



## Favor reciprocation theory in education: New corruption typology



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### ABSTRACT

Embedded in a systemic and chronic process, corruption in education is a pervasive element that exacerbates developing countries' efforts to educate their citizens. Understanding the cumulative impact rests upon exposing key features of educational corruption and bringing to light the varied forms in which corruption emerges within institutions of higher education. Classifying educational corruption may be elusive in the developing settings due to the acceptability and prevalence of the phenomenon; yet, it is imperative that more attention is focused on this area. Based on the empirical research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina's higher education, this paper broadens current understanding of typologies of educational corruption by incorporating the novel forms emerging in the post-war and developing environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In particular, the study surprisingly finds that elites gravitate towards and benefit from non-pecuniary corruption while the poor tend to bribe. The study places the onus on the lack of accountability of elite power maneuvers and aims to aid in creating further awareness to combat corruption.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

As the growth of educational corruption threatens to unravel the increasing international support of education in recent years, practitioners and academics alike have begun to look into the types, causes, and consequences of corruption. This empirical research, depicting new forms of corruption that have emerged in the post-war higher education of Bosnia and Herzegovina, expands current typologies of educational corruption by utilizing Bosnia as a source of primary data. We raise two primary research questions: Is corruption present in Bosnia? If so, in which forms is it exhibited?

The breakup of former Yugoslavia and consequent wars in the Western Balkans caused destruction and ethnic cleansing, bringing about "a vacuum where a corrupt political class emerged" and provoking an environment open to venality (Devine and Mathisen, 2005, 1). Moreover, the overall weakening of the USSR and the

breakup of the central monitoring system, relative to the past, yielded an educational structure prone to corruption (Heyneman et al., 2008). While the decentralization and privatization processes intensified the difficulties of transition into market economies for the former USSR (Heyneman et al., 2008), similarly lacking organization and ethnically driven decentralization within post-war Bosnia created a fertile ground for corrupt behaviors. Knowing more about typologies of educational corruption and quantifying the corruption or the perception of it is a salient and still evolving research area in education. Challenges present themselves particularly with attempts to accurately quantify corruption. This work therefore presumes that, short of witnessing and effectually measuring corruption, perception of corruption is broadly accepted as a default indicator of corruption. Transparency International, for instance, produces annual corruption perception data to build its widely known Corruption Perception Index. This study takes the same approach, where the evidence stems from the data reflecting students' perceptions of corruption.

Corruption research carries inherent risks to researchers. Exposing corruption may jeopardize the social, economic, and political positions of those involved. These dynamics make quantification even more difficult. While this study cannot circumvent or address the nature of the challenges associated with researching corruption, our study does rely on the empirical evidence collected at the higher education institutions that consented to data collection on corruption, often in belief that

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they were considerably less corrupt than their peer institutions. The later discussed findings substantiating corruption and corrupt behaviors in Bosnia and Herzegovina are likely more conservative estimates of the actual corruption if the study were to be inclusive of other, arguably more corrupt, higher education institutions.

Moreover, understanding how educational corruption perpetuates power of the elites in many developing states is another area in educational research that calls for further inquiry. Heyneman (2004) augments the discussion on the role of elites in education systems by observing that all education systems have “elite characteristics” (639) and are by nature a selection process, *that is* if an elite is defined as one who is able to enter through the gates of higher echelons of education. Furthermore, “how selection is managed is deeply important for maintaining an equality of education opportunity” (Heyneman, 2004, 639). Nonetheless, the problem is exacerbated if gatekeepers, in the form of elite and political leaders willfully shut out members of society from a fair and merit-based education. In comparison to a system of meritocracy in education, this subversive system of control cannot occur without a systematic and broadly designed net of corrupt activities, difficult to detect yet highly sustainable as it involves well regulated corridors of networked power, disseminated and encouraged through a top down process. Waite and Allen (2003) note that “until we recognize corruption in all its many guises, we, and those we serve, remain its unwitting victims” (294). Thus, this study argues that a new classification of corruption in education, which takes into account the subversive and widely established control of elites over the higher education system, is needed to fully gauge the problem of corruption in education and, particularly, in higher education.

## 2. Literature review: corruption typologies

Existing research on the topic has aimed at creating typologies of corruption in order to understand its effects on academia and beyond (Altbach, 2004; Chapman, 2002; Heyneman, 2004; Romyantseva, 2005; Sayed and Bruce, 1998a; Transparency International, 2007; Waite and Allen, 2003). Broadening research on the types of educational corruption, Waite and Allen (2003) were among the first to inquire into the unexplored interplay between power and corruption in education, and ways in which seeking a collective benefit for a group can both instigate and perpetuate corruption. In their notable piece on the topic, the authors look into “an ethnology of corruption and abuse of power in educational administration” (281). According to their perspective, the limitation of current research on educational corruption is immediately evident in the widely accepted definition of corruption: corruption is often and generally defined as an individual’s abuse of public position for his/her own good (Palmer, 1992; Sayed and Bruce, 1998b). While educational corruption is frequently individually beneficial, Waite and Allen (2003) expand this definition by referring to Sayed and Bruce’s (1998b) notion of collective benefit when defining corruption among the police. Waite and Allen (2003) view corruption as “any use of power or position through discrete acts or behavior(s) that benefit an individual, group, or organization” (282). The authors further recognize the salience of differentiating not only between individual and collective forms of corruption, but also “between haphazard and more systemic forms of corruption” (289), wherein Waite and Allen claim that a subtle or haphazard type of corruption is perfectly embodied in the case of an uninformed member of the educational administration who has repeatedly used a university computer for personal activities. Similar to these broader views on corruption, we “flexibly define educational corruption as any abuse of official position that is pursued by an individual for either his/her benefit or that of his/her class or group” (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013,

p. 6). We go further in this study by delineating the two key types of corruption: non-pecuniary and pecuniary forms of educational corruption. Pecuniary forms of corruption involve a bribe where an individual, or a group, chooses to abuse his/her official authority to monetarily benefit by receiving a bribe from another individual, or a group, that is expecting to receive a favor or benefit in exchange. Non-pecuniary forms of corruption do not involve a bribe. Favors are reciprocated instead, and no money exchanges hands. The question raised and later answered in this study is in what forms do the non-pecuniary forms of corruption manifest within higher education. We take on this complex issue, but recognize that the study only begins to address the intricacies of this clandestine phenomenon.

Others have also classified corruption and helped determine the facilitators of corruption-related behaviors (Chapman, 2002; Heyneman, 2004; Romyantseva, 2005). The 2013 Global Corruption Report on Education by Transparency International consolidated and exposed myriad forms of corruption; however, while exploring numerous case studies across the world, it does not formalize a typology of corruption in education. Moreover, elite-based corruption as a form of non-pecuniary corruption is not explored in other studies as a systemic phenomenon with its own rigorous rules. For example, in the case study on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Transparency International (2013, 190) only notes briefly that faculty may exchange grades for access to “social capital resources” such as “strengthening relationships with influential public figures from political or social life”. This study however aims to scrutinize such observations through an empirically based understanding of education corruption arising from elite’s use of favor-based reciprocations.

We recognize that favor reciprocations are part of life and are plentiful in the course of daily human interaction. They become problematic when seeded in the abuse of official authority that benefits either one or more individuals. This is the type of corruption that we refer to as non-pecuniary corruption. It is complex and can distort the meritocratic model of higher education, which is why it is at the core of this study. A group of professors may choose to promote each other based on their belonging to a particular ethnic, racial, or religious group rather than their competence. For instance, if incompetent professors are promoted based on their background traits rather than their competence, the quality of teaching would be affected and damaging to the educational process and society at large (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016).

In classifying corruption within educational systems, Chapman (2002) views corruption as occurring at any level of the educational governance: at the ministry level, school, region, classroom, and among international agencies. By introducing a new set of actors in corruption, Chapman (2002) refers to the possible corruption schemes among the international actors that are, often and almost instinctively, presumed to be benevolent actors in education. Additional examples of the corrupt activities taking place within the international agencies, per Chapman (2002), include excessively high payments that are unnecessary but aimed at obtaining certain services or information, siphoning funds away from projects, and making decisions on the allocation of projects not based on the objective evaluations but based on social, family, or business connections. He also notes that the types of corruption are diverse and depend on the socio-economic, political, and cultural context in which they occur.

