

**GENDER AND CORRUPTION, A MATTER OF PUBLIC
INTEGRITY. SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES STARTING WITH
THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

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**1. PREFACE: GENDER AND CORRUPTION. REASONS FOR
CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

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This study is inspired by the attempt to correlate gender and corruption², but the research has begun to find the impossible effort to “quantify” the “gender” connotation in the phenomenon of corruption. Studying corruption from the quantitative point of view (highlighting the gender differences) is outside the scope of this research paper; at the same time, it is evident how it seems difficult to analyse such a substantially concealed phenomenon³. Consequently, it becomes the first element of the state of the art of this field of research that is the lack of the available information; it is relevant and symptomatic of inattention towards the issue ‘gender of corruption’ at national and non-academic level.

Nonetheless, in this framework, there is evidence of the existence of a gender gap in the corruptive phenomenon, and it comes from the press reports and the international literature where it appears clear how corruption affects men and women differently; the inequality between genders has a key role and defining a pattern of these dynamics is the main purpose of this script.

First, corruption and inequality represent a major hurdle in achieving good governance⁴, therefore most *policy* goals fostered internationally in the current century go at same time

² Please, let me indicate the contribution of G. PETTINARI, *Genere e corruzione, una questione d'integrità pubblica. Spunti ricostruttivi a partire dal quadro internazionale*, in G. BONERBA, M. GNALDI, A. PIOGGIA (a cura di), *Genere e Corruzione*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, in corso di pubblicazione.

³ Corruption is based on a “pact” among the parties – that is the promise or the attempt of an exchange, which needs to conceal in order to achieve the purpose of the pact itself, keeping challenging to observe and measure a phenomenon, which only sometimes (and probably rarely, let alone unluckily for the parts) unveils itself (on these issues please refer to M. GNALDI, B. PONTI, *Misurare la corruzione oggi. Obiettivi, metodi, esperienze*, FrancoAngeli, 2018. In addition to this, there is another limit concerning Italy, where a lack of information is such that corruption will be described following a gender differentiation criterion, at least according to the free accessible Italian judicial statistics. It is not possible to verify in ‘micro’ terms, with non-aggregative data, which is itself a first figure. The questions motivating scientific research on gender and corruption relationship are nevertheless useful to understand a phenomenon, to which hasn’t been so much attention also by specialized literature, especially the Italian one.

⁴ In this sense, A. C. ALEXANDER, A. BÄGENHOLM, *Does gender matter? Female politicians’ engagement in anti-corruption efforts*. In H. STENSÖTA, L. WÄNGNERUD (eds), *Gender and Corruption—Historical Roots and New Avenues for Research*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

through the gender equity and the fight against corruption (as established in the United Nations agenda).

Corruption diverts public resources and disrupts the work of the public administration, mining the public function and the trust in public institutions, politics, and economy. Also inequality undermines the basis of the social state and shows extreme backwardness in the society development. Gender inequality, according to the *Global Gender Gap Index 2022*, shows a global gap, which scores 68.1, where 100 corresponds to equal level⁵.

Simultaneously, corruption and inequality feed on each other and this clearly emerges from the subject, despite its complexity; thus, it is necessary, on the one side to focus on the relationship between these two phenomena, and on the other side to implement some tools, to fight back both degenerative processes.

For this reason, it is essential to introduce the intersection of inequality and corruption and investigate their relationship, acknowledging how improving equity in gender is a tool to prevent corruption. The research, indeed, shows the potentiality of finding new tools for the prevention of crimes and discrimination too, by detecting different gender behaviour and corruption risks, starting with the gender inequality conditions, with the possibility, as will be seen, to define gender equity as a tool for the integrity of institutions.

⁵ The *gender gap* measure gives a first impression on gender inequality, which approximates and indexes this phenomenon, by scoring gender equity 68.1 points on a maximum of 100. The index considers both the evolution and the progress towards equality, focusing on four key elements: (1) economical contribution and opportunities (2) school performance (3) health and survival (4) the empowerment of female political representation (this è the subset of women's political *empowerment*, for which it is estimated that more 155 years are needed for achieving gender equity). The 2022 estimation is higher than the 2021 score (67,9), however this improvement does not recover the 2020 loss, where it was estimated that on a global scale, more than 100 years would be necessary to achieve equity, compare to the current 132 years still needed for equality, see <http://reports.weforum.org/globalgender-gap-report-2022>.

The next paragraphs examine the mainstream of international studies, to reveal the necessity of new public standards, suggesting a parallel development of corruption prevention and gender equity⁶.

In order to do this, it appears essential to review any different approaches to this theme.

2. GENDER AND CORRUPTION: NOT A ('SIMPLE') CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP

According to the news and the judiciary scandals, people involved in corruption are essentially men⁷, but the consequence affects society, especially women⁸.

The obstacle to the economic, social and public development, caused by corruption, damages the democratic system, affecting on rights, and consequently on the equality of

⁶ Think about differences all over the world on gender gaps and the possible parallel with democracy development. The Global Gender Gap Index estimates the gap among regions and countries and give a general framework in which no country has fully achieved gender equity, the first 10 countries have filled at least 80% of the gender gap. Other Scandinavian countries such as Finland (86%, 2°), Norway (84,5%, 3°) and Sweden (82,2%, 5°) are among the top 5, along with other European countries such as Ireland (80,4%) and Germany (80,1%), followed by Lithuania and Switzerland. Among the top there is also New Zealand (84,1), Rwanda (81,1), Nicaragua (81), Namibia (80,7). See World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2022, <http://reports.weforum.org/globalgender-gap-report-2022>.

⁷ The recent case of «Panama Papers», despite involving many people (basically rich and white males) coming from all over the world, afferent to an international corrupting network, does not include any women. This is only one example among many, explaining why in the last decades some researchers have drawn their attention to the study of relationship between high corruption rate and low female presence in positions of power. See OSCE, *Gender and corruption: What do we know*, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/507569>.

⁸ A. C. ALEXANDER, A. BÄGENHOLM, *Does gender matter? Female politicians' engagement in anti-corruption efforts*. In H. STENSÖTA, L. WÄNGNERUD (eds), *Gender and Corruption—Historical Roots and New Avenues for Research*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

citizens, benefiting a limited group of people⁹. Gender inequality belongs to the inequalities affected by corruption¹⁰.

The system of power, historically dominated by men¹¹, makes difficult for women to access positions of power, mainly because of the social barriers, which slow back the access and the participation of women to leading roles¹², and this is restrained by the «*male-dominated network*¹³», boasting the spread of corruptive dynamics as well¹⁴.

