losing his driver's license, he offers money to the policeman.	1	2	3	4	5
5	A parent offers money to the director of a prestigious school to accept his son without further testing. *(was removed)*	1	2	3	4	5
6	A businessman offers money to the tax inspector to avoid a fine.	1	2	3	4	5
7	A patient offers money to a doctor in order to give him a definitive diagnosis that will allow him to obtain benefits.	1	2	3	4	5
8	A parent offers money to the director of a public kindergarten so that his child will be accepted out of turn.	1	2	3	4	5