Romyantseva (2005) contributes to this discussion by suggesting that educational corruption emerges in various forms, including, but not limited to, “favoritism in procurement, favoritism in personnel appointments, ghost teachers, selling admissions and grades, private tutoring, and skimming from project grants” (84). She insightfully notes that the types of corruption occurring

**Table 1**  
Key research hypotheses.

	Sample Size	Method
Hypothesis 1: Presence of Corruption: Corruption in higher education has notable presence	762 Surveys 15 Interviews	Descriptive Stats Content Analysis
Hypothesis 2: Pecuniary versus Non-Pecuniary Corruption: Non-pecuniary corruption plays an important role in developing contexts and disproportionately benefits the elites versus non-elites	762 Surveys 15 Interviews	Descriptive Stats Content Analysis
Hypothesis 3: Students' Traits and Non-Pecuniary Corruption Students' social standing is key in determining their role in favor-reciprocation processes. Therefore, students' background traits shape their view on whether non-pecuniary corruption in their institutions of higher education is existent or not	762 Surveys	Binary Logistic Regression <b>Model</b> Dependent: <i>Y = Passing via Social Connections</i> Independents: <i>X<sub>1</sub> = Household Income</i> <i>X<sub>2</sub> = Sex</i> <i>X<sub>3</sub> = Student Type</i> <i>X<sub>4</sub> = Competence Belief</i> <i>X<sub>5</sub> = Father's Position</i> <i>X<sub>6</sub> = Father's Education</i>

within the administration do not impact the values, beliefs, and future life path of students as directly as the types of corruption most explicitly involving students. Offering a rich overview of types of corruption, Rummyantseva focuses on the individual gains and consequences rather than collective benefits and shared motivations of those involved in the corrupt activities. Heyneman (2004) had further enriched the typology research in education corruption by dividing this type of corruption into: "corruption in selection, corruption in accreditation, corruption in procurement, professional misconduct, and corruption in educational property and taxes" (845). Rummyantseva (2005) posits that there may be another classification allowing for a more nuanced comprehension of educational corruption. She begins by terming those transactions involving students as agents, education-specific corruption, breaking this category further into student-faculty exchange, student-administrator exchange and student-staff exchange (88–89). Those transactions that do not involve students as agents she terms administrative corruption. In each of the subcategories of education-specific corruption, she argues, corruption arises through the exchange of bribes and favors for grades, admissions, or access to transcripts, books, and dormitories.

In addition, Kaufmann and Vicente (2011) create pathways in understanding the multiple definitions of corruption, especially when the notion of legality is considered. Their study uncovers a new reality created by corruption as it takes into account the power dynamics of elite behavior and its susceptibility to adapt the machinery of the state, such as legal frameworks, to its own needs. Situating elites in a zero sum game of gain and loss, the study identifies three equilibrium outcomes: the first outcome proposes that illegal corruption flourishes when the elites are allowed or do not face "binding incentives" to limit corruption; the second outcome is an alternative that is "centered around legal corruption" in which there is a cost burden undertaken by the elites "to legally protect corruption"; the last and most ideal outcome, "a no-corruption outcome" engenders a situation in which "the population is able to effectively react to corruption" (Kaufmann and Vicente, 2011, 195). One step further may be to inquire into the clandestine mechanisms that are available and of which elites take advantage to safeguard their reputations. As there are higher costs to manipulate the legal framework to make corruption legal and lower costs to take part in illegal corruption (Kaufmann and Vicente, 2011, 200), maximum gain and minimum loss rules dictate prevarication in the simplest of activities and simulation of a façade to preserve both power and lack of accountability. This is

precisely a state of being towards which Bosnia's elites have moved the country's higher education. As discussed and supported by the empirical evidence in the forthcoming sections, the elite-based favor reciprocations currently flourish within Bosnia's higher education framework, but do so under a system that is seemingly and publically striving towards becoming an integrated part of the EU's higher education area known for its attempt to harmonize transparency and merit-based mobility across all participating countries. In Bosnia, little incentive to drastically change the legal framework exists, although a Law on Pardon was established in 2004 and taken advantage of before it was revoked (Devine and Mathisen, 2005). The Law on Pardon, passed by the parliament and government of Bosnia in January 2004, was unreported by the media, emphasizing its furtive purpose to help elites take advantage of it (Devine and Mathisen, 2005). After a member of parliament (MP) received the first pardon, followed by several more pardons granted to high officials, the duplicitous nature of the law came to the attention of the High Representative who, then, repealed it (Internal SIDA memo in Devine and Mathisen, 2005).

Being in control of creation and execution of legal frameworks, the elites of developing countries often exploit the systems to benefit their collective goals. In the process, favors amongst the elites are often exchanged through social networks and are not adequately sanctioned because of the power reinforcement that these exchanges provide to the elites' within the closed circles of power. A version of this corruption-preserves-class-power notion emerges from Chapman's (2002) writing, wherein he reasons that "gatekeepers' . . . motivation is often economic – to supplement income – but may also be an effort to extend their status or power" (8).

Though it is needed to achieve a deeper understanding of educational corruption, literature on the interplay between power, social mobility, and corruption in the educational sector, in particular, remains limited. It was only a few years ago that Waite and Allen (2003) pioneered such an effort. If a society embraces non merit-based mobility,<sup>2</sup> it arguably accepts corruption-related behavior, since a flawed apparatus other than meritocracy plays a

<sup>2</sup> Please note that while we recognize the debate on what may constitute merit is ongoing (Jaschik, 2013), this paper presumes that the meritorious mobility in education constitutes one backed by superior academic performance for student and by notable expertise, publication record, and excellent teaching for faculty members.

key role in determining social standing in a society. To maintain *status quo*, those in power tend to leverage educational corruption for the maintenance of this elite status. The ultimate goal of this study is to begin decoding what types of educational corruption in developing settings become systematic and normalized behaviors that allow the elites to utilize educational institutions for the maintenance of social inequalities and for turning universities into likely mechanisms of elite status preservation. This study therefore presents an empirically supported new typology of corruption that dissects corrupt behaviors by their pecuniary or non-pecuniary nature.

### 2.1. Key research hypotheses

Using mixed methods, we address three key research questions in the context of the sampled higher education institutions in Bosnia. The primary proposition of this paper is that educational corruption plays prominently in higher education institutions in Bosnia and, furthermore, that the non-pecuniary corruption benefiting elites is particularly concerning and relevant in addressing corruption in education systems of developing countries. More specifically, the study proposes the following hypotheses (see Table 1):

1. Corruption in higher education is notably present.
2. Non-pecuniary corruption, as manifested in the form of favor reciprocations, plays a role in higher education institutions, often benefiting the elites.
3. Students' social standing is key in determining their role in favor-reciprocation processes. Therefore, whether students view non-pecuniary corruption in their institutions of higher education as existent or not is dependent on students' background traits.

The first two hypotheses were tested by examining the survey data as well as by unpacking the content of the semi-structured interviews conducted with students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The third hypothesis relied on the binary logistic regressions that examined whether students' views on the presence of non-pecuniary corruption are dependent on background traits of the participating students. If students' perceptions of non-pecuniary forms of corruption were shaped by students' background traits, it would point to the importance of student background in favor reciprocations in higher education. The elites and non-elites are impacted differently by favor reciprocation, and their views on the presence of non-pecuniary forms of corruption should similarly differ based on the students' background traits. Finding the differential would solidify our theoretical proposition that the favor reciprocations are beneficial to the elites while the bribes remain relevant for the poorer segments of the society.