The (relatively) recent evolution of politics against corruption develops such as a preventive approach in fighting this phenomenon through organizing tools along with repressive ones, considering the opportunity to take ‘systematic’ measures, that are useful in contrasting abusive behaviours of public powers from their origin¹⁵.

⁹ OECD, *Issue Paper on Corruption and Economic Growth*, 2013<https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/anti-corruption/Issue-Paper-Corruption-and-Economic-Growth.pdf>.

¹⁰ A. C. ALEXANDER, A. BÄGENHOLM, *Does gender matter? Female politicians’ engagement in anti-corruption efforts*. In H. STENSÖTA, L. WÄNGNERUD (eds), *Gender and Corruption—Historical Roots and New Avenues for Research*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

¹¹ See O. CORZILIUS, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution and its Impact on Ethics, Solving the Challenges of the Agenda 2030*, 23.1, 2020, pp. 37-38.

¹² « Since the inner circles of power are primarily male-dominated at most levels, it is more difficult for women to gain access to privileges that stem from corruption, as women are typically not part of high-level decision-making processes», I. KUBBE, O. MERKLE, *Introduction. Gender and corruption: the role of norms*, I. KUBBE, O. MERKLE (eds.), *Norms, Gender and Corruption Understanding the Nexus*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2022, p. 11.

¹³ E. BJARNEGÅRD, *Focusing on Masculinity and Male-Dominated Networks in Corruption*, In H. STENSÖTA, L. WÄNGNERUD (eds), *Gender and Corruption—Historical Roots and New Avenues for Research*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 257–273.

¹⁴ M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, L. WÄNGNERUD, *Exclusion or interests? Why females in elected office reduce petty and grand corruption*, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58, 2018, pp. 1043-1065.

¹⁵ N. PARISI, *La prevenzione della corruzione nel modello internazionale ed Europeo*, Federalismi.it, 2019.

At the base of the Merida Convention, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, there is the idea to fight against corruption as a factor of «discrimination between the different groups in society, feeds inequality and injustice, discourages foreign investment and aid, and hinders growth. It is, therefore, a major obstacle to political stability, and to successful social and economic development¹⁶». It outlines a general and principal framework about combat corruption in an administrative manner too and, even if it doesn't include any explicit definition of corruption, it regulates some cases (in the second title of the Convention), explaining how corruption take the form of 'malfunctioning' or 'maladministration, that is phenomena to tackle with a preventive, namely organizational approach. It consists of non-criminal offence, but rather "negligent", which can "contaminate" the administrative action, creating a favourable environment for corruption (ANAC, *The Italian National Anti-Corruption Authority Plan*, 2012)¹⁷.

[The] term «maladministration» [is] meant as the decision-making process (of interest's asset at the conclusion of a criminal procedure, of the definition of phases in every single procedure, of public resources management) which differs from the attention to the general interest because of the inappropriate conditioning of peculiar interests. In other words, it is necessary to have concerning acts and behaviours, that even if cannot be considered as specific crimes, contrast the necessary public interest [...]¹⁸.

¹⁶ UNODC, *Global Action against Corruption, The Merida Papers*, United Nations Vienna, 2004, p. 1.

¹⁷According to the Merida Convention corruption can be defined as an illegitimate action which spaces from the crime until the wider concept of maladministration; bribe (an offer of money or other commodity), clientelism (exchange of mutual favours), nepotism (mutual advantageous exchange), favouritism (benefit to certain individual for reasons which lies outside merit and ability), misappropriation (peculation, misappropriation of goods of others), patronage (resource accreditation as political favour exchange), to state capture condition, that is subtraction of public goods and undue meddling in policy-maker decisions (see C. LIMITI, *Corruzione: digitalizzazione e open data*, iusinitinere.it., 2021). It is about private interest's efforts to reshape laws, State policies to their advantage, giving in exchange private illegal profits to public officials, see J.S. HELLMAN, D. KAUFMANN, *Confronting the Challenge of State Capture in Transition Economies. Finance and Development*, International Monetary Fund, 38, 3, 2001, pp. 31-35.

¹⁸ ANAC, *The National Anti-Corruption Authority Plan*, 2015.

Any corruptive behaviours and maladministration result in the manipulation of public institutions in favour of private interests¹⁹, that is the distortion of power, which embodied in the illegitimate management of the public good in favour of a private benefit²⁰. This is at the expense of the so-called principal-agent relationship, in economy, where the citizen performs the first role (principal), and delegates the pursuit of public interests to the agent, the public administration²¹. If a third part enters this relationship, having such an impact to violate the commitment made by the agent to the principle, in exchange of money and other value; there is corruption, which can take the forms of favouritism, fraudulent award of public contracts, detrimental actions, which may culminate in the State capture, aimed to shape the formulation of public laws in its own favour – namely the opposite of *good governance* o *state capacity, quality of government*²².

With the purpose of fighting back these phenomena, the article 1 of the Merida Convention defines «the promotion and the strengthening of measures aimed at preventing corruption» as its primary goal, and in order to foster this latter, it is necessary to promote international cooperation in public integrity and good faith towards public power management²³. And, in fact, the gender equity policy should be part of preventing strategies,

¹⁹ To this purpose, for Italy, it is also interesting to mention the Memorandum n.1 of 25/1/2013 by the Public Administration Department: The concept of corruption should be meant in a broader sense, encompassing different situations, where throughout the administrative tasks, an abuse by an individual whose power is given to get private advantages. Therefore, the relevant situations are clearly much more than the criminal ones.

²⁰ E. CARLONI, R. CANTONE, *Limits of Corruption Repression and New Prevention Policies*, in M. GNALDI, E. CARLONI (eds.), *Understanding and Fighting Corruption in Europe from Repression to Prevention*, Cham, Springer, 2021.

²¹ R. ACKERMAN, *The Economics of Corruption*, *Journal of Public Economics*, 4, 1975, pp. 187-203.

²² M. D'ARCY, M. NISTOTSKAYA, *State Capacity, Quality of Government, Sequencing, and Development Outcomes*, ed. by A. BÅGENHOLM, M. BAUHR, M. GRIMES, B. ROTHSTEIN, *The Oxford Handbook of the Quality of Government*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2021.

²³ A. MUNGIU-PIPPIDI, M. JOHNSTON (eds), *Transitions to good governance: Creating virtuous circles of anti-corruption*, Chalthenham, Edward Elgar, 2017.

whose objectives, in a democratic system, are related to an impartial use of power, ensuring equality among citizens.