### 3. Methodological framework: mixed methods approach

As we are curious about corruption intangibly and subtly affecting the creation of social hierarchies, this study calls for the recognition of diverse factors that may shape corruption in education. In war-torn countries such as Bosnia, poverty, ethnicity, wealth, and ultimately one's personal character may shape one's proneness towards corrupt behaviors. More importantly, in fragile states characterized with high levels of societal corruption, education tends to reflect the societal proneness to criminalized activities and corrupt behaviors. Most importantly, however, we argue, it is essential to determine *if* and *to what extent* one's affiliation with the socio-economic and political elites, impacts the manner in which higher education corruption manifests itself. Any considered policy response to address corruption in education has

to account for the classification of corrupt interactions. Our study broadens current debate on the relevance of corruption in higher education in developing countries by empirically determining most frequently perceived forms of corruption in higher education within Bosnia's higher education system.

This article is derived from a larger mixed-methods empirical research (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012) with the intent to highlight the complexity of corrupt behaviors in higher education systems of fragile and post-war societies. While broader study relies on elaborate logistic regression modeling, this article zooms in on several key statistics, trends, and a specific logistic regression model that provides deeper insights on non-pecuniary corruption. All analysis is derived from 762 randomly surveyed and 15 purposely selected and interviewed students from public higher education institutions in Bosnia. The survey instrument contained 39 questions though only sub-selected and most relevant findings are presented herein. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of several sub-sections, starting with the most relevant section for this paper, aimed at addressing questions on the forms of perceived corruption in higher education, reasons for its persistency, and facilitators of corruption.

Given logistic difficulty of obtaining data on corruption, the study is unique in its ability to have compiled and analyzed substantive data on corruption in higher education. Briefly, we analyze key descriptive statistics to spell out current trends on the forms in which corruption manifests itself in Bosnia's higher education. The trend analysis was supplemented and further validated using relevant segments of the broader content analysis of the interview-based data. Resembling quantitative approach, the content analysis also looks for repetition of concepts in the interview-based data. In this study, it has helped uncover the contextual idiosyncrasies of educational corruption and elites that could not be observed or detected if the study were exclusively reliant on survey-based trends alone. Through this method, the study directly addresses the role of non-pecuniary corruption in Bosnia's higher education institutions.

#### 3.1. Content analysis

The content analysis method was first developed by Gottschalk and Gleser (1969). It is generally defined as "a method of studying and analyzing communications in a systematic, [and] objective manner . . ." (Kerlinger, 1986). For this research, the individual student interviews were first transcribed in detail then analyzed for any potential patterns that could further inform the quantitative analysis and complement other findings. Gorard and Taylor (2004) simplify differentiation between quantitative and qualitative research to the narrative nature of the latter that allows the researcher simply to ask direct questions. Hammersley (1996) points to the in-depth interviews as informative in formulation of surveys, illustrating that one methodological approach can be informed by the other. This study applies the content analysis method by reducing detailed interview-based data to relevant themes and looking for patterns and repetition of certain concepts, with the particular focus on the concepts that played prominently in the survey-based data.

#### 3.2. Binary logistic regression

As another key piece of the overall analysis, we test whether students' perception of a non-pecuniary form of educational corruption as present (event occurring and coded as 1) or not (event not occurring and coded as 0) can be explained by their background characteristics. This approach warrants the use of simple binary logistics regression. Probit regression was an

alternative contender, but both tend to yield similar results (Gill, 2001; Greene, 1997). Unlike linear regression, logistic regression has no strict requirements for the predictors' distributions (Bewick et al., 2005). Its dependent variable, logit, is expressed as the natural log of the odds, where the odds capture a ratio between the probability of the event occurring ( $p$ ) versus the probability of the event not occurring ( $p$ ). The binary logistic regression is expressed as the Log (odds) = logit ( $p$ ) =  $\ln(p/1 - p)$ .

The key prerequisite for the binary logistic regression analysis is to test the linearity between the logit and predictors, but only for continuous and ordinal predictors. In the forthcoming model, predictors for father's ranking at work (*Father's Position*), father's level of education (*Father's Education*), family's income ranking (*Household Income*), and student's academic ranking (*Student Type*) were all ordinal variables and were therefore tested for the linearity assumption. The Box-Tidwell Transformation Test is a technique that determines whether the linearity assumption is violated or not.<sup>3</sup> The Box-Tidwell Transformation Test requires that for each of the above noted predictors, a new and transformed variable is created by multiplying the natural log of  $X$  with the predictor  $X$ .<sup>4</sup> Once transformed, the transformed predictor is included into a binary logistic regression to determine whether the transformed variable's coefficient is significant, which would be indicative of the linearity assumption's violation. The Box Tidwell Test was performed for all of the above noted ordinal predictors and the linearity assumptions were not violated.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.3. Sampling

Despite increasing emergence of the private higher education institutions, the public higher education remains the main credentials provider in Bosnia. Therefore, the study sampled public higher education institutions. Data was collected at 6 public higher institutions, which allowed for their students to be randomly surveyed on the topic of educational corruption. Presumably, these higher education institutions did not expect corruption in their institutions to play as prominently as it did, thereby comparatively it is likely that other institutions declining to participate in the study were more concerned about the level of corruption within their institutions. Other institutions had been approached, but declined to participate given the nature of the research. Considering these circumstances, this paper is based on one of the larger empirical efforts on the topic in the area of higher education in the Balkans. The randomly surveyed sample totaled to 762 students, but the sampling process was further enriched by interviewing a smaller sample of students who were purposely approached through a network of in-country contacts. In total, 15 students accepted an invitation to participate in this research and openly discuss corruption.

Given Bosnia's societal sensitivity towards corruption, the names of the six public faculties were coded from F1 through F6. Overall, surveyed sample (Table 2), closely resembles general traits of the higher education populations in Bosnia, in terms of graduation rates and gender composition (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012, 2014, 2016). The majority of students surveyed were first year students with declining participation by students who were

**Table 2**  
Sample composition.

VARIABLE	% OF STUDENTS	# OF STUDENTS
<b>SEX</b>		
Female	64	488
Male	34	259
No answer/Not applicable	2	15
<b>ETHNICITY</b>		
Bosniaks	96	732
Croats	2	15
Serb	0.01	1
Bosnians	2	14
<b>YEAR IN SCHOOL</b>		
1st year students	48.0	366
2nd year students	32.9	251
3rd year students	11.7	89
4th year students	6.7	51
No answer/Not applicable	0.7	5
<b>FACULTY COMPOSITION</b>		
F1	13.4	102
F2	8.9	68
F3	26.4	201
F4	21.9	167
F5	25.6	195
F6	3.8	29
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HI)</b>		
HI < 500	21.5	165
500 < HI < 1500	57.2	438
1500 < HI < 2500	14.0	107
2500 < HI < 3500	2.3	18
3500 < HI	2.6	20
No answer/Not applicable	2.3	18

Source: Sabic-El-Rayess (2012).

sophomores, juniors, and seniors (Table 2). This is primarily the case due to the high dropout rates in Bosnia and, as later discussed, the nature of corrupt behaviors that are pushing out certain subgroups of students from the higher education arena. In terms of their household income, participants' socioeconomic profile resembled that of the country while the mono-ethnic composition of the sample was reflective of the ethnic profile of the faculties where permission to collect data was secured (Table 2). While the study may have benefited from a more diverse ethnic composition of the sample, it is generally presumed that ethnicity does not impact the frequency with which corruption occurs in higher education in Bosnia. Issues of corruption have been consistently reported within both ethnic entities in Bosnia. More importantly, the study's relevance surpasses the region in question to have broader implications for our understanding of corruption dynamics in fragile states.

## 4. Findings and analysis: favor reciprocation theory in education

The importance of education, especially post-secondary education, has risen significantly in recent decades to better serve what is now known as the knowledge society. As education holds greater currency, we ascertain the irony in the way today's knowledge society, a term defined by UNESCO World Report to include cultural diversity, equal access to education, universal access to information (in the public domain), and freedom of expression can propel greater corruption when in trying to meet the demands for new skills, students meet exploitative conditions set by rent seeking, and power wielding actors (UNESCO World Report, p. 31). This is due to the high stakes nature of higher education and its link to better employment and other emblems of

<sup>3</sup> In the event the linearity assumption has been violated, the variable in question would be restructured as dummy variables and, in that new form, could be incorporated into the binary logistic regression model.