However, for a long time, most anti-corruption policies have not attended the issue of gender equity, neglecting this element as possible factor able to affect the corruption risk; following a neutrality gender approach, the so called «*gender neutral*»²⁴ or «*neutrality*» in anti-corruption policies²⁵.

This change has been introduced mainly after the 2001 research carried out by Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti²⁶, and by Swamy, Knack, Lee, and Azfar's study²⁷ as well, sponsored by the *World Bank* and the main international organizations engaging in development. This study has the merit of having paid closer attention for the first time on the existence of the relationship between women's political representation and the corruption rate in democratic States institutions.

Bauhr, Nicholas and Wängnerud, in 2018²⁸, have carried out a study in 20 EU countries, proving that women's inclusion in elective assemblies, also at local level, may reduce corruption²⁹. The authors, indeed, have shown that a high rate of women in decision-making roles is related to low corruption levels.

²⁴ «*Policy, programme or situation that has no differential positive or negative impact in terms of gender relations or equality between women and men*», cit. Glossary, European Institute for Gender Equality.

²⁵ OSCE, *Gender and corruption: What do we know*, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/507569.pdf>

²⁶ D. DOLLAR, R. FISMAN, R. GATTI, *Are women really the 'fairer' sex? Corruption and women in government*, *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 46, 4, 2001, pp. 423-429.

²⁷ A. SWAMY, S. KNACK, Y. LEE, O. AZFAR, *Gender and corruption*, *Journal of Development Economics*, 64, 1, 2001, pp. 25-55.

²⁸ M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, L. WÄNGNERUD, *Exclusion or interests? Why females in elected office reduce petty and grand corruption*, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58, 2018, pp. 1043-1065.

²⁹ It involved starting from the correlation between the International Country Risk Guide's corruption index (CORRUPT) and a measure of female involvement in government coming from the Inter-parliamentary Union's (1995) survey, *Women in Parliaments: 1945–1995*.

In addition to this evidence, women's presence has an impact, itself, on the good functioning of the institution, as it has been proven in other studies how women have greater sensitivity towards integrity policies, fostering an anti-corruptive political agenda, in favour of preventive initiatives, supporting the welfare. Others analysis have shown women's vote orientation on the basis of social politics matters, «*vote based on social issues*»³⁰, with a higher score in ethical behaviour evaluation tests, «*integrity tests*»³¹. Moreover, as a matter of fact, women are more generous when it comes to economic and financial decisions supporting the common interest, also in the case of *trade-off* between personal or selfish advantage and sacrifice or public or common value³².

(More) outdated observations aimed at highlighting the fact the women, themselves, are more inclined to show an inclusive and pro-social behaviour such as their innate and spontaneous attitude; this approach supports further considerations that limit the so called «*helping' behaviour*» to social or educational factors, as a consequence of social 'structures' and background³³.

Esary and Chirillo in 2013³⁴ have shown how women are subject to social rules, precluding them from positions of power, and as this increase their sensitivity to policies

³⁰ T.G. GOERTZEL, *That gender gap: sex, family income, and political opinions in the early 1980s*, in *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 11, 1983, pp. 209-222.

³¹ See D.S. ONES, C. VISWESVARAN, *Gender, age, and race differences on overt integrity tests: results across four large-scale job applicant data sets*, in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83, 1, 1998, pp. 35-42; S.H. GLOVER, M.A. BUMPUS, J.E. LOGAN, J.R. CIESLA, *Reexamining the influence of individual values on ethical decision-making*, in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 16/1997, 12-13, pp. 1319-1329 and M.C. REISS, K. MITRA, *The effects of individual difference factors on the acceptability of ethical and unethical workplace behaviours*, in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17, 14, 1998 pp. 1581-1593.

³² C.C. ECKEL, P.J. GROSSMAN, *Are women less selfish than men? Evidence from dictator experiments*, in *Economic Journal*, 108, 1998, pp. 726-735.

³³ A.H. EAGLY, M. CROWLEY, *Gender as helping behavior: a meta-analytic review of the social psychological literature*, *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, 1986, pp. 283-308.

³⁴ J. ESAREY, G. CHIRILLO, *"Fairer Sex" or Purity Myth? Corruption, Gender, and Institutional Context*, *Politics & Gender*, 9(4), 2013, pp. 361-389.

about redistribution of income and wealth, as instruments used to guarantee who was traditionally excluded from the “group of power”, such as women.

Without questioning any study highlighting the “virtues” of female gender, it is impossible not to consider critically how women also rely on the female social role³⁵ itself, appropriate to explain the reason for a popular female attitude, inclined to the development of pro-social behaviours³⁶.

The perception of woman in society sometimes risks to be the outcome of ‘stereotyping’ of the woman herself³⁷, since her social conditions end up to assimilate her ‘natural’ conditions, therefore it is useful to look for some contextual factors, which can explain the gender gap in corruption as the outcome of peculiar conditions.

Goetz’s critical evidence in 2007³⁸ ushers studies focused on contextual factors, which analyse the opportunity conditions of the actors, such as women and men, inside the society

³⁵ Women are more inclined to family support roles. Generally, they are more interested in the common good than men (see C.C. ECKEL, P.J. GROSSMAN, *Are women less selfish than men? Evidence from dictator experiments*, *Economic Journal*, 108, 1998, pp. 726-735), more honest and risk-averse than men (see U. GNEEZY, AND U. RUSTICHINI, *Gender and competition at a young age*, *American Economic Review* 94.2, 2004, pp. 377-381), more raised to self-control (see M. GOTTFREDSON, H. TRAVIS, *A General Theory of Crime*, Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, CA., 1990). In conclusion «women are less likely to commit crimes because of their social role and their education » (see M. GNALDI, *Sesso e corruzione che genere di legame*, infonodes.org, 2021) and so «women may be more dependent on a well-functioning state because of their greater care taking obligations» cit. M. BAUHR., N. CHARRON, *Do Men and Women Perceive Corruption Differently? Gender Differences in Perception of Need and Greed Corruption*, in *Politics and Governance*, 8, 2, 2020, pp. 92-102.

³⁶ «Women may be more dependent on a well-functioning state because of their greater care taking obligations» cit. M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, *Do Men and Women Perceive Corruption Differently? Gender Differences in Perception of Need and Greed Corruption*, *Politics and Governance*, 8, 2, 2020, pp. 92-102.

³⁷ A.-M. GOETZ, *Political cleaners: Women as the new anti-corruption force?*, in *Development and Change*, 38, 1, 2007, pp. 87-105.