<sup>4</sup> Transformed Variable of  $X = X \times \ln X$

<sup>5</sup> The following transformed variables were first computed: *Transformed Father's Position*, *Transformed Father's Education*, *Transformed Three-Level Family Income*, and *Transformed Student Type*. Resulting from the Box-Tidwell testing, we determined that the linearity assumptions were not violated for any of the tested predictors. Therefore, the predictors were used in regression modeling in their original form.

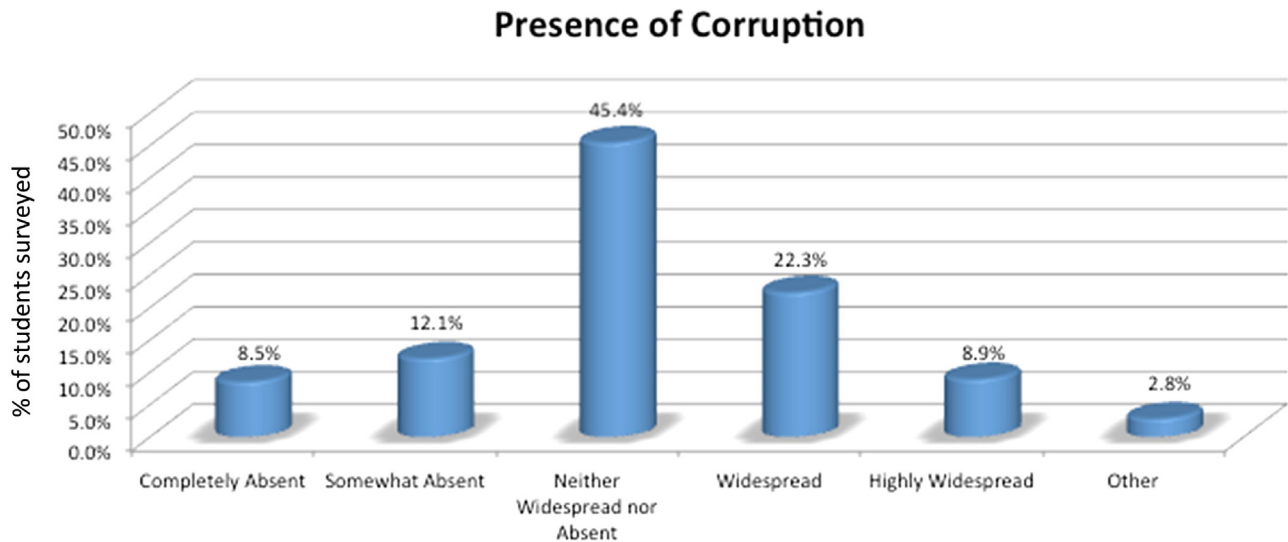


Fig. 1. Extent of corruption in sampled higher education institutions.

Source: Surveys.

success. The lack of enforcement of laws compounded by a weak judicial process and accountability ensure that well-connected elites not receive punishment for their corrupt behavior. Their cases, if they reach the courts, are routinely “stalled or postponed” (Devine and Mathisen, 2005, 23). Thus, the model this paper tests portrays that students’ high socioeconomic status for favor reciprocation helps them to mitigate the extenuating circumstances that corruption presents, while less connected and poor students suffer.

#### 4.1. Presence of corruption

The study’s findings on the presence of corruption in Bosnia’s higher education show that overall, the corruption is notably present in the sampled higher education institutions. Given rigorous sampling methodology and size of the randomly chosen sample, this presence of corruption is presumed largely reflective of the public education system in Bosnia and, likely, mirrors many higher education institutions throughout the developing world. Of the total surveyed sample, only 8.5% of surveyed students viewed corruption as “completely absent”. Moreover, 45.4% of the sampled student body stated that corruption is “neither widespread nor absent”, but 22.3% of the sampled population believed that corruption is “widespread” and 8.9% declared that corruption is “highly widespread” (Fig. 1). In sum, of 762 surveyed students, only 8.5% view corruption as “completely absent,” while a significant portion of the sample, 88.7%, believes corruption is present to some degree (Fig. 1). Only 2.8% of the surveyed participants opted out of the question.

Similarly, the interviewed group overall agreed that corruption was present in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The extent and presence of corruption was also discussed with the pool of 15 interviewed students. One of the interviewed students noted that while educational corruption does not occupy a spotlight on a daily basis in the media of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is a daily occurrence in the educational process (Interviewee 6C). The issue partly rests with the institutions’ implicit endorsement of corrupt behavior: it is not in the interest of the universities to disclose the information on the presence of corruption and its extent (Interviewee 1C).

In defining corruption within Bosnia’s higher education, only 2 interviewed students perceived corruption as “the criminal

activity that involves the acceptance or giving of bribery,” while the remainder demarcated it more broadly as a cluster of activities ranging from bribery to reciprocation of favors among the social elite (Table 3). Among those who described corruption more broadly including the forms of non-monetary exchanges as well, interviewee 9C estimated that favor exchanges comprise about 80% of all corruption-related activities in higher education, while about 20% is left to the bribing process (Table 3).

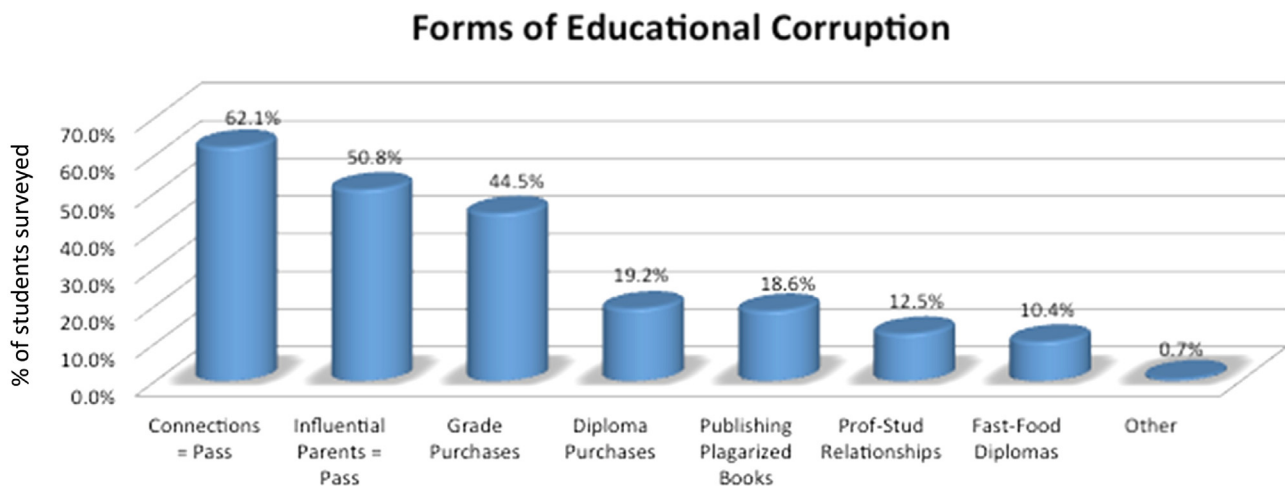
Notably, the two interviewed individuals who believe that corruption is limited only to the bribing process were also politically active in their community. Interviewee 1C not only opted for the more limited definition of corruption but underlined that favor reciprocation is a form of nepotism not solely linked to the elites but is also culturally practiced. Interviewee 1C also remarked that professors look at the politically involved student “more seriously and with different eyes.” The student further attributed his own personal success to hard work, reiterating that he has had no problems or barriers in the course of his studies. The above evidence shows that the student who is caught within the machinery of corruption is unlikely to give a disinterested view of this crisis. Furthermore, the three interviewees who stated they were socio-politically “highly involved” were also on the lower end of the student estimates as to the extent of corruption. Specifically, interviewees 1C, 11C, and 15C remarked that “30–40% of professors” are corrupt; corruption is “present, but not widespread”; and “50% of professors” are corrupt, respectively.

Those students who declared they were less involved socio-politically within their communities often gave higher estimates of how widespread corruption is than those who claimed to have been “highly involved”. The study finds that 2 out of 3 students who remarked they were “somewhat involved” estimated that 70% of their professors are corrupt (Table 3). Also, the “somewhat uninvolved” student who graduated from a public university and later gained employment as a teaching assistant at a different university stated that corruption was even more widespread: the student perceived 90% to 95% of faculty members as corrupt (Table 3). Though the sample size of 15 students is a limiting factor here, the patterns extrapolated from the available transcripts are suggestive of the previously hypothesized notion that corruption is perceived as less widespread by the most politically and socially prominent students who are also the ones most likely to benefit from their access to the social elites and their ability to leverage the

**Table 3**  
Corruption definition and presence matrix.

Code	Socio-Political Involvement	Corruption perceived as bribery	Corruption perceived as bribery, favor reciprocity, other immoral behavior	Perceived extent of corruption
1C	Highly Involved	✓		30–40% of professors
2C	Uninvolved		✓	Highly widespread
3C	Uninvolved		✓	Very frequent
4C	Uninvolved		✓	Highly widespread
5C	Uninvolved		✓	Highly widespread
6C	Somewhat Involved		✓	70%
7C	Uninvolved		✓	80%
8C	Somewhat Involved	✓		70%
9C <sup>8</sup>	Somewhat Uninvolved		✓	Increases during the exam period. About 90–95% are corrupt. This is based on the faculty where I work.
10C	Uninvolved		✓	90%
11C	Highly Involved		✓	Present, but not widespread
12C	Uninvolved		✓	70%
13C	Uninvolved		✓	Only began studies and cannot evaluate
14C	Somewhat Involved		✓	Present
15C	Highly Involved		✓	Present, about 50% of professors
TOTAL	Uninvolved	2	13	

Source: Interviews



**Fig. 2.** Forms of educational corruption.

Source: Surveys

elites' social networks. In the next sub-section, the study continues to probe this notion indirectly by examining the types of corruption most frequently observed in Bosnia's higher education.

#### 4.2. Corruption typology reflecting favor-reciprocation model

Here, we reflect upon the exhaustive list of corruption forms that are presently practiced in Bosnia's higher education. Addressing one of our key research questions on the forms of corruption (Table 1), we theorize that students face various types of corruption during their education; accordingly, we portray a comprehensive picture, which includes the myriad types of

corruption in Bosnia's higher education. In doing so, we draw on the most relevant survey- and interview-based data.

As noted in the literature review, corruption in education can take on various forms. Herein, both interviewees and surveyed students confirmed the existence of diverse types of corruption as manifested in Bosnia's higher education. Of 762 surveyed participants, 8.8% of the sample was of the view that corruption appears in no form within Bosnia's higher education while the two most frequently occurring forms of corruption involve passing exams by relying on personal connections and influential parents (Fig. 2). While not an unlikely scenario for the non-elites, repeatedly failing an individual of social importance would rarely occur. In other words, "connections and acquaintances are the key" to one's success, and it may often be the case that "the poor *have to pay* [emphasis added] while those with higher status only use their connections" (Interviewee 5C). Simply said, some students in

<sup>8</sup> After graduation, this interviewee obtained a job as a teaching assistant at another public faculty.

Bosnia work hard but those who are well connected socially advance in college and, often, post-college at the expense of the hard-working individuals by taking what should have been their jobs (Interviewee 5C).

#### 4.3. Theory in action: favors are for rich and bribes are for poor

The most frequently noted form of corruption in Bosnian higher education does not involve monetary exchange but rather the reciprocity of favors: more specifically, a significant majority or 62.1% of the student body (473 of surveyed students) thought that corruption appears in the form of “passing exams because of one’s social connections” (Fig. 2). The data collected *via* interviews similarly suggest that the reciprocity of favors is one of the key articulations of educational corruption in Bosnian higher education and, in the view of some, the dominant one. Often, direct exchanges of money in the educational system to secure grades or diplomas are seen as less frequent relative to favor exchanges (Interviewee 4C; Interviewee 5C; Interviewee 7C). Reiterating that the poor tend to bribe and the elites resort to their access to the influential and powerful, another participant referred to a colleague who used social connections to enroll into college. The well-connected student explicitly said: “I have the privilege to enter college without any criteria” (Interviewee 14C).

Consequently, students perceive corruption as no longer involving tangible goods but exchanges of jobs, favors, and promises. Out of 15 interviewed students, 9 students believe that corruption in higher education is a result of interconnectedness and in service of an elite described as, for instance, “local power-holders” (Interviewee 1C), “local leaders” (Interviewee 2C), “people with political power” (Interviewee 3C), “those who are politically suitable” (Interviewee 4C), and “people in power” (Interviewee 8C). It is precisely this evolving nature of corruption resulting from the interconnectedness between the educational and political elite that makes comprehensive verification, detection, and proper quantification of corruption highly complex. Therefore, this study relies solely on student perception as indicative proxy of what may be taking place in actuality and within the country’s higher education.

Drawing on the analysis of students’ perceptions regarding various forms of educational corruption, the study confirms that materialistic exchange is not the sole source of corrupt behavior. Indeed, “favor-for-favor” is another form of corruption, producing a college-educated cadre among which some are believed to have never even taken an exam (Interviewee 3C). As another student observed, when going through the admissions process, it is important to have someone who will “speak on your behalf as grades do not speak for themselves” (Interviewee 15C). So, the student’s background may turn out to be the most relevant factor in the admissions process, diminishing the importance of academic success and merit as a measure of student’s performance.

While the political elites operate based on the principle of “I do it for you, you do it for me,” those who lack strong connections “work hard and repeat years endlessly until either one or the other gives up [professor or the student] . . . or they will take a loan to bribe the professor or if the student is female, she will sleep with the professor” (Interviewee 7C). Even the professors who reject corruption and wish to differentiate themselves from the corrupt circles are frequently forced to take part in the corrupt process: they “pass students against their [professors’] own will. It is all systemically connected” (Interviewee 3C) and those that reject or resist corruption may be deemed unsuitable for their positions. They are often politically marginalized and replaced by “little [gods] that listen” (Interviewee 4C). Here, one’s list of academic

publications is irrelevant relative to one’s political suitability (Interviewee 4C).

The second most frequently occurring form of corruption helped validate the hypothesis that the reciprocity of favors plays a crucial role in complicating educational corruption: 50.8% of the surveyed sample believe that educational corruption appears in the form of “passing because of one’s influential parents,” which reflects a very similar notion as does the earlier noted statistic that 62.1% of the surveyed student thought corruption appears in the form of “passing exams because of one’s social connections” (Fig. 2). This finding not only confirmed that students perceive favor-for-favor exchanges as corruption but has also tested one of the key premises of this research: it confirmed the importance of favor reciprocity and consequent implications for the social mobility mechanisms stemming from the students’ perceptions of favor-for-favor exchanges as corruption.

The notion that this paper brings into the limelight is the complexity of non-pecuniary corruption, making educational corruption even more of an intractable activity than it might have been initially perceived to be. Even with bribery that could arguably be traced, there are rarely direct exchanges of money; instead, the exchanges frequently include multiple steps designed to shroud those involved. For instance, one participant witnessed an incident where “a student walked in during the S [code for the course] exam, and said to the professor, ‘Dad said you should stop by to pick it up,’ and professor replied, ‘Give me your indeks<sup>6</sup>’ to [presumably] write in the grade for the exam that was in session” (Interviewee 2C). This exchange occurred and was uninterrupted in front of the entire class.