³⁸ See A.-M. GOETZ, *Political cleaners: Women as the new anti-corruption force?*, in *Development and Change*, 38, 1, 2007, pp. 87-105.

and power relationship³⁹. For example, the marginality of the female gender in positions of power takes an impact on the corruptive potentiality, because of the exclusion of women from decision-making roles, ‘protecting’ them from the opportunity to be attracted to corruption risk: the so called “*exclusion explanation*”⁴⁰.

As to the risk exposure, an important strand of studies⁴¹ observes how women are more likely to be caught and punished when committing a crime, just because of their social role; this aspect could also explain their attitude towards ethic behaviours. The major social stigma, through which society punishes women (the ‘angel gender’), whose behaviour does not adequately comply with their social role, can be a deterrent to crime. The public opinion is far more demanding and severe towards women’s ethical behaviour, stigmatizing mostly possible ‘abuses’ of their role towards come from their community. This, in politics, may stem from the failing and delusional mutual trust between elector and politicians, outlined by the fact the choice of an *outsider*, the female politician, creates the expectation of a different behaviour.

For the reasons mentioned above, the minority and *outsider* condition of women is a ‘disruptive’ element in standard political dynamics, and at the same time it is a source of risk deterrence and aversion, because of the greater social impact of the stigma regarding corruption performed by a woman⁴².

³⁹ L. WÄNGNERUD, *Gender and corruption*, in P.M. HEYWOOD (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Political Corruption*, Routledge, London, 2014.

⁴⁰ M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, L. WÄNGNERUD, *Exclusion or interests? Why females in elected office reduce petty and grand corruption*, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58, 2018, pp. 1043-1065.

⁴¹ See M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, *Do Men and Women Perceive Corruption Differently? Gender Differences in Perception of Need and Greed Corruption*, *Politics and Governance*, 8, 2, 2020, pp. 92-102.

⁴² See M. BAUHR, C. NICHOLAS, L. WÄNGNERUD, *Exclusion or Interests? Why Females in Elected Office Reduce Petty and Grand Corruption*, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58, 4, 2018, pp. 1043-1065; A.C. ALEXANDER, A. BÅGENHOLM, N. CHARRON, *Are women more likely to throw the rascals out? The mobilizing effect of social service spending on female voters*, *Public Choice*, 184, 2019, pp. 235-261 and UNODOC, *The Time is now. Addressing the gender dimension of corruption*, 2020, unodoc.org.

Many of these aspects have been corroborated by the results of a Rivas' experiment in 2007⁴³, carried out on a sample of female and male students playing the role of public officials and corrupting companies, resulting that women are factually more likely to refuse corruption trades, and to have a more risk-averse attitude, whereby there is the possibility to be caught. At the same time women are more inclined to start from the idea that the speaker is hardly likely to accept the corruption offer, thus seeming also less inclined to corrupt. By contrast, men have a great belief in considering corruption as a plausible occasion and in the official to accept the bribe (especially when they are men)⁴⁴.

Research, thus, could draw to the conclusion that the women's presence both at the top of the public administration and at the company management could considerably decrease the occurrence of corruption.

According to the author of this script, the social role of women comes into play, acting in the perception filed, so to have a real impact on the exchange, and becoming a minor offer opportunity, because of the perception of a lower corruption tendency: «*social desirability bias*»⁴⁵. Besides, women show a clear risk-averse attitude, as an outcome of the 'calculation' discouraging behaviours, which may lead to the loss of the reached position compared to their initial marginality.

According to female perception, accepting a bribe means getting a stigma caused by the very high probability of being punished by the judiciary court and by the voters, and so this leads to the loss of the achieved status.

Other research follows this idea, proving how such a more controlled, pro-social, anti-corruption behaviour is, on the one side, the result of self-motivation, the awareness of its

⁴³ M.F. RIVAS, *An experiment on corruption and gender*, published October 2008, mimeo.

⁴⁴ 80% of men are willing to offer a bribe to an official at least once, whereas 65% of women are willing to. See M.F. RIVAS, *An experiment on corruption and gender*, published October 2008, mimeo.

⁴⁵ F. DECAROLIS, S. BATTINI, *Indagine sull'amministrazione difensiva*, *Rivista italiana di public management*, 3, 2020, https://www.rivistaitalianadipublicmanagement.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/08_RIPM_V3-N2_CloseUp_Art.8.pdf.

status, and on the other side, it is the search for tools to fight back its disadvantageous position, in favour of women's interests, according to what is defined as «women's interest mechanism»⁴⁶.

Overall, it is outlined how the integrity of the State and the effectiveness of the rule of law can contrast corruption.

At the same time, defending the disadvantageous positions of the weakest citizens can benefit from the awareness of ethical acts, as is the function of the mechanism that leads women's interest to more impartial tools advantaging a good governance system⁴⁷. Therefore, as already mentioned, women are more sensitive to discrimination and fighting corruption because this comes in favour of women's interests (indirectly)⁴⁸. This is observable in the relevance of women's politics for women's sake, with measures such as improving public services, social policies, healthcare, public fund investments for the common good and fighting gender violence⁴⁹. Sung in 2003 recognizes, among the context factors, how much the occurring conditions in autocracies differ from democracy, so this latter provides the ideal substrate to conquer political power and rights, promoting gender equity and good governance too.

⁴⁶ H. STENSÖTA, *Final Thoughts: Taking Stock and Reflections on Ways forward*, in H. STENSÖTA, L. WÄNGNERUD (eds.), *Gender and Corruption*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018, pp. 275-287.

⁴⁷ See (with references to the Italian case of public services ethics system) F. MERLONI, R. CAVALLO PERIN (eds), *Al servizio della nazione, etica e statuto dei funzionari pubblici*, Giuffrè, Milano, 2009.

⁴⁸ See also B. ROTHSTEIN, *Fighting systemic corruption: The indirect strategy*, in *Daedalus* 147(3), 2018, pp. 35–49.

⁴⁹ N. HALIM, K.M. YOUNT, S.A. CUNNINGHAM, R.P. PANDE, *Women's political empowerment and investments in primary schooling in India*, *Social Indicators Research*, 125, 3, 2016, pp. 813-851; L. WÄNGNERUD, A. SUNDELL, *Do politics matter? Women in Swedish local elected assemblies 1970–2010 and gender equality in outcomes*, *European Political Science Review*, 4, 1, pp. 97-120.

Finally, a further important aspect that is evident from the study on Rivas' model, presented also in other contexts⁵⁰, is a generic consideration: how the probability to be monitored pushes people (men and women) to adopt virtuous behaviour because of 'calculation' matters, increasing aversion risk because of the certainty of punishment.