The dichotomy between the elites and non-elites in how they operate and interact within higher education institutions is obviated in the following comment made by one of the study participants who went on to take a teaching assistantship job at his/her institution:

“My colleague is completing a doctorate in Croatia with one of the, supposedly, prominent names in the field. He is constantly dining with the professor from Croatia. I suspect that is how he is getting his doctorate. I, on the other hand, have been working for years on my doctorate, and everyone is surprised that I want to do it legitimately and that I am taking so long to complete it. (Interviewee 9C)”

This statement illustrates the severity of educational corruption and the consequent differentiation between the elites and non-elites, extending beyond students into the faculty arena. In fact, the social exchanges amongst the privileged remain a relevant social dynamic even after graduation and especially when it comes to the public sector employment: a Bosnian public faculty graduate who sought to work as a teaching assistant post-graduation met with the dean of her faculty and expressed her interest in staying on as a teaching assistant. Given her exceptional performance as a student, she expected the faculty dean to be interested in discussing employment opportunities with her. However, this faculty’s dean rejected her by saying: “I do not employ social cases . . . your parents are unemployed” (Interviewee 4C). The dean effectively disassociated himself or his faculty with a family of no social significance or financial backing. This finding helps validate the relevance of social networking that continues post-graduation and beyond educational sector, as well as this study’s hypothesis that relationship leveraging is utilized only when the two sides involved recognize their mutually equivalent social and political status.

<sup>6</sup> Indeks is a gradebook in Bosnia.



**Table 4**  
List of relevant variables.

VARIABLE NAME	VALUES <sup>9</sup>	VARIABLE TYPE	SURVEY QUESTION
<i>Passing via Social Connections</i>	Yes = 1 No = 0	Dependent	17: Which forms does corruption take? <i>Passing via Social Connections</i> ?
<i>Household Income</i>	500KM–1500KM = 1 1500KM–2500KM = 2 2500KM–3500+ KM = 3	Predictor	34: Please indicate your average monthly household income?
<i>Sex</i>	Male = 1 Female = 0	Predictor	2: What is your gender?
<i>Student Type</i>	Excellent = 1 Very good = 2 Good/Satisfactory = 3	Predictor	4: What type of student were you in high-school?
<i>Father's Position</i>	Worker = 1 Intellectual but not executive = 2, Executive = 3, Director/Owner/Head of Organization = 4	Predictor	37: What has been your father's highest position?
<i>Father's Education</i>	Elementary = 1 Secondary = 2 Two-Year College = 3 College or Higher = 4	Predictor	35: What is the highest degree obtained by your father?
<i>Competency Belief</i>	Always = 1 Almost Always = 2 Often = 3 Rarely or Never = 4	Predictor	10: Are the most competent amongst your peers first to graduate?

#### 4.3.1. Students' background on non-pecuniary corruption: binary logistic regression

Our favor reciprocation theory is seeded in a broader idea that the elites differentiate themselves from the others for the purpose of controlling societal resources. The selection of the privileged few is inherently based on protecting the elite status and creating the access barriers for other groups. When not based on merited selection, the elites tend to choose their members based on background traits, ranging from aristocratic lineage to wealth. In the studied context of Bosnia's higher education, we similarly theorize that the elites differentiate students based on their background traits, including students' social connectivity to the existing elites. Given that we are not privy to the elite's complex and clandestine selection process, we tested whether students' view on the existence of the key non-pecuniary form of corruption, *Passing via Social Connections*, is indeed determined by students' background traits. The students' perceptions of corruption are presumably indicative of the students' own experiences with corruption, where the elites are presumably likelier to benefit while the poorer segments of the society may be more adversely affected.

Of all non-pecuniary forms of corruption (Fig. 2), students pass via social connections (*Passing via Social Connections*) is the most frequently occurring type. This type of corruption allows one to leverage favor reciprocations to unfairly benefit in education. The frequency with which this form of corruption is observed in our data, both qualitative and quantitative, provides the initial yet key evidence that favor reciprocations are live and well amongst the socially powerful elites.

To further test this relationship, we tested if students' belief in the occurrence of *Passing via Social Connections* can be explained using student background traits, including *Household Income*, *Sex*, *Student Type*, *Competency Belief*, *Father's Position*, *Father's Education* and *Student Type*. Direct questions on the students' affiliation with the elites would have adversely impacted students' willingness to participate in the survey. So, to examine the complex relation of the elite status and non-pecuniary corruption, we extracted the key

sub-set of students' background variables from the survey (Table 4), where these variables have collectively served as a proxy of the student's social status. Students were extensively questioned on their background and their perceptions of corruption. Namely, we collected data on students' household income (*Household Income*), students' past academic performance (*Student Type*), father's education (*Father's Education*), father's position within his company or institution (*Father's Position*), gender (*Sex*), and students' views on whether competence is relevant in determining the efficiency with which their peers graduate (*Competency Belief*).

Of the independent variables, *Father's Position* reflects students' social status prominently as it differentiates between fathers who are blue-collar workers, those who are white-collar works, those that are in executive positions, and the ones that lead institutional entities (Table 4). As for the socio-economic background, *Household Income* groups participating students into three categories of low, medium, and high income families. We also captured students' past academic performance to profile them by *Student Type*: excellent, very good, good, or satisfactory (Table 4). Another variable looked at father's educational background (*Father's Education*) by levels ranging from the primary to higher education. *Sex*, a key demographic trait, may also signify differential experiences and, therefore, views of corruption given the presence of sexual favors for passing grades. These select predictors were derived from a 39-question-survey and appropriately coded for the use in the binary logistic regression.

We begin by providing a broader understanding of the regression results before tackling the specifics of the relationships within the regression model. First, the binary logistic regression validated findings derived from other aspects of our analysis: the students' views on non-pecuniary corruption were strongly tied to the students' background traits, which were reflective of the

<sup>9</sup> Please note that all variables are recoded as appropriate. For instance, if too few observations were initially recorded under a particular category, such category was aggregated with another category.

**Table 5**  
Binary logistic regression model on *Passing via Social Connections*.

Variable	Odds Ratio
<i>Father's Position (FP1)</i> Worker = 1 All else = 0	0.415*
<i>Father's Position 2 (FP2)</i> Intellectual = 1 All else = 0	0.260**
<i>Father's Position Rank (FP3)</i> Executive = 1 All else = 0	0.422*
<i>Father's Education 1 (FE1)</i> Elementary = 1 All else = 0	1.231
<i>Father's Education 2 (FE2)</i> Secondary = 1 All else = 0	1.249
<i>Father's Education (FE3)</i> Two-Year College = 1 All else = 0	1.125
<i>Household Income 1 (HI1)</i> 500KM-1500KM = 1 All else = 0	2.312*
<i>Household Income 2 (HI2)</i> 1500KM-2500KM = 1 All else = 0	2.913*
<i>Sex (Sex)</i> Male = 1 Female = 0	1.674**
<i>Student Type (ST1)</i> Excellent = 1 All else = 0	1.281
<i>Student Type (ST2)</i> Very Good = 1 All else = 0	1.296
<i>Competency Belief 1 (CB1)</i> Always = 1 All else = 0	0.270**
<i>Competency Belief 1 (CB2)</i> Almost Always = 1 All else = 0	0.708
<i>Competency Belief (CB3)</i> Often = 1 All else = 0	0.659
Constant	1.577
Chi-square, df	37.863*, 14
% of Cases Correctly Predicted	70.5

\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*  $p < .001$ .

students' overall social standing. Namely, the father's position within a company was a significant factor in whether students saw non-pecuniary corruption as occurring or not. In fact, a student whose father is a worker, intellectual or even an executive, was significantly more likely to perceive *Passing via Social Connections* as existent than was the case with students whose father was a CEO, Director, or owner of the company. This pioneering finding quantified the novel relationship between the students' perceptions of non-pecuniary corruption and their fathers' business

positions. Even more importantly, this relationship confirmed that there was a significant differential between the students whose fathers belonged to the highest echelon of the social hierarchy and those who were of the lesser social standing. The finding, in turn, reinforced our theoretical line of argument that variations in perceptions on corruption exist due to differential experiences between the elites and non-elites.

To elaborate, the odds of stating that they viewed *Passing via Social Connections* as occurring were 0.415 (Table 5) times higher for those students whose fathers were workers than for those students whose fathers were CEOs, Owners, or Directors of businesses or institutions. Students, with fathers at the top of the social hierarchy (i.e. CEOs, Owners, and Directors), belonged to the referential group<sup>7</sup> for this particular predictor. Therefore, all other categories within the predictor are individually compared to the reference group. Similarly, students whose fathers were intellectuals or executives in their companies were 0.260 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 0.422 ( $p < 0.05$ ) times likelier, respectively, to see non-pecuniary corruption as occurring *versus* not.