Thus, according to the logic of 'opportunistic behaviour', a major exposure of women to the possibility of getting caught and the greater stigma, deriving from the women's role in society, will affect their lower attitude to risk, which will also result in positive corrupting tendency and accepting corrupting offers.

3. GENDER INEQUALITY AND EQUALITY: ELEMENTS FOR CORRUPTION PREVENTION

Once the position of power is achieved, a woman acts like an «*outsider*⁵¹» with no bounds and consolidates relationships⁵², she is able to sever or interfere with «*elite group*» of dynamics, influencing the so-called «*male-dominated network*».

To achieve this, women shall effectively access with different mindsets, compare to potentially collusive ones, being impartially selected, or at least for their credits in decision-

⁵⁰ Not just student sample. See also V. ALATAS, L. CAMERON, A. CHAUDHURI, N. ERKAL, L. GANGADHARAN, *Gender and corruption: Insights from an experimental analysis*, Southern Economic Journal, 75, 3, 2009, pp. 663-680.

⁵¹ It should be considered that this is not an innate status within the female gender but is a role of someone out of a consolidated group that comes from outside the familiar and well-known relationship. It is a condition occurring in the absence of pre-existent power dynamics, and it works as a role for disrupting the abuse of power dynamics by individuals outside corruption dynamics (UNODC, *Mainstreaming gender in corruption projects /programmes briefing note for Unodc staff*, 2020, unodoc.org). Consequently, the role aimed at consolidating the abuse of power can also be covered by other individuals abused by the corruptive dynamics, UNODC, *The Time is now. Addressing the gender dimension of corruption*, 2020, unodoc.org.

⁵² N. CAMPANIELLO, *Women in crime*, *Iza World of Labor*, 2019, <https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/497/pdfs/women-in-crime.pdf?v=1>.

making roles (the «*conditional on selection*»): only in this way the female presence can act as ‘antidote’ against corruption⁵³.

The corruption hazard will be lower if selection, control, and accountability tools are employed to act as deterrents, and this is usually the case in a developed democratic context⁵⁴. Moreover, ethical rules, civil sense, as well as the “*esprit de corps*” and the sense of State in officials are related to the concept of public integrity and are useful to the accountability expressed in motivation, and so a helpful assessment criterion.

Here (in a good governance system), the main difference between the male and female reactions to corruption appears, as a so-called *gender gap* (from the social-economical point of view⁵⁵), where impartiality is the rule, since women opt for the more «defensive» strategy, following the laws enforcement meticulously («*strict protocols*») at the expense of slowing down the administrative procedure, and this – note well – does not represent the easiest option or that one made in the absence of discretionally⁵⁶.

Besides, the results issued by Torlger e Valev in 2010 have shown how, in the long time, women have better ethical criteria for corruption, as it happens in Denmark and in the Netherlands⁵⁷.

⁵³ See F. DECAROLIS, R. FISMAN, P. PINOTTI, S. VANNUTELLI, Y. WANG, *Gender and Bureaucratic Corruption: Evidence from Two Countries*, The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization, 2022, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28397/w28397.pdf.

⁵⁴ F. BROLLO, U. TROIANO, *What happens when a Woman wins an Election? Evidence from Close Races in Brazil*, Journal of Development Economics, 122, 2016, pp. 28-45.

⁵⁵ Issue linked to the average income, F. DECAROLIS, R. FISMAN, P. PINOTTI, S. VANNUTELLI, Y. WANG, *Gender and Bureaucratic Corruption: Evidence from Two Countries*, The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization, 2022, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28397/w28397.pdf.

⁵⁶ F. DECAROLIS, S. BATTINI, *Indagine sull'amministrazione difensiva*”, *Rivista italiana di public management*, 3, 2020, https://www.rivistaitalianadipublicmanagement.it/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/08_RIPM_V3-N2_CloseUp_Art.8.pdf.

⁵⁷ Both Countries are among the top 30 of the *Global Gender Gap Index*, for the concept see B. TORGLER, N. T. VALEV, *Gender and public attitudes toward corruption and tax evasion*, Contemporary Economic Policy, 28, 4, 2010, pp. 554-568.

This diversity in term of risk tolerance refers to two circumstances, already mentioned above: the *outsider* role of women and so the risk-adversity approach, these two useful elements can promote a more ethical behavior. For those reasons, on the other side, social inclusion should necessarily be considered an instrument to help people escape marginality. Weakness and poverty influence people's decisions, and because of their vulnerability people would find difficult to refuse subjection to micro-corruption to meet their basic needs⁵⁸. So, the propensity to accept corruption arises, where it is a matter of survival. This mechanism can reset the gender gap and operate when corruption is systematic⁵⁹. It is called “*petty corruption*”: a bribe is necessary to have access to services and risk-averse attitude boats the implementation of corruptive behavior, useful to earn its livelihood⁶⁰.

That explanation refers to the context value, which includes, for example the social inclusion and average wage issues, and how it can affect individual or group attitudes, proving that the concrete chance for alternatives and being prosecuted are the major corruption inhibitors possible factors⁶¹. This is why the focus of the topic related to gender and corruption relationships should be put on the side of context⁶².

⁵⁸ For instance, Decarolis et al. in 2022 elaborated on data from a sample of people in charge of procurement procedures. They showed that the corruption gender gap is lower in Southern Italy, which means that women and men behave similarly, F. DECAROLIS, R. FISMANN, P. PINOTTI, S. VANNUTELLI, Y. WANG, *Gender and Bureaucratic Corruption: Evidence from Two Countries*, *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, 2022.

⁵⁹ In these cases, the gender gap does not affect this phenomenon, but rather the necessity to access the offered services. For example, a study carried out by Bauhr & Charron on a sample of 80 thousand people from 21 countries shows how women perceive ‘necessity’ corruption related to primary needs more strongly. As a result, researchers have realized that it is related to services for people: school and healthcare. M. BAUHR, N. CHARRON, *Do Men and Women Perceive Corruption Differently? Gender Differences in Perception of Need and Greed Corruption*, *Politics and Governance*, 8, 2, 2020, pp. 92-102.

⁶⁰ L. CVETANOSKA, I. KUBBE, *The impact of corruption on gender in Central and Eastern Europe: how corruption challenges women’s life*, in I. KUBBE, O. MERKLE (eds.), *Norms, Gender and Corruption Understanding the Nexus*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2022.

⁶¹ See A. VANNUCCI, *L’evoluzione della corruzione in Italia: evidenza empirica, fattori facilitanti, politiche di contrasto*, in F. MERLONI, L. VANDELLI (a cura di), *La corruzione amministrativa. Cause, prevenzione e rimedi*, Passigli, Bagno a Ripoli, 2010.

⁶² See UNODC, *The Time is now. Addressing the gender dimension of corruption*, 2020, unodoc.org.

An interesting framework, which can be worthy of consideration, analyses corruption using the formula:

$$C=M+D-T-A^{63}$$

In which the corruption level (C) is associated with monopolistic rent-seeking positions (M) and with discretionary power action (D), and this is reversely connected to officials' transparency rate (T) and accountability (A)⁶⁴. In the wake of this pattern, corruption is defined as an activity promoted by the absence of effective institutional and social monitoring of its work, which relies on the flow of information and transparency⁶⁵. Accountability and organizational systems for public are crucial issue⁶⁶, namely key elements in preventing corruption for everybody, a barrier based on ethic-social values against the abuse of power, mediated by regulatory framework, aimed at putting public authority 'out in the open'⁶⁷ so to ensure an impartial and ethical practice.

4. POLICY GUIDANCE, BETWEEN CORRUPTION PREVENTION AND GENDER BALANCE

⁶³ R. KLITGAARD, *Controlling Corruption*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.

⁶⁴ A. VANNUCCI, *L'evoluzione della corruzione in Italia: evidenza empirica, fattori facilitanti, politiche di contrasto*, in F. MERLONI, L. VANDELLI (a cura di), *La corruzione amministrativa. Cause, prevenzione e rimedi*, Passigli, Bagno a Ripoli, 2010.

⁶⁵ L. BRANDEIS, *What publicity can do*, in Harper's Weekly, 1913; A. ETZIONI, *Is Transparency the Best Disinfectant?*, in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 18, n. 4, 2010, A. PRAT, *The more closely we are watched, the better we behave?*, in C. HOOD E D. HEALD (a cura di), *Transparency; The Key to Better Governance?*, Oxford, 2006.

⁶⁶ See D. U. GALETTA, *La trasparenza, per un nuovo rapporto tra cittadino e pubblica amministrazione: un'analisi storico-evolutiva, in una prospettiva di diritto comparato ed europeo*, in *Rivista italiana di diritto pubblico comunitario*, 5/2016, pp. 1019-1065.

⁶⁷ E. CARLONI, *Alla luce del sole. Trasparenza amministrativa e prevenzione della corruzione*, in *Diritto amministrativo*, 3/2019, pp. 497-538.

Reading the international agreements on the fight against corruption of «first generation» criminal law⁶⁸ it becomes clear the idea of an approach inspired by gender neutrality⁶⁹.

In the UNCAC Convention of 2003 the word ‘*gender*’ does not appear, and no gender differentiation elements are introduced.

However, at the same time, in some paragraphs gender belonging is defined as a distinctive element – a “specification” –for instance in article 15, where it is found that the unfair advantage as a result of bribe exchange or other benefits refers to the public official, in the exercise of his or her official duties, be it, woman or man.

Some other steps forward have been made in the study of “Convention implementation State”, issued in 2015 by the UNODC, where it is understandable that sexual intercourse can become a trade commodity for corruption, since the unfair advantage causing corruption is considered in a broader sense, including⁷⁰ also *sextortion*: «*the abuse of power to obtain a sexual favour*»⁷¹. This is an important sign of *gender diversity* inclusion in risk prevention strategies⁷².

⁶⁸ N. PARISI, *La prevenzione della corruzione nel modello internazionale ed Europeo*, in federalismi.it, 2019.

⁶⁹ See OECD Convention from 1997 of the «The criminal Law Convention on corruption» of Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), of the Council of Europe, from 1999; «United Nations Declaration against Corruption and Bribery in International Commercial Transactions» (resolution 51/191) from 1996, as well as «United Nations Convention against Corruption» (UNCAC) from 1999.

⁷⁰ «Scope of the undue advantage In the Convention, the term “advantage” is intended to apply as broadly as possible and also to cover instances where intangible items or non-pecuniary benefits (such as, honorary positions and titles, preferential treatment or sexual favours) are offered, insofar as they create or may create a sense of obligation on the side of the recipient towards the giver», cit. UNODC, *State of implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Criminalization, law enforcement and international cooperation*, United Nations, 2015.

⁷¹ International Association of Woman Judges – Iawj, *Stopping the abuse of power through sexual exploitation: Naming, shaming and ending sextortion*, 2012, https://www.unodc.org/res/ji/import/guide/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion/naming_shaming_ending_sextortion.pdf.

⁷² This implies taking into account how corruption occurs and how can differentiate according to the gender as well. In this case, considering the phenomenon occurring through an exchange, where sexual intercourse acts as bribery

The expression of sextortion as a type of corruption was first used by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), in 2008, when members noticed that judges from different regions reported this kind of corruption⁷³.

While evidence shows that women are disproportionately targeted in a hegemonic masculinity context⁷⁴, men, transgender and gender non-conforming people are also affected by sextortion because the phenomenon follows the vulnerability of people's position. A relationship (around the world) exists between the status of women and gender minorities and discrimination in a situation of patriarchy and misogyny. Gender stereotypes impact inequality and then on people such as women⁷⁵. This link can be indirect, but it depends on the direct vulnerability status. However, there is a lack of systematic statistical data on sextortion, as the corruption is a secrecy action but also because there is no sensibility from the Institution to categorise the case of sextortion, which until recently was not recognised as a phenomenon different to sexual abuse or gender-based violence. Anyway, there are lots of issues with this problem⁷⁶. Useful is the study by Transparency International that draws up a

and concerning also the female gender specifically; since it is part of the most affected target, that is being in a disadvantageous position, vulnerability, poverty or psychological subjection. In order to call this a crime three features are required: (i) an abuse committed by an authority; (ii) an exchange and (iii) a demand, imposed with strength, also psychological coercion. See OECD, C/MIN (2021)21, Policy Framework for gender-sensitive public governance.

⁷³ During their meeting was an African judge at first that described how prison guards asked sex to women to deliver medication, and so Central American judges said how border police demanded sex from girl migrants for permitting them to pass the border. See International Association of Women Judges, "Naming, Shaming, and Ending Sextortion," 2012, <http://www.iawj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Corruption-and-Sextortion-Resource-1.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Find this opinion on A. SCHIAVON, *Cat-Fish, Romance Fraud e Sextortion: le nuove frontiere dell'adescamento nei social media*, Informatica e diritto, XLIII annata, Vol. XXVI, 2017, n. 1-2, pp. 177-200.