Similarly, the relationship between students' views on the existence of non-pecuniary corruption and household income was notable. Students from the lower and middle-income families were 2.312 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 2.913 ( $p < 0.01$ ) times more likely, respectively, to view *Passing via Social Connections* as existent than the students from the households with the highest income. In other words, the elites were less likely to report non-pecuniary forms of corruption as the elites constitute the subgroup most likely to benefit from their social connections.

Another relationship that proved significant was that of the student's gender to his/her view on non-pecuniary corruption. Women were significantly more likely to report non-pecuniary corruption as existent, and this may be related to the females' greater exposure to requests for sexual favors. Amongst the students interviewed for this study, one female student shared her experience with sexual requests from a faculty member throughout her studies, resulting in her eventual transition from a full-time to a part-time student and mistrust in the educational system overall. In this model specifically, women were 1.674 ( $p < 0.01$ ) times more likely to see *Passing via Social Connection* as existent *versus* males. Also, those students who firmly believed in competence when it comes to how quickly one graduates in Bosnia's higher education were also 0.270 times likelier to report *Passing via Social Connections* as existent relative to the students who believed competent never graduate first. Reflecting an interesting dynamic, students who doubt the role of competence in one's study completion are less likely to report non-pecuniary corruption as existent. Those students may be benefiting from their social connections and, thus, deem competence in the graduation process a non-factor. Additionally, students' academic profiles did not impact their perceptions of non-pecuniary corruption. Similarly, fathers' educational profiles had no bearing on students' perceptions. Interestingly, no relationship between the academic success of the students and, similarly, their fathers' suggests that education may not play most prominently in forming students' views on the state of their educational systems when corruption creates systemic distortions. It is instead the social standing and connectivity to the pockets of political, social, and economic power that shape the behaviors and views of students in Bosnia's higher education.

<sup>7</sup> In binary logistic regression, SPSS uses Indicator coding for all categorical variables. The highest number in terms of categories (i.e. 5 if the categories are 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) is by default the reference group that all other groups within the categorical variable are compared to.

### a Favors for war-time achievements

The form of corruption that was discussed earlier and in the context of post-war and post-communist elite formation is the process of diploma awards that took place immediately after the war. The Bosnian Army leadership during the war was comprised of very few formally trained military officials who left the Yugoslav Army to join the Bosnian Army. So, to reciprocate for one's war achievements and heroic participation, many high-level military officials received diplomas. As a research participant openly stated, the participant's father, who played a prominent role in military leadership during the war, was awarded a diploma from a higher education institution "because of his participation in the war" (Interviewee 3C). Soon after the war ended, the members of the new elite were frequently rewarded for their war-related efforts or their participation in the nationalistic politics during and after the 1990s war. Further confirmed by another study participant, a prominent individual in the participant's field of study was a former war hero who, prior to the war, had only a high school diploma, but immediately following the cessation of violence obtained several college degrees and now heads a prominent public company. As the interviewee further notes, "this is a public secret . . . I never saw him at the [faculty] . . . where one percent graduates in time [meaning graduating within 4 years] and he was one [of them]. Others who graduate in time usually do so with a damaged nervous system" (Interviewee 4C).

In sum, the leaders of the war-time armed forces were self-driven individuals who rose to their positions during the actual fighting with Serbia's army and the war-time army of Serb Republic. However, following the cessation of violence, many of these newly emerged leaders entered a post-war era in which construction of the new and multiethnic Bosnian Army was guided by the international community. In the process, certain requirements were placed upon the military leadership in terms of their education and academic qualifications, which in many cases the military officers from Bosnia lacked. To resolve the dichotomy between actual competence in the field shown during the war and the lack of formal academic and military training, many members of the military were helped in the process of obtaining their higher education diplomas: "With the lack of other awards, some individuals were awarded diplomas in appreciation for their war achievements" (Interviewee C4). While this form of privilege given to the war leaders and heroes could have been, in some instances, justified with the award of honorary degrees, this privileging of the newly emerging elites extended beyond a few selective cases, tilting the country's higher education towards the non-pecuniary versus pecuniary corruption model that correlates to one's belonging to the elite echelons in the country.

### b Pecuniary corruption

While favor reciprocations amongst the elites played most prominently within both survey- and interview-based data, pecuniary forms of corruptions remained relevant as well. Of the total surveyed sample, 339 students or 44.5% viewed corruption in the form of "purchased passing grades," while a smaller segment of the sampled group, 19.2%, stated that corruption manifests itself in the form of "purchased diplomas" (see Fig. 2). At times, professors may insist on getting their bribes by repeatedly failing a student, signaling to the student that he/she needs to pay to pass, even though doing so may involve significant financial sacrifice for the family. This is likelier to occur when students lack access to the circles of influence and power. In fact, "it is normal that students who are of the worst economic circumstances have a harder time passing their exams. They do not have or do not know where to pay for their exams; thus, they are forced to study" (Interviewee 1C).

Thus, a cyclic victimization sets into place for non-elite students, and especially those who are most struggling financially, as they continue to fail and may eventually be filtered out of the system unless they can meet the bribery demands.

### c Culture of entitlement and intimidation

In a politically tense setting, such as that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, analyses or observations of educational issues cannot occur in a vacuum away from contextual pressures. Many of the administrative roles in the educational system of Bosnia are decided by political factors rather than merit, which causes many students to see politics as not only being intertwined with educational processes but also as being in control of them (Interviewee 2C, Interviewee 3C, Interviewee 4C). Some study participants have emphasized both their own fear of the corrupt and dominant circles but also the fear felt by those professors or teaching assistants who face threats because they demand knowledge regardless of one's political or social status. There are instances where professors have had to "pass a student because the professor was afraid" (Interviewee 3C). The same study participant further suggested that "there are professors who would do as they should but cannot say no to politics and are forced to pass . . . regardless of their own moral and ethical principles" (Interviewee 3C). Others reiterated that the saying, "favor for favor, you will need me later" is the *modus operandi* of Bosnia's corrupt educational system, while political pressure and threats are also utilized when the members of the academic cadre seem less obedient (Interviewee 4C).

Some of the most persistent professors who attempt to distance themselves from the corrupt echelons go as far as to require a student to find a witness for an oral exam to send the message to the student population and faculty administration that a passing grade for their exam cannot be bought or awarded *via* connections. One of the participants faced such a situation where a professor refused to examine the candidate without at least one student witness to listen in on the exam (Interviewee 3C). This approach is a logistical burden on a student, but, more importantly, reflects the extreme measures taken by uncorrupt professors in their attempt to differentiate themselves from the corrupt circles. Moreover, it is further indicative of the systemic lack of support for those professors who wish to separate themselves from the corrupt and dominant elite.

Another element of the higher education arena and the post-socialist culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an inherited mentality of control and dominance. The need for social importance and systemic control is highly pronounced in this post-socialist system, where those who are socially relevant seek some type of control and frequently feel compelled to reiterate their own self-importance (Interviewee 4C). In academia, this exhibitionist behavior often takes the form of referring to the inferiority of others. The sense of inferiority, combined with the fear of taking action against corruption publicly, ensures that students "only talk but do little" (Interviewee 5C). Young students can easily be subjected to the exercise of authority and power, so the university is a suitable setting for applying the socialist mentality still present within the system. In other words, "we in the post-socialist society suffer from the syndrome of having the need to show power in order to please ourselves . . . and professors manifest this syndrome by exercising their power and authority through their professorships and their grading" over the susceptible and vulnerable student population (Interviewee 4C). Another prevalent source of fear is students' awareness that the mechanisms or committees to punish the perpetrators of corruption are either absent or devised by the individuals likely involved in corruption themselves (Interviewee 4C, Interviewee

5C). Consequently, the verbal and systemic intimidation ensures students' obedience and silence in dealing with the ongoing corruption and turpitude in higher education in the country. In short, this study confirmed the presence of educational corruption, as well as the dominance of non-monetary forms of corruption over bribery.