⁷⁵ See J. O'MALLEY and A. HOLZINGER, *The Sustainable Development Goals: Sexual and Gender Minorities*, United Nations Development Program, 2018, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/sexual-and-gender-minorities.html>.

⁷⁶ Think about the example of a 2019 survey conducted in Zimbabwe; 57 per cent of the women surveyed reported that they must offer sex in exchange for services (even when they enrol their children at school); or the case of migration to which migrants declare that men give to corrupter money, but women give the double price (referring to sex), see O. MERKLE, et al., *A Gender Perspective on Corruption Encountered during Forced and Irregular Migration*, Anti-Corruption and Integrity Programme, German Corporation for International Cooperation, 2017;

list of more exposure situations in which people can become an easier victim that found a prevalence of sextortion by sectors such as migration, judiciary, police service, public sector employment, education, refugee camps, and overall essential services where people are in a more vulnerability situations subject to the power⁷⁷.

Even though there is no clear reference to gender balance in the main Treaties, some innovating elements have been introduced: since 2008, the decision of the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe demanding the Council and the GRECO to consider gender equity. The GRECO, in 2012, released the first report on *Gender Equality*, where gender domain is analysed, and the fight against corruption objectives are defined, with the explicit purpose to integrate that approach in corruption prevention strategies⁷⁸. Starting from the fifth assessment cycle of prevention policies, the Council of Europe (CoE) has recognized a gender rebalancing as a tool to sharpen the fight against corruption, demanding to the promote gender diversity with selection criteria and overcoming the gender neutrality of the first approach.

Besides, concerning *equity*, GRECO has introduced *gender mainstreaming* policy, namely, *gender equity* as a versatile objective in all public policies, as a purpose itself of the CoE. Thus, *Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017* introduces new standards, with a clear corruption prevention approach, converging with corruption prevention national Plans⁷⁹.

The mainstreaming approach also reveals for the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNODC), within the framework of the Merida Convention, refers to the gender sensitive approach supporting the monitoring activities of the State, turning into an anti-corruption criterion. Also, in that case, the Strategic Plan; signed by UNCAC in 2018,

FEIGENBLATT, *Breaking the silence around sextortion: The links between power, sex and corruption*, 2020, TransparencyInternational.org.

⁷⁷ H. FEIGENBLATT, *Breaking the silence around sextortion: The links between power, sex and corruption*, 2020, TransparencyInternational.org.

⁷⁸ GRECO, 24E, *Gender dimensions of corruption*, 2012, <https://rm.coe.int/16806cd01e>.

⁷⁹ GRECO, *21st General Activity Report (2020) of the Group of States against Corruption (Greco). Anti-corruption trends, challenges and good practices in Europe & the United States of America*”, 2021, <https://rm.coe.int/greco-general-activity-report-2021/1680a6bb79>.

introduces gender equality as a new measure for anti-corruption national plans⁸⁰. Within the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD), since 2017 there is also the attitude to adopt many more *gender equality* instruments to support integrity among officials.

This important news redefines the international political framework in the fight against corruption, consequently and hopefully enforcing important novelties at national level.

5. THE “GENDER EQUITY” AGENDA

Gender equity points to guaranteeing equality of humans for the equal distribution of benefits and accountability between genders. It can be achieved through policies which boast their implementation proactively⁸¹. For those purposes, a system of instruments should be developed to promote access to employment for women to fill the gender gap, achieve gender equity⁸² and mine the «structural power asymmetry» accordingly⁸³.

⁸⁰ UNODC, *Mainstreaming gender in corruption projects /programmes briefing note for Unocd staff*, 2020, unodoc.org.

⁸¹ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>.

⁸² Equality and good governance standards require to balance gender representation within institutions (especially where it is a lacking equality access for top management positions). Good institutional governance is inclusive and to implement equality is necessary to facilitate women presence in public institutions.

One of this policy in the prevention of corruption because there is no lack of research outlining how high corruption levels may penalize women participation (OSCE, *Gender and corruption: What do we know*, 2021), as they are outside power dynamics. Women can be excluded from the access to some roles through the limitation of entry barriers. For example, in the case of political support of party or representative interests' network, and so the access to funds for electoral campaigns, see P. NORRIS, *Silver or lead? Why violence and corruption limit women's representation*, Faculty Research Working Paper Series, Cambridge, 2019.

⁸³ OSCE, *Gender and corruption: What do we know*, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/507569.pdf>.

Investing in instruments and knowledge can prevent the prosecution of conditions making it difficult for women to access positions of responsibility at work through acts of compensation gender asymmetry⁸⁴.

In 1966 the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” (CCPR) approved by the UNO, bound⁸⁵ the member and signatory States to adopt such measures appropriate to secure equal access to rights and opportunities, beyond any distinction of «*race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or any other kind of opinion, national or social origin, economic condition, birth or any other kind of condition*» (art. 2).

Article 3 of the Covenant additionally indicates that member States themselves guarantee equal rights with no distinction of man or woman: «*the States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure equal rights to men and women for the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant*».

In 1979 the general Assembly⁸⁶ adopted the Convention to eliminate any form of discrimination against women⁸⁷, entered into force in 1981 and was ratified by 189 Countries from all over the world. Italy signed the Convention in 1980 and ratified it in 1985⁸⁸. This

⁸⁴ H. FEIGENBLATT, *Breaking the silence around sextortion: The links between power, sex and corruption*, 2020, TransparencyInternational.org; U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center, *Corruption in the time of Covid-19: A double threat for low-income countries*, 2020, <https://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-in-the-time-of-covid-19-a-double-threat-for-low-income-countries>

⁸⁵ The UN human rights Committee is the regulatory authority in charge of verifying that the State Parties comply with their obligations. Every four years they must submit reports on the measures adopted to enable to guaranties required by the Pact (see art. 40).

⁸⁶ It was born within the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and it has been constituted as subcommittee as subcommittee on women’s conditions, appointed to the protection and promotion of women’s rights (see Senate of the Italian Republic, *Il background storico della CSW*, https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/senato/file/repository/affariinternazionali/CSW_Background.pdf).

⁸⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW.

⁸⁸ The CEDAW binds the States to submit periodical reports to the Committee, in order to eliminate any kind of discrimination against women, acting as a regulatory authority (from art.17): the Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and

Charter contains not only provisions, but real measures aimed to achieve substantial equality between men and women⁸⁹, the so called “positive actions” to achieve the established purpose⁹⁰.