4.4. Favor reciprocations model

The forthcoming analysis finds that those of the lower socioeconomic status are likelier to bribe if and when needed while the elites rely on their access to power and influence over the higher education. The efforts to conceal corrupt activities often make it difficult to determine the beneficiaries of corrupt behaviors, but Lomnitz (2002) has insightfully observed that “material payment in return for favors is graft. It means the absence of any possibility of personal relationship of having friends in common. Accepting a bribe is an acknowledgement of social inferiority, like accepting a tip or gratuity” (44 as cited in Granovetter, 2007). Leveraging Lomnitz's conception of the relationship between power, social class, and corruption onto the educational arena, one would expect moneys are not always paid for grades, diplomas, or undeserved professorships—especially among the privileged while those of unprivileged social backgrounds would be the ones to engage in offering bribes.

In fact, the study further finds that accepting a bribe from a social equal is not only discouraged because of the stigma associated with asking a social equal for a bribe. Instead, a one-time bribe is deemed a more appropriate form of corruption for the poorer and less influential individuals, given their limited social and political power to reciprocate favors. A one-time payment is deemed of lesser value than the potential reciprocation that may be gained from executing a favor for a socially prominent individual. In simple terms, when elites engage in corrupt processes, they share a mutual understanding that the favor exchanges are likely to have much greater rate of return than one-time bribes. Consequently, if the educational system is fragmented

and susceptible to corrupt practices, the favor reciprocation processes are likely to flourish because *de novo* elites are eager to preserve their newly gained positions of power and alter the social mobility model so that it works to their favor. Supported by the evidence stemming both from qualitative and quantitative analyses, in the post-conflict or post-crisis settings elites often leverage opportune moment to expand their control over education, consequently impacting social mobility by espousing elites' favor reciprocation process that benefits few and adversely impacts the rest. Our study demonstrates that, depending on their background traits that serve as the proxy for their social status, students have different perceptions of non-pecuniary corruption.

A frequent reciprocation of favors amongst the elites is distortive to the educational system. At times, it is an unspoken, yet mutual, understanding between two or more parties that the exchange of favors will occur between, for instance, party A and party B (Fig. 3). The favor exchange may not always transpire simultaneously and its content may often not be specified immediately. In other words, the form, value, and timing of the reciprocal favor may not be detailed at the onset of the interaction between the parties engaging in favor reciprocation (Fig. 3). When Party A asks for a favor, Party A is, in essence, seeking a non-monetary loan that is often given for an unspecified time, likely with an undetermined repayment value, and often with undefined content of that future repayment. When Party B chooses to affirmatively respond to the request, Party B often does not specify the details of the reciprocation though an unspecified expectation that a favor will be reciprocated always underlines a premise of such requests. In other cases, Party B may share particulars of the reciprocity expectations, and parties may even engage in negotiations. As a result, Party A may or may not proceed with the acceptance of the favor exchange parameters, but if Party A ultimately accepts, the favor exchange is agreed upon. Importantly, such favor reciprocations are assumed to occur only when party A and party B have an underlining understanding that they are of an equivalent social standing. If either Party A or Party B loses their elite status, the underlining expectations of reciprocation are often

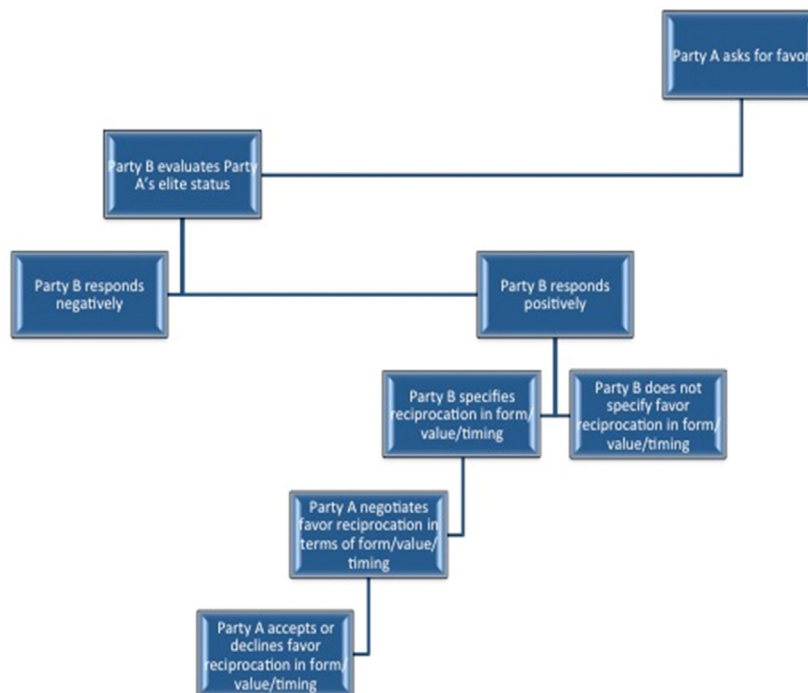


Fig. 3. Favor reciprocation model.

nulled. Simply said, when it comes to favor reciprocations, both parties expect to benefit from each other's social equivalency and power, otherwise they would likely engage in bribery rather than favor reciprocation.

To exemplify, Party A could engage in a conversation with party B about, for instance, passing party A's child on an exam. In response, party B would evaluate party A's social standing and relevance, as well as party A's capability to reciprocate the favor in the future (Fig. 3). In another scenario, a hospital director may ask a professor to pass the director's son during an exam, and the professor may do so with the awareness that he may need medical care at some point in the future. Another recognizable trait of the country's higher education is that professors are often politicians and politicians become professors. As the study has demonstrated, favors are reciprocated amongst the equals.

The elites reinforce each other's positions of power by creating strongholds within key sectors. Education is one of them, and the gatekeepers in academia are politically well entrenched. Professors are typically not favoring students in fear of their parents' social or political influence, but out of desire to solidify their political power and that of their affiliates that operate in other sectors. To exemplify, Hamdija Lipovaca, a former Prime Minister of the Una-Sana Canton, located in the northwestern Bosnia, has also served as a faculty member at the University of Bihac's Law School. Recent riots in the Una-Sana Canton resulted in his forceful resignation and later arrest on charges of corruption. Questions are continually raised on the court's ability to handle his case given his deeply embedded relations to power holders across sectors. His wife, for instance, works as a judge for the very court that is to handle his case. Though poorly defined yet deeply complex, favor exchanges remain highly effective tools that, if endemic, tailor social mobility models and power structures to the specifications of the societal elites.

We further extend this conception by arguing that social-equivalency-based exchanges do not involve bribes likely as the parties are cognizant of the greater value associated with the favor exchanges relative to a one-time bribe. In other words, in educational settings, elites prefer the-favor-exchanges model *versus* the-bribe model when interacting with the social equals and potential value of the reciprocal favor is expected to exceed that of a one-time payment. The immediacy of a bribe is preferred when engaging in corruption with those of lesser social status. Consequently, such interactions, particularly when widespread and normatively accepted within the communities involved, have a direct and adverse impact on the upward social mobility models within any educational context. With this espousal of non-merit-based mobility in the society, coupled with the existing fragmentations, divisions, and instabilities within fragile states such as Bosnia, the chances of the country's long-term development, stability, and peace are meaningfully jeopardized.

## 5. Conclusion

If Bosnia is to emerge with success from its debilitating past, key reforms are needed to investigate and eliminate corruption in its entirety and in the education sector particularly. The role elites play in allowing favor-based reciprocations to weaken education equality for non-elite students should be taken into consideration. Pecuniary *versus* non-pecuniary forms of corruption is a salient differentiation that should be further analyzed beyond Bosnian context. In truth, the nuanced typology presented in this study may frustrate current notions of corruption *because* it does not exchange material entities. The danger of favor reciprocation lies in the facets which compose it: the intractability of the exchange, and the control mechanisms that are in place to ensure that social

ambition continues to beget profound inequities in the one institution that should ideally allow social mobility: education. Moreover, favor reciprocation also severely undermines the trust of the average citizen in public goods such as education and the legal system, further weakening the people's belief in a just society, leading to fractures that may erupt in violence.

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