The *gender equality* mainstream seems to be in line with the current 2030 strategy for sustainable development of the United Nations Organization (UNO)– *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 5 on Gender Equality*– which, in paragraph 20 of the preamble of the Declaration, approved in 2015, «*Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/70/L.1)*»⁹¹, include the transversal purpose, that is necessary for any other goal⁹²:

... to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls [that] will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.

From this preamble starts goal number 5 (out of 17): «Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls», which is splint into eight sub-goals, among which, paragraph 5.5: «Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership

may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, where appropriate, from the States Parties (art. 21).

⁸⁹ See E. SPEZIALI, *La Convenzione per l’eliminazione di ogni forma di discriminazione nei confronti delle donne*, in *Human Rights and Multi-level Governance*, University of Padua, 2016.

⁹⁰ Inter-American Institute of Human Rights e UNIFEM, *Optional Protocol. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 2000.

⁹¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 25 September 2015 (A/70/L. I). Introduction, paragraph 3: «to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls».

⁹² It should be considered that the agenda will be implemented in the framework of a global partnership for a Sustainable Development, a forum, and a policy monitoring system, even if only the governments have primary accountability for monitoring and reviewing, at global, regional and national level (see point 47 «monitoring and reviewing»).

at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life», as well as (paragraph 5.c) «Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels».

The goal *gender equality* implies not to ignore differences, eliminate the traditional neutrality⁹³ of anti-corruption policies towards gender and demands actions which positively affect the discriminated gender⁹⁴.

Only gender-neutral policies related to language style are accepted⁹⁵.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusively, as it can be considered from the findings on the inverse relation between women's presence and corruption, there is no cause effect link between them, but rather a spurious relationship, affected by contextual factors⁹⁶; it is a multi-random kind of relation⁹⁷, in which the benefit on organizations with high levels of female presence, is mainly due to the typical women's risk aversion, because of their *outsider* position.

⁹³ Also called politically «*gender blind*», cit., Anticorruption Resource Centre, UNCAC, *Gender mainstreaming*, 2021.

⁹⁴ In Italy this change is still at the initial stage, the recent news about the Integrated plan for action and organisation (PIAO), introduced with the decree-law n. 80/2021 impose the substitution of previous corruption prevention and transparency plans, to be embedded in a single paper requiring the implementation of a set of policy strategies, such as the performance cycle and the gender equity management. This should (potentially) give way to a holistic interpretation of the relationship between corruption prevention and gender equity: for example, the opportunity of implementation of single guaranteed committees, the action plans and role-based access policies (Forum PA, *Piao: cos'è il Piano integrato di attività e organizzazione e cosa cambia per le pubbliche amministrazioni*, 2022, forumpa.it.).

⁹⁵ EP, Guidelines European Parliament, Gender neutrality in languages, 2018.

⁹⁶ H.-E SUNG., *Fairer sex or fairer system? Gender and corruption revisited*, Social Forces, 82, 2, 2003, pp. 703-723; UNODC, *The Time is now. Addressing the gender dimension of corruption*, 2020, unodoc.org.

⁹⁷ Y. CORCORAN-NANTES, *Engendering Corruption: Gender and the Culture of Exchange in Central Asia*, Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 18, 2, 2017 pp. 18-25.

Over time, as evidence of the observation above, some studies enabling to critically read the first Swamy et al. findings in 2001, have moved forward, by adding evidence about the influence of context on women's behaviour, proving how the greater resistance to corruption is not an attitudinal feature, but rather an 'extreme' consequence, influenced by "initial" and "contextual" factors. Whereby democratic systems, *accountability* policies, empowerment instruments and the effective risk to be punished exist, people will be more likely to behave more ethically. Due to the effectiveness of these factors and the major social and cultural exposure to them, women are more inclined to comply with the rules and consequently to be less subject to corruption. As a result, a higher women presence in top management positions can foster aversion to corruption. This raises many questions, among which job recruitment and procedures to access the 'public job market'⁹⁸.

Another element emerging from the above-mentioned considerations is how gender equity, as institutional policy⁹⁹, in the fight against inequality, has also the effect of contrasting male-dominated self-powering *network* and its possibly flowing corruptive dynamics (whereby they feed each other)¹⁰⁰.

Finally, wearing the 'gender lenses' in the corrupting risk research allows to identify critical situations and potential corruption, which have still little consideration in the current regulatory framework, such as in the case of sexual exchange (*sextortion*), an issue still worth of further research.

⁹⁸ M.F. RIVAS, *An experiment on corruption and gender*, 2007, mimeo.

⁹⁹ In the single administration, it can act as a viaticum itself to fight corruption, since employing people with higher integrity standards will grant a benefit for the whole authority V. TISHKOV, *Women in Russian politics*, Economic and Political Weekly, 28, 1993, pp. 2837-2840), especially when they can access guidance and management positions, because they are more likely to be involved, by showing more interest in systems for the protection of human rights, transparency, fight against lack of transparency, as well as favouritism passing through confidentiality. In this sense reinforcing the idea of advantage for all the community («*women will be anti-corruption force*», UNODOC, The Time is now. Addressing the gender dimension of corruption, https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2020/THE_TIME_IS_NOW_2020_12_08.pdf).

¹⁰⁰ L. POLICARDO, EDGAR J. SÁNCHEZ CARRERA, *Corruption causes inequality, or is it the other way around? An empirical investigation for a panel of countries*, Economic Analysis and Policy, 59, 2017, pp. 92-102.

Research on the gender and corruption relationship clearly deserves deeper investigation, if only for the undeniable link between inequality and corruption, that the institutional gender balance policies together with the fight against corruption should tackle in the name the state of law and *good governance* (in the broadest sense of term)¹⁰¹.

***Abstract.** Starting with the findings on the link between high female presence and low corruption level in public institutions, this article analysis the factors related to the very existence of the interconnection between female presence and public integrity relationship, to realize how much this is “not [about] a (‘simple’) cause-effect relation”, but rather the outcome of social dynamics and context.*

This script identifies some of the elements explaining the favourable effect of female presence in the fight against corruption, which roots in the historical marginality of the female gender; consequently, their current presence in roles of power results in disrupting some consolidate social dynamics. Gender inequality and gender equality are the key elements in the prevention of corruption and therefore the so called “Gender Equity” should define the policy guidance for the prevention of corruption in the next future.

¹⁰¹ H.-E. SUNG, *Fairer sex or fairer system? Gender and corruption revisited*, Social Forces, 82, 2, 2003, pp. 703-723.